

Evening by Evening

By

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VOLUME THREE

*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;
and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:
When I remember thee upon my bed,
and meditate on thee in the night watches.
Psalm 63:5,6*

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:8

MY soul, now that the cool of the day has come, retire awhile and hearken to the voice of thy God. He is always ready to speak with thee when thou art prepared to hear. If there be any slowness to commune it is not on His part, but altogether on thine own, for He stands at the door and knocks, and if His people will but open He rejoices to enter. But in what state is my heart, which is my Lord's garden? May I venture to hope that it is well trimmed and watered, and is bringing forth fruit fit for Him? If not, He will have much to reprove, but still I pray Him to come unto me, for nothing can so certainly bring my heart into a right condition as the presence of the Sun of Righteousness, who brings healing in His wings. Come, therefore, O Lord, my God, my soul invites Thee earnestly, and waits for Thee eagerly. Come to me, O Jesus, my well-beloved, and plant fresh flowers in my garden, such as I see blooming in such perfection in Thy matchless character! Come, O my Father, who art the Husbandman, and deal with me in Thy tenderness and prudence! Come, O Holy Spirit, and bedew my whole nature, as the herbs are now moistened with the evening dews. O that God would speak to me. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth! O that He would walk with me; I am ready to give up my whole heart and mind to Him, and every other thought is hushed. I am only asking what He delights to give. I am sure that He will condescend to have fellowship with me, for He has given me His Holy Spirit to abide with me forever. Sweet is the cool twilight, when every star seems like the eye of heaven, and the cool wind is as the breath of celestial love.

My Father, my elder Brother, my sweet Comforter, speak now in lovingkindness, for Thou hast opened mine ear and I am not rebellious.

*Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me:
lest, if thou be silent to me,
I become like them that go down into the pit.
Psalm 28:1*

A CRY is the natural expression of sorrow, and a suitable utterance when all other modes of appeal fail us; but the cry must be alone directed to the Lord, for to cry to man is to waste our entreaties upon the air. When we consider the readiness of the Lord to hear, and His ability to aid, we shall see good reason for directing all our appeals at once to the God of our salvation. It will be in vain to call to the rocks in the day of judgement, but our Rock attends to our cries.

“Be not silent to me.” Mere formalists may be content without answers to their prayers, but genuine suppliants cannot; they are not satisfied with the results of prayer itself in calming the mind and subduing the will—they must go further, and obtain actual replies from heaven, or they cannot rest; and those replies they long to receive at once, they dread even a little of God’s silence. God’s voice is often so terrible that it shakes the wilderness; but His silence is equally full of awe to an eager suppliant. When God seems to close His ear, we must not therefore close our mouths, but rather cry with more earnestness; for when our note grows shrill with eagerness and grief, He will not long deny us a hearing. What a dreadful case should we be in if the Lord should become forever silent to our prayers? *“Lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.”* Deprived of the God who answers prayer, we should be in a more pitiable plight than the dead in the grave, and should soon sink to the same level as the lost in hell. We must have answers to prayer: ours is an urgent case of dire necessity; surely the Lord will speak peace to our agitated minds, for He never can find it in His heart to permit His own elect to perish.

*If we suffer, we shall also reign with him:
if we deny him, he also will deny us:
2 Timothy 2:12*

WE must not imagine that we are suffering for Christ, and with Christ, if we are not in Christ. Beloved friend, are you trusting to Jesus only? If not, whatever you may have to mourn over on earth, you are not “suffering with Christ,” and have no hope of reigning with Him in heaven. Neither are we to conclude that all a Christian’s sufferings are sufferings with Christ, for *it is essential that he be called by God to suffer*. If we are rash and imprudent, and run into positions for which neither providence nor grace has fitted us, we ought to question whether we are not rather sinning than communing with Jesus. If we let passion take the place of judgment, and self-will reign instead of Scriptural authority, we shall fight the Lord’s battles with the devil’s weapons, and if we cut our own fingers we must not be surprised. Again, *in troubles which come upon us as the result of sin, we must not dream that we are suffering with Christ*. When Miriam spoke evil of Moses, and the leprosy polluted her, she was not suffering for God. Moreover, suffering which God accepts *must have God’s glory as its end*. If I suffer that I may earn a name, or win applause, I shall get no other reward than that of the Pharisee. It is requisite also *that love to Jesus, and love to His elect, be ever the mainspring of all our patience*. We must manifest the Spirit of Christ in meekness, gentleness, and forgiveness. Let us search and see if we truly *suffer with Jesus*. And if we do thus suffer, what is our “light affliction” compared with *reigning with Him*? Oh it is so blessed to be in the furnace with Christ, and such an honour to stand in the pillory with Him, that if there were no future reward, we might count ourselves happy in present honour; but when the recompense is so eternal, so infinitely more than we had any right to expect, shall we not take up the cross with alacrity, and go on our way rejoicing?

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Psalm 24:4

OUTWARD practical holiness is a very precious mark of grace. It is to be feared that many professors have perverted the doctrine of justification by faith in such a way as to treat good works with contempt; if so, they will receive everlasting contempt at the last great day. If our hands are not clean, let us wash them in Jesus' precious blood, and so let us lift up pure hands unto God. But "*clean hands*" will not suffice, unless they are connected with "*a pure heart.*" True religion is heart-work. We may wash the outside of the cup and the platter as long as we please, but if the inward parts be filthy, we are filthy altogether in the sight of God, for our hearts are more truly ourselves than our hands are; the very life of our being lies in the inner nature, and hence the imperative need of purity within. The pure in heart shall see God, all others are but blind bats.

The man who is born for heaven "*hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.*" All men have their joys, by which their souls are lifted up; the worldling lifts up his soul in carnal delights, which are mere empty vanities; but the saint loves more substantial things; like Jehoshaphat, he is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He who is content with husks, will be reckoned with the swine. Does the world satisfy thee? Then thou hast thy reward and portion in this life; make much of it, for thou shalt know no other joy.

"*Nor sworn deceitfully.*" The saints are men of honour still. The Christian man's word is his only oath; but that is as good as twenty oaths of other men. False speaking will shut any man out of heaven, for a liar shall not enter into God's house, whatever may be his professions or doings. Reader, does the text before us condemn thee, or dost thou hope to ascend into the hill of the Lord?

*Trust ye in the LORD for ever:
for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:
Isaiah 26:4*

SEEING that we have such a God to trust to, let us rest upon Him with all our weight; let us resolutely drive out all unbelief, and endeavour to get rid of doubts and fears, which so much mar our comfort; since there is no excuse for fear where God is the foundation of our trust. A loving parent would be sorely grieved if his child could not trust him; and how ungenerous, how unkind is our conduct when we put so little confidence in our heavenly Father who has never failed us, and who never will. It were well if doubting were banished from the household of God; but it is to be feared that old Unbelief is as nimble nowadays as when the psalmist asked, "Is his mercy clean gone forever? Will he be favourable no more?" David had not made any very lengthy trial of the mighty sword of the giant Goliath, and yet he said, "There is none like it." He had tried it once in the hour of his youthful victory, and it had proved itself to be of the right metal, and therefore he praised it ever afterwards; even so should we speak well of our God, there is none like unto Him in the heaven above or the earth beneath; "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." There is no rock like unto the rock of Jacob, our enemies themselves being judges. So far from suffering doubts to live in our hearts, we will take the whole detestable crew, as Elijah did the prophets of Baal, and slay them over the brook; and for a stream to kill them at, we will select the sacred torrent which wells forth from our Saviour's wounded side. We have been in many trials, but we have never yet been cast where we could not find in our God all that we needed. Let us then be encouraged to trust in the Lord forever, assured that His ever lasting strength will be, as it has been, our succour and stay.

How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.

Job 13:23

HAVE you ever really weighed and considered how great the sin of God's people is? Think how heinous is your own transgression, and you will find that not only does a sin here and there tower up like an alp, but that your iniquities are heaped upon each other, as in the old fable of the giants who piled Pelion upon Ossa, mountain upon mountain. What an aggregate of sin there is in the life of one of the most sanctified of God's children! Attempt to multiply this, the sin of one only, by the multitude of the redeemed, "a number which no man can number," and you will have some conception of the great mass of the guilt of the people for whom Jesus shed His blood. But we arrive at a more adequate idea of the magnitude of sin by the greatness of the remedy provided. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's only and well-beloved Son. God's Son! Angels cast their crowns before Him! All the choral symphonies of heaven surround His glorious throne. "God over all, blessed forever. Amen." And yet He takes upon Himself the form of a servant, and is scourged and pierced, bruised and torn, and at last slain; since nothing but the blood of the incarnate Son of God could make atonement for our offences. No human mind can adequately estimate the infinite value of the divine sacrifice, for great as is the sin of God's people, the atonement which takes it away is immeasurably greater. Therefore, the believer, even when sin rolls like a black flood, and the remembrance of the past is bitter, can yet stand before the blazing throne of the great and holy God, and cry, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that hath risen again." While the recollection of his sin fills him with shame and sorrow, he at the same time makes it a foil to show the brightness of mercy—guilt is the dark night in which the fair star of divine love shines with serene splendour.

And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.

Ezekiel 16:6

SAVED one, consider gratefully this mandate of mercy. Note that this fiat of God is *majestic*. In our text, we perceive a sinner with nothing in him but sin, expecting nothing but wrath; but the eternal Lord passes by in His glory; He looks, He pauses, and He pronounces the solitary but royal word, “Live.” There speaks a God. Who but He could venture thus to deal with life and dispense it with a single syllable? Again, this fiat is *manifold*. When He saith “Live,” it includes many things. Here is judicial life. The sinner is ready to be condemned, but the mighty One saith, “Live,” and he rises pardoned and absolved. It is spiritual life. We knew not Jesus—our eyes could not see Christ, our ears could not hear His voice—Jehovah said “Live,” and we were quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. Moreover, it includes glory-life, which is the perfection of spiritual life. “I said unto thee, Live:” and that word rolls on through all the years of time till death comes, and in the midst of the shadows of death, the Lord’s voice is still heard, “Live!” In the morning of the resurrection it is that self-same voice which is echoed by the arch-angel, “Live,” and as holy spirits rise to heaven to be blest forever in the glory of their God, it is in the power of this same word, “Live.” Note again, that it is an *irresistible* mandate. Saul of Tarsus is on the road to Damascus to arrest the saints of the living God. A voice is heard from heaven and a light is seen above the brightness of the sun, and Saul is crying out, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” This mandate is a mandate of *free grace*. When sinners are saved, it is only and solely because God *will* do it to magnify His free, unpurchased, unsought grace. Christians, see your position, debtors to grace; show your gratitude by earnest, Christlike lives, and as God has bidden you live, see to it that you live in earnest.

Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

Psalm 25:5

WHEN the believer has begun with trembling feet to walk in the way of the Lord, he asks to be still led onward like a little child upheld by its parent's helping hand, and he craves to be further instructed in the alphabet of truth. Experimental teaching is the burden of this prayer. David knew much, but he felt his ignorance, and desired to be still in the Lord's school: four times over in two verses he applies for a scholarship in the college of grace. It were well for many professors if instead of following their own devices, and cutting out new paths of thought for themselves, they would enquire for the good old ways of God's own truth, and beseech the Holy Ghost to give them sanctified understandings and teachable spirits. "*For thou art the God of my salvation.*" The Three-One Jehovah is the Author and Perfecter of salvation to His people. Reader, is He the God of *your* salvation? Do you find in the Father's election, in the Son's atonement, and in the Spirit's quickening, all the grounds of your eternal hopes? If so, you may use this as an argument for obtaining further blessings; if the Lord has ordained to save you, surely He will not refuse to instruct you in His ways. It is a happy thing when we can address the Lord with the confidence which David here manifests, it gives us great power in prayer, and comfort in trial. "*On Thee do I wait all the day.*" Patience is the fair handmaid and daughter of faith; we cheerfully wait when we are certain that we shall not wait in vain. It is our duty and our privilege to wait upon the Lord in service, in worship, in expectancy, in trust all the days of our life. Our faith will be tried faith, and if it be of the true kind, it will bear continued trial without yielding. We shall not grow weary of waiting upon God if we remember how long and how graciously He once waited for us.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1:4

A BELIEVER has two principles at work within him. In his natural estate he was subject to one principle only, which was darkness; now light has entered, and the two principles disagree. Mark the apostle Paul's words in the seventh chapter of Romans: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." How is this state of things occasioned? "The Lord divided the light from the darkness." Darkness, by itself, is quiet and undisturbed, but when the Lord sends in light, there is a conflict, for the one is in opposition to the other: a conflict which will never cease till the believer is altogether light in the Lord. If there be a division *within* the individual Christian, there is certain to be *a division without*. So soon as the Lord gives to any man light, he proceeds to separate himself from the darkness around; he secedes from a merely worldly religion of outward ceremonial, for nothing short of the gospel of Christ will now satisfy him, and he withdraws himself from worldly society and frivolous amusements, and seeks the company of the saints, for "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The light gathers to itself, and the darkness to itself. What God has divided, let us never try to unite, but as Christ went without the camp, bearing His reproach, so let us come out from the ungodly, and be a peculiar people. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; and, as He was, so we are to be nonconformists to the world, dissenting from all sin, and distinguished from the rest of mankind by our likeness to our Master.

*And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
And the evening and the morning were the first day.
Genesis 1:5*

THE evening was “darkness” and the morning was “light,” and yet *the two together are called by the name that is given to the light alone!* This is somewhat remarkable, but it has an exact analogy in spiritual experience. In every believer there is darkness and light, and yet he is not to be named a sinner because there is sin in him, but he is to be named a saint because he possesses some degree of holiness. This will be a most comforting thought to those who are mourning their infirmities, and who ask, “Can I be a child of God while there is so much darkness in me?” Yes; for you, like the day, take not your name from the evening, but from the morning; and you are spoken of in the word of God as if you were even now perfectly holy as you will be soon. You are called the child of light, though there is darkness in you still. You are named after what is the predominating quality in the sight of God, which will one day be the only principle remaining. Observe that *the evening comes first*. Naturally we are darkness first in order of time, and the gloom is often first in our mournful apprehension, driving us to cry out in deep humiliation, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” The place of the morning is second, it dawns when grace overcomes nature. It is a blessed aphorism of John Bunyan, “That which is last, lasts forever.” That which is first, yields in due season to the last; but nothing comes after the last. So that though you are naturally darkness, when once you become light in the Lord, there is no evening to follow; “thy sun shall no more go down.” The first day in this life is an evening and a morning; but the second day, when we shall be with God, forever, shall be a day with no evening, but one, sacred, high, eternal noon.

Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

Joel 1:3

IN this simple way, by God's grace, a living testimony for truth is always to be kept alive in the land—the beloved of the Lord are to hand down their witness for the gospel, and the covenant to their heirs, and these again to their next descendants. This is our *first* duty, we are to begin at the family hearth: he is a bad preacher who does not commence his ministry at home. The heathen are to be sought by all means, and the highways and hedges are to be searched, but home has a prior claim, and woe unto those who reverse the order of the Lord's arrangements. To teach our children is a *personal* duty; we cannot delegate it to Sunday school teachers, or other friendly aids; these can assist us, but cannot deliver us from the sacred obligation; proxies and sponsors are wicked devices in this case: mothers and fathers must, like Abraham, command their households in the fear of God, and talk with their offspring concerning the wondrous works of the Most High. Parental teaching is a *natural* duty—who so fit to look to the child's well-being as those who are the authors of his actual being? To neglect the instruction of our offspring is worse than brutish. Family religion is *necessary* for the nation, for the family itself, and for the church of God. By a thousand plots Popery is covertly advancing in our land, and one of the most effectual means for resisting its inroads is left almost neglected, namely, the instruction of children in the faith. Would that parents would awaken to a sense of the importance of this matter. It is a pleasant duty to talk of Jesus to our sons and daughters, and the more so because it has often proved to be an *accepted* work, for God has saved the children through the parents' prayers and admonitions. May every house into which this volume shall come honour the Lord and receive His smile.

*And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work,
and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom:
to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

2 Timothy 4:18

YONDER city of the great King is a place of *active service*. Ransomed spirits serve Him day and night in His temple. They never cease to fulfil the good pleasure of their King. They always “rest,” so far as ease and freedom from care is concerned; and never “rest,” in the sense of indolence or inactivity. Jerusalem the golden is the place of *communion* with all the people of God. We shall sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in eternal fellowship. We shall hold high converse with the noble host of the elect, all reigning with Him who by His love and His potent arm has brought them safely home. We shall not sing solos, but in chorus shall we praise our King. Heaven is a place of *victory realized*. Whenever, Christian, thou hast achieved a victory over thy lusts—whenever after hard struggling, thou hast laid a temptation dead at thy feet—thou hast in that hour a foretaste of the joy that awaits thee when the Lord shall shortly tread Satan under thy feet, and thou shalt find thyself more than conqueror through Him who hath loved thee. Paradise is a place of *security*. When you enjoy the full assurance of faith, you have the pledge of that glorious security which shall be yours when you are a perfect citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem. O my sweet home, Jerusalem, thou happy harbour of my soul! Thanks, even now, to Him whose love hath taught me to long for Thee; but louder thanks in eternity, when I shall possess Thee.

“My soul has tasted of the grapes,
And now it longs to go
Where my dear Lord His vineyard keeps
And all the clusters grow.
“Upon the true and living vine,
My famish’d soul would feast,
And banquet on the fruit divine,
An everlasting guest.”

*When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back:
this I know; for God is for me.
Psalm 56:9*

IT is impossible for any human speech to express the full meaning of this delightful phrase, “*God is for me.*” He was “for us” before the worlds were made; He was “for us,” or He would not have given His well-beloved son; He was “for us” when He smote the Only-begotten, and laid the full weight of His wrath upon Him—He was “for us,” though He was against *Him*; He was “for us,” when we were ruined in the fall—He loved us notwithstanding all; He was “for us,” when we were rebels against Him, and with a high hand were bidding Him defiance; He was “for us,” or He would not have brought us humbly to seek His face. He has been “for us” in many struggles; we have been summoned to encounter hosts of dangers; we have been assailed by temptations from without and within—how could we have remained unharmed to this hour if He had not been “for us”? He is “for us,” with all the infinity of His being; with all the omnipotence of His love; with all the infallibility of His wisdom; arrayed in all His divine attributes, He is “for us,”—eternally and immutably “for us”; “for us” when yon blue skies shall be rolled up like a worn out vesture; “for us” throughout eternity. And because He is “for us,” the voice of prayer will always ensure His help. “*When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies be turned back.*” This is no uncertain hope, but a well grounded assurance—“*this I know.*” I will direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up for the answer, assured that it will come, and that mine enemies shall be defeated, “for God is for me.” O believer, how happy art thou with the King of kings on thy side! How safe with such a Protector! How sure thy cause pleaded by such an Advocate! If God be for thee, who can be against thee?

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

Matthew 28:1

LET us learn from Mary Magdalene how to obtain fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Notice how she sought. She sought the Saviour *very early* in the morning. If thou canst wait for Christ, and be patient in the hope of having fellowship with Him at some distant season, thou wilt never have fellowship at all; for the heart that is fitted for communion is a hungering and a thirsting heart. She sought Him also with *very great boldness*. Other disciples fled from the sepulchre, for they trembled and were amazed; but Mary, it is said, “stood” at the sepulchre. If you would have Christ with you, seek Him boldly. Let nothing hold you back. Defy the world. Press on where others flee. She sought Christ *faithfully*—she stood *at the sepulchre*. Some find it hard to stand by a living Saviour, but she stood by a dead one. Let us seek Christ after this mode, cleaving to the very least thing that has to do with Him, remaining faithful though all others should forsake Him. Note further, she sought Jesus *earnestly*—she stood “*weeping*”. Those tear-droppings were as spells that led the Saviour captive, and made Him come forth and show Himself to her. If you desire Jesus’ presence, weep after it! If you cannot be happy unless He come and say to you, “Thou art my beloved,” you will soon hear His voice. Lastly, she sought the Saviour *only*. What cared she for angels, she turned herself back from them; her search was only for her Lord. If Christ be your one and only love, if your heart has cast out all rivals, you will not long lack the comfort of His presence. Mary Magdalene sought thus *because she loved much*. Let us arouse ourselves to the same intensity of affection; let our heart, like Mary’s, be full of Christ, and our love, like hers, will be satisfied with nothing short of Himself. O Lord, reveal Thyself to us this evening!

*Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week,
he appeared first to Mary Magdalene,
out of whom he had cast seven devils.*

Mark 16:9

JESUS “appeared first to Mary Magdalene,” probably not only on account of her great love and persevering seeking, but because, as the context intimates, *she had been a special trophy of Christ’s delivering power*. Learn from this, that the greatness of our sin before conversion should not make us imagine that we may not be specially favoured with the very highest grade of fellowship. She was one who had left all to become *a constant attendant on the Saviour*. He was her first, her chief object. Many who were on Christ’s side did not take up Christ’s cross; *she did*. *She spent her substance in relieving His wants*. If we would see much of Christ, let us serve Him. Tell me who they are that sit oftenest under the banner of His love, and drink deepest draughts from the cup of communion, and I am sure they will be those who give most, who serve best, and who abide closest to the bleeding heart of their dear Lord. But notice how Christ revealed Himself to this sorrowing one—by a word, “Mary.” It needed but one word *in His voice*, and at once she knew Him, and *her heart owned allegiance by another word*, her heart was too full to say more. That one word would naturally be the most fitting for the occasion. It implies obedience. She said, “*Master*.” There is no state of mind in which this confession of allegiance will be too cold. No, when your spirit glows most with the heavenly fire, then you will say, “I am Thy servant, Thou hast loosed my bonds.” If you can say, “*Master*,” if you feel that His will is your will, then you stand in a happy, holy place. He must have said, “*Mary*,” or else you could not have said, “*Rabboni*.” See, then, from all this, how Christ honours those who honour Him, how love draws our Beloved, how it needs but one word of His to turn our weeping to rejoicing, how His presence makes the heart’s sunshine.

Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.

Psalm 102:13, 14

A SELFISH man in trouble is exceedingly hard to comfort, because the springs of his comfort lie entirely within himself, and when he is sad all his springs are dry. But a large-hearted man full of Christian philanthropy, has other springs from which to supply himself with comfort beside those which lie within. He can go to his God first of all, and there find abundant help; and he can discover arguments for consolation in things relating to the world at large, to his country, and, above all, to the church. David in this Psalm was exceedingly sorrowful; he wrote, "I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top." The only way in which he could comfort himself, was in the reflection that God would arise, and have mercy upon Zion: though *he* was sad, yet Zion should prosper; however low his own estate, yet Zion should arise. Christian man! learn to comfort thyself in God's gracious dealing towards the church. That which is so dear to thy Master, should it not be dear above all else to thee? What though thy way be dark, canst thou not gladden thine heart with the triumphs of His cross and the spread of His truth? Our own personal troubles are forgotten while we look, not only upon what God has done, and is doing for Zion, but on the glorious things He *will yet do* for His church. Try this receipt, O believer, whenever thou art sad of heart and in heaviness of spirit: forget thyself and thy little concerns, and seek the welfare and prosperity of Zion. When thou bendest thy knee in prayer to God, limit not thy petition to the narrow circle of thine own life, tried though it be, but send out thy longing prayers for the church's prosperity, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and thine own soul shall be refreshed.

And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

1 Kings 18:40

WHEN the prophet Elijah had received the answer to his prayer, and the fire from heaven had consumed the sacrifice in the presence of all the people, he called upon the assembled Israelites to take the priests of Baal, and sternly cried, "Let not one of them escape." He took them all down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. So must it be with our sins—they are all doomed, not one must be preserved. Our darling sin must die. Spare it not for its much crying. Strike, though it be as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was laid upon His own Son. With stern unflinching purpose must you condemn to death that sin which was once the idol of your heart. Do you ask how you are to accomplish this? Jesus will be your power. You have grace to overcome sin given you in the covenant of grace; you have strength to win the victory in the crusade against inward lusts, because Christ Jesus has promised to be with you even unto the end. If you would triumph over darkness, set yourself in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness. There is no place so well adapted for the discovery of sin, and recovery from its power and guilt, as the immediate presence of God. Job never knew how to get rid of sin half so well as he did when his eye of faith rested upon God, and then he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. The fine gold of the Christian is oft becoming dim. We need the sacred fire to consume the dross. Let us fly to our God, He is a consuming fire; He will not consume our spirit, but our sins. Let the goodness of God excite us to a sacred jealousy, and to a holy revenge against those iniquities which are hateful in His sight. Go forth to battle with Amalek, in His strength, and utterly destroy the accursed crew: let not one of them escape.

*Neither shall one thrust another;
they shall walk every one in his path:
and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.*
Joel 2:8

LOCUSTS always keep their rank, and although their number is legion, they do not crowd upon each other, so as to throw their columns into confusion. This remarkable fact in natural history shows how thoroughly the Lord has infused the spirit of order into His universe, since the smallest animate creatures are as much controlled by it as are the rolling spheres or the seraphic messengers. It would be wise for believers to be ruled by the same influence in all their spiritual life. *In their Christian graces* no one virtue should usurp the sphere of another, or eat out the vitals of the rest for its own support. Affection must not smother honesty, courage must not elbow weakness out of the field, modesty must not jostle energy, and patience must not slaughter resolution. So also with *our duties*, one must not interfere with another; public usefulness must not injure private piety; church work must not push family worship into a corner. It is ill to offer God one duty stained with the blood of another. Each thing is beautiful in its season, but not otherwise. It was to the Pharisee that Jesus said, "This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." The same rule applies to *our personal position*, we must take care to know our place, take it, and keep to it. We must minister as the Spirit has given us ability, and not intrude upon our fellow servant's domain. Our Lord Jesus taught us not to covet the high places, but to be willing to be the least among the brethren. Far from us be an envious, ambitious spirit, let us feel the force of the Master's command, and do as He bids us, keeping rank with the rest of the host. Tonight let us see whether we are keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, and let our prayer be that, in all the churches of the Lord Jesus, peace and order may prevail.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

Matthew 12:20

WHAT is weaker than the bruised reed or the smoking flax? A reed that groweth in the fen or marsh, let but the wild duck light upon it, and it snaps; let but the foot of man brush against it, and it is bruised and broken; every wind that flits across the river moves it to and fro. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence is more in jeopardy, than a bruised reed. Then look at the smoking flax—what is it? It has a spark within it, it is true, but it is almost smothered; an infant's breath might blow it out; nothing has a more precarious existence than its flame. *Weak things* are here described, yet Jesus says of them, "The smoking flax I will not quench; the bruised reed I will not break." Some of God's children are made strong to do mighty works for Him; God has His Samsons here and there who can pull up Gaza's gates, and carry them to the top of the hill; He has a few mighties who are lion-like men, but the majority of His people are a timid, trembling race. They are like starlings, frightened at every passerby; a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they are taken like birds in a snare; if trial threatens, they are ready to faint; their frail skiff is tossed up and down by every wave, they are drifted along like a sea bird on the crest of the billows—weak things, without strength, without wisdom, without foresight. Yet, weak as they are, and *because* they are so weak, they have this promise made specially to them. Herein is grace and graciousness! Herein is love and lovingkindness! How it opens to us the compassion of Jesus—so gentle, tender, considerate! We need never shrink back from *His* touch. We need never fear a harsh word from *Him*; though He might well chide us for our weakness, He rebuketh not. Bruised reeds shall have no blows from Him, and the smoking flax no damping frowns.

And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

Jeremiah 2:18

BY sundry miracles, by divers mercies, by strange deliverances Jehovah had proved Himself to be worthy of Israel's trust. Yet they broke down the hedges with which God had enclosed them as a sacred garden; they forsook their own true and living God, and followed after false gods. Constantly did the Lord reprove them for this infatuation, and our text contains one instance of God's expostulating with them, "What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the muddy river?"—for so it may be translated. "Why dost thou wander afar and leave thine own cool stream from Lebanon? Why dost thou forsake Jerusalem to turn aside to Noph and to Tahapanes? Why art thou so strangely set on mischief, that thou canst not be content with the good and healthful, but wouldst follow after that which is evil and deceitful?" Is there not here a word of expostulation and warning to the Christian? O true believer, called by grace and washed in the precious blood of Jesus, thou hast tasted of better drink than the muddy river of this world's pleasure can give thee; thou hast had fellowship with Christ; thou hast obtained the joy of seeing Jesus, and leaning thine head upon His bosom. Do the trifles, the songs, the honours, the merriment of this earth content thee after that? Hast thou eaten the bread of angels, and canst thou live on husks? Good Rutherford once said, "I have tasted of Christ's own manna, and it hath put my mouth out of taste for the brown bread of this world's joys." Methinks it should be so with thee. If thou art wandering after the waters of Egypt, O return quickly to the one living fountain: the waters of Sihor may be sweet to the Egyptians, but they will prove only bitterness to thee. What hast thou to do with them? *Jesus asks thee this question this evening*—what wilt thou answer Him?

I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

Psalm 42:9

CANST thou answer this, believer? Canst thou find any reason why thou art so often mourning instead of rejoicing? Why yield to gloomy anticipations? Who told thee that the night would never end in day? Who told thee that the sea of circumstances would ebb out till there should be nothing left but long leagues of the mud of horrible poverty? Who told thee that the winter of thy discontent would proceed from frost to frost, from snow, and ice, and hail, to deeper snow, and yet more heavy tempest of despair? Knowest thou not that day follows night, that flood comes after ebb, that spring and summer succeed winter? Hope thou then! Hope thou ever! For God fails thee not. Dost thou not know that thy God loves thee in the midst of all this? Mountains, when in darkness hidden, are as real as in day, and God's love is as true to thee now as it was in thy brightest moments. No father chastens always: thy Lord hates the rod as much as thou dost; He only cares to use it for that reason which should make thee willing to receive it, namely, that it works thy lasting good. Thou shalt yet climb Jacob's ladder with the angels, and behold Him who sits at the top of it—Thy covenant God. Thou shalt yet, amidst the splendours of eternity, forget the trials of time, or only remember them to bless the God who led thee through them, and wrought thy lasting good by them. Come, sing in the midst of tribulation. Rejoice even while passing through the furnace. Make the wilderness to blossom like the rose! Cause the desert to ring with thine exulting joys, for these light afflictions will soon be over, and then "forever with the Lord," thy bliss shall never wane.

"Faint not nor fear, His arms are near,
He changeth not, and thou art dear;
Only believe and thou shalt see,
That Christ is all in all to thee."

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

John 19:5

IF there be one place where our Lord Jesus most fully becomes the joy and comfort of His people, it is where He plunged deepest into the depths of woe. Come hither, gracious souls, and behold the Man in the garden of Gethsemane; behold His heart so brimming with love that He cannot hold it in—so full of sorrow that it must find a vent. Behold the bloody sweat as it distils from every pore of His body, and falls upon the ground. Behold the Man as they drive the nails into His hands and feet. Look up, repenting sinners, and see the sorrowful image of your suffering Lord. Mark Him, as the ruby drops stand on the thorn-crown, and adorn with priceless gems the diadem of the King of Misery. Behold the Man when all His bones are out of joint, and He is poured out like water and brought into the dust of death; God hath forsaken Him, and hell compasseth Him about. Behold and see, was there ever sorrow like unto His sorrow that is done unto Him? All ye that pass by draw near and look upon this spectacle of grief, unique, unparalleled, a wonder to men and angels, a prodigy unmatched. Behold the Emperor of Woe who had no equal or rival in His agonies! Gaze upon Him, ye mourners, for if there be not consolation in a crucified Christ there is no joy in earth or heaven. If in the ransom price of His blood there be not hope, ye harps of heaven, there is no joy in you, and the right hand of God shall know no pleasures for evermore. We have only to sit more continually at the cross foot to be less troubled with our doubts and woes. We have but to see *His* sorrows, and *our* sorrows we shall be ashamed to mention. We have but to gaze into His wounds and heal our own. If we would live aright it must be by the contemplation of His death; if we would rise to dignity, it must be by considering His humiliation and His sorrow.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

“**C**LEANSETH,” says the text—not “*shall* cleanse.” There are multitudes who think that as a dying hope they may look forward to pardon. Oh! how infinitely better to have cleansing now than to depend on the bare possibility of forgiveness when I come to die. Some imagine that a sense of pardon is an attainment only obtainable after many years of Christian experience. But forgiveness of sin is a *present* thing—a privilege for this day, a joy for this very hour. The moment a sinner trusts Jesus he is fully forgiven. The text, being written in the present tense, also indicates *continuance*; it was “cleanseth” yesterday, it is “cleanseth” today, it will be “cleanseth” tomorrow: it will be always so with you, Christian, until you cross the river; every hour you may come to this fountain, for it cleanseth still. Notice, likewise, the *completeness* of the cleansing, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin”—not only from sin, but “from all sin.” Reader, I cannot tell you the exceeding sweetness of this word, but I pray God the Holy Ghost to give you a taste of it. Manifold are our sins against God. Whether the bill be little or great, the same receipt can discharge one as the other. The blood of Jesus Christ is as blessed and divine a payment for the transgressions of blaspheming Peter as for the shortcomings of loving John; our iniquity is gone, all gone at once, and all gone forever. Blessed completeness! What a sweet theme to dwell upon as one gives himself to sleep.

“Sins against a holy God;
Sins against His righteous laws;
Sins against His love, His blood;
Sins against His name and cause;
Sins immense as is the sea—
From them all He cleanseth me.”

And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Joel 2:11

CONSIDER, my soul, the mightiness of the Lord who is thy glory and defence. He is a man of war, Jehovah is His name. All *the forces of heaven* are at His beck, legions wait at His door, cherubim and seraphim;, watchers and holy ones, principalities and powers, are all attentive to His will. If our eyes were not blinded by the ophthalmia of the flesh, we should see horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the Lord's beloved. *The powers of nature* are all subject to the absolute control of the Creator: stormy wind and tempest, lightning and rain, and snow, and hail, and the soft dews and cheering sunshine, come and go at His decree. The bands of Orion He looseth, and bindeth the sweet influences of the Pleiades. Earth, sea, and air, and the places under the earth, are the barracks for Jehovah's great armies; space is His camping ground, light is His banner, and flame is His sword. When He goeth forth to war, famine ravages the land, pestilence smites the nations, hurricane sweeps the sea, tornado shakes the mountains, and earthquake makes the solid world to tremble. As for *animate creatures*, they all own His dominion, and from the great fish which swallowed the prophet, down to "all manner of flies," which plagued the field of Zoan, all are His servants, and like the palmer-worm, the caterpillar, and the cankerworm, are squadrons of His great army, for His camp is very great. My soul, see to it that thou be at peace with this mighty King, yea, more, be sure to enlist under His banner, for to war against Him is madness, and to serve Him is glory. Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, is ready to receive recruits for the army of the Lord: if I am not already enlisted let me go to Him ere I sleep, and beg to be accepted through His merits; and if I be already, as I hope I am, a soldier of the cross, let me be of good courage; for the enemy is powerless compared with my Lord, whose camp is very great.

*I will go and return to my place,
till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face:
in their affliction they will seek me early.*

Hosea 5:15

LOSSES and adversities are frequently the means which the great Shepherd uses to fetch home His wandering sheep; like fierce dogs they worry the wanderers back to the fold. There is no making lions tame if they are too well fed; they must be brought down from their great strength, and their stomachs must be lowered, and then they will submit to the tamer's hand; and often have we seen the Christian rendered obedient to the Lord's will by straitness of bread and hard labour. When rich and increased in goods many professors carry their heads much too loftily, and speak exceeding boastfully. Like David, they flatter themselves, "My mountain standeth fast; I shall never be moved." When the Christian groweth wealthy, is in good repute, hath good health, and a happy family, he too often admits Mr. Carnal Security to feast at his table, and then if he be a true child of God there is a rod preparing for him. Wait awhile, and it may be you will see his substance melt away as a dream. There goes a portion of his estate—how soon the acres change hands. That debt, that dishonoured bill—how fast his losses roll in, where will they end? It is a blessed sign of divine life if when these embarrassments occur one after another he begins to be distressed about his backslidings, and betakes himself to his God. Blessed are the waves that wash the mariner upon the rock of salvation! Losses in business are often sanctified to our soul's enriching. If the chosen soul will not come to the Lord full-handed, it shall come empty. If God, in His grace, findeth no other means of making us honour Him among men, He will cast us into the deep; if we fail to honour Him on the pinnacle of riches, He will bring us into the valley of poverty. Yet faint not, heir of sorrow, when thou art thus rebuked, rather recognize the loving hand which chastens, and say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father."

*That he may set him with princes,
even with the princes of his people.
Psalm 113:8*

OUR spiritual privileges are of the highest order. “Among princes” *is the place of select society*. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Speak of select society, there is none like this! “We are a chosen generation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood.” “We are come unto the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” The saints *have courtly audience*: princes have admittance to royalty when common people must stand afar off. The child of God has free access to the inner courts of heaven. “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” “Let us come boldly,” says the apostle, “to the throne of the heavenly grace.” Among princes there is *abundant wealth*, but what is the abundance of princes compared with the riches of believers? for “all things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Princes have *peculiar power*. A prince of heaven’s empire has great influence: he wields a sceptre in his own domain; he sits upon Jesus’ throne, for “He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever.” We reign over the united kingdom of time and eternity. Princes, again, have *special honour*. We may look down upon all earth-born dignity from the eminence upon which grace has placed us. For what is human grandeur to this, “He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”? We share the honour of Christ, and compared with this, earthly splendours are not worth a thought. Communion with Jesus is a richer gem than ever glittered in imperial diadem. Union with the Lord is a coronet of beauty outshining all the blaze of imperial pomp.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?

It is God that justifieth.

Romans 8:33

MOST blessed challenge! How unanswerable it is! Every sin of the elect was laid upon the great Champion of our salvation, and by the atonement carried away. There is no sin in God's book against His people: He seeth no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel; they are justified in Christ forever. When the guilt of sin was taken away, the punishment of sin was removed. For the Christian there is no stroke from God's angry hand—nay, not so much as a single frown of punitive justice. The believer may be chastised by His Father, but God the Judge has nothing to say to the Christian, except "I have absolved thee: thou art acquitted." For the Christian there is no penal death in this world, much less any second death. He is completely freed from all the punishment as well as the guilt of sin, and the power of sin is removed too. It may stand in our way, and agitate us with perpetual warfare; but sin is a conquered foe to every soul in union with Jesus. There is no sin which a Christian cannot overcome if he will only rely upon his God to do it. They who wear the white robe in heaven overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and we may do the same. No lust is too mighty, no besetting sin too strongly entrenched; we can overcome through the power of Christ. Do believe it, Christian, that thy sin is a condemned thing. It may kick and struggle, but it is doomed to die. God has written condemnation across its brow. Christ has crucified it, "nailing it to His cross." Go now and mortify it, and the Lord help you to live to His praise, for sin with all its guilt, shame, and fear, is gone.

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And, O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here's pardon too."

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Acts 10:38

FEW words, but yet an exquisite miniature of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are not many touches, but they are the strokes of a master's pencil. Of the Saviour and only of the Saviour is it true in the fullest, broadest, and most unqualified sense. "He went about doing good." From this description it is evident that He did good *personally*. The evangelists constantly tell us that He touched the leper with His own finger, that He anointed the eyes of the blind, and that in cases where He was asked to speak the word only at a distance, He did not usually comply, but went Himself to the sick bed, and there personally wrought the cure. A lesson to us, if we would do good, to do it ourselves. Give alms with your own hand; a kind look, or word, will enhance the value of the gift. Speak to a friend about his soul; your loving appeal will have more influence than a whole library of tracts. Our Lord's mode of doing good sets forth His *incessant activity*! He did not only the good which came close to hand, but He "went about" on His errands of mercy. Throughout the whole land of Judea there was scarcely a village or a hamlet which was not gladdened by the sight of Him. How this reproves the creeping, loitering manner, in which many professors serve the Lord. Let us gird up the loins of our mind, and be not weary in well doing. Does not the text imply that Jesus Christ *went out of His way to do good*? "He went *about* doing good." He was never deterred by danger or difficulty. He sought out the objects of His gracious intentions. So must we. If old plans will not answer, we must try new ones, for fresh experiments sometimes achieve more than regular methods. Christ's *perseverance*, and the *unity* of His purpose, are also hinted at, and the practical application of the subject may be summed up in the words, "He hath left us an example that we should follow in His steps."

*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;
and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

John 6:37

THIS declaration involves *the doctrine of election*: there are some whom the Father gave to Christ. It involves *the doctrine of effectual calling*: these who are given must and shall come; however stoutly they may set themselves against it, yet they shall be brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. It teaches us *the indispensable necessity of faith*; for even those who are given to Christ are not saved except they come to Jesus. Even they must come, for there is no other way to heaven but by the door, Christ Jesus. All that the Father gives to our Redeemer *must come to Him*, therefore none can come to heaven except they come to Christ.

Oh! the power and majesty which rest in the words "*shall come*." He does not say they have power to come, nor they may come if they will, but they "*shall come*." The Lord Jesus doth by His messengers, His word, and His Spirit, sweetly and graciously compel men to come in that they may eat of His marriage supper; and this He does, not by any violation of the free agency of man, but by the power of His grace. I may exercise power over another man's will, and yet that other man's will may be perfectly free, because the constraint is exercised in a manner accordant with the laws of the human mind. Jehovah Jesus knows how, by irresistible arguments addressed to the understanding, by mighty reasons appealing to the affections, and by the mysterious influence of His Holy Spirit operating upon all the powers and passions of the soul, so to subdue the whole man, that whereas he was once rebellious, he yields cheerfully to his government, subdued by sovereign love. But how shall those be known whom God hath chosen? By this result: that they do willingly and joyfully accept Christ, and come to Him with simple and unfeigned faith, resting upon Him as all their salvation and all their desire. Reader, have you thus come to Jesus?

*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;
and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

John 6:37

NO limit is set to *the duration* of this promise. It does not merely say, “I will not cast out a sinner at his first coming,” but, “I will in no wise cast out.” The original reads, “I will not, not cast out,” or “I will never, never cast out.” The text means, that Christ will not at *first* reject a believer; and that as He will not do it at first, so He will not to the last.

But suppose the believer sins after coming? “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” But suppose that believers backslide? “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.” But believers may fall under temptation! “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” But the believer may fall into sin as David did! Yes, but He will “Purge them with hyssop, and they shall be clean; He will wash them and they shall be whiter than snow”; “From all their iniquities will I cleanse them.”

“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever.”

“I give unto my sheep,” saith He, “eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” What sayest thou to this, O trembling feeble mind? Is not this a precious mercy, that coming to Christ, thou dost not come to One who will treat thee well for a little while, and then send thee about thy business, but He will receive thee and make thee His bride, and thou shalt be His forever? Receive no longer the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby thou shalt cry, Abba, Father! Oh! the grace of these words: “I will in no wise cast out.”

*And these are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites,
who remaining in the chambers were free:*

for they were employed in that work day and night.

1 Chronicles 9:33

WELL was it so ordered in the temple that the sacred chant never ceased: for evermore did the singers praise the Lord, whose mercy endureth forever. As mercy did not cease to rule either by day or by night, so neither did music hush its holy ministry. My heart, there is a lesson sweetly taught to thee in the ceaseless song of Zion's temple, thou too art a constant debtor, and see thou to it that thy gratitude, like charity, never faileth. God's praise is constant in heaven, which is to be thy final dwelling-place, learn thou to practise the eternal hallelujah. Around the earth as the sun scatters His light, His beams awaken grateful believers to tune their morning hymn, so that by the priesthood of the saints perpetual praise is kept up at all hours, they swathe our globe in a mantle of thanksgiving, and girdle it with a golden belt of song.

The Lord always deserves to be praised for what He is in Himself, for His works of creation and providence, for His goodness towards His creatures, and especially for the transcendent act of redemption, and all the marvellous blessing flowing therefrom. It is always beneficial to praise the Lord; it cheers the day and brightens the night; it lightens toil and softens sorrow; and over earthly gladness it sheds a sanctifying radiance which makes it less liable to blind us with its glare. Have we not something to sing about at this moment? Can we not weave a song out of our present joys, or our past deliverances, or our future hopes? Earth yields her summer fruits: the hay is housed, the golden grain invites the sickle, and the sun tarrying long to shine upon a fruitful earth, shortens the interval of shade that we may lengthen the hours of devout worship. By the love of Jesus, let us be stirred up to close the day with a psalm of sanctified gladness.

*Thou crownest the year with thy goodness;
and thy paths drop fatness.
Psalm 65:11*

ALL the year round, every hour of every day, God is richly blessing us; both when we sleep and when we wake His mercy waits upon us. The sun may leave us a legacy of darkness, but our God never ceases to shine upon His children with beams of love. Like a river, His lovingkindness is always flowing, with a fulness inexhaustible as His own nature. Like the atmosphere which constantly surrounds the earth, and is always ready to support the life of man, the benevolence of God surrounds all His creatures; in it, as in their element, they live, and move, and have their being. Yet as the sun on summer days gladdens us with beams more warm and bright than at other times, and as rivers are at certain seasons swollen by the rain, and as the atmosphere itself is sometimes fraught with more fresh, more bracing, or more balmy influences than heretofore, so is it with the mercy of God; it hath its golden hours; its days of overflow, when the Lord magnifieth His grace before the sons of men. Amongst the blessings of the nether springs, *the joyous days of harvest* are a special season of excessive favour. It is the glory of autumn that the ripe gifts of providence are then abundantly bestowed; it is the mellow season of realization, whereas all before was but hope and expectation. Great is the joy of harvest. Happy are the reapers who fill their arms with the liberality of heaven. The Psalmist tells us that the harvest is the crowning of the year. Surely these crowning mercies call for crowning thanksgiving! Let us render it by the *inward emotions of gratitude*. Let our hearts be warmed; let our spirits remember, meditate, and think upon this goodness of the Lord. Then let us *praise Him with our lips*, and laud and magnify His name from whose bounty all this goodness flows. Let us glorify God by yielding *our gifts* to His cause. A practical proof of our gratitude is a special thank-offering to the Lord of the harvest.

So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

Ruth 2:17

LET me learn from Ruth, the gleaner. As she went out to gather the ears of corn, so must I go forth into the fields of prayer, meditation, the ordinances, and hearing the word to gather spiritual food. *The gleaner gathers her portion ear by ear*; her gains are little by little: so must I be content to search for single truths, if there be no greater plenty of them. Every ear helps to make a bundle, and every gospel lesson assists in making us wise unto salvation. *The gleaner keeps her eyes open*: if she stumbled among the stubble in a dream, she would have no load to carry home rejoicingly at eventide. I must be watchful in religious exercises lest they become unprofitable to me; I fear I have lost much already—O that I may rightly estimate my opportunities, and glean with greater diligence. *The gleaner stoops for all she finds*, and so must I. High spirits criticize and object, but lowly minds glean and receive benefit. A humble heart is a great help towards profitably hearing the gospel. The engrafted soul-saving word is not received except with meekness. A stiff back makes a bad gleaner; down, master pride, thou art a vile robber, not to be endured for a moment. *What the gleaner gathers she holds*: if she dropped one ear to find another, the result of her day's work would be but scant; she is as careful to retain as to obtain, and so at last her gains are great. How often do I forget all that I hear; the second truth pushes the first out of my head, and so my reading and hearing end in much ado about nothing! Do I feel duly the importance of storing up the truth? A hungry belly makes the gleaner wise; if there be no corn in her hand, there will be no bread on her table; she labours under the sense of necessity, and hence her tread is nimble and her grasp is firm; I have even a greater necessity, Lord, help me to feel it, that it may urge me onward to glean in fields which yield so plenteous a reward to diligence.

For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.

Luke 8:42

JESUS is passing through the throng to the house of Jairus, to raise the ruler's dead daughter; but He is so profuse in goodness that He works another miracle while upon the road. While yet this rod of Aaron bears the blossom of an unaccomplished wonder, it yields the ripe almonds of a perfect work of mercy. It is enough for us, if we have some one purpose, straightway to go and accomplish it; it were imprudent to expend our energies by the way. Hastening to the rescue of a drowning friend, we cannot afford to exhaust our strength upon another in like danger. It is enough for a tree to yield one sort of fruit, and for a man to fulfil his own peculiar calling. But our Master knows no limit of power or boundary of mission. He is so prolific of grace, that like the sun which shines as it rolls onward in its orbit, His path is radiant with lovingkindness. He is a swift arrow of love, which not only reaches its ordained target, but perfumes the air through which it flies. Virtue is evermore going out of Jesus, as sweet odours exhale from flowers; and it always will be emanating from Him, as water from a sparkling fountain. What delightful encouragement this truth affords us! If our Lord is so ready to heal the sick and bless the needy, then, my soul, be not thou slow to put thyself in His way, that He may smile on thee. Be not slack in asking, if He be so abundant in bestowing. Give earnest heed to His word now, and at all times, that Jesus may speak through it to thy heart. Where He is to be found there make thy resort, that thou mayst obtain His blessing. When He is present to heal, may He not heal thee? But surely He is present even now, for He always comes to hearts which need Him. And dost not thou need Him? Ah, *He* knows how much! Thou Son of David, turn Thine eye and look upon the distress which is now before Thee, and make thy suppliant whole.

*I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail
in all the labours of your hands;
yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.
Haggai 2:17*

HOW destructive is the hail to the standing crops, beating out the precious grain upon the ground! How grateful ought we to be when the corn is spared so terrible a ruin! Let us offer unto the Lord thanksgiving. Even more to be dreaded are those mysterious destroyers—smut, bunt, rust, and mildew. These turn the ear into a mass of soot, or render it putrid, or dry up the grain, and all in a manner so beyond all human control that the farmer is compelled to cry, “This is the finger of God.” Innumerable minute fungi cause the mischief, and were it not for the goodness of God, the rider on the black horse would soon scatter famine over the land. Infinite mercy spares the food of men, but in view of the active agents which are ready to destroy the harvest, right wisely are we taught to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” The curse is abroad; we have constant need of the blessing. When blight and mildew come they are chastisements from heaven, and men must learn to bear the rod, and Him that hath appointed it.

Spiritually, mildew is no uncommon evil. When our work is most promising this blight appears. We hoped for many conversions, and lo! a general apathy, an abounding worldliness, or a cruel hardness of heart! There may be no open sin in those for whom we are labouring, but there is a deficiency of sincerity and decision sadly disappointing our desires. We learn from this our dependence upon the Lord, and the need of prayer that no blight may fall upon our work. Spiritual pride or sloth will soon bring upon us the dreadful evil, and only the Lord of the harvest can remove it. Mildew may even attack our own hearts, and shrivel our prayers and religious exercises. May it please the great Husbandman to avert so serious a calamity. Shine, blessed Sun of Righteousness, and drive the blights away.

And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?

Numbers 32:6

KINDRED has its obligations. The Reubenites and Gadites would have been unbrotherly if they had claimed the land which had been conquered, and had left the rest of the people to fight for their portions alone. We have received much by means of the efforts and sufferings of the saints in years gone by, and if we do not make some return to the church of Christ by giving her our best energies, we are unworthy to be enrolled in her ranks. Others are combating the errors of the age manfully, or excavating perishing ones from amid the ruins of the fall, and if we fold our hands in idleness we had need be warned, lest the curse of Meroz fall upon us. The Master of the vineyard saith, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" What is the idler's excuse? Personal service of Jesus becomes all the more the duty of all because it is cheerfully and abundantly rendered by some. The toils of devoted missionaries and fervent ministers shame us if we sit still in indolence. Shrinking from trial is the temptation of those who are at ease in Zion: they would fain escape the cross and yet wear the crown; to them the question for this evening's meditation is very applicable. If the most precious are tried in the fire, are we to escape the crucible? If the diamond must be vexed upon the wheel, are we to be made perfect without suffering? Who hath commanded the wind to cease from blowing because our bark is on the deep? Why and wherefore should we be treated better than our Lord? The firstborn felt the rod, and why not the younger brethren? It is a cowardly pride which would choose a downy pillow and a silken couch for a soldier of the cross. Wiser far is he who, being first resigned to the divine will, groweth by the energy of grace to be pleased with it, and so learns to gather lilies at the cross foot, and, like Samson, to find honey in the lion.

And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

Psalm 72:19

THIS is a large petition. To intercede for a whole city needs a stretch of faith, and there are times when a prayer for one man is enough to stagger us. But how far-reaching was the psalmist's dying intercession! How comprehensive! How sublime! "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory." It doth not exempt a single country however crushed by the foot of superstition; it doth not exclude a single nation however barbarous. For the cannibal as well as for the civilized, for all climes and races this prayer is uttered: the whole circle of the earth it encompasses, and omits no son of Adam. We must be up and doing for our Master, or we cannot honestly offer such a prayer. The petition is not asked with a sincere heart unless we endeavour, as God shall help us, to extend the kingdom of our Master. Are there not some who *neglect* both to plead and to labour? Reader, is it *your* prayer? Turn your eyes to Calvary. Behold the Lord of Life nailed to a cross, with the thorn-crown about His brow, with bleeding head, and hands, and feet. What! can you look upon this miracle of miracles, the death of the Son of God, without feeling within your bosom a marvellous adoration that language never can express? And when you feel the blood applied to your conscience, and know that He has blotted out your sins, *you are not a man* unless you start from your knees and cry, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen." Can you bow before the Crucified in loving homage, and not wish to see your Monarch master of the world? Out on you if you can pretend to love your Prince, and desire not to see Him the universal ruler. Your piety is worthless unless it leads you to wish that the same mercy which has been extended to you may bless the whole world. Lord, it is harvest-time, put in Thy sickle and reap.

*Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul,
once and again; but Satan hindered us.*

1 Thessalonians 2:18

SINCE the first hour in which goodness came into conflict with evil, it has never ceased to be true in spiritual experience, that Satan hinders us. From all points of the compass, all along the line of battle, in the vanguard and in the rear, at the dawn of day and in the midnight hour, Satan hinders us. If we toil in the field, he seeks to break the ploughshare; if we build the wall, he labours to cast down the stones; if we would serve God in suffering or in conflict—everywhere Satan hinders us. He hinders us when we are first coming to Jesus Christ. Fierce conflicts we had with Satan when we first looked to the cross and lived. Now that we are saved, he endeavours to hinder the completeness of our personal character. You may be congratulating yourself, “I have hitherto walked consistently; no man can challenge my integrity.” Beware of boasting, for your virtue will yet be tried; Satan will direct his engines against that very virtue for which you are the most famous. If you have been hitherto a firm believer, your faith will ere long be attacked; if you have been meek as Moses, expect to be tempted to speak unadvisedly with your lips. The birds will peck at your ripest fruit, and the wild boar will dash his tusks at your choicest vines. Satan is sure to hinder us when we are earnest in prayer. He checks our importunity, and weakens our faith in order that, if possible, we may miss the blessing. Nor is Satan less vigilant in obstructing Christian effort. There was never a revival of religion without a revival of his opposition. As soon as Ezra and Nehemiah begin to labour, Sanballat and Tobiah are stirred up to hinder them. What then? We are not alarmed because Satan hindereth us, for it is a proof that we are on the Lord’s side, and are doing the Lord’s work, and in His strength we shall win the victory, and triumph over our adversary.

*Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe,
all things are possible to him that believeth.*

Mark 9:23

MANY professed Christians are always doubting and fearing, and they forlornly think that this is the necessary state of believers. This is a mistake, for “all things are possible to him that believeth”; and it is possible for us to mount into a state in which a doubt or a fear shall be but as a bird of passage flitting across the soul, but never lingering there. When you read of the high and sweet communions enjoyed by favoured saints, you sigh and murmur in the chamber of your heart, “Alas! these are not for me.” O climber, if thou hast but faith, thou shalt yet stand upon the sunny pinnacle of the temple, for “all things are possible to him that believeth.” You hear of exploits which holy men have done for Jesus; what they have enjoyed of Him; how much they have been like Him; how they have been able to endure great persecutions for His sake; and you say, “Ah! as for me, I am but a worm; I can never attain to this.” But there is nothing which one saint was, that you may not be. There is no elevation of grace, no attainment of spirituality, no clearness of assurance, no post of duty, which is not open to you if you have but the power to believe. Lay aside your sackcloth and ashes, and rise to the dignity of your true position; you are little in Israel because you will be so, not because there is any necessity for it. It is not meet that thou shouldst grovel in the dust, O child of a King. Ascend! The golden throne of assurance is waiting for you! The crown of communion with Jesus is ready to bedeck your brow. Wrap yourself in scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; for if thou believest, thou mayst eat the fat of kidneys of wheat; thy land shall flow with milk and honey, and thy soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness. Gather golden sheaves of grace, for they await thee in the fields of faith. *“All things are possible to him that believeth.”*

*Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week,
he appeared first to Mary Magdalene,
out of whom he had cast seven devils.*

Mark 16:9

MARY of Magdala was the victim of a fearful evil. She was possessed by not one devil only, but seven. These dreadful inmates caused much pain and pollution to the poor frame in which they had found a lodging. Hers was a hopeless, horrible case. She could not help herself, neither could any human succour avail. But Jesus passed that way, and unsought, and probably even resisted by the poor demoniac, he uttered the word of power, and Mary of Magdala became *a trophy of the healing power of Jesus*. All the seven demons left her, left her never to return, forcibly ejected by the Lord of all. What a blessed deliverance! What a happy change! From delirium to delight, from despair to peace, from hell to heaven! Straightway she became *a constant follower of Jesus*, catching His every word, following His devious steps, sharing His toilsome life; and withal she became *His generous helper*, first among that band of healed and grateful women who ministered unto Him of their substance. When Jesus was lifted up in crucifixion, Mary remained *the sharer of His shame*: we find her first beholding from afar, and then drawing near to the foot of the cross. She could not die on the cross with Jesus, but she stood as near it as she could, and when His blessed body was taken down, she watched to see how and where it was laid. She was *the faithful and watchful believer*, last at the sepulchre where Jesus slept, first at the grave whence He arose. Her holy fidelity made her a *favoured beholder of her beloved Rabboni*, who deigned to call her by her name, and to make her His messenger of good news to the trembling disciples and Peter. Thus grace found her a maniac and made her a minister, cast out devils and gave her to behold angels, delivered her from Satan, and united her forever to the Lord Jesus. May I also be such a miracle of grace!

*But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth
to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,)
Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.
Matthew 9:6*

BEHOLD one of the great Physician's mightiest arts: He has power to forgive sin! While here He lived below, before the ransom had been paid, before the blood had been literally sprinkled on the mercy-seat, He had power to forgive sin. Hath He not power to do it now that He hath died? What power must dwell in Him who to the utmost farthing has faithfully discharged the debts of His people! He has boundless power now that He has finished transgression and made an end of sin. If ye doubt it, see Him rising from the dead! behold Him in ascending splendour raised to the right hand of God! Hear Him pleading before the eternal Father, pointing to His wounds, urging the merit of His sacred passion! What power to forgive is here! "He hath ascended on high, and received gifts for men." "He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins." The most crimson sins are removed by the crimson of His blood. At this moment, dear reader, whatever thy sinfulness, Christ has power to pardon, power to pardon *thee*, and millions such as thou art. A word will speak it. He has nothing more to do to win thy pardon; all the atoning work is done. He can, in answer to thy tears, forgive thy sins today, and make thee know it. He can breathe into thy soul at this very moment a peace with God which passeth all understanding, which shall spring from perfect remission of thy manifold iniquities. Dost thou believe that? I trust thou believest it. Mayst thou experience now the power of Jesus to forgive sin! Waste no time in applying to the Physician of souls, but hasten to Him with words like these:—

"Jesus! Master! hear my cry;
Save me, heal me with a word;
Fainting at Thy feet I lie,
Thou my whisper'd plaint hast heard."

*Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father,
which hath loved us, and hath given us
everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,
2 Thessalonians 2:16*

“**C**ONSOLATION.” There is music in the word: like David’s harp, it charms away the evil spirit of melancholy. It was a distinguished honour to Barnabas to be called “the son of consolation”; nay, it is one of the illustrious names of a greater than Barnabas, for the Lord Jesus is “the consolation of Israel.” “*Everlasting consolation*”—here is the cream of all, for the eternity of comfort is the crown and glory of it. What is this “everlasting consolation”? It includes a sense of pardoned sin. A Christian man has received in his heart the witness of the Spirit that his iniquities are put away like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud. If sin be pardoned, is not that an everlasting consolation? Next, the Lord gives His people an abiding sense of acceptance in Christ. The Christian knows that God looks upon him as standing in union with Jesus. Union to the risen Lord is a consolation of the most abiding order; it is, in fact, everlasting. Let sickness prostrate us, have we not seen hundreds of believers as happy in the weakness of disease as they would have been in the strength of hale and blooming health? Let death’s arrows pierce us to the heart, our comfort dies not, for have not our ears full often heard the songs of saints as they have rejoiced because the living love of God was shed abroad in their hearts in dying moments? Yes, a sense of acceptance in the Beloved is an everlasting consolation. Moreover, the Christian has a conviction of his security. God has promised to save those who trust in Christ: the Christian does trust in Christ, and he believes that God will be as good as His word, and will save him. He feels that he is safe by virtue of his being bound up with the person and work of Jesus.

*And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth,
that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:*

Genesis 9:14

THE rainbow, the symbol of the covenant with Noah, is typical of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord's witness to the people. When may we expect to see the token of the covenant? The rainbow is only to be seen painted upon a cloud. When the sinner's conscience is dark with clouds, when he remembers his past sin, and mourneth and lamenteth before God, Jesus Christ is revealed to him as the covenant Rainbow, displaying all the glorious hues of the divine character and betokening peace. To the believer, when his trials and temptations surround him, it is sweet to behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ—to see Him bleeding, living, rising, and pleading for us. God's rainbow is hung over the cloud of our sins, our sorrows, and our woes, to prophesy deliverance. Nor does a cloud alone give a rainbow, there must be the crystal drops to reflect the light of the sun. So, our sorrows must not only threaten, but they must really fall upon us. There had been no Christ for us if the vengeance of God had been merely a threatening cloud: punishment must fall in terrible drops upon the Surety. Until there is a real anguish in the sinner's conscience, there is no Christ for him; until the chastisement which he feels becomes grievous, he cannot see Jesus. But there must also be a sun; for clouds and drops of rain make not rainbows unless the sun shineth. Beloved, our God, who is as the sun to us, always shines, but we do not always see Him—clouds hide His face; but no matter what drops may be falling, or what clouds may be threatening, if He does but shine there will be a rainbow at once. It is said that when we see the rainbow the shower is over. Certain it is, that when Christ comes, our troubles remove; when we behold Jesus, our sins vanish, and our doubts and fears subside. When Jesus walks the waters of the sea, how profound the calm!

And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Genesis 9:15

MARK the form of the promise. God does not say, “And when ye shall look upon the bow, and ye shall remember my covenant, *then* I will not destroy the earth,” but it is gloriously put, not upon our memory, which is fickle and frail, but upon God’s memory, which is infinite and immutable. “The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant.” Oh! it is not my remembering God, it is God’s remembering *me* which is the ground of my safety; it is not my laying hold of His covenant, but His covenant’s laying hold on me. Glory be to God! the whole of the bulwarks of salvation are secured by divine power, and even the minor towers, which we may imagine might have been left to man, are guarded by almighty strength. Even the *remembrance* of the covenant is not left to our memories, for *we* might forget, but our Lord cannot forget the saints whom He has graven on the palms of His hands. It is with us as with Israel in Egypt; the blood was upon the lintel and the two side-posts, but the Lord did not say, “When *you* see the blood I will pass over you,” but “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God’s looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all His elect, since it is impossible for our God to look at Christ, our bleeding Surety, and then to be angry with us for sins already punished in Him. No, it is not left with us even to be saved by remembering the covenant. There is no linsey-wolsey here—not a single thread of the creature mars the fabric. It is not *of* man, neither *by* man, but of the Lord alone. We *should* remember the covenant, and we *shall* do it, through divine grace; but the hinge of our safety does not hang there—it is God’s remembering *us*, not our remembering *Him*; and hence the covenant is *an everlasting covenant*.

And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;
Exodus 3:7

THE child is cheered as he sings, "This my father knows;" and shall not we be comforted as we discern that our dear Friend and tender soul-husband knows all about us?

1. *He is the Physician*, and if He knows all, there is no need that the patient should know. Hush, thou silly, fluttering heart, prying, peeping, and suspecting! What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter, and meanwhile Jesus, the beloved Physician, knows thy soul in adversities. Why need the patient analyze all the medicine, or estimate all the symptoms? This is the Physician's work, not mine; it is my business to trust, and His to prescribe. If He shall write His prescription in uncouth characters which I cannot read, I will not be uneasy on that account, but rely upon His unfailing skill to make all plain in the result, however mysterious in the working.

2. *He is the Master*, and His knowledge is to serve us instead of our own; we are to obey, not to judge: "The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth." Shall the architect explain his plans to every hodman on the works? If he knows his own intent, is it not enough? The vessel on the wheel cannot guess to what pattern it shall be conformed, but if the potter understands his art, what matters the ignorance of the clay? My Lord must not be cross-questioned any more by one so ignorant as I am.

3. *He is the Head*. All understanding centres there. What judgment has the arm? What comprehension has the foot? All the power to know lies in the head. Why should the member have a brain of its own when the head fulfils for it every intellectual office? Here, then, must the believer rest his comfort in sickness, not that he himself can see the end, but that Jesus knows all. Sweet Lord, be Thou forever eye, and soul, and head for us, and let us be content to know only what Thou chooseth to reveal.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26

A HEART of flesh is known by its *tenderness concerning sin*. To have indulged a foul imagination, or to have allowed a wild desire to tarry even for a moment, is quite enough to make a heart of flesh grieve before the Lord. The heart of stone calls a great iniquity nothing, but not so the heart of flesh.

“If to the right or left I stray,
That moment, Lord, reprove;
And let me weep my life away,
For having grieved Thy love”

The heart of flesh is *tender of God's will*. My Lord Will-be-will is a great blusterer, and it is hard to subject him to God's will; but when the heart of flesh is given, the will quivers like an aspen leaf in every breath of heaven, and bows like an osier in every breeze of God's Spirit. The natural will is cold, hard iron, which is not to be hammered into form, but the renewed will, like molten metal, is soon moulded by the hand of grace. In the fleshy heart there is *a tenderness of the affections*. The hard heart does not love the Redeemer, but the renewed heart burns with affection towards Him. The hard heart is selfish and coldly demands, “Why should I weep for sin? Why should I love the Lord?” But the heart of flesh says; “Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee; help me to love Thee more!” Many are the privileges of this renewed heart; “‘Tis here the Spirit dwells, ‘tis here that Jesus rests.” It is fitted to receive every spiritual blessing, and every blessing comes to it. It is prepared to yield every heavenly fruit to the honour and praise of God, and therefore the Lord delights in it. A tender heart is the best defence against sin, and the best preparation for heaven. A renewed heart stands on its watchtower looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Have you this heart of flesh?

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Romans 8:23

PRESENT possession is declared. At this present moment we have the first fruits of the Spirit. We have repentance, that gem of the first water; faith, that priceless pearl; hope, the heavenly emerald; and love, the glorious ruby. We are already made “new creatures in Christ Jesus,” by the effectual working of God the Holy Ghost. This is called the firstfruit because *it comes first*. As the wave-sheaf was the first of the harvest, so the spiritual life, and all the graces which adorn that life, are the first operations of the Spirit of God in our souls. *The firstfruits were the pledge of the harvest*. As soon as the Israelite had plucked the first handful of ripe ears, he looked forward with glad anticipation to the time when the wain should creak beneath the sheaves. So, brethren, when God gives us things which are pure, lovely, and of good report, as the work of the Holy Spirit, these are to us the prognostics of the coming glory. *The firstfruits were always holy to the Lord*, and our new nature, with all its powers, is a consecrated thing. The new life is not ours that we should ascribe its excellence to our own merit; it is Christ’s image and creation, and is ordained for His glory. But *the firstfruits were not the harvest*, and the works of the Spirit in us at this moment are not the consummation—the perfection is yet to come. We must not boast that we have attained, and so reckon the wave-sheaf to be all the produce of the year: we must hunger and thirst after righteousness, and pant for the day of full redemption. Dear reader, this evening open your mouth wide, and God will fill it. Let the boon in present possession excite in you a sacred avarice for more grace. Groan within yourself for higher degrees of consecration, and your Lord will grant them to you, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.

*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.
John 11:4*

FROM our Lord's words we learn that there is a limit to sickness. Here is an "unto" within which its ultimate end is restrained, and beyond which it cannot go. Lazarus might pass through death, but death was not to be the ultimatum of his sickness. In all sickness, the Lord saith to the waves of pain, "Hitherto shall ye go, but no further." His fixed purpose is not the destruction, but the instruction of His people. Wisdom hangs up the thermometer at the furnace mouth, and regulates the heat.

1. *The limit is encouragingly comprehensive.* The God of providence has limited the time, manner, intensity, repetition, and effects of all our sicknesses; each throb is decreed, each sleepless hour predestinated, each relapse ordained, each depression of spirit foreknown, and each sanctifying result eternally purposed. Nothing great or small escapes the ordaining hand of Him who numbers the hairs of our head.

2. *This limit is wisely adjusted* to our strength, to the end designed, and to the grace apportioned. Affliction comes not at haphazard—the weight of every stroke of the rod is accurately measured. He who made no mistakes in balancing the clouds and meting out the heavens, commits no errors in measuring out the ingredients which compose the medicine of souls. We cannot suffer too much nor be relieved too late.

3. *The limit is tenderly appointed.* The knife of the heavenly Surgeon never cuts deeper than is absolutely necessary. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." A mother's heart cries, "Spare my child;" but no mother is more compassionate than our gracious God. When we consider how hard-mouthed we are, it is a wonder that we are not driven with a sharper bit. The thought is full of consolation, that He who has fixed the bounds of our habitation, has also fixed the bounds of our tribulation.

*And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh:
but he received it not.*

Mark 15:23

A GOLDEN truth is couched in the fact that the Saviour put the myrrhed wine-cup from His lips. On the heights of heaven the Son of God stood of old, and as He looked down upon our globe He measured the long descent to the utmost depths of human misery; He cast up the sum total of all the agonies which expiation would require, and abated not a jot. He solemnly determined that to offer a sufficient atoning sacrifice He must go the whole way, from the highest to the lowest, from the throne of highest glory to the cross of deepest woe. This myrrhed cup, with its soporific influence, would have stayed Him within a little of the utmost limit of misery, therefore He refused it. He would not stop short of all He had undertaken to suffer for His people. Ah, how many of us have pined after reliefs to our grief which would have been injurious to us! Reader, did you never pray for a discharge from hard service or suffering with a petulant and wilful eagerness? Providence has taken from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Say, Christian, if it had been said, "If you so desire it, that loved one of yours shall live, but God will be dishonoured," could you have put away the temptation, and said, "Thy will be done"? Oh, it is sweet to be able to say, "My Lord, if for other reasons I need not suffer, yet if I can honour Thee more by suffering, and if the loss of my earthly all will bring Thee glory, then so let it be. I refuse the comfort, if it comes in the way of Thine honour." O that we thus walked more in the footsteps of our Lord, cheerfully enduring trial for His sake, promptly and willingly putting away the thought of self and comfort when it would interfere with our finishing the work which He has given us to do. Great grace is needed, but great grace is provided.

*Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me:
for thou art my strength.*

Psalm 31:4

OUR spiritual foes are of the serpent's brood, and seek to ensnare us by subtlety. The prayer before us supposes the possibility of the believer being caught like a bird. So deftly does the fowler do his work, that simple ones are soon surrounded by the net. The text asks that even out of Satan's meshes the captive one may be delivered; this is a proper petition, and one which can be granted: from between the jaws of the lion, and out of the belly of hell, can eternal love rescue the saint. It may need a sharp pull to save a soul from the net of temptations, and a mighty pull to extricate a man from the snares of malicious cunning, but the Lord is equal to every emergency, and the most skilfully placed nets of the hunter shall never be able to hold His chosen ones. Woe unto those who are so clever at net laying; they who tempt others shall be destroyed themselves.

"For thou art my strength." What an inexpressible sweetness is to be found in these few words! How joyfully may we encounter toils, and how cheerfully may we endure sufferings, when we can lay hold upon celestial strength. Divine power will rend asunder all the toils of our enemies, confound their politics, and frustrate their knavish tricks; he is a happy man who has such matchless might engaged upon his side. Our own strength would be of little service when embarrassed in the nets of base cunning, but the Lord's strength is ever available; we have but to invoke it, and we shall find it near at hand. If by faith we are depending alone upon the strength of the mighty God of Israel, we may use our holy reliance as a plea in supplication.

“Lord, evermore Thy face we seek:
Tempted we are, and poor, and weak;
Keep us with lowly hearts, and meek.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall.”

Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of one of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall.

Nehemiah 3:8

CCITIES well fortified have broad walls, and so had Jerusalem in her glory. The New Jerusalem must, in like manner, be surrounded and preserved by a broad wall of nonconformity to the world, and *separation* from its customs and spirit. The tendency of these days break down the holy barrier, and make the distinction between the church and the world merely nominal. Professors are no longer strict and Puritanical, questionable literature is read on all hands, frivolous pastimes are currently indulged, and a general laxity threatens to deprive the Lord's peculiar people of those sacred singularities which separate them from sinners. It will be an ill day for the church and the world when the proposed amalgamation shall be complete, and the sons of God and the daughters of men shall be as one: then shall another deluge of wrath be ushered in. Beloved reader, be it your aim in heart, in word, in dress, in action to maintain the broad wall, remembering that the friendship of this world is enmity against God.

The broad wall afforded a pleasant place of *resort* for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, from which they could command prospects of the surrounding country. This reminds us of the Lord's exceeding broad commandments, in which we walk at liberty in communion with Jesus, overlooking the scenes of earth, and looking out towards the glories of heaven. Separated from the world, and denying ourselves all ungodliness and fleshly lusts, we are nevertheless not in prison, nor restricted within narrow bounds; nay, we walk at liberty, because we keep His precepts. Come, reader, this evening walk with God in His statutes. As friend met friend upon the city wall, so meet thou thy God in the way of holy prayer and meditation. The bulwarks of salvation thou hast a right to traverse, for thou art a freeman of the royal burgh, a citizen of the metropolis of the universe.

*I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth:
I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD
speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.
Isaiah 45:19*

WE may gain much solace by considering what God has *not* said. What He has said is inexpressibly full of comfort and delight; what He has not said is scarcely less rich in consolation. It was one of these “*said not*” which preserved the kingdom of Israel in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, for “the Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven.” 2 Kings 14:27. In our text we have an assurance that God *will* answer prayer, because He hath “*not* said unto the seed of Israel, Seek ye me in vain.” You who write bitter things against yourselves should remember that, let your doubts and fears say what they will, if *God* has not cut you off from mercy, there is no room for despair: even the voice of conscience is of little weight if it be not seconded by the voice of God. What God *has* said, tremble at! But suffer not your vain imaginings to overwhelm you with despondency and sinful despair. Many timid persons have been vexed by the suspicion that there may be something in God’s decree which shuts *them* out from hope, but here is a complete refutation to that troublesome fear, for no true seeker can be decreed to wrath. “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I have not said,” even in the secret of my unsearchable decree, “Seek ye me in vain.” God has clearly revealed that He *will* hear the prayer of those who call upon Him, and that declaration cannot be contravened. He has so firmly, so truthfully, so righteously spoken, that there can be no room for doubt. He does not reveal His mind in unintelligible words, but He speaks plainly and positively, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” Believe, O trembler, this sure truth—that prayer must and shall be heard, and that never, even in the secrets of eternity, has the Lord said unto any living soul, “Seek ye me in vain.”

*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints,
is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles
the unsearchable riches of Christ;
Ephesians 3:8*

MY Master has riches beyond the count of arithmetic, the measurement of reason, the dream of imagination, or the eloquence of words. They are *unsearchable*! You may look, and study, and weigh, but Jesus is a greater Saviour than you think Him to be when your thoughts are at the greatest. My Lord is more ready to pardon than you to sin, more able to forgive than you to transgress. My Master is more willing to supply your wants than you are to confess them. Never tolerate low thoughts of my Lord Jesus. When you put the crown on His head, you will only crown Him with silver when He deserves gold. *My Master has riches of happiness to bestow upon you now.* He can make you to lie down in green pastures, and lead you beside still waters. There is no music like the music of His pipe, when He is the Shepherd and you are the sheep, and you lie down at His feet. There is no love like His, neither earth nor heaven can match it. To know Christ and to be found in Him—oh! this is life, this is joy, this is marrow and fatness, wine on the lees well refined. My Master does not treat His servants churlishly; He gives to them as a king giveth to a king; He gives them two heavens—a heaven below in serving Him here, and a heaven above in delighting in Him forever. *His unsearchable riches will be best known in eternity.* He will give you on the way to heaven all you need; your place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure; but it is there, there, where you shall hear the song of them that triumph, the shout of them that feast, and shall have a face-to-face view of the glorious and beloved One. The unsearchable riches of Christ! This is the tune for the minstrels of earth, and the song for the harpers of heaven. Lord, teach us more and more of Jesus, and we will tell out the good news to others.

*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;
that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
Ephesians 3:17*

BEYOND measure it is desirable that we, as believers, should have the person of Jesus constantly before us, to inflame our love towards Him, and to increase our knowledge of Him. I would to God that my readers were all entered as diligent scholars in Jesus' college, students of Corpus Christi, or the body of Christ, resolved to attain unto a good degree in the learning of the cross. But to have Jesus ever near, the heart must be full of Him, welling up with His love, even to overrunning; hence the apostle prays "that Christ may *dwell in your hearts*." See how near he would have Jesus to be! You cannot get a subject closer to you than to have it in the heart itself. "*That he may dwell*;" not that He may call upon you sometimes, as a casual visitor enters into a house and tarries for a night, but that He may *dwell*; that Jesus may become the Lord and Tenant of your inmost being, never more to go out.

Observe the words—that He may dwell *in your heart*, that best room of the house of manhood; not in your thoughts alone, but in your affections; not merely in the mind's meditations, but in the heart's emotions. We should pant after love to Christ of a most abiding character, not a love that flames up and then dies out into the darkness of a few embers, but a constant flame, fed by sacred fuel, like the fire upon the altar which never went out. This cannot be accomplished except by faith. Faith must be strong, or love will not be fervent; the root of the flower must be healthy, or we cannot expect the bloom to be sweet. Faith is the lily's root, and love is the lily's bloom. Now, reader, Jesus cannot be in your heart's love except you have a firm hold of Him by your heart's faith; and, therefore, pray that you may always trust Christ in order that you may always love Him. If love be cold, be sure that faith is drooping.

If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

Exodus 22:6

BUT what restitution can he make who casts abroad the fire-brands of error, or the coals of lasciviousness, and sets men's souls on a blaze with the fire of hell? The guilt is beyond estimate, and the result is irretrievable. If such an offender be forgiven, what grief it will cause him in the retrospect, since he cannot undo the mischief which he has done! An ill example may kindle a flame which years of amended character cannot quench. To burn the food of man is bad enough, but how much worse to destroy the soul! It may be useful to us to reflect how far we may have been guilty in the past, and to enquire whether, even in the present, there may not be evil in us which has a tendency to bring damage to the souls of our relatives, friends, or neighbours.

The fire of strife is a terrible evil when it breaks out in a Christian church. Where converts were multiplied, and God was glorified, jealousy and envy do the devil's work most effectually. Where the golden grain was being housed, to reward the toil of the great Boaz, the fire of enmity comes in and leaves little else but smoke and a heap of blackness. Woe unto those by whom offences come. May they never come through us, for although we cannot make restitution, we shall certainly be the chief sufferers if we are the chief offenders. Those who feed the fire deserve just censure, but he who first kindles it is most to blame. Discord usually takes first hold upon the thorns; it is nurtured among the hypocrites and base professors in the church, and away it goes among the righteous, blown by the winds of hell, and no one knows where it may end. O Thou Lord and giver of peace, make us peacemakers, and never let us aid and abet the men of strife, or even unintentionally cause the least division among Thy people.

*And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart,
thou mayest. And he answered and said,
I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

Acts 8:37

THESE words may answer your scruples, devout reader, concerning *the ordinances*. Perhaps you say, “I should be afraid to be baptized; it is such a solemn thing to avow myself to be dead with Christ, and buried with Him. I should not feel at liberty to come to the Master’s table; I should be afraid of eating and drinking damnation unto myself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” Ah! poor trembler, Jesus has given you liberty, be not afraid. If a stranger came to your house, he would stand at the door, or wait in the hall; he would not dream of intruding unbidden into your parlour—he is not at home: but your child makes himself very free about the house; and so is it with the child of God. A stranger may not intrude where a child may venture. When the Holy Ghost has given you to feel the spirit of adoption, you may come to Christian ordinances without fear. The same rule holds good of the *Christian’s inward privileges*. You think, poor seeker, that you are not allowed to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; if you are permitted to get inside Christ’s door, or sit at the bottom of His table, you will be well content. Ah! but you shall not have less privileges than the very greatest. God makes no difference in His love to His children. A child is a child to Him; He will not make him a hired servant; but he shall feast upon the fatted calf, and shall have the music and the dancing as much as if he had never gone astray. When Jesus comes into the heart, He issues a general licence to be glad in the Lord. No chains are worn in the court of King Jesus. Our admission into full privileges may be gradual, but it is sure. Perhaps our reader is saying, “I wish I could enjoy the promises, and walk at liberty in my Lord’s commands.” “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” Loose the chains of thy neck, O captive daughter, for Jesus makes thee free.

*And straightway all the people, when they beheld him,
were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.*

Mark 9:15

HOW great the difference between Moses and Jesus! When the prophet of Horeb had been forty days upon the mountain, he underwent a kind of transfiguration, so that his countenance shone with exceeding brightness, and he put a veil over his face, for the people could not endure to look upon his glory. Not so our Saviour. He had been transfigured with a greater glory than that of Moses, and yet, it is not written that the people were blinded by the blaze of His countenance, but rather they were amazed, and running to Him they saluted Him. The glory of the law repels, but the greater glory of Jesus attracts. Though Jesus is holy and just, yet blended with His purity there is so much of truth and grace, that sinners run to Him amazed at His goodness, fascinated by His love; they salute Him, become His disciples, and take Him to be their Lord and Master. Reader, it may be that just now you are blinded by the dazzling brightness of the law of God. You feel its claims on your conscience, but you cannot keep it in your life. Not that you find fault with the law, on the contrary, it commands your profoundest esteem, still you are in nowise drawn by it to God; you are rather hardened in heart, and are verging towards desperation. Ah, poor heart! turn thine eye from Moses, with all his repelling splendour, and look to Jesus, resplendent with milder glories. Behold His flowing wounds and thorn-crowned head! He is the Son of God, and therein He is greater than Moses, but He is the Lord of love, and therein more tender than the lawgiver. He bore the wrath of God, and in His death revealed more of God's justice than Sinai on a blaze, but that justice is now vindicated, and henceforth it is the guardian of believers in Jesus. Look, sinner, to the bleeding Saviour, and as thou feelest the attraction of His love, fly to His arms, and thou shalt be saved.

*Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me,
O LORD God of truth.
Psalm 31:5*

THESE words have been frequently used by holy men in their hour of departure. We may profitably consider them this evening. The object of the faithful man's solicitude in life and death is not his body or his estate, but his spirit; this is his choice treasure—if this be safe, all is well. What is this mortal state compared with the soul? The believer commits his soul to the hand of his God; it came from Him, it is His own, He has aforetime sustained it, He is able to keep it, and it is most fit that He should receive it. All things are safe in Jehovah's hands; what we entrust to the Lord will be secure, both now and in that day of days towards which we are hastening. It is peaceful living, and glorious dying, to repose in the care of heaven. At all times we should commit our all to Jesus' faithful hand; then, though life may hang on a thread, and adversities may multiply as the sands of the sea, our soul shall dwell at ease, and delight itself in quiet resting places.

"Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Redemption is a solid basis for confidence. David had not known Calvary as we have done, but temporal redemption cheered him; and shall not eternal redemption yet more sweetly console us? Past deliverances are strong pleas for present assistance. What the Lord has done He will do again, for He changes not. He is faithful to His promises, and gracious to His saints; He will not turn away from His people.

“Though Thou slay me I will trust,
Praise Thee even from the dust,
Prove, and tell it as I prove,
Thine unutterable love.
Thou mayst chasten and correct,
But Thou never canst neglect;
Since the ransom price is paid,
On Thy love my hope is stay'd.”

*Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing,
and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child:
for more are the children of the desolate than
the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.*

Isaiah 54:1

THOUGH we have brought forth some fruit unto Christ, and have a joyful hope that we are “plants of His own right hand planting,” yet there are times when we feel very barren. Prayer is lifeless, love is cold, faith is weak, each grace in the garden of our heart languishes and droops. We are like flowers in the hot sun, requiring the refreshing shower. In such a condition what are we to do? The text is addressed to us in just such a state. “*Sing, O barren, break forth and cry aloud.*” But what can I sing about? I cannot talk about the present, and even the past looks full of barrenness. Ah! I can sing of Jesus Christ. I can talk of visits which the Redeemer has aforesaid paid to me; or if not of these, I can magnify the great love wherewith He loved His people when He came from the heights of heaven for their redemption. I will go to the cross again. Come, my soul, heavy laden thou wast once, and thou didst lose thy burden there. Go to Calvary again. Perhaps that very cross which gave thee life may give thee fruitfulness. What is my barrenness? It is the platform for His fruit-creating power. What is my desolation? It is the black setting for the sapphire of His everlasting love. I will go in poverty, I will go in helplessness, I will go in all my shame and backsliding, I will tell Him that I am still His child, and in confidence in His faithful heart, even I, the barren one, will sing and cry aloud.

Sing, believer, for it will cheer thine own heart, and the hearts of other desolate ones. Sing on, for now that thou art really ashamed of being barren, thou wilt be fruitful soon; now that God makes thee loath to be without fruit He will soon cover thee with clusters. The experience of our barrenness is painful, but the Lord’s visitations are delightful. A sense of our own poverty drives us to Christ, and that is where we need to be, for in Him is our fruit found.

All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.

Numbers 6:4

NAZARITES had taken, among other vows, one which debarred them from the use of wine. In order that they might not violate the obligation, they were forbidden to drink the vinegar of wine or strong liquors, and to make the rule still more clear, they were not to touch the unfermented juice of grapes, nor even to eat the fruit either fresh or dried. In order, altogether, to secure the integrity of the vow, they were not even allowed anything that had to do with the vine; they were, in fact, to avoid the appearance of evil. Surely this is a lesson to the Lord's separated ones, teaching them to come away from sin in every form, to avoid not merely its grosser shapes, but even its spirit and similitude. Strict walking is much despised in these days, but rest assured, dear reader, it is both the safest and the happiest. He who yields a point or two to the world is in fearful peril; he who eats the grapes of Sodom will soon drink the wine of Gomorrah. A little crevice in the sea-bank in Holland lets in the sea, and the gap speedily swells till a province is drowned. Worldly conformity, in any degree, is a snare to the soul, and makes it more and more liable to presumptuous sins. Moreover, as the Nazarite who drank grape juice could not be quite sure whether it might not have endured a degree of fermentation, and consequently could not be clear in heart that his vow was intact, so the yielding, temporizing Christian cannot wear a conscience void of offence, but must feel that the inward monitor is in doubt of him. Things doubtful we need not doubt about; they are wrong to us. Things tempting we must not dally with, but flee from them with speed. Better be sneered at as a Puritan than be despised as a hypocrite. Careful walking may involve much self-denial, but it has pleasures of its own which are more than a sufficient recompense.

*Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed;
save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.*

Jeremiah 17:14

*I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also,
and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.*

Isaiah 57:18

IT is the sole prerogative of God to remove spiritual disease. Natural disease may be instrumentally healed by men, but even then the honour is to be given to God who giveth virtue unto medicine, and bestoweth power unto the human frame to cast off disease. As for spiritual sicknesses, these remain with the great Physician alone; He claims it as His prerogative, "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal;" and one of the Lord's choice titles is Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord that healeth thee. "I will heal thee of thy wounds," is a promise which could not come from the lip of man, but only from the mouth of the eternal God. On this account the psalmist cried unto the Lord, "O Lord, heal me, for my bones are sore vexed," and again, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee." For this, also, the godly praise the name of the Lord, saying, "He healeth all our diseases." He who made man can restore man; He who was at first the creator of our nature can new create it. What a transcendent comfort it is that in the person of Jesus "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily!" My soul, whatever thy disease may be, this great Physician can heal thee. If He be God, there can be no limit to His power. Come then with the blind eye of darkened understanding, come with the limping foot of wasted energy, come with the maimed hand of weak faith, the fever of an angry temper, or the ague of shivering despondency, come just as thou art, for He who is God can certainly restore thee of thy plague. None shall restrain the healing virtue which proceeds from Jesus our Lord. Legions of devils have been made to own the power of the beloved Physician, and never once has He been baffled. All His patients have been cured in the past and shall be in the future, and thou shalt be one among them, my friend, if thou wilt but rest thyself in Him this night.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

AS He is in the light! Can we ever attain to this? Shall we ever be able to walk as clearly in the light as He is whom we call "Our Father," of whom it is written, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all?" Certainly, this is the model which is set before us, for the Saviour Himself said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect;" and although we may feel that we can never rival the perfection of God, yet we are to seek after it, and never to be satisfied until we attain to it. The youthful artist, as he grasps his early pencil, can hardly hope to equal Raphael or Michael Angelo, but still, if he did not have a noble *beau ideal* before his mind, he would only attain to something very mean and ordinary. But what is meant by the expression that the Christian is to walk in light as God is in the light? We conceive it to import *likeness*, but not *degree*. We are as truly in the light, we are as heartily in the light, we are as sincerely in the light, as honestly in the light, though we cannot be there in the same measure. I cannot dwell in the sun, it is too bright a place for my residence, but I can walk in the light of the sun; and so, though I cannot attain to that perfection of purity and truth which belongs to the Lord of hosts by nature as the infinitely good, yet I can set the Lord always before me, and strive, by the help of the indwelling Spirit, after conformity to His image. That famous old commentator, John Trapp, says, "We may be in the light as God is in the light for *quality*, but not for *equality*." We are to have the same light, and are as truly to have it and walk in it as God does, though, as for equality with God in His holiness and purity, that must be left until we cross the Jordan and enter into the perfection of the Most High. Mark that the blessings of sacred fellowship and perfect cleansing are bound up with walking in the light.

*Trust in him at all times; ye people,
pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.
Psalm 62:8*

FAITH is as much the rule of temporal as of spiritual life; we ought to have faith in God for our earthly affairs as well as for our heavenly business. It is only as we learn to trust in God for the supply of all our daily need that we shall live above the world. We are not to be idle, *that* would show we did *not* trust in God, who worketh hitherto, but in the devil, who is the father of idleness. We are not to be imprudent or rash; that were to trust chance, and not the living God, who is a God of economy and order. Acting in all prudence and uprightness, we are to rely simply and entirely upon the Lord at all times.

Let me commend to you a life of trust in God in temporal things. Trusting in God, you will not be compelled to mourn because you have used sinful means to grow rich. Serve God with integrity, and if you achieve no success, at least no sin will lie upon your conscience. Trusting God, you will not be guilty of self-contradiction. He who trusts in craft, sails this way today, and that way the next, like a vessel tossed about by the fickle wind; but he that trusteth in the Lord is like a vessel propelled by steam, she cuts through the waves, defies the wind, and makes one bright silvery straightforward track to her destined haven. Be you a man with living principles within; never bow to the varying customs of worldly wisdom. Walk in your path of integrity with steadfast steps, and show that you are invincibly strong in the strength which confidence in God alone can confer. Thus you will be delivered from anxious care, you will not be troubled with evil tidings, your heart will be fixed, trusting in the Lord. How pleasant to float along the stream of providence! There is no more blessed way of living than a life of dependence upon a covenant-keeping God. We have no care, for He careth for us; we have no troubles, because we cast our burdens upon the Lord.

*Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders,
ye will not believe.*

John 4:48

A CRAVING after marvels was a symptom of the sickly state of men's minds in our Lord's day; they refused solid nourishment, and pined after mere wonder. The gospel which they so greatly needed they would not have; the miracles which Jesus did not always choose to give they eagerly demanded. Many nowadays must see signs and wonders, or they will not believe. Some have said in their heart, "I must feel deep horror of soul, or I never will believe in Jesus." But what if you never should feel it, as probably you never may? Will you go to hell out of spite against God, because He will not treat you like another? One has said to himself, "If I had a dream, or if I could feel a sudden shock of I know not what, then I would believe." Thus you undeserving mortals dream that my Lord is to be dictated to by you! You are beggars at His gate, asking for mercy, and you must needs draw up rules and regulations as to how He shall give that mercy. Think you that He will submit to this? My Master is of a generous spirit, but He has a right royal heart, He spurns all dictation, and maintains His sovereignty of action. Why, dear reader, if such be your case, do you crave for signs and wonders? Is not the gospel its own sign and wonder? Is not this a miracle of miracles, that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish"? Surely that precious word, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely" and that solemn promise, "him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," are better than signs and wonders! A truthful Saviour ought to be believed. He is truth itself. Why will you ask proof of the veracity of One who cannot lie? The devils themselves declared Him to be the Son of God; will you mistrust Him?

*The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that
loveth violence his soul hateth.*

Psalm 11:5

ALL events are under the control of Providence; consequently all the trials of our outward life are traceable at once to the great First Cause. Out of the golden gate of God's ordinance the armies of trial march forth in array, clad in their iron armour, and armed with weapons of war. All providences are doors to trial. Even our mercies, like roses, have their thorns. Men may be drowned in seas of prosperity as well as in rivers of affliction. Our mountains are not too high, and our valleys are not too low for temptations: trials lurk on all roads. Everywhere, above and beneath, we are beset and surrounded with dangers. Yet no shower falls unpermitted from the threatening cloud; every drop has its order ere it hastens to the earth. The trials which come from God are sent to prove and strengthen our graces, and so at once to illustrate the power of divine grace, to test the genuineness of our virtues, and to add to their energy. Our Lord in His infinite wisdom and superabundant love, sets so high a value upon His people's faith that He will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened. You would never have possessed the precious faith which now supports you if the trial of your faith had not been like unto fire. You are a tree that never would have rooted so well if the wind had not rocked you to and fro, and made you take firm hold upon the precious truths of the covenant grace. Worldly ease is a great foe to faith; it loosens the joints of holy valour, and snaps the sinews of sacred courage. The balloon never rises until the cords are cut; affliction doth this sharp service for believing souls. While the wheat sleeps comfortably in the husk it is useless to man, it must be threshed out of its resting place before its value can be known. Thus it is well that Jehovah trieth the righteous, for it causeth them to grow rich towards God.

*Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin,
shall ye have: I am the LORD your God,
which brought you out of the land of Egypt.
Leviticus 19:36*

WEIGHTS, and scales, and measures were to be all according to the standard of justice. Surely no Christian man will need to be reminded of this in his business, for if righteousness were banished from all the world beside, it should find a shelter in believing hearts. There are, however, other balances which weigh moral and spiritual things, and these often need examining. We will call in the officer tonight.

The balances in which we weigh our own and other men's characters, are they quite accurate? Do we not turn our own ounces of goodness into pounds, and other persons' bushels of excellence into pecks? See to weights and measures here, Christian. The scales in which we measure our trials and troubles, are they according to standard? Paul, who had more to suffer than we have, called his afflictions light, and yet we often consider ours to be heavy—surely something must be amiss with the weights! We must see to this matter, lest we get reported to the court above for unjust dealing. Those weights with which we measure our doctrinal belief, are they quite fair? The doctrines of grace should have the same weight with us as the precepts of the word, no more and no less; but it is to be feared that with many one scale or the other is unfairly weighted. It is a grand matter to give just measure in truth. Christian, be careful here. Those measures in which we estimate our obligations and responsibilities look rather small. When a rich man gives no more to the cause of God than the poor contribute, is that a just ephah and a just hin? When ministers are half starved, is that honest dealing? When the poor are despised, while ungodly rich men are held in admiration, is that a just balance? Reader, we might lengthen the list, but we prefer to leave it as your evening's work to find out and destroy all unrighteous balances, weights, and measures.

*Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?
or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?*

Job 38:16

SOME things in nature must remain a mystery to the most intelligent and enterprising investigators. Human knowledge has bounds beyond which it cannot pass. Universal knowledge is for God alone. If this be so in the things which are seen and temporal, I may rest assured that it is even more so in matters spiritual and eternal. Why, then, have I been torturing my brain with speculations as to destiny and will, fixed fate, and human responsibility? These deep and dark truths I am no more able to comprehend than to find out the depth which coucheth beneath, from which old ocean draws her watery stores. Why am I so curious to know the reason of my Lord's providences, the motive of His actions, the design of His visitations? Shall I ever be able to clasp the sun in my fist, and hold the universe in my palm? yet these are as a drop of a bucket compared with the Lord my God. Let me not strive to understand the infinite, but spend my strength in love. What I cannot gain by intellect I can possess by affection, and let that suffice me. I cannot penetrate the heart of the sea, but I can enjoy the healthful breezes which sweep over its bosom, and I can sail over its blue waves with propitious winds. If I could enter the springs of the sea, the feat would serve no useful purpose either to myself or to others, it would not save the sinking bark, or give back the drowned mariner to his weeping wife and children; neither would my solving deep mysteries avail me a single whit, for the least love to God, and the simplest act of obedience to Him, are better than the profoundest knowledge. My Lord, I leave the infinite to Thee, and pray Thee to put far from me such a love for the tree of knowledge as might keep me from the tree of life.

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Galatians 5:18

HE who looks at his own character and position from a legal point of view, will not only despair when he comes to the end of his reckoning, but if he be a wise man he will despair at the *beginning*; for if we are to be judged on the footing of the law, there shall no flesh living be justified. How blessed to know that we dwell in the domains of grace and not of law! When thinking of my state before God the question is not, "Am I perfect in myself before the law?" but, "Am I perfect in Christ Jesus?" That is a very different matter. We need not enquire, "Am I without sin naturally?" but, "Have I been washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness?" It is not "Am I in myself well pleasing to God?" but it is "Am I accepted in the Beloved?" The Christian views his evidences from the top of Sinai, and grows alarmed concerning his salvation; it were better far if he read his title by the light of Calvary. "Why," saith he, "my faith has unbelief in it, it is not able to save me." Suppose he had considered *the object* of his faith instead of his faith, then he would have said, "There is no failure in *Him*, and therefore I am safe." He sighs over his hope: "Ah! my hope is marred and dimmed by an anxious carefulness about present things; how can I be accepted?" Had he regarded *the ground* of his hope, he would have seen that the promise of God standeth sure, and that whatever our doubts may be, the oath and promise never fail. Ah! believer, it is safer always for you to be led of the Spirit into gospel liberty than to wear legal fetters. Judge yourself at what *Christ* is rather than at what you are. Satan will try to mar your peace by reminding you of your sinfulness and imperfections: you can only meet his accusations by faithfully adhering to the gospel and refusing to wear the yoke of bondage.

Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad: for they have heard evil tidings: they are fainthearted; there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet.
Jeremiah 49:23

LITTLE know we what sorrow may be upon the sea at this moment. We are safe in our quiet chamber, but far away on the salt sea the hurricane may be cruelly seeking for the lives of men. Hear how the death fiends howl among the cordage; how every timber starts as the waves beat like battering rams upon the vessel! God help you, poor drenched and wearied ones! My prayer goes up to the great Lord of sea and land, that He will make the storm a calm, and bring you to your desired haven! Nor ought I to offer prayer alone, I should try to benefit those hardy men who risk their lives so constantly. Have I ever done anything for them? What can I do? How often does the boisterous sea swallow up the mariner! Thousands of corpses lie where pearls lie deep. There is death-sorrow on the sea, which is echoed in the long wail of widows and orphans. The salt of the sea is in many eyes of mothers and wives. Remorseless billows, ye have devoured the love of women, and the stay of households. What a resurrection shall there be from the caverns of the deep when the sea gives up her dead! Till then there will be sorrow on the sea. As if in sympathy with the woes of earth, the sea is forever fretting along a thousand shores, wailing with a sorrowful cry like her own birds, booming with a hollow crash of unrest, raving with uproarious discontent, chafing with hoarse wrath, or jangling with the voices of ten thousand murmuring pebbles. The roar of the sea may be joyous to a rejoicing spirit, but to the son of sorrow the wide, wide ocean is even more forlorn than the wide, wide world. This is not our rest, and the restless billows tell us so. There is a land where there is no more sea—our faces are steadfastly set towards it; we are going to the place of which the Lord hath spoken. Till then, we cast our sorrows on the Lord who trod the sea of old, and who maketh a way for His people through the depths thereof.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,
Ephesians 1:19, 20

IN the resurrection of Christ, as in our salvation, there was put forth nothing short of a divine power. What shall we say of those who think that conversion is wrought by the free will of man, and is due to his own betterness of disposition? When we shall see the dead rise from the grave by their own power, then may we expect to see ungodly sinners of their own free will turning to Christ. It is not the word preached, nor the word read in itself; all quickening power proceeds from the Holy Ghost. This power was irresistible. All the soldiers and the high priests could not keep the body of Christ in the tomb; Death himself could not hold Jesus in his bonds: even thus irresistible is the power put forth in the believer when he is raised to newness of life. No sin, no corruption, no devils in hell nor sinners upon earth, can stay the hand of God's grace when it intends to convert a man. If God omnipotently says, "Thou shalt," man shall not say, "I will not." Observe that the power which raised Christ from the dead was glorious. It reflected honour upon God and wrought dismay in the hosts of evil. So there is great glory to God in the conversion of every sinner. It was everlasting power. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him." So we, being raised from the dead, go not back to our dead works nor to our old corruptions, but we live unto God. "Because He lives we live also." "For we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Lastly, in the text mark the union of the new life to Jesus. The same power which raised the Head works life in the members. What a blessing to be quickened together with Christ!

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

Revelation 4:4

THESE representatives of the saints in heaven are said to be around the throne. In the passage in Canticles, where Solomon sings of the King sitting at his table, some render it “a round table.” From this, some expositors, I think, without straining the text, have said, “There is an equality among the saints.” That idea is conveyed by the equal nearness of the four and twenty elders. The condition of glorified spirits in heaven is that of nearness to Christ, clear vision of His glory, constant access to His court, and familiar fellowship with His person: nor is there any difference in this respect between one saint and another, but all the people of God, apostles, martyrs, ministers, or private and obscure Christians, shall all be seated *near the throne*, where they shall forever gaze upon their exalted Lord, and be satisfied with His love. They shall all be near to Christ, all ravished with His love, all eating and drinking at the same table with Him, all equally beloved as His favourites and friends even if not all equally rewarded as servants.

Let believers on earth imitate the saints in heaven in their nearness to Christ. Let us on earth be as the elders are in heaven, sitting around the throne. May Christ be the object of our thoughts, the centre of our lives. How can we endure to live at such a distance from our Beloved? Lord Jesus, draw us nearer to Thyself. Say unto us, “Abide in me, and I in you”; and permit us to sing, “His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.”

O lift me higher, nearer Thee,
And as I rise more pure and meet,
O let my soul's humility
Make me lie lower at Thy feet;
Less trusting self, the more I prove
The blessed comfort of Thy love.

Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.

Habakkuk 1:8

WHILE preparing the present volume, this particular expression recurred to me so frequently, that in order to be rid of its constant importunity I determined to give a page to it. The evening wolf, infuriated by a day of hunger, was fiercer and more ravenous than he would have been in the morning. May not the furious creature represent our doubts and fears after a day of distraction of mind, losses in business, and perhaps ungenerous tauntings from our fellow men? How our thoughts howl in our ears, "Where is now thy God?" How voracious and greedy they are, swallowing up all suggestions of comfort, and remaining as hungry as before. Great Shepherd, slay these evening wolves, and bid thy sheep lie down in green pastures, undisturbed by insatiable unbelief. How like are the fiends of hell to evening wolves, for when the flock of Christ are in a cloudy and dark day, and their sun seems going down, they hasten to tear and to devour. They will scarcely attack the Christian in the daylight of faith, but in the gloom of soul conflict they fall upon him. O thou who hast laid down thy life for the sheep, preserve them from the fangs of the wolf.

False teachers who craftily and industriously hunt for the precious life, devouring men by their false-hoods, are as dangerous and detestable as evening wolves. Darkness is their element, deceit is their character, destruction is their end. We are most in danger from them when they wear the sheep's skin. Blessed is he who is kept from them, for thousands are made the prey of grievous wolves that enter within the fold of the church.

What a wonder of grace it is when fierce persecutors are converted, for then the wolf dwells with the lamb, and men of cruel ungovernable dispositions become gentle and teachable. O Lord, convert many such: for such we will pray tonight.

Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

Psalms 5:8

VERY bitter is the enmity of the world against the people of Christ. Men will forgive a thousand faults in others, but they will magnify the most trivial offence in the followers of Jesus. Instead of vainly regretting this, let us turn it to account, and since so many are watching for our halting, let this be a special motive for walking very carefully before God. If we live carelessly, the lynx-eyed world will soon see it, and with its hundred tongues, it will spread the story, exaggerated and emblazoned by the zeal of slander. They will shout triumphantly. "Aha! So would we have it! See how these Christians act! They are hypocrites to a man." Thus will much damage be done to the cause of Christ, and much insult offered to His name. The cross of Christ is in itself an offence to the world; let us take heed that we add no offence of our own. It is "to the Jews a stumblingblock": let us mind that we put no stumblingblocks where there are enough already. "To the Greeks it is foolishness": let us not add our folly to give point to the scorn with which the worldly-wise deride the gospel. How jealous should we be of ourselves! How rigid with our consciences! In the presence of adversaries who will misrepresent our best deeds, and impugn our motives where they cannot censure our actions, how circumspect should we be! Pilgrims travel as suspected persons through Vanity Fair. Not only are we under surveillance, but there are more spies than we know of. The espionage is everywhere, at home and abroad. If we fall into the enemies' hands we may sooner expect generosity from a wolf, or mercy from a fiend, than anything like patience with our infirmities from men who spice their infidelity towards God with scandals against his people. O Lord, lead us ever, lest our enemies trip us up!

*I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee,
O LORD, will I sing.
Psalm 101:1*

FAITH triumphs in trial. When reason is thrust into the inner prison, with her feet made fast in the stocks, faith makes the dungeon walls ring with her merry notes as she cries, "I will sing of mercy and of judgment. Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." Faith pulls the black mask from the face of trouble, and discovers the angel beneath. Faith looks up at the cloud, and sees that

"Tis big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on her head."

There is a subject for song even in the judgments of God towards us. For, first, the trial is *not so heavy as it might have been*; next, the trouble is *not so severe as we deserved to have borne*; and our affliction is *not so crushing as the burden which others have to carry*. Faith sees that in her worst sorrow there is nothing penal; there is not a drop of God's wrath in it; it is all sent in love. Faith discerns love gleaming like a jewel on the breast of an angry God. Faith says of her grief, "This is a badge of honour, for the child must feel the rod;" and then she sings of the sweet result of her sorrows, because they work her spiritual good. Nay, more, says Faith, "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." So Faith rides forth on the black horse, conquering and to conquer, trampling down carnal reason and fleshly sense, and chanting notes of victory amid the thickest of the fray.

"All I meet I find assists me
In my path to heavenly joy:
Where, though trials now attend me,
Trials never more annoy.
"Blest there with a weight of glory,
Still the path I'll ne'er forget,
But, exulting, cry, it led me
To my blessed Saviour's seat."

And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Luke 15:2

OBERVE the *condescension* of this fact. This Man, who towers above all other men, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—*this* Man receiveth sinners. This Man, who is no other than the eternal God, before whom angels veil their faces—*this* Man receiveth sinners. It needs an angel's tongue to describe such a mighty stoop of love. That any of *us* should be willing to seek after the lost is nothing wonderful—they are of our own race; but that he, the offended God, against whom the transgression has been committed, should take upon Himself the form of a servant, and bear the sin of many, and should then be willing to receive the vilest of the vile, this is marvellous.

“This Man receiveth sinners”; not, however, that they may remain sinners, but He receives them that He may pardon their sins, justify their persons, cleanse their hearts by His purifying word, preserve their souls by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and enable them to serve Him, to show forth His praise, and to have communion with Him. Into His heart's love He receives sinners, takes them from the dunghill, and wears them as jewels in His crown; plucks them as brands from the burning, and preserves them as costly monuments of His mercy. None are so precious in Jesus' sight as the sinners for whom He died. When Jesus receives sinners, He has not some out-of-doors reception place, no casual ward where He charitably entertains them as men do passing beggars, but He opens the golden gates of His royal heart, and receives the sinner right into Himself—yea, He admits the humble penitent into personal union and makes him a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. There was never such a reception as this! This fact is still most sure this evening, He is still receiving sinners: would to God sinners would receive Him.

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

Psalms 32:5

DAVID'S grief for sin was bitter. Its effects were visible upon his outward frame: "his bones waxed old"; "his moisture was turned into the drought of summer." No remedy could he find, until he made a full confession before the throne of the heavenly grace. He tells us that for a time he kept silence, and his heart became more and more filled with grief: like a mountain tarn whose outlet is blocked up, his soul was swollen with torrents of sorrow. He fashioned excuses; he endeavoured to divert his thoughts, but it was all to no purpose; like a festering sore his anguish gathered, and as he would not use the lancet of confession, his spirit was full of torment, and knew no rest. At last it came to this, that he must return unto his God in humble penitence, or die outright; so he hastened to the mercy-seat, and there unrolled the volume of his iniquities before the all-seeing One, acknowledging all the evil of his ways in language such as you read in the fifty-first and other penitential Psalms. Having done this, a work so simple and yet so difficult to pride, he received at once the token of divine forgiveness; the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice, and he came forth from his closet to sing the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven. See the value of a grace-wrought confession of sin! It is to be prized above all price, for in every case where there is a genuine, gracious confession, mercy is freely given, not because the repentance and confession *deserve* mercy, but for *Christ's sake*. Blessed be God, there is always healing for the broken heart; the fountain is ever flowing to cleanse us from our sins. Truly, O Lord, Thou art a God "ready to pardon!" Therefore will we acknowledge our iniquities.

He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.

Praise ye the LORD.

Psalms 148:14

THE dispensation of the old covenant was that of distance. When God appeared even to His servant Moses, He said, “Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet”; and when He manifested Himself upon Mount Sinai, to His own chosen and separated people, one of the first commands was, “Thou shalt set bounds about the mount.” Both in the sacred worship of the tabernacle and the temple, the thought of distance was always prominent. The mass of the people did not even enter the outer court. Into the inner court none but the priests might dare to intrude; while into the innermost place, or the holy of holies, the high priest entered but once in the year. It was as if the Lord in those early ages would teach man that sin was so utterly loathsome to Him, that He must treat men as lepers put without the camp; and when He came nearest to them, He yet made them feel the width of the separation between a holy God and an impure sinner. When the gospel came, we were placed on quite another footing. The word “Go” was exchanged for “Come”; distance was made to give place to nearness, and we who aforesaid were afar off, were made nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ. Incarnate Deity has no wall of fire about it. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” is the joyful proclamation of God as He appears in human flesh. Not now does He teach the leper his leprosy by setting him at a distance, but by Himself suffering the penalty of his defilement. What a state of safety and privilege is this nearness to God through Jesus! Do you know it by experience? If you know it, are you living in the power of it? Marvellous is this nearness, yet it is to be followed by a dispensation of greater nearness still, when it shall be said, “The tabernacle of God is with men, and He doth dwell among them.” Hasten it, O Lord.

Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?

Job 7:12

THIS was a strange question for Job to ask of the Lord. He felt himself to be too insignificant to be so strictly watched and chastened, and he hoped that he was not so unruly as to need to be so restrained. The enquiry was natural from one surrounded with such insupportable miseries, but after all, it is capable of a very humbling answer. It is true man is not the sea, but he is even more troublesome and unruly. The sea obediently respects its boundary, and though it be but a belt of sand, it does not overleap the limit. Mighty as it is, it hears the divine *hitherto*, and when most raging with tempest it respects the word; but self-willed man defies heaven and oppresses earth, neither is there any end to this rebellious rage. The sea, obedient to the moon, ebbs and flows with ceaseless regularity, and thus renders an active as well as a passive obedience; but man, restless beyond his sphere, sleeps within the lines of duty, indolent where he should be active. He will neither come nor go at the divine command, but sullenly prefers to do what he should not, and to leave undone that which is required of him. Every drop in the ocean, every beaded bubble, and every yeasty foamflake, every shell and pebble, feel the power of law, and yield or move at once. O that our nature were but one thousandth part as much conformed to the will of God! We call the sea fickle and false, but how constant it is! Since our fathers' days, and the old time before them, the sea is where it was, beating on the same cliffs to the same tune; we know where to find it, it forsakes not its bed, and changes not in its ceaseless boom; but where is man—vain, fickle man? Can the wise man guess by what folly he will next be seduced from his obedience? We need more watching than the billowy sea, and are far more rebellious. Lord, rule us for Thine own glory. Amen.

*But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee,
he shall go in thither: encourage him:
for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.
Deuteronomy 1:38*

GOD employs His people to encourage one another. He did not say to an angel, “Gabriel, my servant Joshua is about to lead my people into Canaan—go, encourage him.” God never works needless miracles; if His purposes can be accomplished by ordinary means, He will not use miraculous agency. Gabriel would not have been half so well fitted for the work as Moses. A brother’s sympathy is more precious than an angel’s embassy. The angel, swift of wing, had better known the Master’s bidding than the people’s temper. An angel had never experienced the hardness of the road, nor seen the fiery serpents, nor had he led the stiffnecked multitude in the wilderness as Moses had done. We should be glad that God usually works for man by man. It forms a bond of brotherhood, and being mutually dependent on one another, we are fused more completely into one family. Brethren, take the text as God’s message to you. Labour to help others, and especially strive to *encourage* them. Talk cheerily to the young and anxious enquirer, lovingly try to remove stumblingblocks out of his way. When you find a spark of grace in the heart, kneel down and blow it into a flame. Leave the young believer to discover the roughness of the road by degrees, but tell him of the strength which dwells in God, of the sureness of the promise, and of the charms of communion with Christ. Aim to comfort the sorrowful, and to animate the desponding. Speak a word in season to him that is weary, and encourage those who are fearful to go on their way with gladness. God encourages you by His promises; Christ encourages *you* as He points to the heaven He has won for you, and the spirit encourages you as He works in you to will and to do of His own will and pleasure. Imitate divine wisdom, and encourage others, according to the word of this evening.

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
John 10:27*

WE should follow our Lord as unhesitatingly as sheep follow their shepherd, for *He has a right to lead us wherever He pleases*. We are not our own, we are bought with a price—let us recognize the rights of the redeeming blood. The soldier follows his captain, the servant obeys his master, much more must we follow our Redeemer, to whom we are a purchased possession. We are not true to our profession of being Christians, if we question the bidding of our Leader and Commander. Submission is our duty, cavilling is our folly. Often might our Lord say to us as to Peter, “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.” Wherever Jesus may lead us, *He goes before us*. If we know not where we go, we know with whom we go. With such a companion, who will dread the perils of the road? The journey may be long, but His everlasting arms will carry us to the end. The presence of Jesus is the assurance of eternal salvation, because He lives, we shall live also. We should follow Christ in simplicity and faith, because *the paths in which He leads us all end in glory and immortality*. It is true they may not be smooth paths—they may be covered with sharp flinty trials, but they lead to the “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant.” Let us put full trust in our Leader, since we know that, come prosperity or adversity, sickness or health, popularity or contempt, His purpose shall be worked out, and that purpose shall be pure, unmingled good to every heir of mercy. We shall find it sweet to go up the bleak side of the hill with Christ; and when rain and snow blow into our faces, His dear love will make us far more blest than those who sit at home and warm their hands at the world’s fire. To the top of Amana, to the dens of lions, or to the hills of leopards, we will follow our Beloved. Precious Jesus, draw us, and we will run after Thee.

*For this child I prayed;
and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:
1 Samuel 1:27*

DEVOUT souls delight to look upon those mercies which they have obtained in answer to supplication, for they can see God's especial love in them. When we can name our blessings Samuel, that is, "asked of God," they will be as dear to us as her child was to Hannah. Peninnah had many children, but they came as common blessings unsought in prayer: Hannah's one heaven-given child was dearer far, because he was the fruit of earnest pleadings. How sweet was that water to Samson which he found at "the well of him that prayed!" Quassia cups turn all waters bitter, but the cup of prayer puts a sweetness into the draughts it brings. Did we pray for the conversion of our children? How doubly sweet, when they are saved, to see in them our own petitions fulfilled! Better to rejoice over them as the fruit of our pleadings than as the fruit of our bodies. Have we sought of the Lord some choice spiritual gift? When it comes to us it will be wrapped up in the gold cloth of God's faithfulness and truth, and so be doubly precious. Have we petitioned for success in the Lord's work? How joyful is the prosperity which comes flying upon the wings of prayer! It is always best to get blessings into our house in the legitimate way, by the door of prayer; then they are blessings indeed, and not temptations. Even when prayer speeds not, the blessings grow all the richer for the delay; the child Jesus was all the more lovely in the eyes of Mary when she found Him after having sought Him sorrowing. That which we win by prayer we should dedicate to God, as Hannah dedicated Samuel. The gift came from heaven, let it go to heaven. Prayer brought it, gratitude sang over it, let devotion consecrate it. Here will be a special occasion for saying, "Of thine own have I given unto thee." Reader, is prayer your element or your weariness? Which?

*In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not
thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper,
either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

Ecclesiastes 11:6

IN *the evening of the day* opportunities are plentiful: men return from their labour, and the zealous soul-winner finds time to tell abroad the love of Jesus. Have I no evening work for Jesus? If I have not, let me no longer withhold my hand from a service which requires abundant labour. Sinners are perishing for lack of knowledge; he who loiters may find his skirts crimson with the blood of souls. Jesus gave both His hands to the nails, how can I keep back one of mine from His blessed work? Night and day He toiled and prayed for me, how can I give a single hour to the pampering of my flesh with luxurious ease? Up, idle heart; stretch out thy hand to work, or uplift it to pray; heaven and hell are in earnest, let me be so, and this evening sow good seed for the Lord my God.

The evening of life has also its calls. Life is so short that a morning of manhood's vigour, and an evening of decay, make the whole of it. To some it seems long, but a four-pence is a great sum of money to a poor man. Life is so brief that no man can afford to lose a day. It has been well said that if a great king should bring us a great heap of gold, and bid us take as much as we could count in a day, we should make a long day of it; we should begin early in the morning, and in the evening we should not withhold our hand; but to win souls is far nobler work, how is it that we so soon withdraw from it? Some are spared to a long evening of green old age; if such be my case, let me use such talents as I still retain, and to the last hour serve my blessed and faithful Lord. By His grace I will die in harness, and lay down my charge only when I lay down my body. Age may instruct the young, cheer the faint, and encourage the desponding; if eventide has less of vigorous heat, it should have more of calm wisdom, therefore in the evening I will not withhold my hand.

Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:

Psalm 26:9

FEAR made David pray thus, for something whispered, “Perhaps, after all, thou mayst be gathered with the wicked.” That fear, although marred by unbelief, springs, in the main, from holy anxiety, arising from the recollection of past sin. Even the pardoned man will enquire, “What if at the end my sins should be remembered, and I should be left out of the catalogue of the saved?” He recollects his present unfruitfulness—so little grace, so little love, so little holiness, and looking forward to the future, he considers his weakness and the many temptations which beset him, and he fears that he may fall, and become a prey to the enemy. A sense of sin and present evil, and his prevailing corruptions, compel him to pray, in fear and trembling, “Gather not my soul with sinners.” Reader, if you have prayed this prayer, and if your character be rightly described in the Psalm from which it is taken, you need not be afraid that you shall be gathered with sinners. Have you the two virtues which David had—the outward walking in integrity, and the inward trusting in the Lord? Are you resting upon Christ’s sacrifice, and can you compass the altar of God with humble hope? If so, rest assured, with the wicked you never shall be gathered, for that calamity is impossible. The gathering at the judgment is like to like. “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” If, then, thou art like God’s people, thou shalt be with God’s people. You cannot be gathered with the wicked, for you are too dearly bought. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, you are His forever, and where He is, there must His people be. You are loved too much to be cast away with reprobates. Shall one dear to Christ perish? Impossible! Hell cannot hold thee! Heaven claims thee! Trust in thy Surety and fear not!

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Psalm 61:2

MOST of us know what it is to be overwhelmed in heart; emptied as when a man wipeth a dish and turneth it upside down; submerged and thrown on our beam ends like a vessel mastered by the storm. Discoveries of inward corruption will do this, if the Lord permits the great deep of our depravity to become troubled and cast up mire and dirt. Disappointments and heart-breaks will do this when billow after billow rolls over us, and we are like a broken shell hurled to and fro by the surf. Blessed be God, at such seasons we are not without an all-sufficient solace, our God is the harbour of weather-beaten sails, the hospice of forlorn pilgrims. Higher than we are is He, His mercy higher than our sins, His love higher than our thoughts. It is pitiful to see men putting their trust in something lower than themselves; but our confidence is fixed upon an exceeding high and glorious Lord. A Rock He is since He changes not, and a high Rock, because the tempests which overwhelm us roll far beneath at His feet; He is not disturbed by them, but rules them at His will. If we get under the shelter of this lofty Rock we may defy the hurricane; all is calm under the lee of that towering cliff. Alas! such is the confusion in which the troubled mind is often cast, that we need piloting to this divine shelter. Hence the prayer of the text. O Lord, our God, by Thy Holy Spirit, teach us the way of faith, lead us into Thy rest. The wind blows us out to sea, the helm answers not to our puny hand; Thou, Thou alone canst steer us over the bar between yon sunken rocks, safe into the fair haven. How dependent we are upon Thee—we need Thee to bring us to Thee. To be wisely directed and steered into safety and peace is thy gift, and thine alone. This night be pleased to deal well with Thy servants.

*Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe,
all things are possible to him that believeth.*

Mark 9:23

A CERTAIN man had a demoniac son, who was afflicted with a dumb spirit. The father, having seen the futility of the endeavours of the disciples to heal his child, had little or no faith in Christ, and therefore, when he was bidden to bring his son to Him, he said to Jesus, "If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Now there was an "if" in the question, but the poor trembling father had put the "if" in the wrong place: Jesus Christ, therefore, without commanding him to retract the "if," kindly puts it in its legitimate position. "Nay, verily," He seemed to say, "there should be no 'if' about my power, nor concerning my willingness, the 'if' lies somewhere else." "*If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*" The man's trust was strengthened, he offered a humble prayer for an increase of faith, and instantly Jesus spoke the word, and the devil was cast out, with an injunction never to return. There is a lesson here which we need to learn. We, like this man, often see that there is an "if" somewhere, but we are perpetually blundering by putting it in the wrong place. "*If*" Jesus can help me—"if" He can give me grace to overcome temptation—"if" He can give me pardon—"if" He can make me successful? Nay, "*if*" you can believe, He both can and will. You have misplaced your "if." If you can confidently trust, even as all things are possible to Christ, so shall all things be possible to you. Faith standeth in God's power, and is robed in God's majesty; it weareth the royal apparel, and rideth on the King's horse, for it is the grace which the King delighteth to honour. Girding itself with the glorious might of the all-working Spirit, it becomes, in the omnipotence of God, mighty to do, to dare, and to suffer. All things, without limit, are possible to him that believeth. My soul, canst thou believe thy Lord tonight?

I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

Song of Solomon 5:2

PARADOXES abound in Christian experience, and here is one—the spouse was asleep, and yet she was awake. He only can read the believer’s riddle who has ploughed with the heifer of his experience. The two points in this evening’s text are—a mournful sleepiness and a hopeful wakefulness. *I sleep*. Through sin that dwelleth in us we may become lax in holy duties, slothful in religious exercises, dull in spiritual joys, and altogether supine and careless. This is a shameful state for one in whom the quickening Spirit dwells; and it is dangerous to the highest degree. Even wise virgins sometimes slumber, but it is high time for all to shake off the bands of sloth. It is to be feared that many believers lose their strength as Samson lost his locks, while sleeping on the lap of carnal security. With a perishing world around us, to sleep is cruel; with eternity so near at hand, it is madness. Yet we are none of us so much awake as we should be; a few thunder-claps would do us all good, and it may be, unless we soon bestir ourselves, we shall have them in the form of war, or pestilence, or personal bereavements and losses. O that we may leave forever the couch of fleshly ease, and go forth with flaming torches to meet the coming Bridegroom! *My heart waketh*. This is a happy sign. Life is not extinct, though sadly smothered. When our renewed heart struggles against our natural heaviness, we should be grateful to sovereign grace for keeping a little vitality within the body of this death. Jesus will hear our hearts, will help our hearts, will visit our hearts; for the voice of the wakeful heart is really the voice of our Beloved, saying, “Open to me.” Holy zeal will surely unbar the door.

“Oh lovely attitude! He stands
With melting heart and laden hands;
My soul forsakes her every sin;
And lets the heavenly stranger in.”

*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:
1 Corinthians 1:30*

MAN'S intellect seeks after rest, and by nature seeks it apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Men of education are apt, even when converted, to look upon the simplicities of the cross of Christ with an eye too little reverent and loving. They are snared in the old net in which the Grecians were taken, and have a hankering to mix philosophy with revelation. The temptation with a man of refined thought and high education is to depart from the simple truth of Christ crucified, and to invent, as the term is, a more *intellectual* doctrine. This led the early Christian churches into Gnosticism, and bewitched them with all sorts of heresies. This is the root of Neology, and the other fine things which in days gone by were so fashionable in Germany, and are now so ensnaring to certain classes of divines. Whoever you are, good reader, and whatever your education may be, if you be the Lord's, be assured you will find no rest in philosophizing divinity. You may receive this dogma of one great thinker, or that dream of another profound reasoner, but what the chaff is to the wheat, that will these be to the pure word of God. All that reason, when best guided, can find out is but the A B C of truth, and even that lacks certainty, while in Christ Jesus there is treasured up all the fulness of wisdom and knowledge. All attempts on the part of Christians to be content with systems such as Unitarian and Broad-church thinkers would approve of, must fail; true heirs of heaven must come back to the grandly simple reality which makes the ploughboy's eye flash with joy, and gladdens the pious pauper's heart—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Jesus satisfies the most elevated intellect when He is believingly received, but apart from Him the mind of the regenerate discovers no rest. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." "A good understanding have all they that do His commandments."

*Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen;
because the mighty are spoiled: howl,*

*O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.
Zechariah 11:2*

WHEN in the forest there is heard the crash of a falling oak, it is a sign that the woodman is abroad, and every tree in the whole company may tremble lest tomorrow the sharp edge of the axe should find it out. We are all like trees marked for the axe, and the fall of one should remind us that for every one, whether great as the cedar, or humble as the fir, the appointed hour is stealing on apace. I trust we do not, by often hearing of death, become callous to it. May we never be like the birds in the steeple, which build their nests when the bells are tolling, and sleep quietly when the solemn funeral peals are startling the air. May we regard death as the most weighty of all events, and be sobered by its approach. It ill behoves us to sport while our eternal destiny hangs on a thread. The sword is out of its scabbard—let us not trifle; it is furbished, and the edge is sharp—let us not play with it. He who does not prepare for death is more than an ordinary fool, he is a madman. When the voice of God is heard among the trees of the garden, let fig tree and sycamore, and elm and cedar, alike hear the sound thereof.

Be ready, servant of Christ, for thy Master comes on a sudden, when an ungodly world least expects Him. See to it that thou be faithful in his work, for the grave shall soon be digged for thee. Be ready, parents, see that your children are brought up in the fear of God, for they must soon be orphans; be ready, men of business, take care that your affairs are correct, and that you serve God with all your hearts, for the days of your terrestrial service will soon be ended, and you will be called to give account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. May we all prepare for the tribunal of the great King with a care which shall be rewarded with the gracious commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant”

*My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door;
and my bowels were moved for him.*

Song of Solomon 5:4

KNOCKING was not enough, for my heart was too full of sleep, too cold and ungrateful to arise and open the door, but the touch of His effectual grace has made my soul bestir itself. Oh, the longsuffering of my Beloved, to tarry when He found Himself shut out, and me asleep upon the bed of sloth! Oh, the greatness of His patience, to knock and knock again, and to add His voice to His knockings, beseeching me to open to Him! How could I have refused Him! Base heart, blush and be confounded! But what greatest kindness of all is this, that He becomes His own porter and unbars the door Himself. Thrice blessed is the hand which condescends to lift the latch and turn the key. Now I see that nothing but my Lord's own power can save such a naughty mass of wickedness as I am; ordinances fail, even the gospel has no effect upon me, till His hand is stretched out. Now, also, I perceive that His hand is good where all else is unsuccessful, He can open when nothing else will. Blessed be His name, I feel His gracious presence even now. Well may my bowels move for Him, when I think of all that He has suffered for me, and of my ungenerous return. I have allowed my affections to wander. I have set up rivals. I have grieved Him. Sweetest and dearest of all beloveds, I have treated Thee as an unfaithful wife treats her husband. Oh, my cruel sins, my cruel self. What can I do? Tears are a poor show of my repentance, my whole heart boils with indignation at myself. Wretch that I am, to treat my Lord, my All in All, my exceeding great joy, as though He were a stranger. Jesus, Thou forgivest freely, but this is not enough, prevent my unfaithfulness in the future. Kiss away these tears, and then purge my heart and bind it with sevenfold cords to Thyself, never to wander more.

*And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea.
And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing.
And he said, Go again seven times.
1 Kings 18:43*

SUCCESS certain when the Lord has promised it. Although you may have pleaded month after month without evidence of answer, it is not possible that the Lord should be deaf when His people are earnest in a matter which concerns His glory. The prophet on the top of Carmel continued to wrestle with God, and never for a moment gave way to a fear that he should be non-suited in Jehovah's courts. Six times the servant returned, but on each occasion no word was spoken but "Go again." We must not dream of unbelief, but hold to our faith even to seventy times seven. Faith sends expectant hope to look from Carmel's brow, and if nothing is beheld, she sends again and again. So far from being crushed by repeated disappointment, faith is animated to plead more fervently with her God. She is humbled, but not abashed: her groans are deeper, and her sighings more vehement, but she never relaxes her hold or stays her hand. It would be more agreeable to flesh and blood to have a speedy answer, but believing souls have learned to be submissive, and to find it good to wait *for* as well as *upon* the Lord. Delayed answers often set the heart searching itself, and so lead to contrition and spiritual reformation: deadly blows are thus struck at our corruption, and the chambers of imagery are cleansed. The great danger is lest men should faint, and miss the blessing. Reader, do not fall into that sin, but continue in prayer and watching. At last the little cloud was seen, the sure forerunner of torrents of rain, and even so with you, the token for good shall surely be given, and you shall rise as a prevailing prince to enjoy the mercy you have sought. Elijah was a man of like passions with us: his power with God did not lie in his own merits. If his believing prayer availed so much, why not yours? Plead the precious blood with unceasing importunity, and it shall be with you according to your desire.

*It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom
my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go,
until I had brought him into my mother's house,
and into the chamber of her that conceived me.*

Song of Solomon 3:4

DOES Christ receive us when we come to Him, notwithstanding all our past sinfulness? Does He never chide us for having tried all other refuges first? And is there none on earth like Him? Is He the best of all the good, the fairest of all the fair? Oh, then let us praise Him! Daughters of Jerusalem, extol Him with timbrel and harp! Down with your idols, up with the Lord Jesus. Now let the standards of pomp and pride be trampled under foot, but let the cross of Jesus, which the world frowns and scoffs at, be lifted on high. O for a throne of ivory for our King Solomon! Let Him be set on high forever, and let my soul sit at His footstool, and kiss His feet, and wash them with my tears. Oh, how precious is Christ! How can it be that I have thought so little of Him? How is it I can go abroad for joy or comfort when He is so full, so rich, so satisfying. Fellow believer, make a covenant with thine heart that thou wilt never depart from Him, and ask thy Lord to ratify it. Bid Him set thee as a signet upon His finger, and as a bracelet upon His arm. Ask Him to bind thee about Him, as the bride decketh herself with ornaments, and as the bridegroom putteth on his jewels. I would live in Christ's heart; in the clefts of that rock my soul would eternally abide. The sparrow hath made a house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God; and so too would I make my nest, my home, in Thee, and never from Thee may the soul of thy turtle dove go forth again, but may I nestle close to Thee, O Jesus, my true and only rest.

“When my precious Lord I find,
All my ardent passions glow;
Him with cords of love I bind,
Hold and will not let Him go.”

*For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope:
for a living dog is better than a dead lion.*

Ecclesiastes 9:4

LIFE is a precious thing, and in its humblest form it is superior to death. This truth is eminently certain in spiritual things. It is better to be the least in the kingdom of heaven than the greatest out of it. The lowest degree of grace is superior to the noblest development of unregenerate nature. Where the Holy Ghost implants divine life in the soul, there is a precious deposit which none of the refinements of education can equal. The thief on the cross excels Caesar on his throne; Lazarus among the dogs is better than Cicero among the senators; and the most unlettered Christian is in the sight of God superior to Plato. Life is the badge of nobility in the realm of spiritual things, and men without it are only coarser or finer specimens of the same lifeless material, needing to be quickened, for they are dead in trespasses and sins.

A living, loving, gospel sermon, however unlearned in matter and uncouth in style, is better than the finest discourse devoid of unction and power. A living dog keeps better watch than a dead lion, and is of more service to his master; and so the poorest spiritual preacher is infinitely to be preferred to the exquisite orator who has no wisdom but that of words, no energy but that of sound. The like holds good of our prayers and other religious exercises; if we are quickened in them by the Holy Spirit, they are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, though we may think them to be worthless things; while our grand performances in which our hearts were absent, like dead lions, are mere carrion in the sight of the living God. O for living groans, living sighs, living despondencies, rather than lifeless songs and dead calms. Better anything than death. The snarlings of the dog of hell will at least keep us awake, but dead faith and dead profession, what greater curses can a man have? Quicken us, quicken us, O Lord!

Scripture Memory Programme 2014

O taste and see that the LORD is good!

The Book of Psalms is filled with God's blessings and assurances that uphold believers for a closer walk with Him. The 52 passages in this booklet have been carefully selected not only to highlight the theme but also to encourage you to read the Psalms daily on your own so that you may draw near to God as He draws near to you.

Memorize them and meditate on them prayerfully to be spiritually uplifted!

January 5 – Provision

Psalm 65:11 – Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

January 12 – Trusting in God

Psalm 34:8 – O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

January 19 – Praise

Psalm 9:1 – I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

January 26 – Wise Choice

Psalm 118:8 – It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

February 2 – God's eternal existence

Psalm 93:2 – Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.

February 9 – Security

Psalm 18:2 – The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

February 16 – Love for Righteousness

Psalm 11:7 – For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

February 23 – God’s Goodness

Psalm 86:15 – But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

March 2 – God’s Help

Psalm 18:35 – Thou has also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

March 9 – Love for God’s Word

Psalm 119:15 – I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

March 16 – Rejoicing

Psalm 33:21 – For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

March 23 – Divine Ownership

Psalm 50:10 – For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

March 30 – God’s Mercy

Psalm 147:11 – The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

April 6 – Delighting in God

Psalm 37:4 – Delight thyself in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart

April 13 – God’s Greatness

Psalm 145:3 – Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

April 20 – Christ’s Resurrection

Psalm 16:10 – For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

April 27 – Adoration

Psalm 96:3 – Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

May 4 – Protection

Psalm 46:1 – God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

May 11 – Cheerful Service

Psalm 100:2 – Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

May 18 – Edifying Speech

Psalm 34:13 – Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

May 25 – Spiritual Renewal

Psalm 51:12 – Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

June 1 – Contrition

Psalm 51:17 – The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

June 8 – Overcoming Fear

Psalm 56:3 – What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

June 15 – God’s love

Psalm 103:13 – Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

June 22 – God’s Judgment

Psalm 62:12 – Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

June 29 – God’s Faithfulness

Psalm 73:23 – Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

July 6 – Thanksgiving

Psalm 100:4 – Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

July 13 – God’s Blessing

Psalm 84:11 – For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

July 20 – Guidance

Psalm 86:11 – Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

July 27 – Hope

Psalm 71:5 – For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth.

August 3 – Prayer

Psalm 25:1 – Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

August 10 – Worship

Psalm 96:9 – O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

August 17 – God’s Benevolence

Psalm 103:8 – The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

August 24 – Protection

Psalm 118:6 – The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

August 31 – Courage

Psalm 27:1 – The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

September 7 – Peace

Psalm 4:8 – I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

September 14 – Forgiveness

Psalm 103:12 – As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

September 21 – Anchoring in God’s Word

Psalm 119:23 – Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

September 28 – Provision

Psalm 127:1 – Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

October 5 – Praise

Psalm 103:1 – Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

October 12 – Divine Design

Psalm 100:3 – Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

October 19 – Overcoming Anxiety

Psalm 94:19 – In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.

October 26 – Harmony

Psalm 133:1 – Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

November 2 – God’s Greatness

Psalm 147:5 – Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

November 9 – Deliverance

Psalm 34:19 – Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

November 16 – Rejoicing

Psalm 13:5 – But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

November 23 – Protection

Psalm 121:1-2 – I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

November 30 – Eternal Blessing

Psalm 146:5 – Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:

December 7 – Comfort

Psalm 119:50 – This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

December 14 – Waiting upon God

Psalm 123:2 – Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

December 21 – Eternal Promise

Psalm 111:9 – He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.

December 28 – Comprehensive Praise

Psalm 150:6 – Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

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