

**Mornings with Jesus**  
**by William Jay**

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**MORNINGS WITH JESUS.**

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*Uniform with* "MORNINGS WITH JESUS."

**EVENINGS WITH JESUS:**

A SERIES OF  
**Devotional Reading for the Closet and the Family.**

BY THE LATE  
**REV. WILLIAM JAY,**  
**OF BATH.**

Fep. 8vo, price 6s., cloth.

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FOR

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**REV. WILLIAM JAY,**

OF BATH.

“TRULY OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON JESUS  
CHRIST.”—I *John* i. 3.

Fifth Thousand.

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FLEET STREET.**PREFACE.**

THE series of devotional readings comprised in the  
present volume have been carefully prepared from

notes *in extenso* taken in short-hand of sermons preached by Mr. Jay, principally during the last twenty-five years. That they are faithful transcripts of those rich experimental instructions and encouragements which fell from the lips of the distinguished preacher will not for a moment be questioned by those who were privileged to listen to his pulpit ministrations, or who are at all conversant with his published works.

Although presented in a form differing from that in which they were originally delivered, scarcely any other alteration has been considered either desirable or necessary than an occasional transposition, and the change of person. In almost every instance the texts placed at the head of the several exercises are those which the accompanying observations were intended to illustrate and enforce.

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vi

The whole will be found eminently characteristic of this "Prince of Preachers."\* Here is the same originality and naturalness of manner, perspicuity and impressiveness of style, evangelical and experimental savour, practical and devotional tendency, fulness and felicity of scriptural illustration, and catholicity of spirit, which were most strikingly and singularly displayed in all his pulpit and printed discourses, "all of which," says Dr. Sprague,† "are peculiarly adapted to promote the study of the Bible. It would seem as if the whole of the Scriptures were in his memory, and he had the power on every occasion of selecting the very passage that is most to his purpose.

"One great charm which pervades these pages is, that they range through every department of human experience, and show that the Spirit has his appropriate teachings for every condition.

"They are also eminently fitted to cherish a devotional spirit. While they show the fertility of his mind, the purity of his taste, and the originality and beauty

of his conceptions, they also breathe in an eminent degree the spirit of devotion.”

And of these reflections it may be said, in the words of his esteemed and venerated biographers, that they “lead the pious and devout to the most elevated views of the Divine character, as a Father to

\* A title justly bestowed upon Mr. Jay by the late John Foster, the celebrated  
essayist.

† “Quarterly Christian Spectator.”

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vii

be loved and a Friend to be trusted. Every page seems to exercise over the mind an attraction to the Source of all wisdom, blessedness, and grace; and every sentiment seems bathed in the spirit of devotion, and designed to win the heart for God and truth.

“As an expositor he is eminently successful. With an unrivalled force and effect, and in a style obviously adopted for its plainness and point, does he bring out the hidden beauties of revelation and enchain the mind to the truths of God’s word. He makes it flash its radiance upon the mind’s eye with a power and beauty unperceived before.”

For devotional reading in the Closet, and in the Family, the present volume will be found admirably adapted, and, under the Divine blessing, will not fail to produce a high tone of spiritual feeling and to bring the mind into an appropriate frame for enjoying fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; thus most fully realising what its title indicates, “Mornings with Jesus.”

In a work of this character and a volume of this extent, an occasional repetition of ideas and expression will hardly be matter of surprise or complaint. And considering also that the works of Mr. Jay, collected and published by himself a few years before his death, are chiefly of a similar kind, it will scarcely

be expected that a complete avoidance of sameness of subject or of remark could be attained. If, however, any such instance should have occurred, it will be

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viii

altogether a matter of coincidence, as, in preparing these pages for publication, no reference whatever has been made to those excellent volumes, "in which all who desire to see the truths of Divine revelation treated in their variety and comprehensiveness: their admonitions enforced in winning and persuasive words, and manly dignity, Christian simplicity, and Apostolic earnestness—all who read religious books or instruction and improvement, will find a treasury which will never disappoint them, and which they will not soon exhaust."\*

\* Revs. Dr. Redford and J. A. James.

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## MORNINGS WITH JESUS.

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Jan. 1.—In that day shall there be ... a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. Isa. xix. 19.

WHILE passing from one annual period to another, this remarkable and significant prediction concerning Egypt may serve to remind us of the obligation under which we lie to rear a pillar of remembrance and memorial unto the Lord our God. "At the border" of the new year, therefore, First, Let us, in the spirit and design of the action, set up a pillar on which to record *our past sorrows*. This will tend to keep us in remembrance that while

"Every sigh and every pain  
Are but the fruit of sin,"

our sorrows are designed for our benefit; that, as it is "good for a man to bear the yoke," so it is good to remember it. The remembrance of these will sober our future prospects and lower our earthly hopes, while it will

encourage us by showing that, though we may be “cast down” we may not be “destroyed,” and though we may be “troubled on every side,” yet we may not be “distressed.” Secondly, Let us set up a pillar on which to record our *temporal deliverances*. David remembered the hill Mizar—probably the scene of some signal deliverance—Hezekiah composed a writing on his recovery from sickness, and gave it to the leader of the psalmody, in order that it might be sung in the temple, and he said: “The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day;” and Paul said,

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10

“He who hath delivered doth deliver, and he, we trust, will yet deliver us.” We, too, have been helped in our straits, and supplied every morning and evening with needed mercies. Let us take care to keep ourselves sensible of our obligations to God for his interposition.

“Why should the wonders he hath wrought,  
Be lost in silence and forgot?”

Again, let us record on this pillar of remembrance our *spiritual benefits*—such as the Son of his love, the spirit of his Son, the throne of his grace, the word of his truth, and the exceeding great and precious promises thereof, which are “yea and amen in Christ Jesus.” All Christians have some red-letter days in the almanack of their experience, and times of love to remember and to be grateful for. Oh, what a “time of love” was that when he said unto us “Live;” when he “called us out of darkness into his marvellous light;” when he poured the balm of hope into the bosom of despair, and enable us to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

“Many days have passed since then,  
Many changes I have seen;  
But have been upheld till now—  
Who could hold me up but Thou?”

But we have been upholden in our work and warfare. What snares laid for our souls he has broken, and what

“times of refreshing have come” to us “from the presence of the Lord.” At his throne, in his house, and at his table, how often have his comforts delighted our souls; and his promises have been fulfilled in our experience, meeting our wants and woes, our weaknesses and diseases. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”

“Here I raise my Ebenezer,  
Hither by thy help I’m come;  
And I hope by thy good pleasure  
Safely to arrive at home.”

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II

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Jan. 2.—When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Matt. vi. 6.

OUR blessed Saviour was the example as well as the enjoiner of private devotion. We read of his “rising a great while before day,” and of his “going up into a mountain apart to pray,” and of his “continuing all night in prayer” to his Divine Father. Some complain of not having time. Daniel was prime minister of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, and daily and frequent private devotion was his constant practice. David had to give audiences to ambassadors, and orders to generals and magistrates, and yet he says, “Morning and evening and at noon will I pray.” A real Christian will not live a stranger to devotional retirement; he will feel continually that he has much to do with God alone. There are three advantages pertaining to private prayer. The first results *from, frequency*; we can retire much oftener than we can go to the public sanctuary. We can easily seize a moment of leisure when journeying or engaged in our occupations, as Nehemiah did, who was the king’s cupbearer, who, while attending on his royal master, said, “I prayed to

the God of Heaven." The second is *freedom*; for alone we can make confessions which it would not be proper to make in the hearing of a fellow-creature. We can pour into the bosom of God things we do not feel at liberty to divulge to the dearest relation and friend upon earth. Friendship always deals in secrecy, and so does the friendship subsisting between God and the soul. The third arises from *sincerity*. Private devotion is a much better evidence of sincerity than public worship. Many things in the public assembly are calculated to excite and attract; but when a man retires God must be the principal excitement and attraction. His language is, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee." We must not judge of ourselves by what we feel in large assemblies. Let us retire to be alone with God, and then we shall say, "It is good for me to draw near to God."

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JAN. 3.—*To die is gain.* Phil. i. 21.

THE curse to a believer is turned into a blessing, and the enemy into a friend. For "to die is gain." The traveller then gains his Father's home; the mariner gains the desired haven; the soldier gains his victory and triumph; the believer, after all his conflicts, gains a complete deliverance from all his sorrows and all his sins and temptations. The whole life of a Christian here is founded upon a hope that can only be accomplished by dying. It will be the completion of bliss to be with Christ, and to behold his glory. Death to a Christian is not a bar but a bridge, so that he may pass over and take possession of his glorious inheritance. To a believer death comes so changed in its character that it ought not to be called by this name. It is not properly dying, it is "sleeping in Jesus;" it is "departing to be with Christ, which is far better;" it is "going home;" it is "entering into his rest," and "into the joy of his Lord." Dr. Gouge often said: "I

have two friends in the world, Christ and death; Christ is my best friend, death is my second." Adams, in his "Private Thoughts," says, "I bless thee, O God, that I am to die. I bless thee I am capable of dying. I bless thee that I am appointed to die; and I bless thee the execution is drawing so near." The great John Howe, having been speaking of glory, says: "Oh, how should our hearts leap for joy, that in order to our perfect blessedness nothing is further wanting than to die, and that the certainty of death completes our assurance of heaven. What should now hinder our joyful thanksgivings that we are in no danger of an earthly immortality; that it is not in the power of all the men in the world to detain us in it, and that our greatest enemies can never keep us from dying, and therefore keep us from thee." O, my soul, let me die "the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

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JAN. 4.—Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us. Rom. xii. 6.

GOD does not communicate the same favours to all, nor in the same degree. To some he gives more, to some less.

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13

Some he places in splendid stations, others are called to pass their days in obscurity. But to "every one is given grace according to the gift of Christ." There is a variety in all his works. If we look up we shall see "one star differeth from another star in glory;" if we survey the earth, we shall find hills and valleys, rivers and oceans. If we observe the natural body there is a diversity of parts, and these are very unequal, yet no one of them is needless or useless. It is the same in the mystical body; there are many offices, but all cannot fill the same office. "Having, then," says the apostle, "gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; for as we have many

members, and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." So the apostle Peter says, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." *Grace* again, *manifold* grace! "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracle of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." Unto Christians at large is this grace given—"gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us"—that some should be employed in teaching poor children to read the Bible, and that others should "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction;" to some it is given to subscribe to Bible and Missionary and Tract Societies, and to others to collect for them. Thus we see all may be *graciously* employed and honoured. And Newton, when he says that at God's bidding some fly over earth and seas, adds finely, "They also serve thy will, and they require more grace who wait than those who fly." "For unto you it is *given*," says the apostle, "in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

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JAN. 5.—If the Son shall make you free. John viii. 36.

THIS supposes a previous state of bondage. And the bondage from which the Son of God delivers us is twofold.

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14

First, *The bondage of condemnation*. Sin always binds over the offender to penalty. Now no one by nature is free from this bondage—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." And who has ever done this? "There is none righteous, no, not one." But who can lay open the contents of this curse? "Who knoweth," says the Psalmist, "the power of thine anger: even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." The apprehension of this wrath is tremendously awful, but the doom will far surpass the dread. There is *the bondage*,

where is the *Deliverer*? The Son makes us free. He does this by his cross—by sacrifice, by ransom, by substitution, by “redeeming us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,” by “bearing our sins in his own body on the tree.” Secondly, There is the *bondage of corruption*. This takes in—the tyranny exercised over us by all our spiritual enemies. We talk of liberty, “but of what a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.” Is he free who is the servant of sin—who is taken captive by the devil at his will—who hangs his hopes and fears upon the course of this world—who is governed, not by the convictions of his own mind, but by the smiles and frowns of his fellow-travellers, and approves better things and follows worse? There is the *bondage*; where is the *Deliverer*? The Son makes us free. He does this by his grace—by the undeserved and powerful agency of the Holy Spirit; and everything else will prove ineffectual. The slave of sin resolves to escape; but attempting it in his own strength, he is overtaken, and is “tied and bound by the chain of his sin” faster than before. But when He who proclaims liberty to the captive comes and cries, “Loose him and let him go,” the poor captive is released—his fetters fall off—he gazes on his Deliverer, he melts into tears of sorrow, gratitude, and joy—he kneels, and asks, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” And he rises and says, “I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” There is the bondage, there the Deliverer.

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JAN. 6.—Ye shall be free indeed. John viii. 36.

HERE is the EXCELLENCY of this deliverance. Christ not only makes his people “free,” but “free indeed.” This admits of a fourfold exemplification. First, The freedom is *real*.

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15

It is neither a device nor a delusion. There is no reality in what men call liberty—for which men have fought and bled and of which they boast—compared with the relief and pleasure of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Secondly, It is *spiritual*. The soul is and must be the seat

of happiness or misery. What was Paradise to Adam when guilt had filled him with fear and sorrow? What was a prison to Paul, rejoicing in God's salvation?—his soul, his ideas, his volitions, his resolves, and his resources were free. No night, no darkness, can hinder the "arising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing on his wings." No tyrant can touch a soul that he has made free indeed. Thirdly, It is *permanent*. Many, after asserting their freedom, have been again conquered; but a freed Christian can never be reconquered. "Sin shall not have the dominion over you," saith the apostle, "for ye are not under the law, but under grace." "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." At death the Christian's liberty is enlarged and completed; then is brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Fourthly, This freedom is *infinite*. There is immensity attached to the advantages connected with it. He is free indeed who is free of Mount Zion, the city of the living God—who is free to commune with God as a man talketh with his friend—who can call God Father, enter his house, sit at his table, lean upon his arm, and repose on his bosom—who has every desirable good thing chartered to him, and who, when he dies, is placed nearer to the throne of God and of the Lamb than angels. Let us adore the Saviour who has thus made us really, spiritually, unchangeably, and infinitely free.

"A soul redeem'd demands a life of praise."

It is the design of such a deliverance, "that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life."

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JAN. 7.—Come, ye Messed of my Father. Matt. xxv. 34.

THE blessedness of the saints began by being made to feel their need of the Saviour here. It was the business

of their life—they sought after him in his works—in his word—in his ways—in his dispensations—in his ordinances. They had been brought to such a state that they could say—

“I cannot live contented here,  
Without some glimpses of thy face;  
And heaven, without thy presence there,  
Would be a dark and tiresome place.”

He will therefore fulfil all their desires after him completely, and say at last, “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” “*Come!*” Were they afar oft”? They were by nature without Christ, and thence their debasement and their misery. He knew that they stood in need of him, and that without him they would be undone for ever; and that he was the essence of their blessedness, and unless they came to him they never could be truly happy; and therefore his language always was, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out.” Thus their blessedness began. It was by intercourse; it was by coming to him; and how is it completed? Why, in the very same way. “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” As if he thought they could not be near enough to himself. “Come,” as if he had said, I saw you coming to my cross with your burden. I saw you coming to my throne with all your wants. I saw you coming to my house to behold my beauty and glory. I saw you coming to my table to behold my hands and my side. Oh, come now into my immediate presence; come now into my arms; come now into my bosom, and be for ever with the Lord. Come, come! Do they hesitate?—are they ready to shrink back? There was a time when this was the case; not from anything like aversion, but from a sense of their own unworthiness. And if they are sensible of their unworthiness *now*, they will be a thousand times more sensible of it *hereafter*. Therefore are they represented as casting their crowns before him, as much as to say, by their abdication, that they are not worthy to wear them. But then they will have equal *confidence* in him. Then

they will know no sin. They will know, and he will wish them to know, that they are as welcome as they are unworthy. Yes; no one has, in inviting a beloved friend

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17

to their house, or a child to their bosom, given either of them a thousandth part of the welcome with which he will receive his brethren when he shall say at the last "Come, ye blessed of my Father," &c.

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JAN. 8.—Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Matt. xxv. 34.

OBSERVE four things. First, The *possession*—a kingdom—not only a building of God—a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens—not merely an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; but something more excellent and dignified. A crown sparkles in the eye of ambition; a throne is the highest pinnacle of honour; but the highest throne of an earthly monarch will be nothing compared to the throne of the humblest Christian. Secondly, The *attribute attached to it*—prepared for you. For it was not a natural acquisition; neither of easy attainment; nor an inexpensive endowment. Oh, how many things had to be removed and done before we could receive it! What a system of mediation was to intervene between God and us! and, therefore, says the Saviour, "I go to prepare a place for you." His death, his resurrection, ascension, intercession, advocacy with the Father, and his possession of the whole dispensation of the Gospel, the means of grace, and the agency of the Holy Ghost, were necessary. Thirdly, Observe the *earliness of the design*—a kingdom prepared "from the foundation of the world." Christianity is not only as old as the creation, but much older. "The mercy of the Lord is *from* everlasting as well as *to* everlasting." Do we think of the sacrifice that procured it? It is "The Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world;"—Of the promise that conveys it? "In hope of eternal life, which God, who can-

not lie, promised before the world began;”—Of the love which was the source of it? “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” So true is it that he has “saved us and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Fourthly, *The period of its actual possession*. It is future. “*Then* shall the king say

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18

unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit,” &c. They are now heirs, but heirs under age; and, as such, are in some respects no more than servants. As Young finely says—

“Creatures of yesterday we are,  
Nor into manhood rise,  
Till death pronounces us of age,  
And crowns us for the skies.”

They are *now* indeed the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what they shall be, and the world knoweth them not. They are like David now, anointed, but not crowned; and, like him, through much tribulation they also are entering into their kingdom. *Then* they will be as kings sitting upon thrones, and reigning for ever and ever.

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JAN. 9.—Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy hack.  
Isa. xxxviii. 17.

OBSERVE the *manner in which the pardon of sin is here expressed*. It is by a metaphor. What a man throws behind his back is out of his sight, and he regards it no more. How does this apply to God? Nothing can ever be properly out of his sight, or out of his knowledge. No; but the meaning is, that their sins will no more appear before him to provoke his anger or call forth any condemnation. It is not what we do with our sins, but what God does with them; not whether we forget them, but whether God remembers them. The Christian may say with David, “As far as the east is from the west, so far

hath he removed our transgression from us." Observe the *extensiveness and measure of the Messing*. Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back, however numerous, and however heinous. "Though our sins are as scarlet," says he, "they shall be white as snow;" "though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," for he will abundantly pardon. If only one sin remains it would be enough to ruin the soul for ever. But this is not the case. Mark, here *is the knowledge of the privilege*. He speaks without any hesitation: "Thou *hast* cast all my sins behind thy back." There is a difference between the reality and the manifestation of a thing. There are persons whose

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19

pardon God hath sealed, who write very bitter things of themselves. They have not as yet the *full* assurance of faith. Nevertheless, they are sustained by hope in his mercy. And if they seek it in his own way, he will in due time appear to their joy, and they shall not be ashamed. If they throw themselves at his feet he will take them to his bosom. If with Peter they cry, "Lord save, or I perish," they will be able, by-and-by, to say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" Let us therefore *seek after this inestimable blessing*. What is every thing else without this?—what if we have been recovered from the grave?—what would our going down to the pit of corruption be when compared with going down to the pit of damnation?—what would it be to have the body healed, and the soul condemned? Oh! to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son; to be able to say, "O Lord, thou wast angry with me, but thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me."

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Jan. 10.—Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord.

Psalm cxv. 11.

TRUSTING in God is the basis of every part of religion. We fall by losing our confidence in God, and we can only be recovered by the renewal of it. And the one simple

design of revelation, from the beginning to the end, is that “we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” This is the grand design of the mediation of our Saviour. “God raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.” Hence we are said to be “saved through faith,” to be “justified by faith,” “purifying our hearts by faith,” and to be sanctified by faith, to “live by faith,” and to “walk by faith.” And faith is this trust in its principle, and trust is this faith in its exercise. Let us consider what it is that characterizes a believer’s trust in God. First, It is *difficult*. It is no easy thing for a man whose conscience is truly awakened to trust in a Being who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and whom he has offended times without number; and especially to trust in him not only for pardon, but for accept-

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20

ance and supplies, and salvation, and salvation with eternal glory—to trust a Being who has never been the object of any of our senses, who is therefore an entirely invisible Being to us. Secondly, This trust in God is *warranted*. This warrant is to be found in God’s word. It is this makes him known, and proclaims his name, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.” It is here we have his engagement confirmed by his oath, his promise, and his command, to authorize our trust in him. Thirdly, It is always of a *practical* nature. I may tempt God in a thousand ways, but I can only trust God spiritually in the path of duty and in the use of means. Fourthly, This trust is *perpetual*. We are to trust in him at all times. In general there are two conditions, both of them great trials of this confidence. The first is a state of prosperity, when our very successes and engagements keep us from feeling our need of him so much; and the other is a state of adversity, when events seem to oppose the promises of God. Here is the time to trust in God, and to say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” This trust is very *extensive*. It regards everything we

need for time and for eternity. It is very *relieving*. "His heart shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;" and it is this trust by which God is *pleased and honoured*.

"Retreat beneath his wings,  
And in his grace confide,  
This more exalts the King of kings,  
Than all your works beside."

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Jan. 11.—*Full of grace*. John i. 14.

THAT is, the Lord Jesus Christ was full of divine influence, which in the Scriptures is so often called grace, because it flows from the mere favour of God. As he himself said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Most gladly, therefore," said the Apostle, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the *power* of Christ may rest upon me, for when I am weak then am I strong." Now of this grace all his disciples are partakers. If we lived with the

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21

holiest of his people, we should not find them full of grace; we should discover many sad deficiencies in their principles, their affections, and their actions. But he was filled with the Holy Ghost. He had every excellence, and every excellence in its perfection; grace was poured into his lips, into his ears, into his eyes, into his life, into all he said, into all he did and suffered, and into all that he enjoyed. And he had this grace which filled him, not only as a man for himself, but as a Mediator for us, that from his fulness we might all "receive, and grace for grace." But grace often signifies kindness, benevolence, and generosity; and was he not full of this? Hence we read that he had compassion on the multitude, and fed them. Did he not, with a voice breathing the softness and gentleness of his own loving heart, say, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" and to the woman that was a sinner,

“Thy sins are forgiven thee;” and to the poor suffering thief, who said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,” he instantly said, “This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.” Yes, blessings on his dear name! he is full of grace.”

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JAN. 12.—Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Pet. iii. 18.

THERE are some who deny growth in grace, as if it were not possible to obtain clearer views of divine truth, to be more patient in tribulation, and to be more concerned for the Divine glory, and the welfare of those around us. But our Saviour hath said that the water he gives us shall be in us “a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” And that growth in the divine life is possible, important, and necessary, let us consider the *precepts* of Scripture: “Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.” If we turn to the *emblems* of Scripture, we find it thus variedly and beauti-

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13

fully illustrated: “The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” If we look at the corn growing in the field, there is “first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.” In God’s family there are “babes, young men, and fathers in Christ.” All these are intended to convey the idea of progression. Observe the *examples* of Scripture. The Apostle, writing to the Thessalonians, says, “Your faith groweth exceedingly.” And there is the Apostle himself. Who ever made greater advancements in the divine life than he? and what does he say? “Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” In the *promises* of Scripture this result is abundantly assured to us: “I will be as the dew unto Israel. He

shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine." "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Let us also consider the *advantages* of thus making progress in spiritual attainments; as we advance we shall be changed from glory to glory; every step will add to our dignity and to our usefulness. It is thus that we shall adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, and recommend religion to all around us. While it will tend to promote the Divine glory, it will greatly increase our own comfort and enjoyment, by adding to the evidences of our state and character; and "herein," says the Saviour, "is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit."

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JAN. 13.—Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John xv. 13.

FRIENDSHIP among men arises from the possession of some real or supposed amiable quality in the object of regard; but the friendship of Christ arises from no excellency in its subject. His regards are all undeserved. What were they when he first took knowledge of them? Unworthy of the least possible favour, undeserving, ill-deserving, and hell-deserving creatures. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet *sinner*s Christ

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23

died for us." "When we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Behold! and see what friendship he has manifested towards us. He "who thought it not robbery to be equal with God," taking upon him the form of a servant, becoming "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" "who though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." What friendship! See him "bruised for our iniquities," that by "his stripes we may be healed," and dying that we may live. "Behold," said the specta-

tors at the grave of Lazarus, when they saw him weep, “how he loved him!”

And we can look up and see his friendship to us marked even in stronger colours. What did the angels think of him when they saw him bleeding on the cross? Behold how he loved them! What friendship! See him delivering us “from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” What friendship! to wash us from our sins in his own blood—to sympathise with us in all our sorrows, and to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities now in his glorified state.

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JAN. 14.—And you ... hath he reconciled. Col. i. 21.

RECONCILED to whom? To God. How? In the body of his flesh through death. This reconciliation is effected alone through the mediation of him who died for us, and rose again; of which the Apostle speaks when he says, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses.” We had provoked Jehovah, and he could easily and righteously have destroyed us. We lay entirely at his mercy, and we had no claim to his pity. But when he might have come against us in flaming fire with his holy angels, to take vengeance on us who knew him not, and did not obey him, behold he himself comes forward arrayed as the God of love. There were difficulties in the way of our reconciliation; he removes them. A ransom was necessary; he provides it. A righteousness was requisite; he has wrought out and brought in everlasting righteousness. “He spared

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24

not his Son, but delivered him up for us all,” that we may have the assurance that “with him he will also freely give us all things.” And, oh, let us remember that in thus reconciling us, he did not wait for our submission and our application. He formed the plan himself, and he accomplished it; and “having made peace through the blood of his cross by him to reconcile all things to himself,” and

having opened "a new and living way into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus," he himself advances; he comes forward, he invites us, and he presses us, "who were alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works," to enter in. Hid as we were among the trees of the garden by fear, the voice of thunder would only have driven us yet further off; but the still small voice of peace, saying unto us, "Be ye reconciled unto God," draws us forth, brings us to his dear feet, encourages us to say, "O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me," and to pray, "Lord, I am thine, save me; Lord, I am thine, employ me."

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JAN. 15.—*This is not your rest.* Micah ii. 10.

THIS admonishes us not to look after too much here. There are some persons who idolize life; but after all, what is it found to be? There is no condition, nor any period of it, but justifies the sentiment of the poet—"Too low they build who build beneath the skies." They who do this are walking in a vain show, and are disquieting themselves in vain—are going to broken cisterns, and seeking the living among the dead. If Ave would not be exposed to continued disappointment and wretchedness, we "must set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." Let us therefore draw in our earthly hopes and contract our desires after worldly good, that we may thus escape mortification. This is no rest, no home for a believer. Abraham had many blessings, but it was not to Isaac, although very dear to him, nor to his flocks and herds, however large, that he trustfully looked. But with "Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, he looked for a city which hath foundations,

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25

whose builder and maker is God." So David, though he had the splendour of a court around him, says, "Hide not thy commandments from me, for I am a stranger in the

earth." "I have made thy statutes my song in the house of my pilgrimage." Did he feel at home? "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Did he find this to be his rest? "Lord," says he, "deliver me from men of the world, that have their portion in this life." "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I wake up in thy likeness." There tended his thoughts, and there terminated his hopes.

"My rest is in heaven, my rest is not here, Then why should I tremble when troubles appear? Be hush'd, my dark spirit; the worst that can come But shortens thy journey, and hastens thee home.

"It is not for me to be seeking my bliss, Or building my hopes in a region like this; I look for a city that hands have not piled, I pant for a country by sin undefiled."

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JAN. 16.—*Arise ye, and depart.* Micah ii. 10.

SOMETIMES the believer is drawn and weaned from the earth. But if not disposed to leave the world, the Lord knows how to drive as well as to draw him. He can put a thorn in our nest, and cause us to flutter out to the edge of it, and there to sit like a bird ready to fly towards heaven when he shall have sent the command. If we become careless and high-minded, and, like David, saying, "In my prosperity I shall never be moved," then we shall be made to say, also with him, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." We are liable to become slothful, and to fall asleep at our post, and it is no little thing sometimes that will wake us; but God can strike very hard, and will do so if necessary; and instead of our complaining of this, we should rather be grateful that he is determined we shall not take up with anything here as our portion, and that he should say by his providence as well as by his word, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest;" look towards heaven, go and take hold of the everlasting covenant. And the trials and disappointments of earth will

26

never do us good till they have produced this result. If we only dispute, cavil, and fret, our afflictions have as yet done nothing effectually for us. But when they cause us to turn from earth to heaven, from time to eternity, from the creature to God, they are working together for our good, and made to yield unto us "the peaceable fruits of righteousness"—

"From every earthly pleasure,  
From every transient joy,  
From every mortal treasure,  
That soon will fade and die;  
No longer these desiring,  
Upwards our wishes tend,  
To nobler bliss aspiring,  
And joys that never end."

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JAN. 17.—O Lord, I will praise thee. Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Isa. xii. 1.

THOSE who have tasted the bitterness of alienation have enjoyed the luxury of renewed and restored sentiments of friendship and tenderness. But what is peace with a friend, with a brother, or a father, compared with peace with God? "In his favour is life," and "his loving-kindness is better than life." Who can describe the calm after a tremendous storm? It is a "peace which passeth all understanding." It is angels' food. It is more—

"Never did angels taste above,  
Redeeming grace and dying love."

Angels never knew what it was to have a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" to be delivered from; they never felt the anguish of a wicked conscience, and therefore they never felt the sunshine of rising hope beaming upon their distressed spirits; but the Christian by faith, placing his arms around the cross, can

say with the Apostle, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement."

"Believing, we rejoice  
 To see the curse remove;  
 We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,  
 And sing his bleeding love."

27

JAN. 18.—He will rejoice over thee with joy. Zeph. iii. 17.

THE satisfaction here implied is the Saviour's own joy arising out of the salvation of his people. He is "mighty to save." "He will save; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." First, We may view this joy of the Saviour as the *result of success*. Nothing is more distressing than to be unsuccessful in our efforts, and nothing is more delightful than to see those efforts crowned with success. What said our Saviour? "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come, but as soon as she is delivered of her child she remembereth no more her sorrow, for joy that a man is born into the world;" the very image inspiration applies to the Saviour and his sufferings, where it is said, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." This was "the joy that was set before him," for which "he endured the cross and despised the shame." And oh, what joy did the Saviour experience when he ascended "to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God," after saying, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." Secondly, This joy may be viewed as a *manifestation of his benevolence*. There is no pleasure to be compared with the pleasure of benevolence; none so unselfish, so pure, so elevating, and that will bear reflecting upon, like this. Such joy will be in proportion to the degree of benevolence possessed. How great therefore must be his joy! for

"His heart is made of tenderness,  
 His bowels melt with love."

Thirdly, Let us view the Saviour's joy as *indicative of the delight and complacency* with which he regards his people. "He taketh pleasure in them that fear him." He himself says, in addressing his church, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." For "as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." The Saviour's joy over and in his people is the *sinner's hope*. Oh, what encouragement does it afford to all penitents! If we were but as willing to receive his blessings as he is to confer them upon us, we, too, should go on our way rejoicing. When, therefore, we feel almost afraid to apply to him because of our unworthiness, let us remember

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28

that instead of offending him by so doing we shall give him the greatest pleasure. Lastly, The Saviour's joy is the *saints' example*. He was infinitely *more* than an example, and *nothing less*. If we depend upon him, we must resemble him. If we glory in his cross, we must tread in his steps; we must weep with him when he weeps, and rejoice with him when he rejoices; "for if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his."

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JAN. 19.—For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.  
1 Peter iii. 18.

THE righteous Lord loveth righteousness. He has united sin and sorrow by an adamant chain. "The soul," says he, "that sinneth shall die." When I look at the holy Son of God, I see "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" I hear him saying, "Behold and see if ever there was sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Other sufferers suffered only in some part, he suffered in every part capable of pain; others suffered occasionally, he continually, from the manger to the cross; other sufferers know not beforehand what they have to endure, he saw the end from the beginning, all was spread before him; others have

some to sympathise with them and to soothe their sorrows if they cannot remove them, but he looked for this in vain. He “looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but he found none.” With others, suffering is the offspring of sin; in him was no sin; “he did no evil, neither was guile found in his mouth.” He was the Holy One of God. He said to the multitude, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” Judas said, “I have betrayed innocent blood.” Is there unrighteousness with God? Does he punish the righteous with the wicked, and as the wicked, and *more* than the wicked? Here is a mystery. Here is a combination of the greatest innocence and the greatest suffering. Here is a mystery which would indeed be a contradiction and a blasphemy unless we could add another mystery to it, namely, that of substitution, that which arises from his interposition in our behalf, and

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29

saying, “Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom.” Oh, he snatched us away from the stroke and placed himself in our room, and “bore our sins in his own body upon the three.” Thus he suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God. “He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

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JAN. 20.—*We know in part.* 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

HEAVEN is a state of knowledge. Everything there will be favourable to the acquisition of wisdom. It is impossible to imagine how full, extensive, and profound our future knowledge will be when that “which is perfect is come, and that which is in part shall be done away.” But the Apostle shows that it *is* “in part” even now, and the Christian does partake of it even now; and thus even *here*, says the Apostle John, “we have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.” There is at present great restriction, but we are allowed to conceive of heaven as the scene of present knowledge perfected. The views

which the Christian now has of the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the beauties of holiness, the worth of the soul, the excellencies of the Saviour, and of the grace and glory of his character, are the same in kind though not in measure and degree as the views he will have hereafter. The knowledge he now possesses is like to that of the saints in glory, *peculiar* and *certain*. It is not mere opinion, nor conjecture, nor yet mere reasoning. In God's light he sees light. He can say with Paul, "I *know* in whom I have believed." "We *know* that if the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God." And there is also an influence in it which others never feel, which descends from the head into the heart. Therefore is it said that God gives his people a heart to know him. "And," said the Saviour, in his intercessory prayer, "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Heaven is thus already commenced, and though the *day* is hereafter, the *dawn* is now, and the dawn is produced by the same sun that produces the day.

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30

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JAN. 21.—*Seek ye my face.* Psalm xxvii.

THIS in the Scriptures stands for the whole of religion, and for two reasons: First, *Because it is with him we have principally to do.* He is the greatest and the best of beings. We are most importantly related to him, our principal dependence is upon him, our principal expectations from him, our principal connections with him. He is our Creator, Proprietor, Preserver, Benefactor, Governor, and our Judge. Secondly, *Because before we can have anything to do with him we must find him.* Essentially God is nigh unto us, for "in him we live, and move, and have our being." He is about our path, and is acquainted with all our ways—

"Oh, may these thoughts possess my breast,  
Where'er I roam, where'er I rest;  
Nor let my sinful passions dare  
Consent to sin, for God is there."

But, morally and spiritually considered, sinners are away from God, and God is away from them. We all left him criminally, and he left us penally. So that we who sometimes were "afar off," and were living without God in the world, have been "made nigh." Our first and chief concern, therefore, is to find God. Where shall we find him if we do seek? Why, in heaven. Hence we are taught to address him as "our Father, who art in heaven." But if ever we get there, and before we get there, we must find him—Where? In the Son of his love. Without him, God is a consuming fire. In him he is reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. He is to be found in his house; he has promised to be there, and his people have seen the goings of their God and their King in the sanctuary. God is to be found—and they have found him—in his "palaces for a refuge," at his table, at the family altar, and in the devotions of the closet.

"Where we seek him he is found,  
And every place is hallowed ground."

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31

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JAN. 22.—*The Lord is good.* Nahum i. 7.

HE is essentially good—immutably good—infinately good. The good of all creation is derived from him. They are only so many beams from this sun, or so many drops from this ocean. "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." But his goodness does not appear here in its highest form; and the reason is, these creatures never forfeited his care and kindness; they answer the purpose of their original creation. It is otherwise with us; we nave rebelled against him; we are transgressors from the womb; we deserve, as children of disobedience, that his wrath should be poured out upon us. And yet such is his marvellous loving-kindness, that even "the children of men put their trust under the shadow of his wings." And he spares us, and preserves us. He provides for us, and

gives us richly all things to enjoy. What a world has he fitted up for us! what sights for our eyes! what sounds for our ears! what relishes for our appetites! Yet, if he were to stop the bounties of nature and providence, we could even then exclaim with the Apostle John, "Herein is love." In what? "Not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Oh, this *ensures* every other blessing. "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." This *involves* every other. He is "all in all." By him and in him we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." How good is he, who not only without our desert and without our desire provided for us such a Saviour, but has disposed and enabled us also to avail ourselves of him; who has called us, not only by his word, but by his Spirit?" "Why," may every Christian ask—

"Why was I made to hear his voice,  
And enter while there's room,  
While thousands make a wretched choice,  
And rather starve than come?"

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,  
That sweetly forced me in,  
Else I had still refused to taste,  
And perish'd in my sin."

JAN. 23.—If then I be a father, where is my honour?  
and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord  
of hosts. Malachi i. 6.

IT becomes us to obey whatever God commands us, and to do whatever he enjoins. First, Because he has a *right* to command us. He is the sovereign; we are his subjects. He is the master; we are his servants. He is the father; we are his children. A king has no such right to the obedience of his subjects; a master has no such claims to the duty of his servants; a father has no such claims to the

regards of his children, as God has to all our homage. The reason is, they have not, and never can have, an absolute property in us. But God has, for it is “he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.” We derive from him our being, our powers, our possessions, all our enjoyments, and all our hopes. We are therefore his by infinite ties, and bound to serve him. And we cannot complain that we do not know what his demands are upon us. He has shown us what is good. He has told us what he has required of us. He has given us his word. We have his will, and to this we may repair, unawed by every authority in the universe unless his own, to know what he enjoins upon us. We, therefore, know his will; and to “him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” The servant which knoweth his lord’s will, and doeth it not, “shall be beaten with many stripes.” Secondly, Because all his commands are *reasonable*; none of them are arbitrary or tyrannical. We may not always be able to perceive the reasons on which they are founded; but there are reasons, and these reasons are now satisfactory to him, and by and by will be more apparent and satisfactory to ourselves. Thirdly, Because all his commands are *beneficial*. If a Christian serves God disinterestedly, even then he cannot serve him for naught. All that he enjoins upon us has special regard to our welfare, as well as his own glory; and “in keeping his commandments there is great reward.” And Fourthly, we should render obedience unto all God’s commandments, because they are all *practicable*; they all imply a power to obey, if not already possessed, yet attainable; if not in nature yet in grace; if not in ourselves, yet in him whose

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33

authority we recognise, and who is always accessible. Thus while we are not sufficient of ourselves, even to “think anything as of ourselves, our sufficiency is of God;” and while “without him Ave can do nothing,” yet with his strengthening us we can “do all things.” His commands, therefore, are so many intimations of success.

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JAN. 24.—For through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Eph. ii. 18.

THE effect of sin is to separate us and God, and to keep us from God. This is the condition of all men by nature. The degradation, the misery, the wretchedness of sin, all arise from our separation from God, and our happiness and our elevation must, therefore, arise from our re-admission to him, and fellowship and communion with him. And, says the Apostle, “we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” The approach to an earthly monarch may be difficult, and it must necessarily be very much limited. They cannot always personally receive every petition presented to them, nor can they hold intercourse with all their subjects; this would neither be in accordance with their ability or dignity. But with regard to believers and their Sovereign, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, they can have access to him at all times; they can tell him all that perplexes them, all that distresses and alarms them; they can communicate to him what they are not at liberty to communicate to their dearest friend; they can have access unto him in every place, talk with him by the way, and have communion with him, and, Isaac-like, they may find their meditations of him in the fields to be sweet; and even while transacting their ordinary business they may have delightful intercourse with him. Thus also we may have access unto him in his house, at his table; we may lean on his arm, repose in his bosom, and enjoy him as the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

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34

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JAN. 25.—We which have believed do enter into rest. Heb. iv. 3.

HEAVEN is a state of blessedness. All are capacitated for enjoying happiness, but there are some who have found it. These are they to whom the ever blessed God has assigned “the path of life,” and who are now in “his presence,”

where “there is fulness of joy,” and at his right hand, where “there are pleasures for evermore.” We do not question their happiness, nor are Christians here strangers to all that blessedness which they above are now enjoying. They also have attained to the glorious liberty of the sons of God, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus having already made them free from the law of sin and death; they are upheld by God’s free Spirit; they run in the way of his commandments with enlarged hearts. Is there a rest that remaineth for the people of God? We, says the Apostle, which believe, do even here “enter into rest.” Have the blessed multitude in heaven entered into pure, complete, and eternal peace? Why even here, the Apostle tells us, Christians are possessed of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeping their hearts and minds through Jesus Christ; even now their minds are kept in perfect peace, being stayed upon God. Are they not blessed because they are still with the Saviour, dwelling where he is, and beholding his glory? And do not Christians now enter into glory by the eye of faith? Do not they hold sweet communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, even now? Yes, blessed be God, these are the earnest and foretastes of that blessedness which is begun on earth and perfected in heaven.

“Blessed are the sons of God,  
They are wash’d in Jesus’ blood;  
They are happy now, and we  
Soon their happiness shall see.”

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JAN. 26.—How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways are past finding out. Rom. xi. 33.

LET us not therefore be surprised if sometimes we should be required to exercise implicit confidence in such a Being,

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35

and be compelled to trust him even in the dark. Is it to be supposed, that everything which he is doing in the church and in the world, in families and with regard to

individuals, should be level to our capacity? We are now "walking by faith, and not by sight;" and he is continually saying to us, "What I do ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter." A period is coming when we shall have the fullest and clearest perception of this truth, "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." They admire him *now*, but how much more will they admire him *then*. For though now, and in other cases, ignorance is the cause of wonder, yet here knowledge is the cause; and the more we know the more we shall admire, because he is not only perfect but infinite, and therefore we shall always be discovering more and more, and therefore honour and admire him more. Then he will "appear in his glory." "We shall see him then as he is." Then his work will be finished, then every mysterious dispensation will be unveiled to our view, then we shall see clearly how all that he did here harmonized with the truth of his word, how all conduced to the welfare of his people. *Now*, often he seems to forget them, to neglect them, to be adverse to them. How unlikely the events which befell Joseph appeared to fulfil the assurance given unto him, yet, by and bye, the whole was explained, and he could say, "Ye meant it for evil, but the Lord meant it for good." So shall it be with us; we shall not only see the wisdom and the rectitude and the goodness of his dispensations to our own satisfaction, but to his eternal praise. We shall say with Moses, "God is a rock, his work is perfect. His ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he;" and, with the adoring throng, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

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JAN. 27.—God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. 1 Cor. i. 27.

HERE we see the weakness of human instrumentality and the efficiency of divine agency. If we go back to the

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36

beginning of Christianity, we shall find the greatest work accomplished with means and instrumentality the most inadequate to the purpose. What a work, to set up the kingdom of God in a world lying in wickedness, to establish the gospel dispensation, and to extend it in the face of a world in arms against it. Its doctrines seemed unaccountable to human reason; its motives being spiritual were opposed to the carnal mind; its duties required the destruction of every evil passion, and the profession of it was sure to expose a man to reproaches, losses, exile, imprisonment and death. It had to overcome the edicts of emperors, the persecution of magistrates, the subtlety of philosophers, the craftiness and covetousness of priests, and the profligacy of the common people. His design has ever been to subdue all nations to the obedience of the faith. He therefore commanded his Apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And who were they? They were not fetched from the schools of Greece or Rome, but from the lake of Galilee, without power to compel, or riches to bribe, or learning to perplex, or eloquence to persuade, yet "the word of the Lord grew and multiplied" so that the gospel soon reached the boundaries of the unwieldy Roman empire. "The faith of the gospel has come unto you," says the Apostle to the Colossians, "as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit as it doth also in you." It is the Lord's doing and is marvellous in our eyes. Other agents would gain admiration by the excellency and competency of the means and instruments they employ. His praise springs from their weakness and unfitness. The barley cake of Gideon, the blowing of the priest's ram's-horns at the destruction of Jericho, the sling and stone of David, all teach the same truth, as the Apostle states, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us." So, when the nations of Europe were to be reformed from popery, Luther, a poor monk, and not the head of the catholic church, was to be converted and employed for the purpose. And if the Scriptures are

to be translated into the various languages of the East, God does not call for a first-rate scholar from the university, but takes a Carey from the humble craft of shoe-

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37

making. So it is often found *now* as to personal experience. One man goes into a place of worship from mere curiosity and is converted; another takes up a tract and reads it and is pricked in his heart. An accident befalls another and he reflects; a dream terrifies another, and he prays. The most likely means are nothing, unaccompanied by the energy of God, and the most unlikely means are available when he is pleased to employ them. Thus ministers shall not labour in vain, nor shall the humblest effort be in vain, but shall produce "all the good pleasure of his goodness."

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JAN. 28.—I create the fruit of the lips. Isa. lvii. 19.

TWO inquiries must be here made. What is intended by *the fruit of the lips*, and how it is produced? With regard to the first, we know, from the authority of Hosea, and also of the Apostle to the Gentiles, that this intended praise and thanksgiving. The latter, speaking of Christ, says, "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise unto God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name." And respecting the second God says, "*I create the fruit of the lips.*" He does this two ways: HE produces the SUBJECT of this praise; that is, providence, with its unnumbered mercies, and the gospel, with all its abundant privileges, promises, and blessings. The former good is often the result of human instrumentality employed by God's agency. The latter is entirely produced from "the good pleasure of his goodness." "He hath saved us. and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." This, therefore, is entirely supernatural; this comes alone from him without interference on our side, opposed to all our desert, and distinguished from all desire and preparation for the recep-

tion of it. Nothing can deserve our praise like the gospel. It is owing to the gospel that our country has risen to such distinction and pre-eminence. Oh that we esteemed it more highly than we do! God also produces the disposition itself. The *application* of the gospel is from him as well as the *existence* of it. "Not unto us, therefore," we are constrained to say, "not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name

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38

be the glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake," if a Saviour has not only been provided for us, but received by us. While we praise him for the seasons of the year, the beauties of nature, and the bounties of providence, let us adore and bless him for the unsearchable riches of Christ. In thus blessing God that we have been enabled to receive the gospel in the love and in the blessedness of it, we shall be yielding unto him the fruit of our lips, and he who thus "creates the fruit of the lips" will accept and honour it, for he says, "Whosoever offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

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JAN. 29.—Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. Psalm xxxiv. 8.

THE best way of knowing the goodness of God is by *tasting* it. Here David does not say, Head and see! hear and see! but "*Taste and see that the Lord is good;*" that is, apply it, make trial of it, and prove it for yourselves. The man of God here refers to experience. Experience means knowledge derived from experiment and trial in contradistinction to mere opinion, speculation, and conjecture. Experimental philosophy is universally commended, and properly speaking no other philosophy is appreciated. So what the Scriptures speak of with regard to faith, knowledge, repentance, humility, love, peace, and joy, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, may be reduced to experiment and trial in the same way; and there are numbers, blessed be God, who have not only read and heard, but have also "tasted

that the Lord is gracious," who know the Lord is good by their own experience, and can say, I know it, for I have realised it—I have enjoyed it. There are three advantages which result from this tasting or from this experimental knowledge. The first is *an increased desire after it*. This is natural and unavoidable, "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby, if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Secondly, It will *produce a fuller conviction* of its truth and importance. A poor unlettered man may be trusted in the presence of the most subtle philosopher who would endea-

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39

vour to persuade him that honey was sour, and that gall was sweet. He would say, You may reason and ridicule but you will never convince me; I know that honey is sweet and that gall is bitter, for I have tasted them. So is it with the real Christian; "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Thirdly, it will produce *fergency and earnestness in speaking of these things and in recommending them* to others. Such an one knows the value and efficacy of the medicine he recommends, he has tried it himself and has been cured by it; and the Christian knows what peace flows from a sense of pardoning love—that it is good to draw near to God—he knows there is a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." And with the Apostle John they will thus bear testimony: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." And shall not we also say,

"Now will I tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Saviour I have found,  
I'll point to his redeeming blood,  
And say, Behold the way to God!"

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JAN. 30.—He saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Titus iii. 5.

IT is by the agency of the Holy Spirit that we have been made to see our guilty, wretched, undone, and perishing

condition—by whom alone our once rebellious will has been bowed to God’s dispensations and to obey his will—by whom also the affections which were once earthly, sensual, and devilish are fastened and feasted on things above, and the memory is made to retain God in its knowledge, and the conscience to fear him, and by whom we are disposed to dedicate all we are and have to the service and glory of God, walking before him in newness of life. It is he alone that renders the gospel precious by impressing us with the sense of our wants, and showing us every blessing there that is adapted to relieve a fallen, guilty, depraved, helpless, perishing creature. It is he that makes the gospel of peace effectual to relieve the conscience under its pressure of distress, and also to purify the heart by faith, and to fill the life with all the fruits of righte-

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40

ousness, and this is unto the praise and glory, not of the man who exercises it, but of God who produces it. Thus it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy, he saved us; “for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Let us, therefore, give him the glory that is due to his holy name.

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JAN. 31.—The Lord is a stronghold in the day of trouble.  
Nahum i. 7.

OR, as it is in the margin, “He is their strength in the day of trouble.” He does not keep his people *from* trouble, but he is their refuge and relief *in* it. From whence does this “day of trouble” arise? Does it arise from *danger*? Why, he is our strength for protection. However persuasive or powerful our foes may be, we may say with David, “The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” and with Paul, “In all these things we are more than conquerors.” Or does the day of trouble arise from *duty*? Then he is our strength for assistance. How often have we been oppressed by a sense of our inability to perform the work required of us. While thinking of pluck-

ing out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand, of walking by faith instead of walking by sight, living while on earth with our conversation in heaven, and looking at the things which are unseen and eternal, well may we exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things? "The work looks fitter for an angel's strength than for a man's. And it is so; but we have more than the ability of an angel for the performance of it; "our sufficiency is of God." By this Abraham was enabled to offer up his son Isaac, and thus strengthened Daniel entered the lion's den, and the three Hebrew children the fiery furnace. Or is the day of trouble the result of *affliction*? Why, then he is our strength to support and deliver us. He does not always release his people from their afflictions, but he can sustain us under them, and comfort us in all our tribulations. Instead of releasing Paul from the thorn in the flesh, though he was very importunate in praying for its removal, he said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And Paul was perfectly satisfied that the trial should remain, since the "strength" to sustain it was

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41

insured to him. Most gladly, therefore, says he, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." And now the promise is, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be." Whatever the nature and degree of our affliction may be, we shall always find God to be a "very present help in the day of trouble."

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FEB. 1.—*Turn ye unto the.* Zech. i. 3.

WE have turned away from God, and the language of the Church well becomes us: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." This being the case, religion must always commence with a *turning* unto the Lord. The very meaning of the word conver-

sion is turning—from darkness to light—from sin to holiness—from the creature to God—as our end, our resting-place, and our portion. But this will never take place without a deep conviction of the wrongness and danger of the state we are in, and of the course we are pursuing, as well as of the importance and necessity of our being united to the blessed God, with whom is the fountain of life, and who alone can “supply all our need from his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” This conviction the Holy Ghost produces, and under the influence of it the turning to God will be *immediate* and without delay. “I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” *It will be penitential*; there will be a “sorrowing after a godly sort” that we have ever forsaken him. Under this conviction we shall turn to him *fully*, not merely forsaking some sins which are of easy abandonment, and performing some duties which are of easy execution, but the change will be entire. We shall seek him with our whole heart; “for we cannot serve God and mammon.” David therefore says: “I esteem all thy commandments concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way.” This turning will be *evangelical*. There is no turning to God aright but through the Mediator—or it will be turning towards a “consuming fire,” for

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42

such God is out of Christ. It is only in the Son of his love that he is approachable. “I am the way,” says he. “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” It is thus we came to God at first. It is thus we must come to God always. It is only here that we can find boldness and access with confidence, and as we thus submit ourselves to the righteousness that is of God, we are accepted in the beloved, and have the testimony that we please God.

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FEB. 2.—I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts.  
Zech. i. 3.

HIS command to turn unto him might have been enforced by his absolute right, and by his uncontrolled authority;

but he softens and sweetens it by his goodness and grace, assuring us that we shall not seek him in vain, but find him to the joy and rejoicing of our heart. This assurance is necessary. "We are saved by hope;" nothing can be done without hope. We have something here more than mere conjecture—mere peradventure—mere possibility, or probability. Possibility will, in some cases, actuate a man—and the beginning of a religious life is sometimes a kind of venture with young converts—but probability will influence even much more. But here we have *certainty*—we have all the assurance we can desire—founded upon the veracity of a true and faithful God. He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." He in effect says,

"Look from the borders of the pit  
To my recovering grace."

And see what it has actually done. Look at Manasseh, who sinned away all the advantages of a pious education; and yet "in his affliction he sought the Lord God of his fathers, and was found of him." How basely did the Prodigal conduct himself. He confessed that he was not worthy to be called a son; and all he could plead for was to be made like a hired servant; but when he turned to his father, the father saw him while he was yet a great way off, and had compassion on him, and "ran and fell upon his

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43

neck, and kissed him;" and not only clothed, but adorned him; not only fed, but feasted him. Let the goodness of God, therefore, lead us to repentance; and while God is turning to us with a smiling face and open arms, invoking us to return unto him, let us say, with the Church, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

NO one for a moment can doubt that this refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Observe two things. First, His *peculiar denomination*, "The Word." John is the only one of the sacred writers who speaks of him under this name; but this does not render it less worthy of regard, for "he wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost." Three things appear to be derived from John's use of the title, "The Word." First, That *it is intended to mark a person*. Nothing can be more false or forced than the meaning given by the Socinians, that it here means the wisdom of God. How could the wisdom of God be made flesh, and dwell among us? And how could we behold this as the only begotten of the Father? Secondly, The term indicates *previous existence*. When it is said the Word was made flesh, it conveys the idea that he was something else before. Thirdly, It is designed to mark a *Divine person*. The name given to God is expressly given to him. *Creation* is ascribed to him. All this could not have been affirmed of him, as a mere creature, or a super-angelic being. John here declares that he was God; and that he was the source of all life and existence. Observe, Secondly, His *incarnation*, "The Word was made *flesh*," which is saying that he became man. But he did not cease to be God in order to become man. Union is not transmission. As he was God before, so he could not cease to be God after, he took upon him our nature; "for he *took* not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Hence the Scriptures ascribe many things to him which will not apply to his Divine nature, or agree with his human nature separately. "Unto us a child is given." This does not refer to him as God. "And his name shall be called Wonderful." This does not refer to him as man.

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44

It is not the humanity of Christ that was from everlasting; and it is not the divinity of Christ that hung and suffered on the tree. So that there is neither contradiction nor impossibility in the incarnation of the Son of God; but it is a mystery, and will perhaps ever remain so. And what

is not a mystery? There is a mystery in the wind. Every blade of grass, and every part of matter is a mystery. And "great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh." And the Apostle makes it to be of so much importance, as to be the medium of our salvation. It is thus the Deity is brought down to our apprehension and to our reach. Thus he becomes what he could not else have been—our example. Thus he is able to sympathise with us in our distresses. Thus he would suffer, bleed, and die, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

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FEB. 4.—Unto me, unto am less than the least of all saints.  
Eph. iii. 8.

DISTINGUISHED and honoured as the Apostle had been, he does not he have himself unseemly. He does not think of himself more highly than he ought to think. He is not puffed up. "I am less," says he, "than the least of all saints." Bad grammar, but good divinity. The fact is, his feelings were often too powerful for expression—his meaning too big for common utterance; and therefore he used old words, or coined new ones, in order to produce an appropriate impression. The designation, "saints," means "holy ones;" it is therefore of *holiness* he is speaking, not of his condition, of his natural talents, of his learning, nor of his knowledge, but of his holiness. He does not say, I am the least of all writers: the least of all scholars: this would have been falsehood and affectation in him; but "I am less than the least of all holy ones;" and the reason of this distinction is this, that all other qualities and excellencies may be known in their subjects and in their effects, but not so of holiness. Holiness resides essentially within, and consists principally in the state of the heart, and in the rectitude of our motives and principles. For a man is not the more or less holy according to the number of religious actions he performs. These may be done without any love

to God in the performance of them. They may be done even from an improper motive. It is possible for a natural man to surpass a real Christian in many things that are materially good. But we are holy in proportion as our heart is right with God, and as our motives and principles are pure and heavenly. We cannot know what is in the heart of another, nor the degree of his motives and principles. If our conduct is better than his, his motives and principles may be superior to ours, and therefore in the view of God he may have more of moral and spiritual excellence.

It is thus we are to understand the admonition of the Apostle to the Philippians: "Let each esteem other better than himself." This maxim will not apply universally; to use it in some cases would be folly; for a strong and healthy man to esteem a weak and sickly one as more able to do many things than himself, or for a rich man to esteem a poor man richer than himself, or a scholar to esteem an illiterate man wiser than himself. But it is otherwise with regard to holiness: there we should never presume in our own favour, but, with the Apostle, we should be disposed to consider ourselves "less than the least of all saints."

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FEB. 5.—We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Eph. iii. 12.

HERE we see that while the Lord Jesus Christ is the object of our faith, he is also the medium of our access unto God, and that, to enjoy this privilege, our faith is as necessary in one sense as Christ is in another. The one is meritorious, the other instrumental. Here is the way of access, but faith is necessary to approach God with boldness and confidence. Let us observe three things respecting this faith in Christ, and the freedom we enjoy through it in drawing near to God. First, We have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of him as the *gift of God*. "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son;" and the Apostle says, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The conclusion is obvious, that if he should give us the greater he will

not withhold the less. If he has given us the one without asking, he will not deny the other upon our asking.

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46

Secondly, We have boldness and access by the faith of him *as the sacrifice for sin*. When a man is convinced of sin, nothing but this will satisfy him. Now he can come and plead with God through the atonement of the Lord Jesus. Thirdly, We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him as our *risen and exalted Saviour*. Thus God raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our hope might be in God. As "he was delivered for our offences," so "he was raised again for our justification;" and "he ever liveth to make intercession for us." He is our "advocate with the Father." He pleads on our behalf. Thus we have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of him. What is our worship? Is it having access unto God? Is it drawing nigh to God, and honouring him with the lip while the heart is far from him? or are we concerned to "worship God in the spirit," to "rejoice in Christ Jesus," while we have "no confidence in the flesh?" This is the happiness of a believer in Jesus, who is free and welcome to have access with confidence and boldness to God. Let us make use of this privilege both for ourselves and on behalf of others, being more enlarged in our desires, more emboldened in our hopes, and more importunate in our supplications.

"Thou art coming to a King,  
Large petitions with thee bring;  
For his grace and power are such,  
None can ever ask too much."

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FEB. 6.—Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Eph. iii. 20.

NOTHING is more painful to real affection than inability to help the beloved object—to behold the sufferer's wants we cannot relieve—pains which we cannot alleviate—to hear the parched lips saying, "Pity me, pity me, oh ye

my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me," and to be able only to shed unavailing tears. But, with regard to our heavenly Friend, "His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, nor his hand shortened that it cannot save." The Syro-Phenician woman in behalf of her daughter cried unto him, "Lord, help me," and she cried not in vain. The

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47

father of the lunatic brought his child to his disciples, but they could not dispossess the evil spirit. He then cried "Lord, have mercy on my son," and he succeeded. Thus we see he answers to the declarations of his blessed word. He comes forward as "mighty to save"—able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. Speak we of wisdom? His understanding is infinite; he sees the end from the beginning, and always knows what is best for us. Speak we of wealth? His riches are boundless. The world is his and the fulness thereof; all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. Speak we of strength? Lo! he is strong. "Nothing is too hard for the Lord." Then he can conquer, and enable us, worms as we are, to vanquish too. "We are made more than conquerors through him that hath loved us." And he will raise us up at the last day; and therefore believers are looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, "who shall change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

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FEB. 7.—And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed. Gen. xxviii. 10, 11.

THE life of Jacob was a very chequered scene, and one remark may be made on the whole of his history. His greatest trials sprung from his greatest comforts, and his greatest

comforts sprung from his greatest trials. He passed through a great number of trials, one of which arose from the resentment of his brother Esau; to preserve him from Esau's fury Jacob was sent to his uncle Laban, who dwelt in Padan-Aram. This journey must have exercised Jacob very severely. He was now parted from his parents; the journey was long, he had been tenderly brought up; he was alone—no beast to carry him, no guide to direct him, nor companion to soothe his mind by conversation. After a journey of forty miles, his safety prevented his going

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48

further that night. What will he do for a lodging? Here is no building near him, no materials to build even a temporary shelter. The clouds serve him for a tent, the darkness for his curtains, and the ground for his bed; "and he took of the stones of the place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." How happy in trouble, and how safe in danger, are they who have the all-sufficient Jehovah to watch over them and to preserve them in their going out and in their coming in! Jacob slept, but his heart waked. We have every reason to suppose that what he had most reflected upon in the day continued to occupy and impress his thoughts in the night season. God, therefore, took advantage of this; and though much that is here is supernatural, yet we may be fully assured that if God had more of our waking thoughts he would have more of our sleeping thoughts too. "A dream cometh through the multitude of business." Jacob dreamed. Dreams are generally frivolous and absurd, yet there are some good, though weak, persons who lay much stress upon them; hence they are depressed or elated according to the character of their dreams. This is unquestionably wrong; for though God has spoken to his people in this way, it is not his ordinary way. "We have a more sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place." If from this blessed Book we have reason to conclude that we are the servants of God, we may rely on him to take care of us and to pro-

vide for us in whatever circumstances we are placed. But the circumstances of his dream are worthy of our attention, because they have the signature of God upon them.

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FEB. 8.—And behold, a ladder set tip on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold! the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. Gen. xxviii. 12, 13.

OBSERVE what he *saw* and what he *heard* in his dream. As to what he saw: “Behold, a ladder set up on the earth,

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49

and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” We think this was doubtless intended to be a representation of the Divine presence, observing everything and keeping up a constant communication between heaven and earth. Our Saviour said to Nathaniel, “Hereafter ye shall see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” Here then we have found the mystery of Jacob’s ladder. It is a representation of the Son of God. The extent of the ladder, reaching from earth to heaven, shows his Deity and humanity. The angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man show that these glorious beings are peculiarly connected with his mediatorial work. He was seen of angels—at his birth; he was relieved by them in the wilderness; they strengthened him in the garden, proclaimed his resurrection, and attended him back to heaven. He is the medium of all intercourse between heaven and earth. Every blessing comes to us through his mediation: so, as we here see, does this blessing of the ministration of angels. In consequence of what he has done and suffered, and from the relation in which we stand to him, they are “all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation.” The

poorest Christian upon earth is more superbly attended than the mightiest monarch that ever swayed a sceptre. He also saw the Lord standing above. Standing was in this case the posture of attention, and all the scheme of providence and of redemption is under his review. This is what he saw. What did he hear? Why, the Lord repeated unto him the covenant made with his father, and ratified it with him. He then accommodates himself more immediately to Jacob's present situation and circumstances. Jacob was alone; God promises to be with him: he was exposed; he promises to keep him: he was an exile; he promises to bring him home again. All this was true. All this was to be relied on. God assured him that he would not leave him until he had brought to pass all that of which he had spoken to him. And his word is firmer than the earth or the heavens; for "heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall not pass away." What could Jacob desire more? What could God engage to do more?

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50

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FEB. 9.—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. 2 Tim. iii. 16.

THE Bible is an inspired book. It claims for itself no less a distinction and pre-eminence. Wise and good men may differ a little as to the mode of this inspiration, but this does not affect the reality nor the nature of its communications. The Bible is full of God, and it is able to make us wise unto salvation. I take up this Book and read; and I there find an infinite adaptation to my state as a sinner. If I am a wanderer, here is a guide; if I am enslaved, here is redemption; if I am all guilt and weakness, here is righteousness and strength. I take up the Book and read, and I immediately perceive that it must have been written by a Being who knew me, and knew me perfectly, and by a Being who was concerned, and perfectly concerned, for my welfare—That is the blessed God. I take up the Book and read,

and I say such heavenly benevolence and such pure morality could not flow but from the Fountain of all purity and benevolence. I take up the Book and read, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." "By love serve one another." What, compared with these, was pagan philosophy? and what, compared with these, is modern infidelity? How abundant are the proofs that the Bible is desirable, useful, and necessary to man; that this alone can rescue us from the thralldom of corruption, free our minds from stinging doubts and tormenting fears; that without this all is confusion without us and all is dark within us; that this alone can instruct us in ignorance, sanctify us in prosperity, sustain us in adversity, and enable us to triumph in death. We cannot question either the Divine inspiration of the sacred Scriptures, or of their being fully able to accomplish their design, that "the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

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FEB. 10.—The Spirit of Jesus Christ. Phil. i. 19.

THIS is not the only place where the Spirit is ascribed to Jesus Christ. To the Romans the Apostle says, "If any

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51

man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." It is the same Spirit which he partook of as man, and which prepared him for the discharge of his mediatorial work. All his people are as really partakers of this Spirit as himself, but only with this difference: they have it in measure, while he has the Spirit without measure. They have an "unction from the Holy One," but he was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." He also obtained the Spirit for us. He possesses the Spirit; from him alone we can receive it. "The Son quickeneth whom he will," and it is with him we have immediately to do; for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and from his fulness we may receive, "and grace for grace." Observe the *importance of the supply of the Spirit*. We need this

influence *continually*. The Apostle needed it; ministers need it; Christians of all ages and under all circumstances need it. We need it in duties, that we may be able to perform them aright; we need it in our warfare, that we may be more than conquerors; we need it in our trials, that we may be preserved from sinking or sinning in the day of adversity, that we may acquiesce in the dispensations of Providence, and say, "Let him do what seemeth him good." Observe, also, the *manner in which this influence is communicated*. By "the supply." As the body is sustained and refreshed day by day, so it is with regard to the spiritual life. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Let us therefore remember this, and seek for it. Let us not rely on natural principles or former experiences, or on our frames; but let us seek to "be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." Thus, however weak in ourselves we may be, we can become "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." If in ourselves we can do nothing, with Christ thus "strengthening us by his Spirit in our inner man" we can do all things.

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FEB. 11.—He knoweth them that trust in him.  
Nahum i. 7.

DOES he not know those who do *not* trust in him? Yes, he does. "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he pondereth all his goings." This knowledge, therefore, may

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52

at first view seem to be no privilege. But it *is* a privilege, and it affords no common satisfaction to the mind of the Christian to reflect, that under all the misconceptions of friends, and the reproaches of enemies, "he knoweth them that are his." Yes, "he knoweth our frames, and remembereth that we are but dust;" "he knows our souls in adversity;" and he knows all our walkings through the wilderness, all the moral maladies of the mind, and what remedies to apply; he knows where and when to afflict, and how to deliver, and so as to make "all things work together

for our good." Is not this a privilege—a source of satisfaction which lays the foundation for his universal providence? As the prophet says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." Knowledge here does not intend mere perception and intelligence, but approbation, complacency, and acknowledgment; therefore it is said, "If a man love God, the same is known of him;" that is, he is approved of and delighted in: the meaning therefore is, that Christians are "accepted in the Beloved;" that God is "well pleased with them for his righteousness' sake," that he "takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy;" that their alms are the odour of a sweet smell; that their services are spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; and that God stands in an attitude of the most perfect friendship toward them and says of them, as he did of Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee." What then remains, but that we say with the Church, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation—my God will hear me."

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FEB. 12.—Surely, the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. Gen. xxviii. 16.

HOW strikingly does the ignorance of Jacob on this occasion represent the *ignorance of mankind at large!* We cannot go from the presence of God, nor flee from his Spirit. He is in every place; "he fills heaven and earth, beholding the evil and the good." He sees all we do, hears

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53

all we say, knows all we think, whether it be good or whether it be evil; but how little do men in general imagine this! They do not realize this solemn fact, nor think that God "compasseth their path and their lying down, and is acquainted with all their ways." It also represents the *ignorance of God's people* themselves. They are prone to imagine that they shall be alone, or that they are alone,

in trying situations and circumstances. God's manifestations to his people are often very unlooked for, for he looks not only to deliver and to relieve them, but to surprise them; to cause it at "even-tide to be light," and to turn the "shadow of death into the morning." Still we should look for these tokens of his gracious presence, especially in trouble; because he has expressly said, not only "I will never leave nor forsake thee," but "I will be with thee in trouble." We should, therefore, be sure to expect him *there*; for, have not his people always found him there? Spilsbury suffered for conscience sake; he had been in prison and released once, and when he was apprehended a second time, and they were leading him away to prison, and his wife and children were weeping around, he said "O, weep not for me; I am not afraid to go to prison now, for I found God there the first time." Did not John find him when labouring as a slave in the Isle of Patmos? Did not Daniel find him in the den of lions? Did not the three Hebrew children find him in the fiery furnace? Did not Joseph find him in the prison? Have not his people in all ages found him a very present help in every time of trouble? Little did Jacob imagine that such a scene awaited him here.

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FEB. 13.—*Your joy.* John xvi. 24.

THERE is, then, a joy belonging to Christians. "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." *Your joy*, says the Saviour. The intimation would have been absurd, if there was not a joy provided for them, and valued by them, to which they were entitled, and of which they were possessed. This accords not, indeed, with the opinions of the people of the world; according to them, religion prescribes a joyless course, engaged in which, we must bid

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54

adieu to everything like pleasure. According to them—if it smiles on eternity, it frowns on time; if it renders death safe, it renders life melancholy and gloomy. But where

did they learn this? *At the bar of reason?* As all happiness depends on God, is it likely that he will allow those who love and serve him to be less happy than those who hate and oppose him? Where did they learn this? *At the bar of experience?* If we consult those who have made the trial of his service, they will tell us that since they have served him they have found his yoke easy, and his burden light. Where did they learn this? *At the bar of Scripture?* Why, this assures us that Religion's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." What say its *commands?* "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice." What say its *promises?* "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord." What say its *representations?* "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound." "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day" "And what say its *examples?* Look to the first Christians, none of whom escaped persecution. Their religion made them sufferers, but it did not deprive them of pleasure and comfort; they "received the word in much affliction," and "in joy of the Holy Ghost." They "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." The reason that we see and hear so little of joy among Christians now, is that everything in this cold wintry world is adapted to repel instead of drawing forth their joy; and, moreover, theirs is a joy with which strangers intermeddle not. Their joy floats not upon the surface, but dwells deep in the recesses of the heart, making holidays there. And lastly, if Christians do not rejoice, it is because they do not live as they ought; they do not live up to their privileges.

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FEB. 14.—That your joy may be full. John xvi. 24.

WITH many Christians their joy is feeble, stunted, and ever varying. Yet there is a fulness of this joy—a twofold fulness—there is an *absolute* fulness of this joy. This is reserved for the believer, in another world, when he "shall be presented before the throne of his glory with exceeding

55

joy." "In thy presence," says the Psalmist, "is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." The other is *comparative*, and this is attainable here. The Apostle prayed on behalf of the Romans, that they might be "filled with all joy and peace in believing;" and here the Saviour intimates that the completion of this joy is very desirable. It is so on three grounds. First, As the *ornament and recommender of religion*. There is nothing adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour, or that recommends religion to those around us, more than this joy; we should therefore be careful to showmen that there is a reality, an excellency, and a blessedness in religion. Secondly, This joy is an *assistant in duty*. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." Sorrow is depressive and unnerving, joy is emboldening, impulsive and communicative. If this joy abounded, we should be less ashamed and afraid of confessing what we believe in the heart. How it enlivens duty and feeds zeal! This joy is like oil to the wick of a lamp, and like wind to the sail of a ship: it sets all, and keeps all, in motion. It weans the believer's heart from the world by finding a substitute infinitely richer and sweeter—

"As, by the light of open day,  
The stars are all conceal'd,  
So earthly pleasures fade away  
When Jesus is reveal'd."

Thirdly, This full joy is a *supporter in the hour of affliction*. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." What could have been more distressing than the situation of the church in the days of Habakkuk? "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:" yet, says she, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

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FEB. 15.—My house is not so with God. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

HERE is a depth of distress. David experienced many sore trials; the affliction to which he refers here was domestic, and principally of a moral nature. Religion does not de-

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56

stroy or eradicate relative feelings; but it improves, enlivens, enlarges, and regulates them. David's heart was strongly set upon his house. Hence it was that he felt suffering from this quarter touch him to the quick. And who does not? "A man's chief foes," says the Scripture, "are of his own household;" and the same may be said of his trials and afflictions. A man can endure the storms and buffetings of the world when he finds in his home a calm and an inviting retreat; but how hard to bear when no comfort grows there, when nothing but sorrow is to be gathered there! What disappointments do fond parents experience from this quarter! "Children," says Mr. Henry, "are certain cares, and uncertain comforts and probable crosses." One perhaps is maimed in body; another is unsuccessful in business; a third is wretched in his connections; another is diseased; and another is carried down to an early grave, and left under a stone on which is inscribed by a bleeding heart, "Childhood and youth are vanity"—"Thou destroyest the hopes of men;" while another is seen walking the downward road, a companion of transgressors. How was it with David? Various domestic calamities had befallen him. Ah! this was the sting of his affliction—"My house is not so with God." Some religious parents can enter into his feelings, while they often think of their children, of their forms, of their features, of their talents, of their accomplishments, of their worldly prospects, and of their settlement in life; but this is the principal thing—what they should be with God. If they are not so with him as it ought to be, as they wish it to be, as they hoped it would be, everything else is like the chaff that the wind driveth away. And there are some who are saying, We have waited and we have watched and we have prayed, and nothing grows; after all our endeavours we see

them turning back, turning aside following every folly—like the deaf adder, nothing charms them but sin, “charm we never so wisely.” Errors will grow, and bad tempers will grow fast enough; but the growth of religious principles, of the seeds of truth sown in the youthful mind, depends upon Divine grace. The grace that softened our hearts can soften the hearts of those who are dear to us, however hardened through the deceitfulness

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57

of sin. “Instead of the thorn may come up the fir tree and instead of the brier may come up the myrtle tree.” “although” at present “he maketh it not to grow.”

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FEB. 16.—He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. This is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow.  
2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

HERE is an all-sufficiency of consolation. Although my house is not so with God as it ought to be, as I wished it to be, as I hoped it would be; though my family is in disorder and distraction; though irreligion has expelled peace and comfort from my home; I can look abroad, and I can look above too, and I can find something in which to wrap my poor troubled spirit: the gracious engagement of my God holds firm. Here I am prepared, as if lie should say, for anything and everything; here I find the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; here I ride at anchor, and say, in the storm,

“A hope so much divine,  
May troubles well endure.”

Now let us feast our souls upon this heavenly manna: it is meat to eat which the world knows not of. And first, It tells us that God has entered into a covenant with us to be our God and guide even unto death, and our portion for ever; that this covenant is *everlasting*, and that its counsels and contrivances bear the most ancient date. “Yea,” says God, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love,

therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Secondly, This covenant is *ordered in all things*; nothing in it is left to contingency; wisdom presided over mercy in the formation of it; all its parts are arranged with a view to the whole, and with a view to their end. Thirdly, This covenant is *sure*. Its promises and performances are absolutely certain; he has sworn as well as promised, and because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself—"Surely in blessing I will bless thee." Observe also the *importance* he attaches to it: "it is all my salvation;" all that was necessary to its present, full, and final accom-

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58

plishment and enjoyment is included here. He tells us also of the *love* he bore to it: it is "all my desire."

"The Lord my portion is,  
I shall be well supplied;  
Since he is mine, and I am his,  
What can I want beside?"

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FEB. 17.—This is all my salvation, and all my desire.  
2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

ALL my salvation requires to be done, and all my salvation requires to be given, is included in the everlasting covenant. And how much is required! Is the pardon of my sin necessary? There it is: "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Is holiness necessary? There it is: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you, and a new heart will I give you." Is strength necessary? "The Lord is my strength and my song, and has become my salvation," and he will put strength in us. Is grace necessary? The covenant gives it. Is glory necessary? It provides it. Is God necessary himself, with all his relations and attributes? There is the grand provision in the covenant: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." So therefore all the Lord's people have each a

God for himself; a God to guide, to guard, and to supply all their need from his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. David also says, "This covenant of Salvation is all my desire." The believer desires to comprehend, with all saints, what is its height, and depth, and length, and breadth. He desires more of all this salvation, but not more than all its rich and glorious provisions. If we regard this as the supreme good, it will be all our desire to know more clearly our interest in this covenant, and to feel more richly an experience of its blessings, and to live more entirely according to its motives and encouragements. If we thus regard the blessings of this well-ordered covenant, our hold of other things will be loosened; and we shall sing, with Doddridge:—

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59

"All my capacious powers can wish  
 In this doth richly meet;  
 Nor to my eyes is light so clear,  
 Nor friendship half so sweet."

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FEB. 18.—That it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater. Isa. lv. 10.

WHAT would our world be without the snow and the rain from heaven? If God were to make the heavens over us to be as brass, the earth would soon be beneath us as iron. But now see the consequences of these influences—how his paths drop fatness, and how the valleys are made to stand thick with corn; and let us observe how, when these showers come down, the earth brings forth and bears, and gives "seed to the sower and bread to the eater;" that is, furnishes a supply both for present provision and future propagation. Let us see how easily this may be applied to the gospel. What would any country, town, village, or individual be without the Scriptures? Perishing for lack of knowledge. But when the gospel comes, it brings along with it the living bread, the staff of spiritual and eternal life. In other words, it brings pardon, friendship with

God, the renovation of our natures, all the fruits of the Spirit—which are “joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” And as the husbandman is a sower as well as an eater, so is the Christian. He enjoys the blessings of the gospel himself, but then he is to convey them to others; and the gospel has been preserved and maintained in our world in the same way as the corn—not by miracle but by propagation. The one is by making it the duty of all who have received it to extend and diffuse it, and the other is by making it a *privilege* to do it; and it does this by producing in them a disposition for it, so that their duty becomes their delight. If we drop a single grain of wheat into the ground, it will yield a number of similar grains. If we sow them also, they will produce many more, so that from one single grain of corn there will be a sufficiency with which to disseminate a furlong, a field, a district, a province, a country, yea, and the globe itself. Once all Christianity was cen-

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60

tred in the Saviour. He imparted it to twelve apostles, and then to seventy disciples, and they to thousands. God says, “I will sow them in the earth:” that is, they shall be the means of producing their like; they shall multiply. “I will cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” “I will bless them, and they shall be a blessing.”

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FEB. 19.—I will remember thee from the land of Jordan?  
and of the Hermonites. Psalm xlii. 6.

THERE are two ways in which we may understand these words—both instructive, and perhaps both included. First, As an expression of *determined confidence*; as if he had said, “In whatsoever situation, place, or circumstance I may be found, I *will* remember God, and I *will* hope and confide in him.” How often in the Scriptures do we find good men imagining the worst, and yet hoping for the best! Thus the church in the days of Habakkuk, after surveying

their condition, and finding every indication of prosperity destroyed, says, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Thus David sang in the 46th psalm, a psalm of which Luther was very fond, so that when his timid but good friend Melancthon, who had not his fortitude, was distressed, "Come," says Luther, "let us sing the 46th psalm, and let Rome and hell do their worst." And so says David here, as if he had said, "Wherever I am, O my God, I will think of thee; and if banished from my own palace, and deprived also of thy sanctuary and public ordinances, I will think of thee and be comforted." And so may we say, whatever may be our circumstances, I will call thee to remembrance, and exercise confidence in thee. Thou, Lord, only art "my portion in the land of the living." And in whatever situation, however disadvantageous and trying, I may be found, I will remember thee. Secondly, Then we may consider it also as an expression of *confidence derived from reflection*. He would remember God "from the land of Jordan," etc., because he had been there, and had experienced there what would always serve to increase and confirm his confidence in God. He does not tell us what God had done for him in these

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61

places, but it is obvious that they had been scenes of divine manifestations and interpositions. Let us call to remembrance what God has done for us in providence and grace what proofs we have received of his kindness, faithfulness, and power. It is our duty and privilege not only to notice God's appearances for us at the time, but to treasure them up in our mind, that we may recur to them; for they were intended not only for our immediate relief, but in order to be cordials against our future faintings.

"His love in time past forbids me to think  
 He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;  
 Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review  
 Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through."

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FEB. 20.—*The hill Mizar.* Psalm xlii. 6.

WE know, from accurate maps of the land of Canaan, where the Jordan rolled; we know where was the land beyond Jordan; we know where was the region possessed by the Hermonites; but no one has informed us what or where this hill Mizar was. The word in the margin is from the *little hill*. Now we know not what took place on this hill. It might be here that the Lord delivered him “out of the paw of the lion,” and “out of the paw of the bear;” but whether the supposition be correct or not, we may be assured there was something that served to impress it on the mind of David, and thus to increase his confidence and his hope. All places are alike to God, but they are not the same to us. There are few persons who have not some place toward which they look with peculiar interest. How dear must be to a mother the spot in the churchyard that holds the ashes of her darling child! How endeared and affecting must the cave of Machpelah have been to Abraham after it contained his beautiful and beloved Sarah! We are told that Mary was gone to the grave of her brother to weep there. And how many places are interesting in review! How many spots have been made sacred by meditation and intercourse with God, and of which we could say, “This is none other than the house of God!” There are spots toward which we can look, where God freed our mind from a grievous snare and temptation, and

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62

made us free indeed; where God commanded a wonderful deliverance for us; where he turned the shadow of death into the morning, and where at eventide it was made light. These Mizars, these little hills, how precious do they become in the remembrance!

“Here to these hills my soul will come,  
Till my beloved calls me home.”

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FEB. 21.—*He was rich.* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

LET us notice the SAVIOUR'S GREATNESS—"He was *rich*." Then he existed before his incarnation. Discarding his pre-existence, what sufferable meaning can be assigned to the Apostle's language? A man cannot pass from one situation or condition to another before he exists; and where there is no previous dignity there can be no condescension. Hear what he saith himself: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." "Before Abraham was, I am." John says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Thus, we not only find him existing, but existing divinely too. How rich was he in the *nature and claims of Deity!* How we are lost in the thought of eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience! How rich must he be who possessed all these attributes of Deity! And he possessed them. "In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." How rich was he whose dominion was universal, and whose possessions were boundless! He could say, "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; the world is mine and the fulness thereof." *How* rich must he be who could produce all these, and uphold them by the word of his power! "The eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season." "He openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." Then in him were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." What accomplished beings have we had in our world! How wealthy are some in mind! We think of Newton, Bacon, Boyle, Locke, Sir William Jones, &c. But if we take all the wisdom of all the men who ever

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63

lived on earth, and add to this all the intelligence of all the angels in heaven, still we should bear in mind the fact, that all these in their aggregate are no more to his infinite understanding than the drop to the ocean, or a beam to the sun, and that all had been derived from him. He was

rich in all communicable blessings—blessings of grace and of glory, providential and spiritual, of time and of eternity.

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FEB. 22.—*He became poor.* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

FROM the Saviour's greatness let us pass to HIS HUMILIATION. We are not to suppose from hence that he ceased to be what he had been, or that he divested himself of the prerogatives of Deity. This was impossible; but he veiled them. The first degree of his humiliation was *his assuming our nature*. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." It would have been a low stoop in him if he had taken upon him the nature of angels; but he stooped much lower. "Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." The next degree in his humiliation was the *manner* in which he became incarnate. Jesus appeared in no worldly grandeur; nothing could be more obscure, abased, abject, than the circumstances attending his birth: born in a stable and laid in a manger. His mother acknowledged to God the "low estate of his handmaiden." Nor was he exempted from the weakness of infancy. He tottered before he could walk, lisped before he could speak; he passed from ignorance to knowledge; he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. He was brought up at no university, and was not trained at the feet of any Gamaliel. Therefore the people said, "Whence hath this man knowledge? seeing he was never taught." He was poor *in accommodation*. He said himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He was poor *in reputation*. He was "a worm, and no man." He was called "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, and the friend of publicans and sinners;" a Samaritan, an enemy of Cæsar, and a blasphemer of Moses. He was poor *in sympathy*. The feelings of persons struggling with hardships, or under

sorrow, are often relieved when they excite commiseration and notice; for it is natural for the sufferer to exclaim, "Pity me, pity me, oh ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." "I looked," said he, in his agony, "for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." Where is the multitude he fed with the loaves and fishes? Where are the blind whose eyes he opened? And his disciples, where are they all? They have forsaken him, and fled. Angels who ministered to him in the wilderness, where are ye? Almighty God, where art thou? "My God, my God," he cries, "why hast thou forsaken me?"

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FEB. 23.—*I am the truth.* John xiv. 6.

THERE is the *truth of sincerity*—and Jesus is the "faithful and true Witness," in his lips there was no guile. There was always a correspondence between his words and his works. Everything he said could be relied upon, and can be relied upon now. There is the *truth of accomplishment*—he was full of this. Under the former dispensation all was figure and type: "the law was a shadow of good things to come," but "the body was Christ." He was the true bread which came down from heaven; the true rock whose streams flowed in the wilderness; the true tabernacle "which the Lord pitched, and not man;" the true mercy-seat. Every bleeding bullock, every slaughtered lamb, proclaimed him aloud as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." All had its fulfilment in Him. There is the *truth of reality*. All on earth is shadow, but here all is substance.

"In vain we lavish out our lives  
To gather empty wind,  
The choicest blessings earth can yield  
Will starve a hungry mind."

But his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed; and he that eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood hath everlasting life. Then there is the *truth of doctrine*. There are various kinds of truth; historical, philosophical,

and scientific truth; but he was *Divine Truth*. That truth which regards the soul and eternity; which tells us

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65

all we want to know, and all we must know; which tells us of our ruin and our recovery; of our reconciliation with God; of the only way of justification; of our sanctification; of the only way of obtaining a title to heaven, and a meetness for it. All this he revealed, and all this is contained in the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

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FEB. 24.—For the mountains shall depart, and the hills he removed; hut my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace he removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. Isa. liv. 10.

THE covenant of works, made with Adam, and the national covenant of the Jews, were soon destroyed; but the covenant of grace and peace is immutable and immoveable. It is sure to all who are interested in its blessings. It is as sure as the truth, as the faithfulness, and as the promise of God can make it; for he has sworn as well as promised, and because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself. "Surely in blessing I will bless thee." Formerly covenants were made by sacrifice. Instances of this are to be met in profane as well as in sacred history; and it is here we read of the "blood of the everlasting covenant, by which the Lord Jesus was brought again from the dead." A person may fail in his engagement, however solemnly made, either by forgetfulness, or change of mind, or inability to execute it; but this can not apply here. Blessed be God, he cannot forget—"his understanding is infinite." He cannot change, for he is "without variable-ness, or the shadow of turning." He can never feel weakness, for he is the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, and in whom is everlasting strength. Therefore, all the "promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by him." A believer may therefore stand firm on the rock of everlasting ages. "Yea, the mountains and the

hills shall depart; heaven and earth may and will pass away, but my word," saith he, "shall not pass away; neither shall my covenant be removed, saith the Lord." Let us trust, and not be afraid. A good man lately, when he was dying, seemed to be much in anguish and agony of spirit. It was a struggle with unbelief, but faith pre-

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66

vailed; after a while he opened his eyes again, and raising his hands, he said, "His promise is yea and amen, and never was forfeited yet;" and immediately expired.

"Oh, for a strong and lasting faith,  
To credit what the Almighty saith;  
To embrace the message of his Son,  
And call the joys of heaven our own."

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FEB. 25.—Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
2 Cor. viii. 9.

THERE are many who do not know it—who have never heard of his name; they are the proper objects of our compassion: we should daily pray for them, that "his way may he known upon earth, his saving health among all nations." But it is otherwise with us. "To us is the word of this salvation sent." It matters very little what we know, if we know not this; yet it is a lamentable fact, that there are many to be found in this land of light who are ignorant of the leading truths of the gospel; these are hastening into a miserable eternity. But persons may not only perish from ignorance, they may perish also by knowledge. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Oh, the grand thing is for us to know "the truth as it is in Jesus," to know the way of salvation, to know the way everlasting. Oh, there is a *certainty*, there is an excellency in this knowledge which distinguishes it from every other. There is *blessedness* in it. "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound." There is *freedom* in it. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." There is *eternal life* in

it. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It is therefore more than a *speculative* knowledge that the Apostle intends. Of what advantage would it be for us to know that he is the foundation, and we never build upon it? Or that he is the refuge, and we never flee to it? Or that he is the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and we never wash therein? This gospel belongs to the heart; it requires all our feeling, and it is impossible for us to receive it as we ought—as a message faithful and worthy

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67

of all acceptation—unless it excites feelings such as nothing else can produce, and is accompanied with dispositions and pursuits such as nothing else is characterized by.

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FEB. 26.—The glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

John i. 14.

HERE is a glorious object to behold. Not the glory of the world, or of the princes of the world, which cometh to nought. Not the glory of a temporal empire, which the Jews were looking for. Not the glory of a worldly conqueror—a glory stained with blood, concerning which the late Bishop Porteus says, "One murder makes a villain; millions a hero." Not the glory of statesmen. No, but a godlike glory; "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." God has many children by creation, and he has many children by adoption, for all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty; but he is "the only begotten Son of the Father." He, therefore, is raised in his glory beyond the glory of Moses, or of Solomon, or of angels. "For to which of the angels said he, at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? "But, "when he bringeth forth his first begotten into the world he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." They who saw him saw "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." His attributes, actions, and spirit, all proved

a Divine relation, superior to every creature—to an infinite and Almighty Being; and “we behold the light of the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ,” and the perfections of the one are the perfections of the other. And, says the Saviour, “He that hath seen me hath seen my Father also, for I and my Father are one.”

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FEB. 27.—*We beheld his glory.* John i. 14.

HOW was this perception of the Redeemer’s glory realized? First, They saw his glory *corporeally*, with their bodily senses; they heard him in *conversation* and *preaching*. They saw his glory at his *baptism*, in his *transfiguration*, in the *miracles he wrought, in the garden of Gethsemane*,

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68

*at his crucifixion*. How much of his glory did they see *after his resurrection*, and when he ascended to his Father, and the heavens received him out of their sight, and *on the day of Pentecost*? Before this “the Holy Ghost was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” “He hath showed forth this,” says the Apostle, “which ye now see and hear.” All these new tongues are his, *and in the conversion of the three thousand* they saw the glory of his power displayed in giving efficacy to the word of his grace. They now saw his kingdom was not of this world, that his death, was a propitiation for sin, and that he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. They not only saw the Saviour’s glory *corporeally*, but *spiritually* too. Others saw the miracles, but believed not on him. But it pleased God, said the Apostle, to “reveal his Son in me.” And it is the same now; while he is revealed *to* others, he is revealed *in* his people. And according to the Saviour’s own word, “He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life.” Are we able to make this acknowledgment? Can we say we have “beheld his glory?” for this is possible now. He is now to be seen by the eye of faith, and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Yes, he is to be seen now in the gospel,

in his house, in his ordinances, in his people, and in his works. If we have beheld his glory, then we have been abased in our own eyes; then the world has ceased to overcome us; then we can say with Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord;" and we shall exclaim with Doddridge:—

"Yes, thou art precious to my soul,  
My transport and my trust;  
Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,  
And gold is sordid dust."

Secondly, If we have seen his glory, *we shall be concerned that others may behold him* also; his love will constrain us to live not unto ourselves but unto him who loved us and gave himself for us. Then we shall *resemble* him. He will not only be our teacher but also our example. This is the essence of all religion, and this is what he himself enjoined. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

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69

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FEB. 28.—*I will heal him.* Isa. lvii. 19.

GOD by the gospel heals in two ways. First, He heals *the anguish of a wounded spirit*. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." While some never feel their wounds, have never been disturbed in their conscience, others have their consciences bruised under a sense of guilt and a dread of wrath to come. Such an one mingles his drink with weeping. The world can no longer charm, nor old companions allure him. "The arrows of the Almighty stick fast within me," said one of old, "the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit." "A wounded spirit who can bear?" and a wounded spirit who can heal? Men may skin over the wound, try many things, but it will break out again. Outward reformation, vows, fastings, alms' deeds—from all these some endeavour to obtain peace of conscience, and although they may for a time obtain something like a calm, yet as the light in them increases,

and as they become better acquainted with the spirituality of God's law, all their fears and despair revive; but nothing can relieve an awakened mind but the scheme of redemption revealed in the gospel. That alone can satisfy the sinner's conscience which satisfied the justice of God—nothing but the blood of sprinkling, which “speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” Then, secondly, *God* *uy the gospel heals the moral maladies of our nature.* This always accompanies the former. It would be endless to enumerate the diseases of our fallen and depraved nature. “The whole head is sick, the whole heart faint, and there is no help in us. But are we under the necessity of perishing? By no means. If there is no help in us, there is *help* laid upon one that is mighty. If there be no *hope* in us, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. If there is no *health* in us, there is balm in Gilead, and there is a physician there. The same light that shows us our disease reveals to us also our remedy, and the grace that makes us feel the one enables us to apply to the other—and that is a Saviour, who is made unto us not only righteousness but sanctification, who not only justifies but renews; for if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away and all things become new.” See a man under the agency of the spirit of God, delighting in the

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70

Saviour; he dedicates all he has and all he is to his service and glory, walking before him in newness of life.

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FEB. 29.—And knew the grace of God in truth.  
Coloss. i. 6.

THE grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ cannot be known in truth, without producing in us corresponding effects. It will excite our *application* to him; we shall be found at his feet, praying, “Heal me, for I have sinned against thee.” It will excite our *admiration*, and with angels we shall desire to look into these things. How surprising his condescension, how matchless his mercy! It baffles

all description, it defies all wonder; it sets even astonishment at a stand. The mind never feels its insignificance so much as when it is contemplating the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of the Saviour's love, which passeth knowledge. This knowledge will also teach us to *love* him. It will make us truly *grateful*, and we shall ask, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" It will lead us to *devotedness* to his service, and we shall pour forth the warmest emotions of our souls, and ask daily, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It will excite us to *imitate* him, to be like-minded with him, and to walk even as he walked. And while we reflect on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich," we shall deem nothing too humiliating, nothing too arduous to engage in for his sake on the behalf of others. Blessed Jesus, thy heart was made of tenderness! Thou went about doing good. In thee the disconsolate always found a comforter, the ignorant an instructor, and the lost a Saviour. Oh that we may resemble thee! Oh that we may have the same mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus!

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MAR. I.—When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? Isa. v. 4.  
 "WHAT," says God, "could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" He has done much

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71

for us, and he has a right to expect much from us. Though we are not able fully to discharge the obligations under which he has placed us, yet we ought to be sensible of them and show that we are willing to make adequate returns', and to be always asking, "Lord what wilt *thou* have *me* to do?" Therefore we may observe that God expects us to make suitable returns, and is disappointed if we do not. But can God ever be disappointed? Here we must make a distinction between what is a fact and what is a

right. As to the question of fact, he is *not* disappointed, he cannot be disappointed. No event nor circumstance can occur to surprise, or even to inform him. But as to the question of *right*, he may, he has a right to be disappointed. What culture has he bestowed upon his vineyard! He therefore justly complains, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" "These three years I have gone seeking fruit and found none." He does expect gratitude and a sense of obligation where he has conferred benefits. Alas! what instances of ingratitude, unkindness, and unfruitfulness compel him to say, "When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

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MAR. 2.—He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,  
ORDERED in all things. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

THIS covenant of salvation shows that God is good. His work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment; he hath done all things well. It is "ordered in all things." Its arrangements are perfect. At present we can but imperfectly survey this order; but though we now see through a glass darkly, by and by this mystery will be more fully developed. We shall then find that all heaven will be filled with admiration and praise at the manifold wisdom of God herein. But we even now see some and much of its excellency. It is so ordered in all things as to harmonise and display the Divine perfection; as to unite his honour with my happiness, that while he redeems Jacob he glorifies himself in Israel. It is so ordered in all things, that while the sinner is encouraged he is abased, and abased while he is encouraged; that sin is pardoned while condemned, and

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72

condemned while it is pardoned. It is so ordered in all things, as to provide for everything we need, and only as we need it, from the fulness of the Redeemer and not from ourselves. This will serve to influence our love, check self-confidence, incite to diligence, and promote intercourse

with our Lord and Saviour. It is so ordered in all things, as to separate care and duty; so that while it delivers us from all anxiety about events, by showing us the providence of God, managing all things for us—God caring for us—it frees us from solicitude, and leaves us free to pursue our work, and nothing else. In a word, we see it is so ordered in all things, as to prove that the Author of it was a being who perfectly knew us and all our condition, and that he perfectly loved us; for he has wisely and mercifully adapted all things to all our woes, wants, weakness, and wishes. Therefore to this a believer turns in a dark and cloudy day, and not only submits but acquiesces. He glories in the scheme, and wishes to glory in nothing else.

“Amidst temptations sharp and long,  
My soul to this dear refuge flies;  
Hope is my anchor, firm and strong,  
When tempests blow and billows rise.”

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MAR. 3.—I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy. *Psa. xliii. 4.*

THIS regards the worship of God; and our worship is infinitely due to him, whether we consider the eminency of his perfections or his relation to us. Some are above all the formalities of religion; they find every day a Sabbath, and every place a temple, and in so saying give too much reason to question whether they worship God at all. Those who are most regardful of the Sabbath and the sanctuary are the most attentive to all the other duties of life; and, indeed, one good work always prepares for another. Our nature is such that we need seasons, and forms, and places of worship. The mind must be approached through the medium of the body, and our communion with things unseen and eternal must be maintained by means of things temporal. God is to be glorified in our bodies as well as in our spirits, which are his. Under the Jewish dispensa-

tion there was a tabernacle and a temple. Our Saviour attended in the synagogue and the temple. His followers are commanded not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, and in order to incite and encourage them he hath said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The public services of the sanctuary are indispensable to the maintenance of religion in a neighbourhood or country. In the sanctuary the various distinctions of life are preserved from becoming excessive. There the rich and the poor meet together in the presence of Him who is the Maker of them all. There are they reminded of their original equality—their final and their religious equality—and who has not often exclaimed,

"Lord, how delightful 'tis to see  
A whole assembly worship thee;  
At once they sing, at once they pray,  
They hear of heaven, and learn the way."

And how do the public services of the sanctuary enliven our affections! How much information is obtained while we see his beauty and inquire in his temple! What consolation is experienced there! "God is known in his palaces for a refuge." The widow there draws to her knee her fatherless boy, and there she hears God is a father to the fatherless, and a judge of the widow in his holy habitation. There she hears: "Let thy widows trust in me;" and she departs rejoicing in the God of providence. Where is the Christian who has not said—

"In every new distress  
We to his house repair;  
We'll think upon his wondrous grace,  
And seek deliverance there."

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MAR. 4.—*Made rich.* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

HERE is another wonderful transition. We have seen a transition from riches to poverty; here is a transition from poverty to riches, and all through the medium of his inter-

position on their behalf. What a change takes place in the subjects of divine grace always! They were “thorns” and are now “fir-trees;” “briers” but now “myrtle-trees;”

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74

afar off, but now “made nigh;” blind, but now they see; dead, and are made alive; were “lost, and are found;” were poor, and now are “made rich.” We were poor in every sense of the word; we had nothing we could call our own except sin. Poor as creatures, poor as sinners; the fall has stripped us of all our moral and spiritual excellencies, but He “remembered us in our low estate.” We had no knowledge, but we are now “made wise unto salvation.” We had no righteousness then; we have now “the righteousness which is of God by faith.” We had no strength then; we are now “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” We had then no title to heaven; we have now “a right to the tree of life.” We had no peace then, we have now a “peace which passeth all understanding.” We were then strangers to joy; we have now a “joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.” We were then poor enough, were living without God; we now have a God who is our own God for ever and ever, and we can claim him with all his perfections, relations, and promises, and can say, “God, even our own God, shall bless us.” How rich are Christians then become! Theirs are the “*unsearchable* riches of Christ.” We shall never do them justice, for we never can understand them fully. They are *spiritual* riches; they render the soul wealthy, and they are *eternal* in their duration. This spiritual wealth may consist with much outward poverty and distress; persons may be poor in this world’s goods, and be rich in faith, rich towards God, and “heirs of the kingdom “which he hath promised to them that love him. “Poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing all things.” Very little of the Christian’s wealth is here discernible, because it is to be enjoyed above. They are now minors; their inheritance is therefore reserved in heaven for them: for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart

of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

“His angels can never express,  
Nor saints who sit nearest the throne,  
How rich are his treasures of grace!  
This, tins is a mystery unknown.”

75

MAR. 5.—For your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich. 2 Cor. viii. 9.

THIS is the medium of all a believer's attainments. If we are rich, it is because “he was poor, and that through his poverty we might become rich;” that is, by his emptying himself we are filled; that by his descending to earth, we can ascend to heaven; that by his bearing the shame, we are crowned with glory and honour; that by his dying alone we live. If he saved others, himself he could not save. If he redeemed us, it must be with the price of his own most precious blood. If we are saved, and enriched, and glorified for ever, it must be in a way in which the law is not dishonoured, but magnified and made honourable; in which sin must be condemned while pardoned; in which all the attributes of God must be blended in perfect harmony. “Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other,” in a way which blends and mingles “glory to God in the highest” with “peace on earth, good will to men.” And here it is that all are displayed. “Therefore he was made perfect through suffering, and thus became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Thus it was that “He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich;” that “he once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” It is here we see the value of our souls; it is here we see the importance of our salvation; it is here we see what difficulties stood in the way of it, and how remotely, infinitely re-

motely they are removed. It is here we learn our full obligation to the Saviour.

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

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MAR. 6.—*This is my friend*. Sol. Songs, v. 16.

LORD Brooks was so charmed with that wise and accomplished person Sir Philip Sidney, that when he died he would have no other inscription upon his tomb than this:

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76

“Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sidney;” and shall not we say, Oh may my tomb but as truthfully declare, “Here lies a friend of Jesus.” This will be infinitely more important than if it were adorned by the trophies of victory, the ensigns of power, or the emblems of affection. Let us endeavour to ascertain as clearly as we can that he is our friend, so that we may also say, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Then whatever be our circumstances, we may fully rely upon his presence and aid. And to encourage and comfort us he says, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” If other friends forsake, and other helpers fail, he is the same. “When my father and mother forsake me,” said the Psalmist, “then the Lord will take me up.” He is the “friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” “He fainteth not, neither is weary.” “He is a very present help in trouble.” And then let us often think of going home to this dear friend, and of being for ever with the Lord. The Apostle said, “Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” It will also be “far better” for *us*; “far better” for us to be in “the land flowing with milk and honey,” than to be in the wilderness with the serpents, and entangled with the thorns and briers. It will be “far better” to be delivered from the burden of the flesh, and to be presented “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” We

need not be afraid of going to him. His presence will be with us in the valley of the shadow of death, and at the end we shall find him waiting to receive us to himself, that we may behold his glory, that we may see him as he is and be for ever with him.

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MAR. 7.—Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

I Tim. vi. 17.

EVERY creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. While some abuse temporal blessings and comforts, there are others who are almost afraid to make use of them. It is always desirable we should be sensible of our desert, and that we are not worthy of the least of all the mercies bestowed upon us;

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77

yet it is equally important we should feel that we are welcome to enjoy the goodness our heavenly Father has provided for us. It is true, we have by sin forfeited all claim to God's goodness; but the Saviour has restored to believers this right:—

“He sank beneath our heavy woes,  
To raise us to a throne,  
There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows  
But cost his heart a groan.”

They are therefore now again become ours, yea, more ours than ever they were before. The Apostle here would have believers to understand that they are not to be unobservant of the seasons of the year, nor be blind to the beauties of the garden nor insensible to the fragrance of the rose, nor look with indifference upon the valleys when they stand thick with corn, or on the little hills when they rejoice on every side; but that they should avail themselves of their high privilege, for every Christian can look around upon all the works of creation, and say, “My Father made them all.” Indeed there is no one can enjoy the good things of nature like one of God's beloved children,

because he connects a sacredness with them, being ransomed by the Saviour's death, so that he cannot use them indifferently or improperly. And then he relishes the love of the Giver in the gift, and as Watts says—

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“How sweet our daily comforts prove,  
When they are season'd by his love.”

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MAR. 8.—If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself.

Prov. ix. 12.

AS religion makes us truly wise, to possess it is to gain the greatest advantage. Now this does not mean that heavenly wisdom will make a man cunning and selfish. The man of wisdom will be concerned to be useful. While religion is indeed personal, it is also social in its aspects and influences. It begins, and indeed must begin, with himself; but it must not end there. A Christian will be anxious, as he has opportunity, to do good to all men. Nor does it mean that he will not be beneficial to others as well as himself. As before his conversion he was a curse, so now he will

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78

prove a blessing. Christians are “the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.” They are the “repairers of the breach; the restorers of paths to dwell in.” Christians are the greatest benefactors of the human race. By their prayers and by their examples, by their influence and by their exertions, they “serve their generation according to the will of God.” The meaning of the expression, “thou shalt be wise for thyself,” first, is spoken of in reference to God. Our goodness extendeth not to him. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? We must not, therefore, think much of our services in his cause; for when we have done all that is commanded of us, we must say we are unprofitable servants. That is, unprofitable *to him*, never to ourselves. And therefore we need not be afraid to come to

him because we have no worthiness, and have nothing to bring; for he has said we are to come to him, not to communicate, but to receive. Then it means, secondly, that though *others* may derive benefit from it, no one is or can be so enriched by it as the possessor of true wisdom. The fruit will fall principally into our own lap. It means that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that *now is*, and that which is to come." The *temporal* benefits of religion *are great*, but the *spiritual* benefits are greater. And as to the *eternal* benefits to which it leads, and of which it is the earnest, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

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MAR. 9.—*Ebenezer*. I Sam. vii. 12.

A ROMAN emperor has advised us to dispose of the three periods of time thus: the past to oblivion, the present to duty, and the future to Providence. To two of these admonitions we do well to take heed. Let us give the present to duty, "and whatsoever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with our might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither we are fast hastening." Let us also give the future to Providence; casting all our care upon him, for he careth for us, being assured that, as the result of so doing, we shall possess the

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79

peace of God which passeth all understanding. But we dare not give the past to oblivion, for "God requireth that which is past;" and therefore we should remember and record it. We are too prone to forget the benefits we have received; but our time cannot be more profitably employed than in reviewing our past life. From such a review we may derive many valuable and instructive lessons. This was God's command to the Jews: "Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God hath led thee." Who is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the lovingkindness of God. We should be frequently thus

reviewing and recording the various scenes of life through which we may have passed. In so doing we shall be advancing our own humiliation, the glory of God, our gratitude to, and our own confidence in God, our own instruction, and the encouragement of others. There are stated seasons when this may be profitably done—on a birthday, or at the commencement of the new year, when passing on from one annual period to another. We should set up a pillar of grateful remembrance. What have been our reviews of life? What praises have we rendered? Have they been according to the benefits done unto us? Some have by a succession of disappointments been brought low, but he has also helped them, and turned the shadow of death into the morning; others have been afflicted, and said, The graves were ready for me, but he sent his word and healed me; and I said, I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord. And another has said, I have had to contend with corruptions within and temptations without, and yet “my foot has held his steps; his way have I kept, and not declined.” I have often been ready to halt, and even have sometimes said, I shall one day perish; but through thee “I have run through a troop, and by my God have leaped over a wall.” Therefore, as to the past, cannot we join issue with the grateful prophet, and say, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped me;” and connecting the past with the future, are we not warranted in saying with Newton—

“His love in time past forbids me to think  
 He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink,  
 Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,  
 Confirms his good pleasure to help me quite through.”

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80

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MAR. 10.—Who inherit the promises, Heb. vi. 12.  
 GOD from the beginning has dealt with his people in a way of promise. He could have accomplished all his grace and mercy in their behalf without having previously announced

them. But then they could not have *known* them: they could not have *believed* in them; they could not have *hoped* for them, and *pleaded* them in prayer, or have made them their song in the house of their pilgrimage. Many advantages are derived from the promises; some of these promises regard the life that now is, but many more of them regard the life which is to come. Few of the promises of God, indeed, are ever completely accomplished in this world; they draw us, therefore, forward and upward. "We are saved by hope;" "we rejoice in hope;" heaven will fill up every void; heaven will perfect everything that concerns us. Heaven will perfect the *intellectual life*. "Here we see through a glass darkly, there face to face; now we know in part, then shall we know even as we are known." Heaven will perfect the *spiritual life*. We now groan, being burdened, and when we would do good evil is present with us; we shall then be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Heaven will perfect the *social life*. Here we dwell in Mesek, and have our tents in Kedar; there shall we join the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; and the spirits of just men made perfect; and an innumerable company of angels; and Jesus, the Mediator; and God, the Judge of all. Heaven will perfect the *corporeal faculties*. What limbs, what senses, what imaginations, shall we have then! What a state heaven must be, if we take but this one view of it—that it brings us into the possession of all the promises. "To die is gain," says the Apostle; and no wonder, if we are to gain all that God has spoken of, and if all that the Scriptures have told us is to be there realized. Now observe that this inheritance is & *present* possession. They *inherit*—not that they *shall* inherit. Now, says our Saviour, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," for all live unto him. And do not the Scriptures perpetually imply it? How else could we understand the words of the Saviour to the poor thief, or the language of the Apostle? "Absent from the body, present with the

Lord.” This intimates an *immediate transition*. “Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” This regards *immediate enjoyment*. How delightful to remember that our pious friends and relatives, who have been removed from us, now inherit the promises! Delivered from the burden of the flesh, they are now enjoying the felicity of heaven. They have done with sorrow, and, what is best, they have done with sin, and are freed from all their infirmities. They have entered that blessed world of light and life—of peace and joy—and are for ever with the Lord.

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MAR. 11.—He ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Heb. vi. 12.

THIS injunction implies three things. First, *That there is nothing unattainable and impracticable in the example of those who have gone before us*. We may, we can follow them. They were exercised by the very same trials and temptations, and they had the very same passions with us. What they were they were by grace; what they did they did by grace, and that grace is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever; there is no reason, therefore, that we should ever despond. Secondly, *That we should acquaint ourselves with them*. Without this we cannot follow them. We cannot follow what we are ignorant of. Imitation is something voluntary—intentional—that requires frequent observation, and to have the thing much before the eye of the mind, in order to have the mind impressed. We should, therefore, search the Scriptures to see what God has there recorded of their principles, their actions, and their sufferings. We must behold them in the various relationships and conditions of life; how they behaved in prosperity and in adversity, in life and in death. And the Third thing is, *That we should not be satisfied with anything short of resemblance and conformity*. With these men labouring in the vineyard we are to work too. If they denied themselves, we are enjoined also to deny ourselves. With them we are to have also our con-

versation in heaven, and to walk by faith, and not by sight, even as they also walked. In regarding this injunction we

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82

may observe—*That we are to distinguish what was peculiar in their situation to themselves, and what was common and general.* For want of doing this, the Apostles were rebuked by the Saviour, to whom he said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” We may notice also that with regard to those things in which they were exemplars, we must attend to them *chiefly as regards ourselves.* There is a disposition in many the very reverse of this. They love to hear of the duties of others, not of their own. It is far better for us all to seek after our own particular duties, and whatever be our rank, whatever our condition in life, to say with David: “I will hear what God the Lord will speak;” or with Paul, “What wilt thou have me to do?”

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MAR. 12.—Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been a long time in that case. He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? John v. 6.

WHAT hath sin done! How various and how numerous are the evils which affect human nature! Some of our fellow creatures are made to “possess months of vanity,” and have “wearisome nights appointed to them.” These seem incapable of enjoyment, and are unfitted for the active services of life—dying while they live. Among the objects of woe found by our Saviour on this occasion, his attention was struck by a poor wretch who had groaned under his malady for thirty and eight years, and had been waiting at the pool for the propitious moment, but always had the mortification to be prevented by those who were less helpless than himself, or who were better served. The Saviour knew all his distress, and his eye affected his heart. When Jesus saw him he knew that he had now been a long time in that case; he saith unto him, “Wilt thou be made whole?” This case is here recorded for an important pur-

pose; and we never read the gospel, nor peruse the history of the Saviour to advantage, till we learn to bring it home to our own business and bosoms; till we learn to rise from the body to the soul, and in the recovery of the one to acknowledge the salvation of the other. He who came into the world to seek and to save that which is lost is

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83

fully acquainted with our condition, which, like that of this impotent man, is a state of disorder and disease. And here the subject comes into conflict with the prejudices and pride of man. We often hear persons talking about the dignity of human nature; and if we consider it physically and intellectually, it *is* dignified; when we see man in his capacity for boundless improvement, in the expansion of his powers, in the acquisition of literature, and in the progress of philosophy, we see that man is made “a little lower than the angels.” But oh, how lamentable is it to find any of these fine powers misapplied and abused! What is man morally?—what is he religiously?—what is his state and disposition towards God? Why he is a fallen, a guilty, a depraved, a perishing, and, in himself, a helpless creature. His body has become mortal, and subject to every calamity; and his soul is “alienated from the life of God.” Many are continually acknowledging in their devotions that “they are tied and bound by the chain of sin,” and saying “there is no health in us,” meaning there is no moral and spiritual health in them. The Scriptures have decided this melancholy fact by the glorious *provisions* of the gospel—else what need of a redemption if man is not enslaved; and of a Saviour if not lost; or of a remedy if not sick and dying? And Scripture also confirms this fact by the most express *decisions*, declaring that “all have sinned,” “all have become guilty before God;” that all are “condemned;” that, by the law of God, “every mouth is stopped;” that the “whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint;” and that, from the “crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores.” All

the principles, all the powers of the soul are affected by sin, precisely in the same way as the body is injured by disease. This is seen in the perversion of the judgment, in the ignorance of the understanding, in the rebellion of the will, in the pollution of the conscience. It is seen in the inconsistency, tyranny, and carnality of the affections, and in the folly and iniquity of the life; while destruction and misery are in their paths. This is an affecting condition. We shall hereafter consider the remedy proposed.

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84

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MAR. 13.—Wilt thou be made whole? John v. 6.

TWO things are implied in the question. First, That *the disease is curable*; for our dear Saviour would not raise our attention to trifle with us, much less to deceive us. The case is indeed desperate with regard to our own ability, and with regard to the sufficiency of all creatures.

“The help of man and angels join’d  
 Could never reach our ease;  
 Nor could we hope relief to find  
 But in his boundless grace.”

But there is hope in Israel concerning this thing, and nowhere else. But while all others address the sinner in vain, and in withdrawing say, “Help is not in me,” He, blessed be his name, comes forward bringing health and cure, and saying, “I will come and heal him.” O, how many millions have experienced the efficacy of his cross and grace, who are now before the throne; and how many thousands are there now living on earth who are witnesses for him! Bor though not free from infirmity, though they complain of inward corruption, yet are they new creatures; yet old things have passed away, and all things have become new; yet they are walking by faith, having their conversation in heaven, looking for that blessed hope. Secondly, It is here *implied that willingness* to be cured is essential to recovery. This cure is not forced upon any, neither is it accomplished by an operation of which we are insensible, or by a charm.

The method of cure is one which requires thought, conviction, recollection, inclination, choice. There is no deviation from this, even in the work of the Spirit himself. The way he heals is by opening the eyes of the understanding, and showing us what is the hope of our calling, and what is the glory of the riches of his inheritance. He “works in us” “to will and to do.” He draws, and we run after him. His way is, by a divine influence to make us sensible of our need of the blessing, to lead us to prize it, to long for it, to seek for it, and then the attainment will render both blessed and grateful. Thus Mary, we are told, chose the good path which should not be taken from her. “He that feareth the Lord, him shall he teach in the way.” What way? The way he shall choose. “*Wilt thou be made whole?*”

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85

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Mar. 14—Wilt thou be made whole? John v. 6.

WHAT answer have we returned or are disposed to give to this question? for we are now as capable as was the impotent man of answering this question, and Christians are daily and hourly answering it; and we can testify our readiness to be cured in four ways. First, *By our inquiry after the way and means of recovery*, saying, “What must I do to be saved?” The Scriptures will be searched now to find the only thing which they were principally designed to make known, namely, a dying, risen Saviour. Secondly, We show our willingness to be cured by *our applying to the great Physician*, resorting to his footstool, and crying “Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.” Thirdly, Our readiness to be cured is proved by *our submission to his prescriptions, without murmuring or complaint*. When the man of God had prescribed for the cure of Naaman, Naaman was wroth, and went away and said, “Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper.” So he *thought*, but it did not become him to think but to *acquiesce*. “But,”

said he, "are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel; may I not bathe in them and be clean?" So he turned away in a rage, and had nearly missed his cure. How different was it with the poor blind man, when Jesus made clay and anointed his eyes, and said unto him, "Go to the pool of Siloam and wash;" he did not question but believed: he went and washed, and received his sight. And this is the disposition of every awakened and convinced sinner—every one who is willing to be healed by the Saviour; he will say: "If by *any* means, Lord prescribe, I submit, however mysterious to my reason, however humiliating to the pride of my heart, to whatever provision or sacrifice thou requirest; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He wishes not merely that the disease may be checked, but that he may be free from the very principle, from the very cause of the malady. He desires to be *entirely whole*. And, Fourthly, The willingness to be cured will also appear *in the eagerness with which we shall sometimes look after convalescence*. We know how much is at stake—our eternal life. O,

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86

with what anxiety do we ask, "And shall I be cured, or must I after all perish under this fatal disease of sin?" And O, what pleasure we shall experience if we discern any sign, however small, of recovery—any little appetite we have after the provision of God's house, any little strength, any little ability to walk if not to run in the way of God's commandments. How this will encourage our souls. Am I thus desirous to be made whole?

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MAR. 15.—*Look to yourselves.* 2 John i. 8.

REASON and Scripture combine to enforce upon us self-attention; and therefore we may observe that we may and ought to look, to ourselves. First, It enjoins upon us a regard to the soul, to see that we have evidence of its being pardoned and renewed; that we have a title to heaven and a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; that we are feeding

upon the bread of life and clothed with the garments of salvation; and our care of the soul is to be supreme. The salvation of the soul is the one thing needful, and therefore we are commanded to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Secondly, We are here admonished to look to our *bodily health*, not to be finical or fanciful, but to maintain a rational care of it in the use of proper means, for health is a most invaluable blessing; it is the salt that seasons and the honey that sweetens very other enjoyment, and is to be valued not only on the ground of enjoyment, but also on the score of usefulness. Thirdly, We are to be mindful of our *reputation*; a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. Character is credit: it gives weight to a man’s counsel and advice. We ought to be very careful lest through any inadvertence or impropriety the way of truth may be evil spoken of, and the worthy name by which we are called may be blasphemed. With a Christian, carelessness is a crime; and therefore, says the Apostle, “Avoid the appearance of evil.” Fourthly, We are to be concerned for the welfare of our *family connections*, and those with whom we are intimately associated. “He that provideth not for those of his own house hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” Lastly, This injunction will further apply to our *secular* matters. We are required to

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87

abide with God in our calling. The Apostle urges upon the Romans to be “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” Paul would have a Christian tradesman a morning man, punctual, regular, obliging, active, intelligent. Why should the “children of this world” be “wiser in their generation than the children of light?” “If a Christian man be a tradesman,” says Mr. Newton, “I would have him be the best in the nation. Yea,” says he, “if he be but a blacker of shoes, I would have him the best in the whole parish.”

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MAR. 16.—Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Phil. ii. 4.

THAT is, we are not to look upon our own things exclusively or only, "but every man *also*"—this is the interpretation—"on the things of others." Self-preservation has been called the first law of nature, and it is so; and if man were only a solitary creature it would be the only law of his nature. But now man is variously associated and related, and therefore he is a social being, for "no man liveth unto himself;" and only a Cain will question this, and ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Observe, therefore, what the admonition requires: that we look also upon the things of others—not with *curious inquisitiveness*, needlessly prying into other people's history, condition, and circumstances, in order to gratify vanity or furnish materials for the tongue. "Let none of you suffer as a thief or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters." Again, we are not to look upon the things of others *enviously*. "Be not thou afraid," says David, "when one is made rich, or when the glory of his house is increased:" as if he should say, The distinctions and the acquisitions and the cares which make others so uneasy around you are not worthy of you. Oh, what evil is there in this disposition, for one person to be uneasy because another is happy; and yet this principle is so powerful, so subtle in its various workings, that Solomon says, "Who can stand before envy?" Thirdly, We are not to look upon the things of others *unconcernedly*, but with sympathy, and to help them. Hence we are commanded to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that

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 88

weep." Thus it was with Job. "Did not," he says, "I weep for him that was in trouble; was not my soul grieved for the poor?" And this is the meaning of the Apostle here; for when he says, "Look on the things of others," he cannot mean with such a look as the priest and the Levite gave to the poor, wounded, bloody traveller, and who went by on the other side; but he means such a look as that the eye shall affect the heart, such a

look as shall awaken commiseration and produce corresponding emotions and exertions.

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MAR. 17.—The unsearchable riches of Christ. Eph. iii. 8.

THESE unsearchable riches of Christ do not intend so much his attributes and possessions as God, as his mediatorial resources and treasures. The whole dispensation of the Spirit is lodged in his hands; for “in him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell”—pardon, peace, knowledge, strength, grace, and glory. There is an abundance of these riches in him; they are unsearchable as they are found in him. The world has its riches, but they are easily comprehended; and Solomon summed them all up when he said, “Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity.” All the wealth of the world, all the world calls good and great, is infinitely inferior to mind. The riches of the Saviour are for the *soul* and for eternity—they are therefore invisible as to the senses; and they are boundless, too, so that no creature in heaven or earth can ever fully explore them. Angels, it is true, desire to look into these things, and will always be looking into them, but never fathom their depths. No mortal, therefore, can ever worthily conceive of the value of that blood which cleanseth from all sin;—the perfection of that righteousness which can justify the ungodly and give him a title to eternal life;—that peace which passeth all understanding;—that “joy which is unspeakable and full of glory;”—that love which passeth knowledge; or that power that is “able to do for us exceedingly abundant above all that we can ask or think.” Well, therefore, may the Apostle call them the “unsearchable riches of Christ.” O, how we should rejoice to know that he is in possession of such unsearchable

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89

riches. It should gladden us to learn this on *his own account*, for he is infinitely worthy; on *our own account* we should rejoice that he has in his possession and at his

disposal, and for us, all the treasures of nature and grace, and of providence and glory; and we should rejoice on the *account of others*, that these unsearchable riches belong to one

“Whose heart is made of tenderness,  
Whose bowels melt with love.”

Let us rejoice to think that therefore there are in him the resources of pity and of power, and the resources of grace and of glory. And let us tell this joy to him who has unsearchable riches, with confidence. Let us enlarge our desires and our hopes, and be not satisfied with just obtaining from him mere relief, but “ask and receive, that our joy may be full.”

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MAR. 18.—So will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing.  
Zech. viii. 13.

CHRISTIANS do not go to heaven alone. The subjects of divine grace, as they wish to be useful, and endeavour to be useful, so they are honoured in being *made* useful. They are made useful by their prayers, by their example, by their influence, and by their exertions. Thus it was with David. “Restore unto me,” said he, “the joys of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit, then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” But he was a musician, a poet, a monarch; he had large resources, he could serve his generation according to the will of God. And so too can all who are willing and disposed. There is no situation, however inconsiderable and obscure, but contains in it efficiencies, if we will but employ them. A brother may bring a brother to Christ, as Andrew brought Peter. A friend may bring a friend to Christ, as Philip brought Nathaniel. A neighbour may bring a neighbour to Christ, as the woman Sychar did the Samaritan. Masters and mistresses may instruct their servants. Many a servant has said, “Blessed be God that ever I entered such a family; I was then ignorant as a heathen;

then my feet were turned into the paths of peace." And what a revolution was produced in the family of Naaman, and in all Syria, by a little girl that was taken captive in war, who availed herself of a favourable opportunity, while dressing her mistress's hair, to talk about the prophet of God in Israel. Thus we see how and why some are blessed—that they may be blessings to others.

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MAR. 19.—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath Messed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Eph. i. 3.

HERE is the *quality* of these blessings: "spiritual blessings." Here is their *plenitude*: "all" spiritual blessings. Here is their *residence*: "in heavenly places." Here is their *security*: "in Him." The grand thing is to be blessed of God. Men bless only in words and wishes, God in results and communications, for "he commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore." Of what avail, in the most important exigencies of life, would be the friendship of our fellow-mortals, however powerful? But "the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich," and he "addeth no sorrow with it." How vain the censure of the whole world if he should smile upon us! "Let them curse, but bless thou." What are the revilings of men while he says to the soul, "I am thy salvation." His blessing is upon his people, upon all their concerns. He blesses even their temporal advantages and comforts; he "giveth them all things richly to enjoy." He blesses, as it is said, "their bread and their water." Hence "the little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." He not only feeds his people, but feeds them with the "bread of life." He not only clothes them, but clothes them with the "garments of salvation." He not only makes them free, but "free indeed." He not only enriches them, but bestows upon them the "unsearchable riches of Christ." He makes them not only creatures, but "new creatures;" delivers them from the curse of the law, justifies them freely by his grace, renews them by his Holy Spirit, calls them to the fellow-

ship of his Son Jesus Christ, so that when "he shall appear they also shall appear with him in glory;" and now he

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91

gives them the earnest and first-fruits and foretastes of the heavenly inheritance, so that—

"The men of grace have found,  
 Glory begun below;  
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground,  
 From faith and hope may grow.

"The hill of Zion yields  
 A thousand sacred sweets;  
 Before we reach the heavenly fields,  
 Or walk the golden streets."

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MAR. 20.—That thou mayest go in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Deut. xxvii. 3.

THE history given in the Scriptures of the Jews is very interesting and profitable. It is worthy of our regard, for its veracity and antiquity, for the wonders it records, and for the instructions it supplies. As they were fair specimens of human nature, it teaches us much concerning ourselves, and it teaches us also how to regard God. The Jews, as a people, were typical of the Christian church. A type, as Dr. Doddridge says, is always inferior to the reality. Canaan was in many respects a type of heaven; and in the Scriptures we find the Jews *were* typical of Christians. Moses was a type of Messiah. He says himself, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up like unto me. Him shall ye hear." Their condition in Egypt may serve to represent our natural state; their deliverance from it, our conversion; their passage through the wilderness, our residence in this world; Jordan, death; Canaan, heaven. Regarding Canaan as an emblem of heaven, we may observe—First, That Canaan was given to the Jews *entirely irrespective of all worthiness and works in them*. How often does Moses labour to convince them of this. God had not chosen them for their righteousness sake, for they

were a stiff-necked people. And the Apostle does not labour the less to convince *us* that “we are saved by grace through faith, and not of ourselves; it is the gift of God;” and that “the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Secondly, Canaan *was given by promise and covenant*. So is heaven. “In hope of eternal life,”

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92

says the Apostle, “which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began.” To whom, then, could he have addressed the promise? Not to us, but to our covenant head and representative. The covenant which secured to the Jews the land of Canaan was made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; in them the children of Israel were blessed, and for their sakes they received all these things. But the better covenant, of which all the spiritual Israel shall glory, was made with a far greater character than Abraham, who was given, as Isaiah says, for “a covenant to the people;” and in him we are blessed, and for his sake we receive all these things. Third, Canaan was given for the *settlement and rest* of the Jews after their bondage in Egypt, and their travels and toils, and privations and hardships in the wilderness; and like it “there remaineth a rest for the people of God.” “They rest from their labours.” Fourthly, Canaan was remarkable for its *fertility*. It is seldom ever mentioned in the Scriptures without the addition of “flowing with milk and honey.” Moses describes it as “a good land; a land of brooks of water; of fountains and depths, that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil, olives and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness: thou shalt not lack anything in it.” Let us look through this literal description to the *spiritual* glory discerned, and let us remember the language of the Apostle with regard to the patriarchs: “They confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth. Now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.” After all, what

were the clusters of grapes and pomegranates to the whole vintage of Canaan? and what was Canaan to heaven P and what are all the present indulgences which are here vouchsafed to Christians, compared with what is reserved for them? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is a good report we have heard, but the half has not been told us; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love him."

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93

"If such the sweetness of the streams,  
 What must the fountain be,  
 Where saints and angels draw the bliss  
 Immediately from thee."

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MAR. 21.—*Whose faith follow.* Heb. xiii. 7.

EVERYBODY feels the force of the common adage, that example is above precept; and the Bible contains examples worthy our imitation. Let us, therefore, ascertain our MODELS. The principal of these examples is indeed the example of the Lord of life and glory. He it is who is the image of the invisible God, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Other examples are occasionally useful. With these the Scripture abounds. We have the example of the servants, as well as of the Master. And we are commanded to set our feet in the foot-prints of the flock. We are to be followers of them "who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The Apostle here refers in general to the patriarchs and prophets of ancient times. With these holy men we have an intimate connection, remotely as they lived from us, as to time and place. "They that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." "Now we, then, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise." Jacob wrestled with God, and prevailed, and was immediately knighted on the field, and surnamed by the name of Israel; and such honour have all the saints. He has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek

ye me in vain." "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." Passing over successive generations, passing by princes, heroes, statesmen, and scholars, the Apostle points us to a small company distinguished chiefly by their communion with God and their obedience to him. And as this distinction is everything in the view of the Supreme Being, so it should also be in our estimation. Let us, therefore, judge of men by their real worth; by their intellectual, moral, and religious character. The righteous are the excellent of the earth; they are more excellent than their neighbours; it is for them kingdoms are preserved or delivered from judgments; it is for them that God confers and continues blessings; it is for them that the earth itself is in being. These men lived also under a

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94

dispensation very inferior to our own. Yet such was their improvement of their means and privileges, that they are deemed worthy to be held forth as examples to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come. We cannot, therefore, judge of men solely by their situation and external advantages. Some plants of righteousness, who are fixed in a very unfavourable soil, bring forth more of the fruits of righteousness than others who are planted in the house of the Lord. Thus, "the first shall be last, and the last first." We may observe, also, that these men had their faults and their infirmities, and are never represented in the Scriptures as perfect. But their imperfections are not to render us insensible to their excellencies; the evil in them is not to hinder us from following the good that was in them. In reading the address of our Saviour to the seven churches, we may remark how in each case he seems to labour to find something to eulogize before he is constrained to condemn. May the same mind be in us which was also in him; and let us keep in view our models, that we be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

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MAR. 22.—Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. Phil. i. 29.

HERE is an honour often conferred upon Christians. Nothing strikes us like a fact; and nothing is ever so impressive as the display and the exercise of the passive graces in the believer. God, therefore, gives his people the grace of being placed in a state of affliction, in order that they may become his witnesses; that they may be examples to display to others the truth of the excellency and efficacy of the religion of the gospel; and they are often enabled peculiarly to glorify God in the fire of tribulation. Sometimes, when they are laid by, through accident, or an affliction, or a disease, they are ready to think they are approaching a very useless part of their lives. They are led to conceive of it as Job says, as being “made to possess months of vanity,” during which they can do nothing for God or their generation, when, in fact, they have been in such circumstances

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95

as to be approaching the most useful part of their lives, when they have been enabled to suffer as Christians; when their whole frame and character has been expressive of the language, O Lord, I mourn, but I do not, dare not murmur; “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” “Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.” And how salutary has the effect of this been! how useful has been the impression it has produced! And even where Christians have lived, perhaps, in a mud-wall cottage—stretched, it maybe, on nothing better than a pallet of straw, where they are hardly observed by any of their fellow-creatures—by the manner in which they suffer, for aught we know, they may excite even praise and thanksgiving in another world; for the Apostle tells us we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.

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MAR. 23.—Unto me is this grace given. Eph. iii. 8.

AUGUSTINE calls the Apostle Paul the “herald of grace.” He well deserves the name. He is always magnifying and extolling it. He never loses sight of it for a moment. He connects it with everything. He connects it with his *conversion*: “When it pleased God, who called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, who called me by his grace.” He connects it with his *conversation in the world*: “Not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have our conversation in the world.” He connects it with his *trials and sufferings*: “He said unto me,” says Paul, “my grace is sufficient for thee.” Pie connects it with his *unparalleled exertions*: “I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” He connects it with his *functions*: “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, and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” As if he had said, This honour has been conferred on me; I have been invested with this office, not for any excellence in me; I did nothing to deserve it; yea, burned with nothing but hatred against it, and compelled men to blaspheme. O,

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96

what grace, grace the most free and sovereign, not only to have pardoned me, but also to have employed me, and made me the messenger of his heart’s compassion, to go forth and announce to the perishing human race that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” What grace is there here; so that both as a Christian and an Apostle he was constrained gratefully to exclaim, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” Earthly princes when they want ministers, or masters when they want servants, will be sure to take those who seem the most meritorious, and who already possess the qualities and excellencies they require in them. In calling his servants, God frequently takes the most unsuitable and the most inadequate, and qualifies them for the work he assigns to

them, in order to show that the excellency of the power is of himself, and not of man. Man *needs* instruments, God does not. It is true he *employs* them, but never from weakness, always from wisdom, in grace and kindness. Men *depend* upon their instruments; God's instruments depend upon *him* for every purpose and in every work.

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MAR. 24.—*My word.* Isa. lv. 11.

AS we are the creatures of God, and as he hath made us reasonable creatures, it is natural to suppose that he would give to us a revelation of his mind and will concerning us. Without this we cannot walk so as to please him, or obtain a knowledge of his approbation, upon which all our happiness depends. In the Holy Scriptures God has made this revelation, which is emphatically designated the Word of God. "My word," says God. Abundant evidences establish the divine origin of the Scriptures—evidences derived from various proofs, and proofs so convincing that a man must have closed his eyes not to perceive the force of them. "Holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." All we have met with in the Scriptures constrain us to say, "This is the finger of God." We have here prophecies, precepts, promises, admonitions, the achievements of the best of men, and the convictions of the wisest of men. We have *internal* evidence in the

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97

purity and dignity and consistency of its contents. We have external evidences in the numberless miracles openly performed in the presence of enemies, who would have gladly denied them if they could. We have prophecies, many of which have been fulfilled, and others which are fulfilling under our own eye; and the establishment and spread of his cause by means which could never be considered adequate to the production of the result without a divine interposition and agency. And how delightful is it, in a world of uncertainties and suspicions, of conjectures and errors, to find something concerning which we may

say, This is truth; this is something upon which we may rely, firm and secure; and here we have something upon which we can depend, with more assurance than upon the continuance of the earth and heaven, for our Saviour says: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

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MAR. 25.—They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Luke v. 31.

OF what importance is it, therefore, that we should be fully sensible of the condition we are in! Unless we are conscious that we are suffering from a spiritual disease ourselves, and are thereby in danger of perishing, we shall never be induced to seek of the Physician of souls a divine and everlasting cure. For this purpose let us consider, First, The *complaint* itself; and there is nothing so dreadful; no disorder of the body will bear any comparison with it. It vitiates our noblest parts; it destroys the beauty, strength, freedom, pleasure, and the activity and usefulness of the soul; and it exposes not only to a temporal, but to an *eternal* death. Secondly, Let us consider the *Physician to whom we are directed to apply*. He has everything to recommend him. Job rejected his friends under the notion that they were physicians of no value. But the Lord Jesus is the very reverse of all this. He is infinitely *able*; no difficulty is too great for his skill; he never failed in any case yet which he undertook since the creation of the world. And he is equally *willing*. He performs all his cures "without money and without price." He is always accessible, and is always *condescending* and *affable*, and

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98

*ready* to attend us. He has said, to encourage all applicants, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Thirdly, Let us consider that *the time of cure is limited*, that it is *short*, and that it is *very uncertain*. It is only *now* that he addresses the question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" While there is life there is hope, phy-

sically and morally; but still there are favourable opportunities which may pass and never return. There are impressions that may be worn off, and there are convictions that may be starved for want of being cherished and sustained; and we know that at death all the opportunities of salvation are over. Lastly, Let us remember, that neglecting to make application to this only Physician of souls, and rejecting the gracious remedy provided, will greatly aggravate the misery by which it will be succeeded.

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MAR. 26.—*Bless the Lord, O my soul, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction.*

Psalm ciii. 2, 3, 4.

WHAT is required of those who have experienced at the hand of the great Physician his recovering mercy? First, To be *adoringly thankful*; and shall not we call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to bless his holy name that he restoreth our souls, that he healeth our bruised hearts, and bindeth up our wounds; and shall we not make the grateful acknowledgment, “Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling; therefore will I walk before the Lord in the land of the living;” presenting “our bodies unto him as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.” Secondly, If we are healed, it is our duty to recommend our gracious deliverer to others, to tell them “what a dear Saviour we have found.” We often observe in the public prints acknowledgments from patients when they have obtained relief, and those acknowledgments arise from two things—from compassion towards their fellow sufferers, and also a regard to the physician. If all the cases which our Saviour has cured from the beginning had been so testified of, the world, I suppose, would not contain the books that would be

written. Hereafter they will all be made known, to the honour of this Physician, “when he shall come to be glori-

fied in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." Let us be concerned, therefore, to seize every opportunity to tell what God hath done for our souls. If we do this with simplicity and sincerity, we maybe the means of saving souls from death; and the deliverance of one soul from spiritual death is of more consequence than the delivering of an empire from civil bondage. But let us be careful to recommend the great Physician by our lives as well as our lips, by our tempers as well as our tongues.

"Thus shall we best proclaim abroad  
The honours of our Saviour God,  
When the salvation reigns within,  
And grace subdues the power of sin."

Thirdly, If we have been healed, let us avoid a relapse, and abstain from those indulgences from which we have suffered so much already. Let us guard against the sin which doth so easily beset, and by which we have been so degraded and injured, and brought down to the very gates of death and hell, taking heed to what our Saviour said: "Go thy way and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee;" and as David said: "Ye that fear the Lord hate evil."

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MAR. 27.—*Be not slothful.* Heb. vi. 12.

A PHILOSOPHER, when he was asked "What is the sin most universal to mankind?" answered, truly and justly, "Idleness and sloth." But mental sloth is greater than bodily sloth, and spiritual sloth is greater than mental. It seems very astonishing, as well as unnatural, that any man can see such honours as those which come from God and not feel something like ambition, or behold the unsearchable riches of Christ and not covet them, and learn that the Judge standeth at the door and not be afraid; see such a heaven and not agonize to enter it; see hell moving to meet him at his feet and not tremble and flee from the wrath to come. When we consider the infinite importance of eternal things, that with such consequences depending, and with such a prize exhibited before us, it is most marvellous that we should

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100

so faintly “fight the good fight of faith,” and so sluggishly “run the race that is set before us.” How diligent men in general are in the ordinary transactions of life; they rise early and sit up late, eating the bread of carefulness; they compass sea and land to advance their temporal concerns, which, after all, have very little connection with their happiness; a hint is sufficient there: but to stir us up to be followers of Christ, there must be sanctuaries, preachers without and conscience within—various dispensations of providence; we must be goaded and wooed, blessed and chastised, in order to induce us to think of a better, even a heavenly inheritance; and yet, alas! all this is too little, all this is in vain. It was not by the indulgence of sloth that those characters who “through faith and patience inherit the promises” rose to their eminence and distinction and entered the kingdom. Let us watch against the very beginning of sloth, and cultivate a holy activity of mind, ever keeping in view our station and our resources, and see how we can best glorify our Saviour and serve our generation. Our time is flying, and we ought not to be creeping; but while we should be followers of the good, we may also, in works of faith and labours of love, be ourselves examples to others. O let us be followers of Him who said, “I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.”

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MAR. 28.—*Faith and patience.* Heb. vi. 12.

WITH regard to these excellent graces of the Holy Spirit, observe, First, *Their dependence and order*: faith and patience, not patience and faith; patience does not produce faith, but follows it: so does everything in religion. Other things are the stream, this the spring; other things are the produce, this the root. Secondly, *The nature of their service.* One word will explain this fully; it is “through faith and patience,” says the Apostle, “they inherit.” This shows at once their present use and future vocation [[cessation]]. Neither of these graces will be found in the future world.

Where is the need of faith, where we *see and know?* and where is the need of *patience*, when we have *nothing to endure?* But both of these are admirably adapted to our

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101

present state, and of unspeakable use in our passing through this world. What could we do without *faith*? It is *through faith* “we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God.” “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath revealed”—revealed them unto us by his Spirit. “Without faith it is impossible to please God;” for he that cometh unto God must “believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” “We are saved through faith.” There is neither justification nor sanctification without faith. We “live by faith,” “walk by faith,” “overcome by faith.” Hence we read of the “word of faith,” the “fight of faith,” the “work of faith,” and of the “household of faith.” May this, therefore, ever be our prayer, “Lord, increase our faith.” What could we do without *patience*? Patience has two offices to perform; the one regards waiting for the good, and the other the bearing of evil. How necessary is it, therefore, that we should pray that patience may have its perfect work,” that “we may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.” Both of these graces will be constantly required while we are here, and it is only through these that we can ever inherit the promises.

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MAR. 29.—Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ. Phil. i. 27.

WE may here observe three things: First, *The designation of the gospel*. It is the “gospel of Christ,” and is so named, not only because he is the author of it, but because he is also the subject, and, in a sense, the only subject of it, for all more or less remotely refers to him. It is elsewhere designated “the word of Christ,” “the truth as it is in Jesus.” It is full of his person, his character, his offices,

his sufferings, his atonement, his righteousness, his intercession, and his glory. The Apostle made Christ everything, not only in doctrine, but even in duty, and he could not enforce conjugal tenderness without a reference to him. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." Secondly, *The conversation enjoined*. This term commonly with us means *dis-*

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102

*course*, and it is a great thing to regulate this, and for the speech to be always with grace. James, therefore, said "If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." And what our Saviour said is enough to make us shudder every day, to think that for "every idle word that men speak they shall give an account thereof" in the day of judgment; for "by thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned." But it also mean's *habitual behaviour or conduct*. "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." "Let your conversation be without covetousness." "What manner of persons ought ye to be, in all conversation and godliness?" In all these cases conversation means a course of action. Thirdly, *The correspondence between the gospel and this conversation*. "Let your conversation be as it *becometh* the gospel of Christ." Now the becomingness of anything is always relative; what is becoming in one might not be so in another. We cannot determine how a man ought to live as to his expenditure till we know what he has to depend upon as to his income; for we are to provide things honest, not only "in the sight of the Lord," but also "in the sight of man;" while godliness is always essentially the same in its principles and practice, yet Solomon says, "In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider." Now, therefore, before we can judge what conversation *becometh* the gospel, we must ascertain what the gospel itself is. The gospel has four characteristics, or may be viewed under four aspects. It is a system of knowledge, cheerfulness, sanctity, and of mercy and

benevolence. Conversation, therefore, becoming the gospel of Christ must be distinguished by four attributes, that is, it must be wise, cheerful, holy, and benevolent.

“So let our lips and lives confess  
The holy gospel we profess.”

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MAR. 30.—The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. Job xlii. 10.

THUS we see that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. There is not only the efficiency of

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103

personal prayer, but the efficiency of relative prayer. The prayer which led to Job's deliverance was not a prayer for himself but for others. When our Saviour taught his disciples to pray, he did not teach them to say my Father, but “Our Father, who art in heaven.” And thus he intimates to all his followers that they are not to come to the throne of grace for themselves alone. We should remember this, that as in the days of his flesh the dear Redeemer never rejected any that came to him on their own behalf, so he never rejected any who came pleading with him on behalf of others. Let this, therefore, encourage parents to pray for their children, masters and mistresses to pray for their servants, relatives to pray for their friends. We should never forget what a resource we have in such prayers. We are passing through a world of misery, and are continually meeting with wretchedness we cannot relieve. We can sympathise and weep with the sufferers, but this is not all. We can retire and address the God of all grace, and engage him on their behalf, “who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.” And the success of our prayer does not depend upon talent or eloquence; for “He despiseth not the prayer of the destitute, but will hear their cry.” And whether we are in the closet, in the field, or in the shop—any where and at anytime—we may avail ourselves of this blessed resource of praying on behalf of others.

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MAR. 31.—*Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day.* 1 Thess. v. 5.

THE gospel is a system of knowledge. Hence it is called "light." "The light of life," "a great light," "the light of the world." When we think of this subject comparatively, three states with regard to knowledge present themselves to our notice. First, If we refer to the *heathen*, they were the children of night; all was dark with them. This was the case with these boasters of knowledge. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;" they were "vain in their imagination, and their fleshly hearts were dark." If some of these philosophers had a belief in the immortality of the soul, it was "only," as Paley said, "one of conjecture; they never taught it as a principle,

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104

never urged it as a duty. Secondly, 'If we turn from the heathen to *the Jews*, we shall find they were the children of the light. They had some light. Here was God known. "His name was great in Israel." "To them were committed the oracles of God." They possessed all the revelation the world then contained. But much as this was the case compared to the destitution of all around them, it was little compared with what was possessed by those who should come after them; and therefore our Saviour said to his disciples "that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things that ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things that ye hear, and have not heard them." Therefore, *Christians* are the children of the light and of the day. The Jews had the types and the shadows; Christians have the realities. The Saviour was to them "afar off," and they could not discern his lovely features, but we behold him "face to face." To them the Sun of Righteousness was below the horizon, but upon us he has "risen with healing in his wings;" and, says the Apostle John, addressing believers, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things;" not that we are to understand that we derive from the Scriptures a knowledge of the arts and sciences. We do not go to the

gospel for philosophy but divinity. It does not profess to teach us astronomy, but something beyond the stars. Its language is the language of Him whose words are words of "eternal life." It is wisdom: it is the "wisdom from above;" and it is knowledge: it is the excellent "knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." There we know all that is necessary for us to be acquainted with as sinners: and there we find things made plain just in proportion as they are important, so that the wayfaring man may not err therein. And as the dial tells us the hours of the day by the shadow as well as by the sunshine, so shall it be found that the gospel teaches us by what we do not see as well as by what is revealed. How much may we learn from its silence, and how much wiser would some men be if, when the gospel ceases to guide them, they would choose not to advance and intermeddle with what they ought not to know, and pry into things which they have not power to discern, and which puff up the fleshly mind. But let us not forget or neglect

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105

the intelligence derived from the gospel. Seeing that we are "children of light and of the day, let us not sleep as do others." How lamentable it is that we, who have the Scriptures, and sabbaths, and sanctuaries, and such abundant opportunities and advantages "to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," should make so little proficiency. To us the words of our Lord will, we fear, be applicable: "Are ye also yet without understanding?" "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?"

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APRIL 1.—*This is his name whereby he shall he called, The LORD our righteousness.* Jer. xxiii. 6.

To whom does this passage refer but to the Son of God, "in whose days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely?" To him from whom we derive all our salvation and all our security. Let us, therefore, consider his PERSONAL TITLE. He shall be called THE LORD our

righteousness. The word is JEHOVAH, which is a name above every name. Our translators have rendered the word "Jehovah" by the word "Lord," which is very inferior to the comprehensive idea of the original. The Scripture gives an honour to this name above every other by which the Divine nature is represented. God, therefore, reserved the proclamation of it for the most illustrious revelation of his power and glory; and he applies this name to himself peculiarly and as incommunicable. And this name is given to him who came into the world to save sinners. In the New Testament it is paraphrased and expressed thus: "Him who was and is, and is to come—The Almighty." Is he here called Jehovah? The language is strong, but his *perfections* allow it. His omniscience allows it—"The churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and the heart." His omnipresence allows it—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." His unchangeableness allows it—"He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The language is strong, but his *operations* justify it. "All things were created by him and for him, and he is before all

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106

things, and by him all things consist." "Without him was not anything made that was made." The language is strong, but it *accords with the worship demanded and received* by him. When John fell at the feet of the angel to worship him, the angel said unto him, "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant." Worship God. Worship him only and exclusively. When the Apostles came to our Saviour and said, "Lord, increase our faith," he did not rebuke them; and Stephen, when dying, and being full of the Holy Ghost, and therefore not likely to be mistaken, prayed unto him, and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and "lay not this sin to their charge." Paul "besought the Lord thrice" when he had the "thorn in the flesh," that it might depart from him. And we know that it was to the Lord Jesus that he prayed, because he answered the prayer, and said, "My grace is sufficient

for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Therefore, says the Apostle, "I will glory in my infirmities, that the power of *Christ* may rest upon me." And where, also, in other places, addressing the Corinthians, he says, speaking of the Saviour, "Their Lord and ours." "To all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, both, theirs and ours." And if *men* were liable to mistake, the *angels* are considered as infallible. And yet John heard them crying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." And they were authorized to do it, and they were commanded to do it; and if they could err, God could not, who enjoined it upon them, for "when he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, he saith, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.'" The language is strong, but the *occasion* requires it. His greatness must be carried into every part of his work, as a Saviour. Without this, how could he preserve what they committed to him against that day? Without this, how could his obedience be meritorious or his blood Divine? Or how could it be that One died for all, so that his death was an equivalent, and more than an equivalent, for the destruction of the numberless victims who would otherwise have perished? So we see this is not a mere speculation, but it is an indispensable truth in the Christian system.

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107

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APRIL 2.—*This is his name whereby he shall be called,*  
*The LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.* Jer. xxiii. 6.

OBSERVE his RELATIVE CHARACTER, or what he is to us, "The Lord *our* righteousness." The *former* would have filled us with terror, but *this* softens down the effulgency, *this* throws a rainbow around his head, and tells us we need not be afraid of another deluge. He is our righteousness in two ways—by his making us righteous by a change of *state* and by a change of *nature*, for the latter is as really derived from him as the former. Our sanctification comes to us from his suffering and his dying for us. Nothing can

be more expressly declared than this: "He gave himself for our sins," says the Apostle, "to deliver us from the present evil world." "He loved us, and gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" for by his death he not only satisfied Divine justice, but he obtained the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. Therefore "the Son quickens whom he will." And true it is, as Watts expresses it,

"Tis by the merits of his death  
Who hung upon the tree,  
The Spirit is sent down to breathe  
On such dry bones as we."

But now, though this change of state and change of nature be indispensable, they are very distinguishable. Every Scripture should have its own legitimate meaning given to it, and no more. In the passage before us, the reference is to the change of state, the righteousness of justification; "And Christ," says Paul, "is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Righteousness by his performing the precept and by his enduring the penalty of the law. Thus he is "the Lord our righteousness;" our righteousness to the exclusion of every other." As there is salvation, there is righteousness "in none other." "He trod the wine-press alone" in the procurement of it, and we thus plead it, as David did, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." It is ours by *imputation*, "Yes," the Apostle says, "he hath

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108

made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He was made "sin," and we are made "righteousness," in the same way both by imputation. Our guilt was reckoned to him, and he transferred his righteousness to us, and we are absolved. Therefore the Apostle desired that he might be "found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the

righteousness which is of God by faith." It is ours *perfected*. He said, when he expired, "It is finished;" and it was finished, and nothing now can be added to it. It yields all the claims which God demands. It magnifies the law and makes it honourable. In the parable it is called the "best robe." David tells us that in this righteousness believers are exalted—not only justified, but exalted—raised above Adam in paradise and the angels in heaven. The obedience of Adam was but the righteousness of a man; the obedience of angels was but the righteousness of creatures; but the believer has "the righteousness which is of God by faith"—a Divine righteousness—and therefore infinitely perfect and infinite in its value. It is ours *for ever*. This "adds bliss to bliss." Daniel tells us that the Messiah was to "make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness." "My righteousness," says God, "is for ever and ever"—for ever in the doctrine and in the experience and in the enjoyment of his people.

"This glorious dress the same appears  
When ruined nature sinks in years;  
No age can change its glorious hue,  
The robe of Christ is ever new."

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APRIL 3.—THIS IS HIS NAME WHEREBY HE SHALL BE:  
CALLED, *The Lord our righteousness*. Jer. xxiii. 6.

NAMES are designed to distinguish and to make their owners known; persons more than things are always called by their proper names. When it is here said: "This is his name whereby he shall be called—JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness, it may be considered as including three things. First, This is considered *his greatest work*. When a man takes a name from any of

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109

his actions, we may be assured that he will do it from the most peculiar, the most eminent, the most glorious of them. When, therefore, the Redeemer was to assume a name worthy of him, and by which he was to pass in our world,

he was to be called "the Lord our righteousness." He is great and mighty as a Prophet and as a King, but it is his Priestly office on which all is founded, and which gives them their efficiency and their success. We rejoice in his dominion, but it is "his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross," that affords relief to our troubled consciences, and by believing which we are enabled to "enter into rest." This is the doctrine that harmonizes and honours the divine perfections, that gives them their glory in the highest; this is that which best secures holiness in life, and peace in death. This, and this alone, constrains us to live not unto ourselves, but to him that "died for us and rose again." This is our comfort in adversity; in the confidence of this alone we can finish our course with joy. Every truth in Scripture is connected with it, and leaving it we lose the clue, and are found only in an inextricable labyrinth. Secondly, It means that *he is to be approached under this character.* This is always to be the great subject of the Christian ministry. Paul therefore says, "We preach Christ crucified," "whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The first preaching of the gospel was called the "preaching of the cross" itself, and the first ministers made manifest the Saviour and the Redeemer's knowledge in every place, for they knew and conformed to it—they knew that this was the name by which he was to be called, "The Lord our righteousness." Thirdly, It means that *all his people would own him as such.* Therefore it is said: "Surely shall one say, in the Lord Jehovah have I righteousness and strength." Not only believe it, but say it. "One" here does not mean "one" exclusively, but "one" characteristically—one as a specimen, a sample of all of them; for all of them will be induced to use the same language, when inducted into the glory of this scheme, by the influence of him who is to glorify Christ by taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us. Each will then say, "My tongue also shall talk of thy

righteousness all the day long." And not only is it the burden of their praise below, but of their praise above. It is the name under which they will adore him for ever. They will not be so taken up with their joy, and dazzled with their glories there, as to forget the way by which they came there, and realized all this, but they will sing, "Worthy is the Lamb;" they will say, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever."

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APRIL 4.—*Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.*  
 Luke xxiii. 47.

A DYING bed is a very affecting scene, but few have opportunity or liberty to observe it. But a public execution awakens much attention, and will be impressive according to the character of the sufferer and the disposition of the spectators. Our Saviour died, not in a quiet room, not on a bed of ease and comfort, but upon a cross, upon a hill, and at a public festival. No wonder, therefore, especially considering his fame, that his death should have attracted many spectators. We do not read of the chief priests, or of the elders, or of the scribes, or of the rulers being affected on this occasion. Yea, we know that, regardless of all decorum as well as of humanity, they joined in insulting the Redeemer in his last agonies. But we see the centurion impressed. This centurion was a Roman officer. We should always avoid general and indiscriminate reflections upon bodies and professions of men. Four centurions are mentioned in the New Testament, and of all those individuals we are compelled to think well. This centurion was the commander of a hundred men, and he was now appointed with his troops to guard the cross—to preserve it from all kinds of tumult. He was therefore now in his calling, and what a mercy it fell to his lot to perform duty on this occasion. Little did he imagine, when he ascended the hill of Calvary with his

men in the morning, what he should experience while he was there. Who knows what a day may bring forth? Little did

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Joseph imagine, when he went to inquire after his brethren's welfare in the plains of Dothan, that he would be governor of the land of Egypt; or Saul, when he set off to seek his father's asses—or David, when he carried provision to his brethren in the camp of Israel, that they would be anointed kings over all Israel. The people of the world call this the romance of history; but we view these things as the mysteries of the providence of Him "who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." He was not only a Roman officer; he was a heathen, a Gentile. And with regard to the attractive influence of the cross of Jesus, our Lord said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." And here we see an instance of it. And the man being a Gentile, renders the case more interesting to us; for what were we once but Gentiles in the flesh, worshipping the sun and the moon, and having a God for every day in the week; painted, naked savages, living in the woods, the slaves of a cruel and bloody superstition. But now what was it that affected the centurion? It was what he saw was done. He saw the Saviour give up the ghost. He was surprised that he should die before those who were crucified with him—before the blow which fractured and dispatched them; that he should not die of exhaustion; and that, with such calm composure and divine compassion, he should pray for his murderers while they were driving the nails into his hands and feet—and at the promise to the dying thief, the address to his mother, and to John concerning his mother. Ah, it was the moral scenery, as well as the physical scenery, which made the impression upon the mind of the centurion, "who, when he saw what was done, glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." In a parallel passage it is said, "He feared God greatly, and exclaimed, Truly this was the Son of God." He was the Son of God, because he had often said so, and

he would not have said this unless it had been true; and, therefore, he was convinced of his *innocency* and of his *dignity*, by the disposition which he displayed, and by the miracles which were performed on his behalf, and which were so many express testimonies from God.

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112

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APRIL 5.—*All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.* Luke xxiii. 48.

OBSERVE what is here said of SOME OF THE PEOPLE. This passage says, “all” the people; but this “all” must be taken with some restriction. We read in the thirty-third verse, that “the people stood beholding.” “And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; himself he cannot save.” The word all is often taken for *many*. There were many with him; and all those, it is said, who “came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.” The common people had always heard him gladly; they followed him from place to place. These were the persons to whom he principally preached; and he was so popular among them that the priests and rulers dared not lay hands upon him, for they feared the people. Observe the *action and conduct* of the people. They “smote their breasts,” in token of solemn displeasure and sorrow. They not only lamented and condemned the injustice and cruelty of others, but reflected upon themselves for not espousing his cause—for not bearing testimony in his favour; and some of them, it is more than probable, had joined in the yell in the courtyard—“Away with him; crucify him, crucify him.” And probably they had not only beheld his miracles, but had been made partakers of some of his benefits. Now, when they began to see what they had been doing, and who and what he was, they were greatly affected. They did it ignorantly; but it was nevertheless criminal. But, though the ignorance was a crime, it was pardonable; and now they

began to discern the truth of the case, they smote their breasts. There was something of that feeling when, seven weeks afterwards, Peter stood up amongst them and said—"Ye have crucified the Lord of life and glory." "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Was this the case? They smote their breasts and returned. Whether this may intimate that they would look no further; or that they would stay no longer, nor in-

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113

quire what was the result of all this; or that the impression made was merely momentary, and that they returned to their ordinary concerns again; or was it in their favour, to show that they were unable to bear the sight any longer—that they wished to be alone to grieve, and therefore withdrew, as Peter went out and wept bitterly—as the stricken deer leaves the herd—or as duty called them to prepare immediately for the solemnities of the Sabbath, now so soon to draw on? Here we are again unable to determine; yet, from all the circumstances of the case, we may conclude that they sorrowed after a godly sort; that they carried away impressions which were never erased; and that this again was another fruit of the Saviour's death, and the exemplification of his own prophecy, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth fruit."

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APRIL 6.—*And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.* Luke xxiii. 49.

AND here we have some of the SAVIOUR'S OWN CONNECTIONS spectators on this occasion. Observe, First, They include his *acquaintance*. These were persons between friends and strangers, with whom he had occasional and partial intercourse, without admitting them to intimacy. Of such our Saviour must have had many, as he had never

affected the monk and the ascetic. In his various journeys up to Jerusalem and back again to Galilee, where he commonly resided, he must have slept under many a roof. We find him frequently preaching in a private house. He would make acquaintance of those who resided there. His acquaintance, therefore, must have been many. Secondly, They include "*the women that followed him* from Galilee, who stood afar off beholding these things." Everything here was more than allowable. Everything here was praiseworthy. It is a remark which has been often made, but cannot be made too often, that women were the last at the cross, and the first at the tomb of Jesus. What a contrast these pious women here form with the disciples! Where are they? One has betrayed him; another has denied him;

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114

and all have forsaken him and fled. These women were not the "daughters of Jerusalem," to whom Jesus turned and said, "Weep not for me." Those were dwellers in Jerusalem; whereas the women here spoken of had followed him from Galilee, where they resided; they accompanied him when he came up to attend the Passover. But this is not all. We are led to observe, that there were "many women," some of whom were women of substance, and they were enabled to exercise beneficence towards their Lord and Saviour. Observe, it is not only said that they followed him up to Jerusalem, but that they "ministered unto him," bearing his expenses. We have the names of some of them—Mary Magdalene was one who had been healed and delivered by our Lord of a complication of maladies, and she felt her obligation. Another was Mary, the mother of James and John, the very woman who, influenced by her two sons, requested that "one of them might sit at his right hand, and the other at his left in his kingdom;" and to whom he said, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?" and they foolishly said, "We are able." Here was the mother, but where were James and John, who said they were then able? We shall indeed presently find

one of them at least drawing near the cross, but nothing is said of James. Where was he? Observe their *position*—"they stood beholding afar off." Perhaps they could not get nearer for the crowd; but even here the prophecy was fulfilled, "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off;" perhaps they were in some measure influenced by fear, and their courage increased with the occasion. But there was real love in them; *this* was the principle which swayed them, and they were soon by their love able to cast out fear, as we see by their subsequent conduct, especially on the morning of the resurrection. They stood beholding him, until, through the growing obscurity of the darkness that was now coming on, they had nearly lost sight of him. Doubtless they felt much despondency. They would feel the annihilation for the time of all their hopes of an earthly empire. After awhile, it is to be observed, they got nearer to the cross. Feeling the shaking of the earth,

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115

and now seeing the darkness, many drew back from the cross terrified, and thus gave the Saviour's friends an opportunity of approaching nearer to it. And this was necessary, for otherwise they would not have been able to contemplate him in the spreading darkness. Here were two of the women with the mother of Jesus, Mary the wife of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene. Mary Zebedee, who had introduced her two sons, is not standing near the cross. John is there now. When Jesus therefore saw his mother and that disciple standing by, he saith unto his mother—Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to that disciple, Behold thy mother!" These were the spectators on this occasion; and thus they were all influenced. Jesus died nearly two thousand years ago. We cannot therefore actually see him die, and yet in the preaching of the gospel before our eyes Jesus Christ is evidently set forth as crucified among us.

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APRIL 7.—*The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.* Matt. xx. 28.

THIS Jesus said in allusion to his own death, and it is to remind us of the numerous influences and advantages derived from it. And concerning his death he mentions four things. First, We are to *consider him as a ransom*. This metaphorical expression is one of the favourite terms employed by the Holy Ghost. There is a reality in it infinitely surpassing the emblem. A ransom is a satisfaction or a compensation for release from bondage. It reminds us of what we were, and of the state in which we were; we were the slaves of sin—led captive by the devil at his will. The lowness and wretchedness of the state of bondage in which we were are inexpressible, inconceivable. He interposed and said, “Deliver them from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.” What was this ransom? Had we been delivered from our former condition it would have been a deliverance only, not a redemption. Redemption supposes a price. We were “bought with a price.” And what was the price? “Ye were not redeemed,” says Peter, “with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” This was the ransom—“a price beyond all price.” He was our substitute. He

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116

died in our stead, in our place. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He, the just, died for us, the unjust. “Surely,” says the Church, “he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” Secondly, He tells us that *his death was intentional*; not an eventual thing, but foreknown; not a consequence, but a design. He assumed our nature, not to reign in it, but to suffer, and on purpose to suffer. This was his grand aim and business, to “give his life a ransom for many.” Thirdly, He reminds us also that his death was *voluntary*. He *gave* himself a ransom for many. Although it is sometimes said that he was sent of the Father, yet he was at his own disposal. Therefore the Scriptures sometimes

ascribe his death to his love, "He loved us and gave himself for us;" and sometimes it is ascribed to his power, "No man taketh my life from me, I lay it down myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." This commission he voluntarily accomplished, it was not forced upon him, and therefore he said, "That the world may know I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." Therefore he said, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God, thy law is within my heart. I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." Fourthly, It regards the *esteem he has for his people*. Sometimes they are described by their character, here by their number—"many." He does not tell us how many; and he has almost forbidden us to inquire concerning it, for when a man one day asked him, "Lord, there are few that be saved?" without noticing the poor trifler at all, he said to them that were with him, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many I say unto you will seek to enter in and shall not be able." As much as if he had said, Instead of indulging yourselves in various inquiries concerning the number of the saved, do you be concerned to be one of them. But we are allowed to say very many. So many, to do justice to the promise made to the Messiah, that" all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations serve him."

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117

So many, that when gathered out of every country, and nation, and tongue, and people, they will be found a multitude that no man can number. So many, as that the Messiah admits it an ample compensation for all the sufferings he endured; for "he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied."

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APRIL 8.—*He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* Rom. iv. 25.

THE importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is often expressed in the Scriptures, but the importance of it is not seen by viewing the fact itself, or considering it separately. All we hope to derive from the mediation of Jesus Christ, or from the official relation he sustains, depends upon his resurrection, and is nothing without it. It is there we have the clearest evidence of his Messiahship, because he is thereby declared to be the Son of God, with power; it is there we see him victorious over all the powers of darkness. Enoch and Elias never grappled with death; they slipped into heaven by a flowery way. But it was otherwise with the Messiah. Death seized him, and dragged him into his den, but there he was strangled himself, and the destroyer of death came forth in triumph, and proclaimed, "I am the resurrection and the life." It is there we see the worth, the all-sufficiency, and the acceptableness of this sacrifice. It is there we have evidence that his death was an offering and a "sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour." "He raised him up from the dead and gave him glory" for that purpose. In his discharge from the grave we may read our own discharge from the curse of the law; and hence we read that an angel came and rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre. He could have done this himself, but it would have looked like a prisoner breaking away from his prison, and endeavouring to escape by stealth, whereas now he who had imprisoned him as the surety of his people releases him. He has made the payment, and his resurrection from the dead is a receipt in full for the deliverance of his church, by his suffering for them. Therefore it is said, "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised

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118

again for our justification." Therefore, says the Apostle, "who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It is there we behold him, the source of spiritual life, awaking, and sanctifying, and enlightening, and renewing his people by

the Holy Spirit, which he died to obtain, and which he rose to possess and to communicate. It is there we behold him, as the model and principle of our resurrection. When he died, we died in him; when he rose, we rose with him; when he was quickened, we were quickened together with Christ, and raised, and made to sit with him in heavenly places. Our glory, if we belong to him, necessarily follows his; he would not be complete without us. Where the head is, there shall also the members be, and the Apostle assures us that "if, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

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APRIL 9.—*I will raise him up at the last day.*  
John vi. 44.

OBSERVE first the *specialty* of the privilege. For it may be asked—"Will he not raise all at the last day? He will; but that cannot be considered a deliverance which raises a man from a bad state and consigns him to a worse; which takes him from worms and casts him into flames. The wicked are not raised hereafter from the same principle as the righteous, nor are they raised under the same kind of dispensation. They are to be raised as criminals, not to be set free, but to be judged, and punished for the deeds done in the body. So that though the resurrection be a universal event, it is a special and limited privilege. Unquestionably the privilege is to be taken exclusively, that in comprehending all that precedes it, and subserves it, and that is necessary to it, it takes in the perseverance of believers to the end of life, their victory over all spiritual enemies, and the raising up the body at the resurrection. The resurrection is not only apart of this blessedness, but it is the completeness of it, the principal part. We see how far the Redeemer carries his concern on behalf of his people.

As he will lose no one of them, so he will lose no part of them. He has ransomed the body as well as the soul, and

he will reclaim them; and “the temple of the Holy Ghost,” though demolished for a time, he will re-edify; it will be raised infinitely improved. The same body, but oh, how superior; not after the model of Adam’s body when he came from his Maker’s hands in Paradise, but “after the image of the heavenly.” This is the privilege. Observe also the *Author* of it. He is not only the model of the resurrection of his people, but the accomplisher of it. And in his humiliation he knew this sublime destination, he knew that his voice was to awaken all the dead, that he was to raise them up, and judge them all, and to assign them their proper portions. The Apostle, therefore, fixes upon the ability, which it is necessary for us to recognise here—We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it maybe fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Then, finally, the *certainty* of the privilege, “I will raise him up at the last day.” It is, moreover, as sure as it can be made. As his power renders him able, as his love makes him willing, so his word has bound him down, for though we could not bind him, he has condescended to bind himself. And his people can depend upon him as a faithful and true witness, especially as they know that there is such a union between him and his people that he cannot be complete without them, that where he is there shall also his servants be, that where the head is there must the members be. And he has said, “Because I live ye shall live also.”

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APRIL 10.—*Ye know all things.* I John ii. 20.

THIS must be taken with some restriction, otherwise the assertion would not be true with regard to any individual, not even to an inspired Apostle, who says, “We see in part.” It must therefore be qualified, by being taken with four limitations. First, These “all things” include *religious things only*; the Apostle does not refer to the knowledge of nature, of commerce, or of policy, or of the arts and sciences; but what Paul calls “the things of the Spirit,” and the things which

120

are of God “and which accompany salvation.” Secondly, it extends only to all *religious things that are revealed*—“secret things belong to God, but the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children.” Where the Scripture is silent, it is better for us to be silent also. The question with us is, What saith the Scripture? Thirdly, All religious things which are revealed, and *which are important*. Everything in religion is not equally momentous, though equally true. The grand business of the things which are revealed is to answer the question, “What must I do to be saved?” The grand exhibition is, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” What we are required to know is not the decrees of God, but his commands; to study the promises of God rather than his prophecies. As soon as the disciples began to study prophecy, and came to our Saviour, saying, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?” he said, “It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.” A man maybe a spiritual man, and yet not know what sort of a creature leviathan was. There are many things in the Scriptures the knowledge of which does not necessarily accompany salvation. Fourthly, The knowledge of all things revealed is to be considered *comparatively, not absolutely and completely*; for “who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?” As to many of the things revealed, if we can know but little of their nature and mode of existence, or even the mode of their operation, we know them in their results and developments; how little of these we know, and which even the very “angels desire to look into.” They see there is much more to be known, and they come to the church to learn the “manifold wisdom of God.”

“The cross, the manger, and the throne,  
Are big with wonders yet unknown.”

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April 11.—*So is the kingdom of heaven, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.* Mark iv. 26, 27.

NATURAL influences operate *mysteriously*, and thus also is it in the spiritual economy. Those individuals who say that they

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121

will not believe any more than they can comprehend, must have either very large understandings or very little creeds, for what do we know or what can we comprehend? we do not even understand ourselves. "Oh, what a miracle," says Young, "is man to man!" Who can explain the human frame, the causes of vital heat or the colour of blood, and a thousand other things? We should do, therefore, in reference to spiritual things, what we do in all such cases as those to which reference is here made. In all these instances we are satisfied with the results, if we are ignorant of the processes; we are satisfied of the effect though reason may fail, and perfectly fail, as to the causation and the mode by which the effects have been produced. As we know not how the bones of the unborn infant do grow, nor "what is the way of the spirit;" "even so," says the Royal Preacher, "thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all." "The wind," says our Saviour, "bloweth where it listeth"—and what philosopher can explain the first rise and final issue, and numberless other things pertaining to it—"yet thou hearest the sound thereof;" and you feel its currents: you see the clouds course along; you see the waving of the corn in the field; and you see trees torn up by the roots. "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Or apply it more immediately to the imagery here employed by our Lord of the corn which the husbandman sows, and "which springs up he knoweth not how." In vain, therefore, as Paul says, do any ask, "How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance

of wheat, or of some other grain." Here we see life and death; we see decay and growth at once, equally inexplicable and undeniable; so is the spiritual life.

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APRIL 12.—*Ask, and ye shall receive.* John xvi. 24.

WITH regard to the asking and receiving blessings from our heavenly Father observe four things. First, That *God has prescribed this course, and made prayer the channel of*

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122

*his influence and communication.* For all these things, says he, "I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Secondly, *He has a right to determine the way in which he should be gracious;* for grace must be free, or it is no more grace. He is a great King above all gods, and we have no claim upon him. Yea, we were unworthy of the least of all his mercies; we lay entirely under his displeasure, and as children of disobedience we deserved that his wrath should come upon us. Thirdly, *The way he has chosen is best,* whether we consider his glory or our own welfare. Prayer humbles man, while it exalts God: it expresses our dependence upon him, and gives him the glory that is due to his holy name: thus honouring his wisdom, his power, and his goodness. And as to ourselves, if we obtained these blessings without ever claiming or seeking after them, the attainment would afford us no satisfaction. We should not then value them, nor call upon our souls, and all that is within us, to bless and praise God for them. Fourthly, As he has appointed and enjoined this way, *He will always pay regard to it.* He always has done so from the beginning of the world. He hath not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain;" and he never will, and he never can. For though we could not bind him, he has bound himself by promise; and the Scripture cannot be broken. Let us therefore confide in his faithfulness, and pray for the blessings we need; for, says he, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for

every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth: and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." And, blessed be his name, there are no meritorious qualifications required—no hard conditions imposed.

"Though in ourselves we have no stock,  
The Lord is nigh to save;  
The door flies open when we knock:  
It is but ask and have."

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APRIL 13.—*He that is holy, let him be holy still.*  
Rev. xxii. 11.

HEAVEN is not only a high but a holy place, in which entereth "nothing that defileth;" for "without holiness

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123

no man shall see the Lord." Christians are called to holiness, and are commanded to be holy: "Be ye holy; for I am holy." They are addressed as "holy brethren." They are here made partakers of the holiness they are to possess and enjoy in heaven. Hence are they said to be "predestinated to be conformed unto the image of God's dear Son." Are we discouraged by this description of the Christian's holiness, and ready to say, instead of experiencing this holiness of heart and life—this conformity to the mind of Christ, and of walking as he also walked—that we "find another law in our members warring against the law of our minds?" Still we may bless God there is a law of the mind to be warred *against*, which was not the case with us *once*; nor is it the case with others *now*. Do we say, "When I would do good, evil is present with me?" Yes; but there is also the *will* to do good. This shows that those who are thus exercised are not merely convinced but converted, not merely reformed but renewed in the spirit of their mind, not only moral but holy; being made partakers of God's holiness, they mind spiritual things, are joined to the Lord, and have one spirit. He that is holy here will be confirmed in holiness hereafter. The Christian on earth is therefore the subject of the same

holiness, differing only in measure and degree, as the glorified spirits above. The same spirit of humility which disposes them to cast their crowns at the Saviour's feet, leads the believer now to say, "Not I, but the grace of God in me." Do they who dwell in his house above still praise him? Believers have the same spirit of gratitude, and are saying, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be continually in my mouth." There, his servants serve him, see his face, and have their names in his forehead. So in his church on earth, the saints in degree take pleasure in diffusing his glory, realizing his presence, and avowing, even unto death, his name.

"The men of grace have found  
 Glory begun below;  
 Celestial fruits on earthly ground,  
 From faith and hope may grow."

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 124

APRIL 14.—*The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the Made, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.* Mark iv. 28.

NATURAL influences operate *gradually*, and so do the spiritual. What a scene does winter display often, when the woods, and the hedges, and the trees, and the fields, and the gardens are stripped of their ornaments, and look dreary and dead! But the spring comes round, and brings out their beauties and fertility, and we go forth, and we see nature renewing the face of the earth, and making all things new. But how? By *degrees!* We would not limit the Holy One of Israel: there must be a time when religion begins, though there is no time when it ends. Instantaneous conversions are not always to be depended upon. In nature we see every thing resulting from small beginnings, and by imperceptible degrees advancing. So it is in spiritual things. And we may observe, too, that the more excellent things are, the slower is their progress. How much sooner some animals reach their

full size than a man, and how much more rapidly grows the osier than the oak. There are many eminent Christians and ministers, who for some years were very feeble in their views and dispositions. It was a considerable time before they came into the glorious "liberty of the sons of God." They had to *feel* and they had to *fight* their way too. But they trod the firmer and fought the harder, because they could say, "We have 'learned by experience.'" We know that this was the mode with our Saviour, in the days of his flesh. He said to his disciples, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." Thus he leads them on. So it is with his people now. Their course has commenced, like the dawn, with a few rays; but then these rays are forerunners. But "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Let us not, with regard to ourselves or others, "despise the day of small things." Neither let us be discouraged if at present we have but little strength. How small is the germ of the corn at first! How unlikely it seems to be able to withstand the assailing of the weather and of the winter! But that which is "sown in weakness

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125

is raised in power;" "though our beginning be small, our latter end shall greatly increase."

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APRIL 15.—*Behold, for peace I had great bitterness.*

Isa. xxxviii. 17.

WE ought always to value God's mercy; but our successes and indulgences, frequently for a time, make impressions which are injurious. They cause us to forget our present condition, and that other dangers may be yet in reserve and awaiting us. So it was here. Hezekiah had just experienced a marvellous deliverance, and promised himself a continuance of peace and triumph. When lo! he was seized with a distemper, which embittered all his comforts, and threatened his life. "In my prosperity," said David, "I shall never be moved." Ah! vain hope; for

with the same breath he exclaimed, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Of the many sources of disappointment to which the most favoured child of Providence is liable, let us notice four. And, First, There is nothing more precarious than *health*. Who can tell what a day may bring forth; what accidents may befall us; or by what diseases we may be laid prostrate? Secondly, *Children* may bitterly disappoint a parent's hope. Here is Rachel, holding up their little robes, which are to be worn no more, "weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not." And here is a greater affliction still—a child becoming vicious, and a companion of fools. Thirdly, *The friendships of life* may prove how insincere and perfidious are some who have been trusted as friends. Hence the language of David, "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; but it was thou, my guide and mine acquaintance." Thus it was with Job; his friends dealt deceitfully with him. So it was with Paul, when before Caesar, he says, "All men forsook me." Fourthly, *Wealth* is another source of disappointment. Many who began life in affluence are now living in want, or depending on alms. We should therefore take care, and be sober-minded, and not look for more from any of those things, in our passage through life, than they are able to afford. Let us make the Lord our trust; he will not, he

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126

cannot, disappoint us. If creatures are broken cisterns, he is the Fountain of living waters; if they are broken reeds, he is the Rock of Ages.

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APRIL 16.—*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*  
Philemon 25.

TO what else than this principle alone can our salvation be ascribed? The Saviour's interposition on our behalf is neither the result of imposition, compulsion, desert, nor importunity. It cannot be ascribed to *imposition*. Some persons undertake enterprizes unconscious of their con-

sequences. How often they have exclaimed, "If I had foreseen the results, I would have had nothing to do with it!" But this was not the case with the Lord Jesus. He was neither inveigled into it, nor did he engage in it from ignorance. He saw the end from the beginning. It was laid before him. He saw it all when he said, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God." We know what this will implied—it was his becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Yet he came forward and showed no reluctance in the execution; and as his passion drew near, he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" *Voluntariness* was also necessary to his obedience. Deity has no impression from external causes. He therefore must act and did act freely. His passion was the exercise and the expression of his absolute independence: "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Therefore, in his death, "he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost," which showed that he died not of exhaustion or weakness. He was not only the Sacrifice, but the Priest that offered it. Nor could it be the effect of *desert*. We were criminals in our misery; and this is a circumstance on which the Apostle enlarges so frequently and so much: "When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly;" "God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Nor was it the result of *importunity*. It was as much without our desire as it was without our desert; for it was long

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127

before we had a being. To humble Job God said to him, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" and Christ may say to Christians, "Where were you when I came forward and said, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom?" No; the more we examine this subject the more we shall find it impossible to ascribe our being, enriched with all the

blessings of salvation, of grace, and of glory, to any other cause than to his grace.

“With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace  
Beheld our helpless grief;  
He saw, and O amazing grace,  
He came to our relief.”

APRIL 17.—*The Salvation of the Lord.* Exod. xiv. 13.

THIS is the distinguishing theme of the gospel. Salvation always refers to some evil; and numberless are the evils which are embattled against us “in our passage through this vale of tears, and from which alone we are protected by the God of salvation, to whom belong ‘the issues from death,’” and who is therefore called “the Preserver of men.” But we are fallen, guilty, depraved, perishing, and, in ourselves, helpless creatures; and therefore we need deliverance from great and manifold spiritual evils. This deliverance is emphatically called always *Salvation*—“so great” salvation—and it is so great, so inconceivably great, that compared with it every other salvation is “nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity.” Now this salvation includes more than mere deliverance. It is not only a deliverance *from* something, but *to* something—“from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;” from condemnation to adoption; from the curse of the law to all the promises of the gospel; and from hell to heaven.

“Buried in sorrow and in sin,  
At hell’s dark door we lay;  
But we arise by grace Divine  
To see a heavenly day.”

This salvation is *for ever*; as it is written, “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” The

more valuable any possession is, the more alive we are to its stability, and the more miserable we become in proportion as we discover the probability or possibility even

of leaving or losing it. "He that believeth on me," says the Saviour, "hath everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." It is a *full* salvation. It leaves no evil unremoved, no want unsupplied, no hope unaccomplished. It brings to us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." It reveals unto us a sun in our darkness, a shield in our danger, strength in our weakness, peace in our trouble, joy in our sorrow. It blesses us with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." "It is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." This salvation, as to its procurement, was finished on the cross; and as to its actual application and enjoyment, will be completed when the believer, as an embodied creature, shall "enter into the joy of the Lord."

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APRIL 18.—*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.* 1 Cor. iii. 6.

SO we see that spiritual influences, as well as natural, operate *in connection with human means and exertions*. The husbandman knows that he cannot produce an ear of corn; but he equally knows that he can manure, and plough, and sow; and he knows that it would be egregious folly were he to look for a crop without these. For though he well knows that God could produce a crop without human culture, he knows he never does. While he knows that all these efforts would be nothing at all without the snow and the rain from heaven, he equally knows that the rain and the snow from heaven would be nothing without these. The one in the economy of God is as necessary as the other. Instrumentality never excludes agency, never detracts from it, yea, displays it the more. Ministers cannot of themselves convert their hearers, yet they can study hard and give themselves to meditation, and seek to find out not only words of truth, but acceptable words, and then retire and pray,

129

“O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.” Although parents cannot convert their children, yet they can train them up in the admonition of the Lord. And we should all be working “out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure.” “For all these things,” says God, after promising them, “will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” Here, indeed, now is some difference between these natural and spiritual influences, but then it is in our favour. We are not sure that our prayers will always move the clouds, but we know Him who has said, “Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened.” We know, also, who has said, “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? “The fertility produced by natural influences in the fields and in the gardens is always limited, but there are no bounds to control the spiritual progress. God “giveth more grace.” He is the “God of all grace.” We are exhorted to “go on unto perfection;” and we may “increase with all the increase of God,” and be “filled with all the fulness of God.”

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APRIL 19.—*And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! Gen. xxviii. 17.*

THAT is, how venerable, how august, how solemn, how divine! Intercourse with God is calculated to check levity of mind and to produce serious impressions. The man who was not at all afraid to lie down in this place, surrounded with danger and enveloped in darkness, is filled with fear in the morning—at what? at the thought of a present Deity. This was not a slavish dread, like that which Belshazzar felt when he saw the handwriting upon the wall; but he was filled with what the Apostle calls “*reverence and godly fear.*” Such the seraphim know when they cover their faces with their wings, when they appear before God; such Isaiah felt, when he said, “Woe

is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Such Peter felt, when he said, "Depart from me; for I am

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130

a sinful man, O Lord God." Such Job felt, when he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, and now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And the experience of every believer now is the same. He knows "there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared." The Christian fears the Lord and his goodness; and when we can meet Christ as our own, "as our portion for ever"—when in duty we draw near to him, "even to his seat"—when we enter the secret pavilion and our thoughts are arrested—then the character of God, as He is, rises in our estimation, and more of the adoration of the supreme Being is introduced in all the feelings of our soul. It was so with Jacob here. This may serve to check an improper practice among some persons, who, in addressing God in prayer, express themselves in a manner they would not dare to do in addressing a fellow-creature of their own rank. We should never forget that we are addressing the King of kings and Lord of lords. This, therefore, may remind us, that if we would serve God acceptably, we must serve him with reverence and godly fear. There is nothing that tends to render devotional exercises so conducive to edification, as our coming to them in a solemn and impressive frame of mind, just as Jacob felt after this interview and this address.

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APRIL 20.—*As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth.* Isa. lv. 10, 11.

"THE rain and the snow that cometh down," and the gospel, have one author. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." There are some who imagine the Apostle James here means to establish a distinction between these—between the good gifts and the perfect gifts—applying

the good gifts to earthly, and the perfect gifts to spiritual benefits. It is true that there is such a difference between them, and it is equally true that they all descend from above, and they all come down from the God of all grace. This is unquestioned with regard to the snow and the rain. Every one knows that if God were to withhold these no creature could obtain a "fall" of the one or a "shower" of

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131

the other. "Hath the rain a father, and who hath begotten the drops of dew? " "Can any among the vanities," asks Jeremiah, "of the Gentiles give rain?" And the inference to be derived from this is, that if God gives the less, he gives the greater; that as the natural light is from him, so must also spiritual illumination be; for, saith the Apostle: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The life of an insect and of the plant comes from God, and so also does that life which is emphatically called the "life of God." "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The verdure of the meadows, and the fertility of the fields and of the gardens praise God, and the saints by their self-denying duties, their works of faith and labours of love, and the graces of the spirit, "show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light;" and if we are filled with the fruits of righteousness, it is by "Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." "This people," says God, "have I formed for myself, and they shall show forth my praise." It is commonly and justly admitted that the works of nature lead to God as their author, and that there is upon all of them the impress of Deity; that such is the immensity of some and the minuteness of others, and the perfection of the whole, that we are constrained to say—

"The hand that made them is Divine."

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APRIL 21.—*He that received seed in the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.* Matt. xiii. 23.

WE here see, that as natural influences operate according to the nature of the soil, so do the spiritual. In the parable we observe there was the very same sower, the very same seed, and the very same season: the difference therefore in the result was not in these. It was in the nature of the ground. There were four kinds of soil. The way-worn and the stony place, the thorny place, and the good ground.

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132

Our Saviour says the good ground is the honest and good heart; not that any hearts are naturally so, or can be so, destitute of the grace of God. But some are prepared for the reception of the word. The parable takes the fact, and wisely accounts for the difference of the produce from the difference of the soil. "Do not," says God, "my words do good to them that walk uprightly?" that is, to those who are sincerely desirous of knowing and following its designs. And our Saviour says: "He that doeth my will, shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." We are, therefore, likely to derive benefit from reading or hearing the word, when our hearts are delivered from the love of every sin, and when we can come to his dear feet and pray—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? "Lead me in the way and guide me, for "thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." Agencies must evermore operate according to the nature of their subjects. Heat, the very same heat that melts wax, will harden clay. There may be two persons sitting in the same pew and hearing the truth; if one of them believe it, and believe not only the truth of it but the importance of it, and the other does not, it is not possible for them to feel alike the same doctrine. So says the Apostle to the Hebrews, "The word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." And to the Thessalonians he says, "Ye received our

word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe." Therefore, says the Apostle James, "Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive meekly the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls."

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APRIL 22.—*Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption.* Isa. xxxviii. 17.

THE writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick. Observe, First, His *perilous situation*. It was the "pit of corruption," that means the grave; he was on the verge of the eternal world. We see how unimportant the distinctions of the world are. He was a great king, and very successful, but a disorder arrests him and lays him low.

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133

One day he is on the throne, another on the bed of languishing. No human greatness can secure a man from the ordinary infirmities of nature or the common calamities of life. Observe, Secondly, *His restoration* from this perilous state. He was delivered, that is, recovered. He speaks of it as a privilege. "Life is yours," saith the Apostle Paul; and it is an inestimable blessing, and capable of infinite improvement. With regard to the Christian's personal enjoyment, he may say, "It is better to depart and be with Christ," but to abide in the flesh may be more useful to others. It is, indeed, the only season of usefulness. This is the only opportunity Christians have of serving their generation, and of glorifying their Saviour. Thirdly, Observe also the *Author* of his deliverance. It is the *Lord's* doing. He bringeth down to the grave, and he raiseth up. Hezekiah was recovered by the application of prescribed and proper means; but this only shows God's order in working. God chooses to use means in his agency, and therefore *we* must use means too. But whatever means we employ we must rely for their success entirely upon him; for "without him we can do nothing." Observe, Lastly, That he received this deliverance *as springing*

*from the divine favour.* “*Thou hast in love to my soul*” done it. Our temporal mercies never have so sweet a relish as when we taste the love of God in them. God sometimes *denies his people in love.* When through ignorance they implore things which would be injurious to them, his kindness leads him to refuse their desires. So he sometimes *grants in wrath.* The Israelites, discontented with the manna, desired flesh. God gave them their heart’s desire, but sent leanness into their souls.

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APRIL 23.—*The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*  
John iv. 21.

WE here observe that the Christian dispensation did not properly commence till the death of Christ. But, upon his resurrection from the dead, he gave his commission to his disciples, to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;” “and they went forth preaching every-

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134

where that men should repent.” There is nothing, therefore, in the Christian dispensation like that of Judaism, which, though of divine origin, was now to be abolished. That system was exclusive, and necessarily confined to a particular nation. In the nature of the case it never could have become a universal religion. It was impossible that the males of all countries could have repaired three times a year to Jerusalem, to appear before the Lord, and to worship there.

“But we have no such lengths to go,  
Nor wander far abroad;  
Where’er the saints assemble now,  
There is a house for God.”

Christianity has no localities. The gospel overlooks everything that is external and adventitious in men’s condition, and regards them as men only, whatever be their colour, condition, their country, or their character; it regards them in those exigencies which are common to

every individual of the human race. It finds all guilty, and it brings forgiving mercy. It finds all depraved, and brings sanctifying grace. It finds all incapacitated and destined to live for ever, and turns this, which would otherwise have been a curse, into a blessing, by converting it into life and immortality.

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APRIL 24.—*My soul is cast down within me.*  
Psalm xlii. 6.

“MAN is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;” and whatever direction our life takes, it will be sure to conduct us through a vale of tears. Observe, here, the *speaker* himself. These are the words of David, a great man, who had even reached the throne. It was not while he was in Bethlehem, but after he had reached Jerusalem—after he had exchanged a shepherd’s crook for the royal sceptre—that he said, “O that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest.” Yet he was a good man—an eminently good man—who possessed more experimental religion than any man before the incarnation of the Son of God; “a man after God’s own heart.” There are many who are perplexed and distressed because they think God has

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135

no regard for them, therefore they often ask, “If I am his why am I thus?” Whereas they are thus because they are his. They are pruned because they are vines, and because he would have them bring forth more fruit. They are in the furnace because they are gold; they are chastened because they are sons—“for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not.” Observe, next, the *extent and degree of his fear*. You will see that it got through to his mind, and pulled his very soul down to the ground. “My soul is cast down within me.” It is not the water *without* a vessel that sinks it, but the water that gets *in*. While the mind is calm, peaceful, and heavenly, outward distresses are of little importance; but when all is dark without and gloomy within too, when man frowns, and God does not appear to

smile, then is the soul tried. A man's spirit may sustain his infirmities, "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" And, we may add, who can cure? Why, only the God of all grace, and the God of all comfort, to whom David made his complaint. Let us, whenever we feel distressed and depressed in our mind, take the case and spread it before the Lord. He alone can alter the state of the mind who has access to it, and dominion over it. Let us remember that when the soul is cast down it is not destroyed; and endeavour to check instead of giving way to despondency; and say, in the preceding words, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, for he is the help of my countenance, and my God."

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head."

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APRIL 25.—*As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* Gal. vi. 10.

OBSERVE, First, That this command is founded on *the authority of God*; for who can read his word without reading the injunction—to "do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." "If a man

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136

love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." Secondly, This command intimates to us the *need we have of each other*. There is no such thing as independence in our world; it is only ignorance and pride that lead people to affect anything like it. It is in the social body as it is in the natural body; there are many members, but there is only one body. "Ye," says the Apostle, "are members, one of another." The higher men

rise the more dependent do they become; the rich owe more to the poor than the poor owe to them. The foundation of the social edifice is the lowest part, but then it sustains the whole. Let us learn how dependent we are, and how much others have done for us. Thirdly, Obedience to this command is necessary to the enjoyment of the *pleasures of beneficence*. He who leaves his neighbour in hunger and wretchedness, while he has the means and opportunities of doing good, is just like a man who dies for thirst with a cup of nectar in his hand. In the same proportion as we are really benevolent will be our happiness; therefore our Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." What luxury ever equalled that of Job, when he said, "The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Here is pure pleasure; durable pleasure; pleasure that will bear examination, bear review; pleasure that, like the rose, will yield perfume even after it is dead. Fourthly, To induce in us a practical regard to this admonition, let us keep in mind that *benevolence will not lose its reward*. How often in his word does God press this as a motive upon us. It cannot, therefore, be wrong for us thus to regard it. "Cast thy bread upon the waters," says the wise man, "and thou shalt find it after many days." "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." These are the declarations, the assurances of God, who is faithful and able to perform what he has promised; for all events are under his control, and all creatures at his disposal. Fifthly, Let us refer to the *example of Christ*; and this motive is reserved for the last because it is the best. "Whatsoever we do in word or deed," we are to "do all in

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137

the name of the Lord Jesus." Our arguments, therefore, and our practice, must be Christian and evangelical. "Let this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus." We had no claims upon him; we were unworthy of the least of all his mercies, ill-deserving, hell-deserving creatures, and must have perished for ever. And what did his inter-

position on our behalf cost him? "For our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." "He gave his life a ransom for us." "Therefore if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

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APRIL 26.—*He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that he may bring forth food out of the earth.* Psalm civ. 14.

THE literal description, which is contained in this fine ode to the spring by the royal Psalmist, is again being fulfilled. The clouds have poured down their treasure, and the grateful soil is teeming with the promises of loveliness and fertility. In this case two things should follow. First, That we should *gratefully adore that God*, who never leaves himself without witnesses, in that he is continually doing us good and sending us rain and fruitful seasons, and "filling our hearts with food and gladness." Why are we thus indulged? Have we duly improved his former loving kindnesses? "Not unto us, O Lord!" for "it is of the Lord's mercy we are not consumed." O that the "goodness of God may lead us to repentance." Secondly, Let us endeavour to *derive religious instruction from it*. There are but very few persons who are really lovers of natural scenery. The multitude are carried away by something artificial, and are more struck with the works of man than by the works of God. And we have met with others, who have a real taste for nature, but then they never regarded it as the handmaiden of grace, never made it the representation and the remembrance of better things. Yet there is a striking analogy between the works of God in nature and in grace. The blessings of the Scripture are infinitely superior to the blessings of the field, yet the one furnishes illustrations of the other, and was designed to furnish them; and by a holy chemistry we may extract heaven from earth;

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138

by a holy mechanism we may make the creature a ladder by which to ascend to the Creator; by spiritual-mindedness

and meditation we may render every place a house of God, every avenue the gate of heaven, every object a preacher. The rising sun may tell us of the "Sun of Righteousness rising with healing under his wings." The refreshing dew may remind us of the doctrine of divine grace. "And," says Isaiah, "as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be; that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

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APRIL 27.—*Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.*  
James v. 13.

AFFLICTIONS of every kind are considered in the Scriptures as trials, and the reason is, because they serve to show our principles, our dispositions, and our resources. It is natural for men, when they are in difficulties and distresses, to repair to something that promises to afford them deliverance, or at least to temper and sweeten the bitter cup of sorrow; and as every individual is insufficient in himself to secure this, we make use of various and numerous expedients for the purpose, but they are all in vain, and therefore, at last, classing our comforts with our crosses, and the good with the evil, disappointed and confounded, we acknowledge with Solomon, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." The Christian has but one resource, but then it is an adequate and an infinite one, and is able to weigh down all that can be brought against him. Therefore, instead of walking up and down, saying, "Who will show me any good?" he says to his soul, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Now this is the divinely-prescribed course—"Call upon me," says God, "in the day of trouble." "Is any afflicted?" says the Apostle, "let him pray." We should regard prayer not only as a *duty* but as a *privilege*, as the cordial of human life, as the balm of

139

affliction, as opening an asylum into which no evil shall enter, as affording a sanctuary where “the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.” Hence said the church, “Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn and he will heal us, he hath smitten and he will bind us up.” Thus we may repair in all our distresses unto God, and if we cannot address him. in words, it is our mercy to know, that “all our desire is before him, and our groaning is not hid from him.”

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APRIL 28.—*I will remember the works of the Lord.*

Psalm lxxvii. II.

THIS is not a natural resolution. Men naturally are for putting God out of their thoughts. God infinitely deserves our remembrance, and He is perpetually making us to remember. He says to us in his word and by all his works, “Behold me, behold me.” He pours a profusion of benefits around us, that we may be perpetually reminded of him; and when we forget him, he will employ other and painful methods to induce us to regard him. And when he is visiting us with chastisement, it is well if we remember him, and ask, “Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?” David, when in distress, and when his soul was cast down within him, says, “I will remember thee.” And so said Asaph, in the day of trouble, and when his “sore ran in the night.” Whom *ought* we to remember? Whom can we remember so effectually when in distress as God? “He is,” says the Apostle, “the blessed God;” the original is “the happy God,” happy in himself, and the source of happiness to us. Therefore, when our soul is cast down within us, let us remember him—remember his *power*. Can anything be “too hard for the Lord? “Is he not able to do far more exceedingly abundant than we can ask or think? Let us remember his *wisdom*. He knoweth our soul in adversity. He knows what discipline we require. He knows “how to deliver the godly,” and how to make “all things work together for good.” Let us

remember his *goodness*. "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." There is a needs-be for these dispensations. If we should ever question whether

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140

he withholds anything for want of disposition to indulge, let us look at the cross. See what he has given us already. Let us remember that he "spared not his own Son," but "gave him up for us all," and will he not "with him also freely give us all things" that are necessary for our welfare? Let us remember his *word*. "This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me." What provisions! what promises do we find here! how suited to our own case, and all-sufficient for our relief. Let us remember his *covenant*, which is ordered in all things and sure; and let us remember his *providence*. O may we never forget that God is about our path, and while he is acquainted with all our ways, he is "performing all things for us." In the midst of our fears, he is managing all our affairs, and caring for us, with infinite wisdom and kindness. Let us therefore remember the works of Him, without whom a sparrow falls not to the ground, and who numbers the very hairs of our head. It was thus David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

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APRIL 29.—*The place was called Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. Numb. xiii. 24.*

CANAAN was rich in its productions, and the Jews had even while in the wilderness a specimen of it; and as the spies held forth grapes, figs, and pomegranates, they said, "This is the fruit of it;" so that the children of Israel had something beside the report and the promise: they had not only the pledge of it, they had a part of Canaan itself, a little realization of it. And have not Christians something of heaven even while they are here? and concerning which they also may say, "This is the fruit of it?" The report is indeed something, and it is a good report, and the promise is also exceedingly precious, and is a pro-

mise that shall never fail; but the Christian is a partaker of heaven while on earth. Are not the knowledge, purity, and blessedness, in which consists their spiritual life, to believers now what the grapes of Eshcol were to the children of Israel—the earnest and foretastes of the heavenly Canaan? And there are seasons in which these earnest and foretastes are most richly vouchsafed and enjoyed.

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141

The first of these is *Solitude*. As Christians, our souls can never prosper in the divine life without occasional and frequent retirement. As the treasures of friendship are mainly unfolded and enjoyed in secret, so is this abundantly the case with the friendship subsisting between God and his people. It is then he manifests himself unto the Christian as he does not unto the world. It is then we sing:—

“Be earth with all her scenes withdrawn,  
Let noise and vanity be gone;  
In secret silence of the mind  
My God and there my heaven I find.”

Secondly, *The means of divine appointment*. In reference to the sanctuary, have we not often prayed with Watts,

“Send comforts down from thy right hand,  
While we pass through this barren land;  
Lord, in thy temple let us see  
A glimpse of heaven, a glimpse of thee.”

And how often have we been privileged to see his power and his glory in the sanctuary? As he himself has said, “I will bring them to my holy mountain, and I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. Thirdly, *The table of the Lord*. It is here that sense aids faith; it is here that Jesus Christ stands and shows to his beloved and loving disciples his hands and his side; and while participating in this ordinance they have said, “I sat under his shadow with great delight, and found his fruit sweet unto my taste.” *Affliction* is another season at which God vouchsafes his earnest and foretastes of heaven. Jacob was a fugitive when he said, “This is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.” John was an exile in Patmos

when he was "in the spirit on the Lord's day." "And," says Paul, "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. Lastly, These earnest and foretastes of heaven are peculiarly vouchsafed in *dying moments*, and we shall need them then; and

"Jesus can make a dying bed,  
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

Affliction tends to promote the believer's readiness to leave

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142

this world; but these earnest tell us what heaven is, and render it attractive, so that he sings—

"Yes, I have tasted of the grapes,  
And now I long to go  
Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps,  
And all the clusters grow."

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APRIL 30.—*Seek the Lord.* Zeph. ii. 3.

OBSERVE four purposes for which we are to seek God, and which enter essentially into genuine religion. First, We are to seek to *know* him. Here religion begins. "This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "I will give them," says God, "a heart that they may know me." Secondly, We must seek to *enjoy* him. In order to this, we must be reconciled; till his anger is turned away from us, he cannot comfort us; till we are justified by faith, we cannot have peace with God; we cannot rejoice in Christ Jesus till we have received the atonement; and then we have boldness and access by the faith of him; then we can draw near to him as our exceeding joy; then our souls can be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness; in his favour we live, and his loving-kindness is better than life. Thirdly, We are to seek to *serve* him. He is not only our portion to enjoy, but our master to obey and attend upon. "On thee," says David, "do I wait all the day"—not only as an expectant to receive his supplies, but as a servant to receive and execute his orders, and to inquire,

“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” His service is perfect freedom; his work is honourable and glorious; his yoke is easy and his burden is light; and in keeping his commandments there is great reward. Fourthly, We must seek to *resemble* him. It is the essence of religion to be like him whom we worship. We are to “show-forth his praises” (in the margin, virtues) “who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.” God’s virtues are God’s perfections; and the best way in which we can show them forth is by following them and exemplifying them. We cannot resemble his natural perfections; we cannot be Eternal, like him; Almighty, like him; Om-

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143

niscient, or Omnipresent, like him: but we may resemble his moral attributes. In our measure and degree we may be holy, like him; do good, like him; forgive, like him; and therefore our Saviour says, “Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful:” “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” And as we advance in this grace, and are “renewed after the image of Him who created us in righteousness and true holiness,” “we are changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.”

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MAY 1.—*They are men wondered at.* Zech. iii. 8.

THE subjects of divine grace are like him to whom they belong, and whose name is “The Wonderful.” They are for signs and for wonders. “I am a wonder unto many,” says David; and, indeed, the experience of Christians in general is strange to the people of the world. Their language to them seems paradoxical when they say, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” The people of the world think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot. They are amazed when they see that they

can turn their backs upon those amusements and dissipations, which seem essential to their very life; and they often imagine that it is mere affectation in Christians to do this—that their hearts are still after these things; for they are not in the secret. They know not that they have discovered pleasures infinitely superior—that they are thus weaned from worldly indulgences; so that they are astonished when they see them in their trials “possessing their souls in patience,” and sometimes even rejoicing in tribulation. The reason they are so amazed when they see this in Christians, is because they do not see *all*. They see their troubles, but they do not see their supports. They see the burdens which press them down, but they do not see the “everlasting arms” underneath them. They do not see what access they have to the throne of the heavenly grace; how they bathe their weary

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144

souls in the streams of that river which maketh glad the city of God; how by waiting upon God their strength is renewed. They are astonished when they see them going on cheerfully in their religious course, though they gain by it no worldly honour or wealth; nay, often lose the friendship of their connections, and draw upon them the abuse and reproach of their neighbours. The reason is, they know not the principles which actuate them. They are not acquainted with their grand attraction; “for the love of Christ constraineth us,” says the Apostle, “to live not to ourselves, but to him that died for us and rose again.” He says, “Lovest thou me?” and the Christian answers,

“Lord, it is my chief complaint  
That my love is weak and faint!  
Yet I love thee, and adore,  
O for grace to love thee more.”

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MAY 2.—*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive.* John xvi. 24.

SOME suppose that in this Scripture our Lord gave a gentle rebuke to his disciples for their contractedness in their prayers. As if he had said, Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name compared with what you *might*, with what you ought to have asked. But it is an intimation of their ignorance as to the proper mode of prayer; for as the Apostle says, "At this time the way to the holiest was not fully made manifest." It had been typified and prefigured from the beginning, but the disciples themselves did not understand the thing designed. Hitherto they had not expressly prayed in his name, neither did it seem necessary while he was with them. But now, says he, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will do it for you." Now ask, and ask in my name. Nothing can be more decisive, more expressive than the declarations of Scripture concerning the nature and availableness, and only availableness, of our Saviour's mediation. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus." We come unto God by him. "Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." "I am the way; no man

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145

Cometh unto the Father but by me." And be it observed that our asking in his name is not, as the Socinians explain it asking by his authority; but it means that we are to pray through his mediation; imploring  *blessings*  for his sake—pleading his incarnation, his sacrifice, his intercession. Abel was heard and accepted because of the excellency of his sacrifice. Under the law no penitent was ever pardoned in any other way, for without the shedding of blood there never was any remission. We learn, therefore, from hence, that our prayers to be available must be Christian, to be Christian they must be in his name; that is, we must be sensible not only of our unworthiness, but of our guilt, not only of our wants, but of our desert; not only renouncing our own sufficiency, but our own righteousness, submitting ourselves unto the righteousness of God, acquiescing in this mode, placing all our depend-

ence upon it, and even glorying in it. Without this, if we seek we shall have not, "because we ask amiss."

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MAY 3.—*The riches of his goodness.* Romans ii. 4.

WE may here observe, that, besides the displays of Cod's general goodness, there is his goodness which we may call mercy and grace—a goodness which deals with us as sinners—a goodness which was the sovereign origin of our salvation, and of all those spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, the goodness which led him to remember us in our low estate. In this, as John says, without overlooking other things—"In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." What an unspeakable, what an infinite instance of God's love towards us is this. Herein we have a pledge, and indeed the substance of every other, for "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." All things in grace. Are we oppressed with a sense of sin? and do we feel it to be a burden too heavy for us to bear? Here he says, "I will be merciful to thy unrighteousness and thy sins, and thy iniquity will I

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146

remember no more." Are we groaning, by reason of the bondage of corruption, as well as under the sentence of condemnation, and do we long to be holy? Here he says, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean; and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart will I give you, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Do we apprehend dangers and difficulties in our course, filling our minds with despondency? Here he says, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help

thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness;" "my grace is sufficient for thee." The riches of his goodness include all things in Providence. Here we learn that "all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth to them that fear him;" here we find that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God"—the darkness as well as the light, pain as well as pleasure, enemies as well as friends, losses as well as gains; and "though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby."

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MAY 4.—*My word shall not return unto me void, out it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* Isa. lv. 11.

HERE we see the resemblance between natural and spiritual influences *in the certainty of their success*. The snow and the rain do not return fruitless, nor shall God's word; neither the one nor the other is ineffectual, but produce results corresponding to a certain and previous arrangement. Some results indeed always follow. But are these showers *always* useful? It is easy to see, that when they fall upon the garden and upon the cultivated field they are useful, but what is their use when they fall upon the sea, upon the sand, and upon the rock? We cannot say that God has poured them down in vain even then. It is not for us mere short-sighted creatures, to determine what is in vain in the divine empire, where we find one operation will produce a thousand effects. It is a fact that God sends his.

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147

gospel, and it is fairly and faithfully preached often when persons do not receive it. Nor is it then *thrown away*; even with regard to the *wicked* it is not in vain; they will have to acknowledge that "a prophet has been among them;" "they will have no cloak for their sin;" they "will be speechless;" they will be made to feel the full conviction that their destruction has been from

themselves; they will have to acknowledge that God is justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth. Besides, man is to be considered not only personally but relatively. Where the gospel does not sanctify, it restrains; where it does not save, it civilizes. The community derives a thousand benefits from the genial influence of the gospel. But there is a certainty of some spiritual effects in this case also. The degree and the instances of usefulness here we are incompetent judges of. It is impossible to tell what conviction it produces, or what emotions it excites. O, could we witness what has taken place under a gospel sermon as God surveys it! Then we should find one pricked in the heart crying out, "What must I do to be saved?" There is another, freed from his doubts and fears, and enabled to rejoice in the God of his salvation. Another comes in, pressed with grief to the ground; and the preacher has the tongue of the learned, and speaks a word in season to his weary heart; and he finds God in his palaces for a refuge.

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MAY 5.—*There is none abiding.* 1 Chron. xxix. 15.

HOW often are believers saying with the patriarch Job, "Changes and war are against me." "Here," says the Apostle, "we have no continuing city." This will account for the variations in the views and feelings of the godly which are continually taking place. If it is now day with them—"the day is neither clear nor dark;" it is a mixture of both. Their life is a chequered scene. "For we are," says David, "strangers and sojourners, as were all our fathers; and our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." The image of the church in its present condition may be "a bush burning with fire, and not consumed;" and the motto of each member of the church is still that which

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148

Paul adopted in his day, "Perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed." Here is the difference

between vitality and formality in religion. The latter knows no change, while the former always abounds with it. Many persons are like stones in the field; they remain the same throughout the year, for they are dead. But it is otherwise with the trees in the garden—they are alive; and the “trees of the Lord are full of sap.” And as in the vegetable economy, so in the spiritual—they pass through all the variations of the seasons. Here we talk of a dark night; in heaven it is day without a cloud. While we now feel changes—changes without, changes within—let us think of the everlasting covenant that is well ordered in all things and sure. Here we are all anxiety and confusion in our minds and circumstances. One prop is struck away after another. One friend is removed after another, and one comfort after another is dropping; for God never meant that we should continue our hold of earthly good; but in his blessed word he says, “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” Let us, therefore, say with David, “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Finally, let this experience teach us to look forward to heaven, for

“All on earth is shadow.

All beyond is substance. How solid all  
Where change is known no more.”

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MAY 6.—*And they shall say, The Lord is my God.*  
Zech. xiii. 9.

IN proportion as we feel our need of anything, and value it, are we anxious to make it our own. How many are there who think they would be happy if they were able to say, This office is mine, this title is mine, this house is mine, this land is mine, this inheritance is mine; but he only is truly blessed who can say, *This God is mine*. There is a foundation for this appropriation. Indeed there is nothing else that a Christian has which is really his own. Our wealth,

if we have it, or children, or time, are not our own; our souls are not our own; but a believer may say, "God, even

149

our *own* God, shall bless us;" and as he is *really* our own, so is he *entirely* and *eternally* our own. "This 'God is our God for ever and ever.'" This is the grand thing when we address God, especially when we are dealing with God in trouble and distress. Then we may plead with him on the ground of *our interest in him*. There are times when we may be afraid to adopt this language of appropriation, as if it did not belong to us; but there are two senses in which the most timid Christian is able to use this language. First, We may use it as the language of *hope*. This hope may have to war daily with doubts and fears, and yet we cannot give it up. It may not at present bring us full relief, but then it ascends to the throne of grace, it brings us to the foot of the cross. This hope is like laying hold of a branch when sinking in deep waters; it is just enough to keep the head above water, to preserve us till some more effectual aid be brought to extricate us. There is also another sense in which the most fearful of God's children can adopt this language. We can say he is our God by *preference and submission*. "Lord, I am thine, save me;" if thou refuse to acknowledge the relation (and I deserve to be refused as a friend), O "make me as one of thy hired servants;" "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Thus it is we may say, "The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him." God is ours, not only by *donation* on his side, but by *dedication* on our side. There is an inseparable connection between these two. If we have been enabled to give up ourselves to God, we may be assured that God has given himself to us. If we love God, and choose him for our portion, we may be assured he has loved us and chosen us to be his peculiar treasure, for we love him because he first loved us.

"When I can say my God is mine,  
When I can feel his glories shine,  
I tread the world beneath my feet,  
And all that earth calls good or great."

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MAY 7.—*Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me.* Job. xxix. 2-5.

THE remembrance of our early views and feelings may tend to cheek present felt or feared declension, and become a principle of recal and revival, inducing us to say, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now." We read of the "first ways of David." Alas! how often are the first ways of Christians better than their last ways. Still what was said to the church at Ephesus will apply to churches and Christians now—"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." "Go," says God to Jeremiah, "and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown; Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." And we do well to call to remembrance the former days—the days of first love. Oh, how little dominion had the world over us then. How did we find his word, and eat it; and it was the joy and rejoicing of our souls. Then we not only called the Sabbath of the Lord a delight, but felt it so; and we numbered the intervening days. What pleasure we found in waiting upon God; the trifling things that detain us now had no power with us then. We said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,  
 How sweet their memory still,  
 But they have left an aching void,  
 The world can never fill."

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MAY 8.—*The wisdom of the just.* Luke i. 17.

TO be religious is to be wise. It is so in the estimation of him whose judgment is always according to truth. Scrip-

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151

ture is express on the subject. Hence the design of John's ministry was to "turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom' of the just." Hence Solomon says, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding." It is not so, indeed, in the opinion of the world, the blind world. Yet while the men of the world rail and vilify the truly wise, they often feel convictions very different from their language; like Balaam, who while cursing Israel, was compelled to exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel; let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." So then wisdom will be justified of all her adversaries hereafter, and wisdom is justified of all her friends and all her children now. "They know that they have chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from them." "They know whom they have believed, and *why* they have believed him, and they are persuaded that he is able," and faithful, "to keep that which they have committed to him against that day." They are all children of the light and of the day; they are not of the night nor of darkness. There are many things, indeed, of which they are ignorant, but they are "made wise unto salvation." They have "an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." Not all things *absolutely*, but all things relatively—all things *essential*, all things which are necessary to their real welfare. They were once blind; they will acknowledge it; but they now see and are thankful. They know what is "the hope of their calling and the riches of the glory of their inheritance." They know all things *comparatively*: their knowledge is different from the knowledge of the same thing which they once had, for now in God's "light they see light," and the Holy Spirit "leads them into all truth." They have, therefore, other views of themselves, and other views of the Saviour, than they once had. Their knowledge

*discriminates* between things that differ—between those truths which are essential and those which are circumstantial—between those truths which are fundamental and those which are ornamental—between treasures and treasuries. Their knowledge is *practical*. They are wise to propose the noblest end, and wise to pursue it by the most suitable means—wise to secure in the only opportunity the things

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152

which belong to their peace. “He that gathereth in summer is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.”

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MAY 9.—*No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.* John vi. 44.

THERE are three things here deserving our regard. The first regards our coming to Christ; implying absence, accessibility, and application. The second regards man's *inability* without divine agency; this inability is moral and universal. The third, the *influence* by which the soul is brought to the Saviour: it is by an influence divine; it is by the Father, who hath sent the Saviour; it is by the Father's drawing him. This is not always an alluring and gentle influence. When God is dealing with the souls of men in bringing them to the Saviour they often feel something besides pleasing and gentle attraction. This was the case with the jailor, when tremblingly he exclaimed, “What must I do to be saved?” and with the three thousand, when they were pricked in the heart, and cried out, “Men and brethren, what must we do?” In a general way (for there are some little variations) the work may be described thus. First, There is *conviction of sin*: the man is made to see the nature, the pollution, and the number of his transgressions. This produces, Secondly, *Distress and fear*: he sees the curse of the law hanging over his offences, and that he is ready to perish. His conscience is awakened, it condemns him; a burden too heavy for him oppresses him. The world no longer can charm him; he feels his need of some-

thing now which he never felt before, and he feels that it cannot be derived from himself. Hence, Thirdly, *Self-renunciation and despair*: he sees that he can do nothing to atone for his former transgressions, to deliver him from the condemnation of the law, and to renew him in the spirit of his mind. Yet, Fourthly, Along with all this there is some hope founded upon the declarations and examples of Scripture. This hope for a time may be very weak and trembling, just sufficient to keep him from despair and afterwards from turning back to perdition, and to induce him, as with a rope upon his neck, to go forward towards

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153

the merciful King of Israel, saying, "I will go in unto the king: and if I perish, I perish." Fifthly, With all this there are *new and earnest desires* after Jesus; a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Now he sees the Saviour's all-sufficiency and his suitableness. His desires are naturally drawn towards him, as those of a hungry man after food, or those of a thirsty man after water. Oh, says he, whatever I may be denied, "that I may but know him, and the power of his resurrection." And therefore, Lastly, He is now *willing to receive* Jesus Christ, as he is presented in the gospel—a holy and gracious Saviour, at once the destroyer of sin and of self; and not only now does he feel a readiness to submit to this plan, but he is able to acquiesce in it, to glory in it, and to say with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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MAY 10.—*And when they had prayed, the place teas shaken inhere they were assembled together.* Acts iv. 31.

OBSERVE here the *occasion* of the prayer. Peter and John had been apprehended, and had successfully defended themselves; so, when the council had further threatened them, "they were let go, finding nothing how they could punish them." Like attracts like, and "being let go they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief

priests and elders had said unto them;” and the persecuted disciples immediately gave themselves to prayer. Prayer is enjoined upon us in our distresses.” “Call upon me in the day of trouble.” “Is any afflicted, let him pray.” Observe the *substance* of their prayer. It was very seasonable, very suitable, and very short, as all Bible prayers are. It was also very *exemplary*; though they had been so evil entreated, yet they felt no disposition for revenge. They remembered the instructions of him who had said, “Love your enemies; bless them that curse you.” They had imbibed the spirit of him who, “when he was reviled, reviled not again; but committed himself into the hands of him that judgeth righteously.” And therefore you see they besought God to stretch forth his hand, not to strike and punish, but “to heal.” There was something

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154

*very extraordinary* in this prayer. Though the Jews acted so wickedly in putting the Saviour to death, yet they did it” according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” Here is a chain thrown across a river; we can see the two opposite ends, but not the union in the midst; but were the chain raised, or the water lowered, we could see the connection as well as the extremities. All our knowledge of the affair begins and ends here—God’s foreknowledge and man’s free agency harmonize really, but inexplicably. Then we see the *success* of the prayer; and God hath never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. The sign of the acceptance of the prayer seems strange—“The place was shaken.” This seemed much more likely to produce dread than to engender hope. But God would so teach us that he is “greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints,” that he will be sanctified of all them that come nigh to him, and that there was something awful in the dispensation of his mercy and his grace; as Watts says:—

“Terrors attend the wond’rous way  
That brings our blessings down.”

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MAY 11.—*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.*

Acts iv. 31.

THIS is said to have been the effect resulting from the prayers of the Apostles, and the members of the Church assembled, when Peter and John were set at liberty after being examined by the chief priests and elders. The effect as here stated has two references. First, It refers to the *extraordinary* agency of the Holy Ghost. This was now necessary in their circumstances, and they had already been enabled to speak suddenly many languages which they had never learned, and healed with a word a man who had been lame from his birth. Thus the grand seal of heaven was affixed to their commission. But though these extraordinary influences were then needful, they were not to be continued; indeed, if they had been continued, they would have been extraordinary no longer. The possession of them never was an evidence of the godliness of the possessor. Balaam prophesied as sublimely as ever Isaiah did, and Judas per-

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155

formed miracles as well as Peter and John. Many will be disowned by our Saviour in the last day, who will yet be able to plead, "Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" And, therefore, while we are not to look for these now, we should not envy those who were partakers of them. The Apostle says to the Corinthians, "Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way;" that is, as he adds, Seek after the possession of the *graces* of God's Spirit, "faith, hope, and charity, these three;" and remember that "the greatest of these is charity." Seek to be "filled with the Spirit," as a Teacher, an Enlivener, a Renewer, a Comforter. Secondly, The expression refers to the *special influences* of the Holy Ghost. They were now called to fresh deeds, fresh difficulties, fresh dangers; and therefore they required fresh supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And, thus we, like them, may also find strength equal to the day, and obtain accessions of illumination

and confidence, and courage, peace, and joy, and be prepared to stand complete in all the will of God.

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MAY 12.—*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* Eph. vi. 20.

THE Fall has left us as much without strength as without righteousness. Many are not willing to admit this. It is much easier to convince such of their guilt than of their weakness. Though they neglect for the present the “things which belong to their peace,” they never question their ability to do them. Therefore, at some future season, when they have leisure—and when circumstances are more favourable—they mean to do this. But, ah! the trial, the real trial, would convince them of their inability of themselves to believe, to repent, to obey, and to become “new creatures;” this would bring them upon their knees, and then these important results would soon be exemplified. But Christians themselves acquire the knowledge of their weakness slowly and gradually. At first they are found to rely very much upon their convictions, purposes, resolutions, and perhaps vows too, but their “iniquities, like the wind, after all carry them away,” and by their failings

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156

and falls they are taught that they only are safe who are “kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.” They also learn to pray more and more—“Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” This was the case with Peter. But a very few hours after his warm, sincere, and vehement protestations of fidelity—“Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee”—have elapsed before we find him denying the Saviour, and that with oaths and curses. Let us

“Beware of Peter’s word,  
 Nor confidently say,  
 ‘I never will deny thee, Lord,’  
 But grant I never may.”

Christians learn by experience more and more where alone their strength lies, and they are led at length to trust in the Lord only, "for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." They find that all their "sufficiency is of God;" that his grace and his strength alone is sufficient for them. Hence the command—"Be strong in the Lord," &c. Hence the promise—"I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Hence the prayer—"Be thou my strong rock, for a house of defence to save me." And hence the devout and confident acknowledgment—"I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." When cast down under a sense of weakness, and of the duties, difficulties, and dangers of our course, let us remember that

—"The Mighty God  
Still feeds the strength of every saint."

There are two things with regard to this strength, we must remember. The one is, the supplies of it are *communicated seasonally*—"As thy day so shall thy strength be." His grace is communicated in time of need, active grace for active service, suffering grace for a suffering hour, and dying grace for a dying hour. And the other is, that it *is obtained by the use of means*—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Our souls can never prosper if we neglect the use of means. It is "the diligent soul that shall be made fat."

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MAY 13.—*They shall all know me.* Jer. xxxi. 34.

KNOWLEDGE is the prerogative and the distinction of humanity. "For there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." The principal object of this knowledge must be God himself, whether we consider the perfections of his nature, or the various relations in which he stands to his creatures. Indeed we know nothing as we ought to know, unless we know him. This knowledge is *evangelical*. It is not knowing

him as the almighty and eternal God, who made all things; “who upholdeth all things by the word of his power;” “who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” This knowledge will not answer the purpose of a poor perishing sinner. Yea, it may operate upon his depravity to produce distance, dread, and dislike. “We are saved by hope;” and our restoration cannot be accomplished till we are enabled by his grace to hope in him, and to see that with the Lord there is forgiveness, and with him is plenteous redemption. God in nature is God *above* us; God in providence is God *beyond* us; God in law is God *against* us; but God in Christ is God *for* us, and God *with* us, and God *in* us. We must know him, therefore, in the person of his dear Son; for “God, who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” This knowledge is *experimental*. There is a great difference between knowing a thing only in theory and knowing it in experience, by the confidence of the heart, the bias of the will, and the ardour of the affections. It is expressed by tasting—“O taste and see that the Lord is good.” This is very different from the mere reading, speaking, and talking about it. The knowledge of some professors of religion never descends lower than the head. But in the new covenant God says, “I will give them a heart to know me;” and this knowledge is ever accompanied with three things. With *confidence*—“They that know thy name will put their trust in thee;” with *affection*—“He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love;” and with *obedience*—“He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar,

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158

and the truth is not in him.” This knowledge is therefore *practical*; indeed knowledge is always to be viewed in the order of means; and when it does not reach the end, the sacred writers consider it no better than ignorance; and indeed it is not. This knowledge is also *appropriating*; and there are some who can say with the

Psalmist, "This God is our God for ever and ever, and he will be our guide even unto death." And oh! what a happy experience to be able to exclaim—

"When I can say this God is mine,  
When I can feel his glory shine,  
I'll tread the world beneath my feet,  
And all that earth calls good or great."

And where this appropriation is not actually experienced! it is always really desired; and the desire is an evidence of a work of grace begun in the heart. The Christian therefore prays with David, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation;" and "blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

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MAY 14.—*Come unto me.* Matthew xi. 28.

THIS is not to be understood corporeally. Many literally came to the Lord Jesus Christ when upon earth; some from captiousness, some from curiosity, some for the loaves and fishes, and some under temporary emotion and awakening; to whom he said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" but though the expression is not to be understood corporeally, it is yet taken from the body. It is a remark of Dr. Watts, that there is hardly a part of the human body whose action has not been employed to hold forth the operations of faith. Sometimes the reference is to the eye—then believing is seeing him; sometimes it is to the ear—then believing is hearing him; sometimes to the taste—then believing is eating his flesh and drinking his blood; sometimes to the feet, and then believing is coming to him. If it be asked, what is coming to Christ? it is believing on him; and what is believing on him? it is coming to him. This coming to Christ implies three things. First, *Absence*; for what need is there of

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159

our coming to Christ, unless we are previously at a distance from him? Such is the condition of every man. Naturally all are without Christ as to saving influence

as to a proper knowledge of him, love to him, confidence in him, and union and communion with him. Secondly, *Accessibility*. We can come to him, we can find and approach him. Not to his bodily presence. As man he is absent; as God he is still present. He said to his Apostles, "Lo! I am with you, even to the end of the world." Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Thirdly, *Application*; for this coming to him is to deal with him concerning the affairs of the soul and eternity, and for all the purposes for which he executes his various offices, and for all the blessings which he has to bestow. We come to him as a way, that we may walk in him; as to a refuge, that we may enter him; as to a fountain open for sin and uncleanness, that we may wash therein; as to a foundation, that we may build on him our structure of hope and happiness for ever: as diseased and dying patients try a physician; and, throwing ourselves at his feet, cry, "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." We come to him as a Prophet, and we pray that he would "lead us into all truth;" as to the High Priest of our profession, and beseech him to intercede for us. We come to him as our King, and pray that he would rule over us, and reign in us, and establish there his own kingdom, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We come to him as the "Shepherd of Israel divine," and ask, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon." I want thy rest, and I want thy food, and nothing else will satisfy my longing soul. Faith is therefore often represented by *trusting* in him. The idea is that of confidence exercised, and this is always preceded and accompanied by knowledge. Hence, said the Psalmist, "They that know thy name will put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

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MAY 15.—*As a root out of a dry ground, he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him. Isa. liii. 2.*

THIS is most culpable ignorance. If we found a man who was entirely insensible to Milton's "Paradise Lost," or Cowper's "Task," dead to Raffael's pencil, to all the beautiful and sublime scenery of nature, to all that is illustrious and inspiring in human disposition and action, we should be ready to say, Why this senselessness is enough to make a stone speak. Men may be undeserving of the praise they obtain, or if the praise be deserved in the reality, it may be excessive in the degree. But it is impossible to ascribe titles too magnificent, attributes too exalted, adoration too intense, to him who "is fairer than the children of men;" who is "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely;" for "how great is his beauty!"

"All human beauties, all divine,  
In our beloved meet and shine."

Oh! there have been individuals whom it would have been a sin not to have admired and applauded. We have heard of a Pearce, a Wilberforce, a Winter, and a Newton, who seemed to be "the spirits of just men made perfect." We have heard of a Howard, and have melted at the recollection before his image in St. Paul's; of a Fenelon, who seemed to possess the meekness of wisdom and the wisdom of meekness; and as to Archbishop Usher, Bishop Burnet says, "In free and frequent conversation I had with him for twenty-five years, I never heard him utter a word which had not a tendency to edification; and I never saw him in any other frame than that in which I wish to be found when I come to die." But *He* made all these fine beings—all their excellencies were derived from Him; and if all these excellencies, and all other excellencies that could be extracted from men on earth or from angels in heaven, were assembled together, the aggregate could be no more compared with his glory, than a drop to the ocean or a beam to the sun. Now to be insensible to such a Being

as this, argues not merely a want of intellectual, but of moral taste; and evinces not only ignorance, but depravity.

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161

The man is dead; but, as the Apostle says, "he is dead in trespasses and sins"—that is, morally and guiltily dead. He can "walk according to the course of this world," though he cannot take a step in the way everlasting. He can feel a veneration before an earthly judge, but he can constantly trifle in the presence of the Judge of all. He can admire an earthly friend, but never extols that "Friend who sticketh closer than a brother:"

"Whose heart is made of tenderness,  
Whose bowels melt with love."

He can idolize the hero that falls in defence of his country; he can applaud all that the chisel, all that the pen, all that the pencil can produce, and aid in rolling along his fellow-creature's fame to the end of the earth; but he who died not for a country, but for a world, and for a world of crime, He awakens no emotion, no respect.

"Brightness of thy Father's glory,  
Shall thy praise unheeded he?  
Fly, my soul, such guilty silence,  
Sing the Lord who came to die."

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MAY 16.—*The grace of God that bringeth Salvation.*

Tit. ii. 11.

IT is of the gospel the Apostle here speaks. Observe its name: "the grace of God." This is a name often applied to it in the Scripture, as for instance, we read, "This is the true grace of God wherein we stand." "Receive not the grace of God in vain." "It is a good thing that the heart lie established with grace." This designation of it is intended chiefly to remind us of its *source*, as it could only arise from the good pleasure of his goodness. Surely we contributed nothing towards this dispensation by our desert, or preparations to receive it, or desires after it. The gospel also *reveals* and testifies of the grace of God.

This is the communication it makes concerning his treatment of a world of rebels: that "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Herein he shows us the "exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us

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162

through Jesus Christ." Observe its *subject*. The gospel is not employed on a trifle. Its infinite importance is to be inferred from the subject it brings, which is salvation. This is a blessing we can never too highly extol. It is called "a great salvation." Other salvations have been produced by an exertion of Divine power only, but this was achieved by nothing less than the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God. Those were for the body, this for the soul; they were for time, this for eternity. We can look into Blackstone to know how to save our property; into Galen to know how to save our health; into Seneca to know how to save our reputation; but if we would attain a knowledge of the way to obtain the salvation of our souls in the day of the Lord Jesus with eternal glory, we must come to the Scripture. Here are the "words of eternal life," which "show unto men the way of salvation." I am expiring, here is a remedy; I am in bondage, here is redemption; I am perishing, here is "balm in Gilead" and a physician; I am destitute, here is "the bread of life;" naked, here is Christ's "robe of righteousness;" poor, here are "unsearchable riches;" I am nothing, here I can "possess all things," and exclaim, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

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MAY 17.—*The common salvation.* Jude 3.

IN eulogizing the gospel the finest epithet the Apostle could attach to it was its *commonness*. Common to all ages, all countries, all conditions, all characters; for "the grace of God," saith another Apostle, "hath appeared unto all men." Christianity was designed to be a "light to lighten

the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of the people Israel." Hence Christ is not compared to a lamp, which can shed but a partial and confined illumination, but to the orb of day, which irradiates the valley and the hill. "I am come a light into the world." This will be the final result of Christianity. Down to this time it has had to do with individuals and families; by and by there will be the "nations of those who are saved." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth

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163

of the Lord hath spoken it." And to this universal extension it is every way adapted; there is nothing in Christianity restrictive. The Jewish religion, though divine in its origin, was confined, and necessarily confined, to one people. But Christianity has no locality; "The hour cometh," said our Saviour to the woman of Sychar, "when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men exclusively or superstitiously worship the Father." By revealing pardon, mercy, sanctifying grace, and eternal life, it is easy to see that the gospel addresses man only as man, regardless of any adventitious circumstances. It regards all men, wherever they are, first, as *guilty*; secondly, as *depraved*; and thirdly, however guilty and depraved, as destined to *immortality*. It passes by all the little distinctions that exist for a few moments here between the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, and verifies the language of the Apostle, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." And surely this will much more strongly apply to those minor differences, that subsist among those who equally "worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." It teaches us to say, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." It rebukes all persons who would confine salvation to their own party, and who anathematise those who are walking without the line drawn by their prejudice, ignorance, and pride. The gospel

teaches us to say of every disciple of Jesus, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother."

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MAY 18.—*The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men.* Tit. ii. 11.

By this the Apostle intends particularly to intimate that none are excluded from the benefits which the gospel reveals, and that none are exempt from its *appointments*. All men are included in the benefits the gospel reveals. We never in the Scriptures read any such language as this: If this person seek him he will be found by him; but if

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164

that person seek him he will reject him. So far from that, the language of the gospel is, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely;" "Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;" Go forth, and "as many as you find, both good and bad, bid to the wedding." In proclamations of grace among men there are always some exceptions; for instance, the ringleaders are excluded: their pardon would endanger the safety of the community. But "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor God's ways as our ways." We have, therefore, in the Scriptures some of the chief of sinners, the vilest of the vile, called on purpose to be patterns: not to induce people to continue in their sins, but to seek after salvation from them; and the Apostle, after mentioning the wickedness of his former course of life, says, "Nevertheless I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting." And as none are excluded from its benefits, so none are exempted from its *appointments*. It reaches to all men. It commands sovereigns and judges, as well as subjects and criminals. It says, "Be wise now, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth." It says, "Blessed are *all* they that put their trust in the Lord." None are beneath its notice. It enters into all

the directions of actual life. If men are single, it prescribes their choice; if they are connected, it regulates their condition; if they are masters, it tells them of a "master in heaven;" if they are servants, it enjoins them to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things;" if wives, it enjoins that they reverence their husbands; if husbands, it commands them to love their wives; if children, to be obedient to their parents; and parents to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and thus we see how "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men."

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MAY 19.—*For he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.*

Luke vi. 35.

INGRATITUDE is the blackest of all crimes. "The ungrateful are like the grave, always receiving and never returning;"

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165

but nothing can equal our ingratitude if we refrain from speaking in our Saviour's praise. We have no claim upon his benevolence; we are unworthy of the least of all his mercies. Nay, we are not only unworthy, but we are undeserving, ill-deserving, and hell-deserving creatures; we have sinned ourselves completely into the hands of his justice; and he could both righteously and easily have destroyed us. And let us think also of the *number* and *magnitude* of the benefits which he bestows. Without going over the field of nature, or examining the dispensations of Providence, though in reference to them we should "abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness," we will notice only those which refer to the Saviour's coming "to seek and to save that which was lost;" "to deliver us from the curse of the law;" to save us from the "wrath to come;" to emancipate us from the "bondage of corruption;" to make us the "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty;" and to entitle us to an immensity and an eternity of blessedness and honour insured to us and even begun in us here. And then let us add the *expensiveness of the medium*. We

sometimes do good, but it may be without design, or to gain advantage or reputation, or it may be owing to some pressure, or to deliver ourselves from some importunity, or without any self-denial. But we “know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich yet for our sakes became poor.” We know that he laid aside the form of the sovereign, and took upon him the form of a servant. He was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” We have seen him in the manger, agonizing in the garden, and bleeding on the cross. And can we see this, without every feeling of our soul inducing us to exclaim—

“Let him be crown’d with majesty  
 Who bowed his head to death,  
 And be his honour sounded high  
 By all things that have breath.”

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MAY 20.—*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?  
 Not one.* Job xiv. 4.

THE natural state of man as a sinner, as described in the Scriptures, differs very widely from the notions entertained

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166

of him by some. For while there are those who altogether deny his fall and depravity, there are others who suppose he yet possesses a very large degree of rectitude, and that the common grace which every man is supposed to bring into the world, if well managed, is sufficient for his salvation. It is easier to bring men to a confession of their guilt than of their inability. They cannot indeed very well deny that they have sinned, but as to their neglecting their duty, they mean to attend to this, and they never questioned their ability to repent and obey whenever they please. But surely such persons cannot have read the Scriptures with attention or they would have found that Paul himself acknowledges that “in him,” that is in his “flesh, dwelt no good thing.” No stream can rise higher than its fountain. The effect cannot be better than its cause. As we cannot

perform natural actions without the concurrence of nature, how can we perform spiritual actions without the concurrence of the Spirit? If we “live and move and have our being” in God naturally, surely we must live and move and have our being in God spiritually, especially when we consider that this life is of so much higher an order than every other. What but pride can render a man averse to this design? for it only brings a man where he ought to be, that is, feeling himself to be “nothing at all,” and holds forth God as what he really is, “all in all.” This is not a mere speculation. It is a truth of importance. It serves to show those who are the subjects of this work what is their duty—to bless and praise God, who by his sovereign grace has not only provided for them salvation, but has “enabled them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ unto life everlasting.” So that they are not allowed to “starve rather than come,” but are graciously compelled to come in that his house may be filled. On the other hand, if strangers to it, it shows what is their duty, namely, prayer to him who alone can accomplish this, and “who works in us to will and to do, of his good pleasure;” who is always able to do it, always willing to do it; and far more willing to save us than we are to be saved, and to make us holy than we are to be made holy. It is, therefore, infinitely better that the power should be in him than in ourselves.

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167

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MAY 21.—*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* I Pet. i. 3.

THERE are two things which may be observed with regard to gratitude, and both of them are here exemplified. The one regards the *regulation* of it. Temporal blessings are never to be overlooked; but what are these when compared with “all spiritual blessings,” which regard the soul and eternity? How many have said, “What a blessed rain this is!” who have never once in their lives said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath be-

gotten us again unto a lively hope." The other regards the importance of *confidence* in order to gratitude. The discovery of these blessings is a very pleasing thing, and it is well to know that they are attainable, and to rejoice even in hope of them; but it is the *appropriation* of these blessings which touches all the springs of holy passion and praise. It is this that animates the Apostle and his fellows in this passage—"who hath begotten *us*." But how are *we* to "bless" the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? How can we bless him? We never can bless him as he blesses us. When he blesses us he communicates something, and we receive something we had not before; but this will not apply to our blessing him: our goodness extendeth not to him. He is exalted above all blessing and praise. But gratitude really consists in the disposition to return a favour received. Among men there may be more than an equivalent given for a favour received, but this can never be the case with regard to the Almighty; our obligations to him can never be discharged. The gratitude therefore must appear principally in feeling them, and, while we are unable to make adequate returns, in showing that we are willing to make suitable ones, such as are in our power. It will appear therefore in our thinking well of him, in our speaking well of his name, in recommending him to others, in endeavouring to please him, in praying that the words of our lips and the meditations of our hearts may be acceptable in his sight, according to the inquiry of David and the admonition of the Apostle, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" "I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto the Lord, which is your reasonable service."

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168

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MAY 22.—*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* 1 Pet. i. 3.

HERE are three things we may notice concerning the production of the believer's hope. First, The *author* of it. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The title of God, under the Old Testament dispensation, was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The title of God under the Gospel is, so to speak, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything is *paternal* in the new economy. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath put all things into his hands." This is the grand rule in the dispensation of divine grace. It always regards him first, and then us in him, as he said to his disciples, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." We here see not only the communion which Christ and Christians have in this relation, but we see the order of the communion too. First, *His* God and Father; then *our* God and Father. It is this which is to explain the *manner* in which we are always to pray. We are to come and ask in his name and for his sake, and it is this which is to explain the  *motive*  urged by the Apostle, "to forgive one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us." Secondly, Observe the *principle of the production*. "According to his abundant mercy." There was power in God; this would have crushed us. There was justice in God; this would have condemned us. There was goodness in God; but we have no claims upon his goodness. He could both righteously and easily have destroyed us. But there was *mercy*, "abundant mercy." Owing to this, mankind from the beginning were placed under a dispensation of forbearance. This led God so early to speak in a way of promise to the perishing children of men; this led him to open a door of hope even in this vale of tears.

"Tis from the mercy of our God  
That all our hope begins."

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed

on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Thirdly, Observe the *medium of the production*: "The God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the *resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*." The case is this, that all the hope we derive from the mediation of Jesus Christ, or from any one of the offices he sustains, depends upon his resurrection, and would be nothing without it. It is in his discharge from the grave we may read our own discharge from the curse of the law. In his resurrection we behold him as the *model*, the *principle*, and the *efficiency* of our resurrection. When he died, we died in him; and when he rose, we rose with him.

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MAY 23—*A lively hope*. I Pet, i, 3.

THE "hope laid up for us in heaven" has entirely and only to do with *life*. All life is valuable, but there is a life which deserves the name—a life of justification, a life of sanctification, the life of God in the soul of man, the life everlasting. This hope has only to do with this life. It is a hope full of immortality. The Apostle here means that it is durable and growing. Other hopes die. We have buried many of our hopes already, and others are dropping off like leaves in autumn. But this hope can never decline, never diminish: it will not grow dim with the eye, nor dull with the ear of the body; but as the "outward man perishes, the inward man will be renewed day by day." Time is necessarily killing every other hope. Every day, every hour, takes something from our worldly possessions and enjoyments, and brings us nearer to the end of them; but the very reverse of this is the case with the Christian's hope. Every day, every hour, instead of diminishing, increases it; brings us nearer to its fruition and perfection for ever. He means to tell us, that in this "lively hope" there is an *efficiency*. This hope can never be found in the soul inoperative. *All* real hope indeed is active and lively, according to its degree. Let us look at the energy of a Christian's hope in *trials*; it is "an anchor of the

170

soul, sure and steadfast:" holding us secure in the raging and buffeting of the sea and storm.

"A hope so much divine  
May trials well endure."

Let us view the vigour of this hope in *worldly temptations*. Moses not only endured the menaces of Pharaoh because he saw "Him who was invisible," but "when he was come to years he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect to the recompense of the reward." It is thus by faith the Christian overcomes the world. He can only be weaned from earth by finding and realizing something better. When the soul is satisfied with the goodness, and filled with the blessing of the Lord, the world allures in vain. See the vigour of this hope in *duty*. When is a Christian so active as when he feels "the joy of God's salvation," and can "rejoice in hope?" How this drives off dullness, and indifference, and sloth, and even drowsiness in religious concerns! How the Christian "worships God in the spirit," and is "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." For the "joy of the Lord is our strength." See the vigour of this hope in the Christian's *sanctification and holiness*. He that "hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure," as to measure, and degree, and quality; for the believer, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

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MAY 24.—*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* Rom. v. 12.

Taking mankind at large, it is supposed that one dies every second. How many have died during the last hour,

during the last day, during the last week, and during the last year! Oh, the immensity of the aggregate of the

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171

dead since the Fall! But of all this number one died *first*; and there are several things pertaining to the first of our race who died worthy our attention. The first man that died, died *young*. Had the course of nature been followed, Adam and Eve would have died before Abel; but Abel went first, as if in the very beginning God would prevent the presumption of those who reckon upon life because of their youth. There cannot be a more fallacious rule to go by. The very first person that ever died, died *suddenly*—without warning, without sickness, in the fullness of health and strength. It is true, his death was the effect of external violence; but we need not to be informed that we are perpetually exposed to accidents, and to the malice of wicked and invisible spirits. A sudden death commonly excites surprise, but there is nothing really wonderful in it; the wonder is on the other side. And when we consider the structure of our body, the multiplicity of the delicate organs and vessels of which it consists, the brittleness of the human frame, the wonder is that we live a single day or a single hour. There are sixty movements of the blood every minute, so that sixty times every minute the question is asked, “Shall I live or die?” The very first man that died was a *good* man, a man accepted of God, loved of God. It might seem strange that God should allow this; but it showed from the first that “no man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before him,” that there is no judging of the regards of God by external dispensations, and that all things come alike to all. “There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.” It showed, also, that though death was the effect of the curse, it could be turned into a blessing; and the fact altogether looks favourably to the human race. God would not suffer Satan to have the first fruits of death. The first man that entered the grave *entered glory*, and heaven was inhabited by a human being before hell was inhabited by

one. The very first man that died was a *martyr*; not only was he religious, but he died for his religion. "Marvel not that the world hate you." Yes, "if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus he shall suffer persecution." We see how soon this wretched business commenced in the world. It is found in the family of Abra-

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172

ham, between Ishmael and Isaac, where he that was "after the flesh persecuted him that was after the Spirit." But it was found much earlier. We read that Cain killed his brother Abel, because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. He hated him because God loved him. It was "God testifying of his gifts," and accepting his sacrifice, that was the only provocation of his resentment; and the "carnal mind is still enmity against God."

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MAY 25.—*Teaching us.* Tit. ii. 12.

LET us attend to what is here said of the *influence of the gospel*. It is expressed by "teaching." It teaches by way of *precept*. Some of those precepts are particular, and others are more general. It teaches by way of *example*; and as example goes much further than precept, everything in the gospel is thrown down before us in instances and facts. We are not only told of the Christian warriors, but we see the warriors engaged; and we see the pilgrims, and mingle with them; we travel with them, and hold converse with them. We see the actings of faith in Abraham; of meekness in Moses; of patience in Job; of zeal in Paul; and we have the perfect example of one who did no evil—in whom was no sin—the Holy One of God—godliness incarnate—the ten commandments walking up and down in the flesh. The gospel also teaches in the way of  *motive*. It addresses every principle of our nature; every passion of our bosom; our hope, our fear, our joy, our sorrow, our abhorrence, and our admiration. It draws back the veil, and we see a burning world—a descending Judge—the rising dead—the dead, small and great, standing before

God—the glories of heaven and the flames of hell. It addresses our discouragements, our unworthiness, and the sense of our weakness. It says, “Fear not, for I am with thee,” &c. “My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness.” It also teaches by *way of real, spiritual, and efficient operation*. It is here that none teaches like him: he not only gives the lesson, but the capacity to receive it; not only the light, but the seeing eye; not only the sound, but the hearing ear. It teaches the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dead to feel. Pre-

173

cept and example may suit those who are already alive; but what will they do with those who are “dead in trespasses and sins,” unless there be something more? There is this distinction between the gospel and all other moral means: all other moral means are left to their own unaided strength; but this is not the case with the gospel. The gospel is connected with the presence and energy of God, and this is insured to us. The gospel is the “ministration of the Spirit.” “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” And when it is effectual for our salvation it comes, as the Apostle says to the Thessalonians, “not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.”

MAY 26.—*Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.* Tit. ii. 12.

HERE we see what the gospel teaches us to deny, and what it teaches us to do. It teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. We are therefore required to “lay aside all malice and guile, and hypocrisy and evil speaking,” and to receive with meekness the engrafted word—to put off the old man with his deeds, according to the deceitful lusts of the flesh—to put on the new man. It requires us not only to “cease to do evil,” but to “learn to do well.” There are many people who are leaning on a negative religion; and

a negative useless life is as criminal and as unchristian a life as a life of profligacy. The tree that brought not forth good fruit was hewn down. The servant that was unprofitable was a wicked servant, and cast into outer darkness; not because he abused his talent, but because he hid it. Therefore, observe what the gospel teaches us to do, "to live soberly, righteously, and godly." Here is a fine reference to the three parties concerned in all moral acts and duties—ourselves, our fellow-creatures, and our God. When we are sober minded, temperate in the indulgence of our passions, affections, appetites, and senses; when we are moderate with regard to all earthly things—not too eager to gain them—not too fond of possessing them—and not too sorrowful when we resign them—then we live

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174

soberly. When whatsoever we would that men should do unto us we do so also unto them; when we render to all their due; obedience to whom obedience is due; honour to whom honour is due; pity to whom pity is due; relief to whom relief is due; money to whom money is due; when actuated by conscientiousness, we regard what is due to the souls and bodies of our fellow-creatures, then we live righteously. And when our hearts are right with God; when we believe in him, fear him, love him, resemble him; when we make his word our rule, and his honour our aim, and do all to the glory of God, then we live godly. And the Apostle reminds us *where* we are thus to live—namely, "in the present evil world." There is another world to which we are rapidly advancing, and with which we are intimately connected. The gospel teaches us to make religion our principal concern in this world. Its truths must be learned; its principles must be gained; audits disposition must be exercised in the present world. We must now, or never, acquire that taste that will prepare for the enjoyment of heaven. We must now, or never, obtain that capacity that will fit us for the employments of heaven. We must now be made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." "Now, he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is

God, who has also given us the earnest of the Spirit." And when the Apostle says that it must be in the present world, he means to show the *possibility* as well as necessity of the case. Bad as the situation is, it is possible for the grace of God to teach a man to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the present world. There have already been instances of this, and there are instances now.

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MAY 27.—*Behold, thy King cometh.* Matt. xxi. 5.

THERE is observable throughout the whole of the Redeemer's history a wonderful combination of abasement and grandeur. This could be exemplified in various instances; but, especially, by what is called his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. In one view nothing could be more humiliating than this scene. He entered in order to suffer and to die on a cross, between two thieves; and he rode on an ass. The thing itself was not degrading: it was com-

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175

mon in the East for princes and judges to ride on asses. But let us observe the appendages here. The animal was borrowed. It was untrained; "a colt, the foal of an ass, on which never man rode." It was completely unfurnished, and one of the company threw his garments across its back for the Saviour's accommodation. And who were his attendants, his guards, his heralds-at-arms, on this occasion? None of the priests, or scribes, or chief citizens of Jerusalem, but the common people; who were considered as not knowing the law—as accursed. And yet here, even here, we behold his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." For, First, The transactions had *been predicted* ages before by the spirit of prophecy. Secondly, It showed the *Omniscience* of the Saviour, that he well knew the place and position of the two animals—the colt tied to the mother, where two ways met; and it evinced his *Omnipotence*, in making the owner willing to give it up for the use of a stranger. And he was surrounded with acclamations which could not be sup-

pressed; the whole multitude of the disciples began to "rejoice, and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;" saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." Among the multitude were found some of the old haughty hypocrites, the Pharisees, and they immediately said, "Master, rebuke thy disciples." It is very unseemly, besides it is liable to be very injurious. It is dangerous; it may gender a tumult. It is outrageous; it will bring all sober and rational religion into contempt. It is vanity in him who receives it, and indiscretion in them that offer it. They deserved no reply; but Jesus answered and said unto them, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." The phrase is susceptible of three meanings; and it is not easy to determine which was the leading sentiment in the mind of the Saviour. He would intimate, first, that the silence would be *vile*; secondly, that it would be *difficult*; and, thirdly, that it would be *useless*. That, should they be induced to hold their peace, nothing would be gained, for others would immediately rise up in their place who would make as much noise, and perhaps a great deal more.

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176

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MAY 28.—*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Tit. ii. 13, 14.

HERE we are taught what believers are to expect, and what they are to acknowledge. It teaches us what to expect. This hope does not mean the grace of hope, but the *object* of hope. Observe its *residence*. It is said to be in another place, "laid up for us in heaven." It is described by its *attribute*, "blessed," and it may well be called "that blessed hope;" for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which

God hath prepared for them that love him." And it is also described by the *season* when it is to be attained; "at the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." This season is mentioned because it will then be accomplished. The intermediate state is not denied, or overlooked, or undervalued by the Apostle, here or elsewhere, but he leads forward very naturally the minds of Christians to the consummation of the whole in the adoption: that is to say, the redemption of the body, when the flesh, which has slept in hope, shall be awakened; when this "vile body" will be changed, and fashioned like the Saviour's own glorious body; when the number of the redeemed will be complete, as well as their persons, and the whole of them entered into the joy of their Lord. It also teaches believers what they are to acknowledge, for their religion is not a future existence only. No, they can look backward as well as forward; we are to acknowledge that he gave himself not only *to* us but *for* us. That is, to be poor, to be persecuted and oppressed, to suffer and to die, and not to be a martyr only, but to be a Redeemer; not only to redeem them from the guilt, and the curse, and the horrible consequences of our manifold iniquity, but as we are defiled, as well as guilty, and stand in need of renovation as well as pardon, "to purify them unto himself "by the agency of the Holy Spirit, that they might be "a peculiar people;" whose peculiarity should not consist in notions, in opinions, in the shape of a garment, in the use

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177

of a pronoun, or in a dissent from the ancient established customs and manners of the community in which they live; but a practical peculiarity and dissent from the spirit and maxims and cares of the world—"a peculiar people, zealous of good works." These are the glorious truths that feed and nourish our experience and practice. Under the influence of these principles may we live, and in the enjoyment of them die.

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MAY 29.—*The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Tit. ii. 13.

WHAT would our religion be, abstracted from the exalted sentiment, that “he gave himself for us,” or if these words were philosophized away? But Christians feel their power and their vitality. What an evidence have we here of the mighty doctrine of “the faith once delivered to the saints,” the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle, in speaking of “the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” means that he is intended. This is undeniable, because of his appearance. The appearance is never in the Scriptures applied to the Father, but only to the Son; and the being who is to appear is the same being who gave himself for us to redeem us. Nor is this all; the Apostle remarks—and what a proof again is this of his divinity—that our recovery is not only from him as the author, but terminates in him as the last end. He says, he gave himself for us to “purify *unto himself* a peculiar people.” In another place, it is said, “He hath redeemed us unto God by his blood.” Here then he does it to present us to *himself* a “glorious church.” He cleanses it and washes it by the washing of water, that he might *present it to himself* a “glorious church.” As in the old creation, so in the new; “all things are made *by him and for him.*” And we are here reminded of our *obligations* to him, that we may acknowledge not only our dependence on him now, but how much we owe him, and shall owe him for ever; that we may dedicate ourselves to his service, and ask, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” And, therefore,

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178

how *valuable and worthy* does the gospel appear. It infinitely suits our wants, and completely relieves them. It is a doctrine of godliness and grace. “It is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and the life which is to come.” It unites the glory of God and the happiness of man together; while it tranquilizes the

conscience of the sinner, it heals his moral maladies, and makes him a new creature. Well may the gospel, which is so holy in its tendencies, so sublime in its doctrines, so adapted to make men individually and socially happy, be called the glory and excellency of God. While we would be thankful for this inestimable blessing, let us be concerned for its wider diffusion. It is by this alone the present evil world will be morally changed. May we therefore pray that it may have free course, run, and be glorified, and that "His way may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations." Amen.

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MAY. 30.—*When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*  
Acts ii. 1-4.

THE account given of the origin of Christianity in this book is both minute and marvellous. Infidelity has endeavoured to account for the fact without the admission of supernatural agency; but it has signally failed, and the very events which it has considered as causes were themselves the effects, and no solution can be given which is satisfactory but that which is here furnished us. And the more we reflect on the nature of God and the character of men, and the more we consider general causes and effects, whatever obscurities there may be, we must yet acknowledge that "this cometh of the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Before our Saviour left his disciples, he said to them, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem, and wait for the

promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me; and ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come

upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." It is very likely that they did not entirely comprehend the meaning of this assurance, but they believed the word of the Saviour; they expected some extraordinary communication, and therefore they remained in the city in the exercises of devotion. The event took place on one of three great festivals which the Jews were accustomed to commemorate. It is here called *Pentecost*, that is, "the fiftieth;" it means fifty days after, the promise not being fulfilled until the day was "*fully* come." It was in the morning, and *early* in the morning, when the disciples were "with one accord in one place," waiting in earnest and united prayer for this glorious communication; "and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." This was a solemn harbinger, intended to prepare them for the occasion, and it could not fail to awaken in them the most serious attention. This was an address both to the *ear* and to the *eye*, for scarcely had the sound ceased, when "there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." The element of fire was an emblem of the *Holy Spirit's* influence; while the peculiar *form* which it assumed showed the kind of gift conferred upon them; "for they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the *Spirit* gave them utterance." Their emotion and their zeal could not long remain unnoticed, "for there were dwelling at Jerusalem at this time devout men, out of every nation under heaven;" and when they heard of it they came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language, "and they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we in our own tongue, wherein we were born, the wonderful works of God?"

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MAY 31.—*How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?* Acts ii. 8.

THE audience on this occasion was composed of "Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, and Cretes, and Arabians;" but, however diversified, they all heard the Apostles speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. In noticing, therefore, this extraordinary fact, we observe, First, That it could be nothing less than a *real miracle*. Two things are essential to a miracle. *First*, There must be something that can be seen, and touched, and handled. These are called *signs*, and it would be wonderful if signs could not be seen. This, by the way, shows the absurdity of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Its advocates say it is a miracle. Why, then, let it be seen. We are all capable of seeing and knowing bread and wine; the priest mumbles certain words over it, and he says it is changed. Why, then, let it be seen—let it be tasted, let it be touched, let it be examined. It was so with all the miracles of Moses. It was so with the miracles of our Lord. The deaf heard, the blind saw, the dumb spake, the lepers were cleansed, the dead were raised up; and so it was *here*. These men professed to speak in all these various languages; well, and here were many men who heard them speak in these languages, and were well capable of judging. *Secondly*, A miracle must be above all known *second causes*. God only could have done this. God only could have stored the minds of these men with such a multitude of arbitrary signs, and have given them power and ability to utter such a variety of distinct sounds. It is well known to be very difficult for any man to speak a foreign language—to bring his knowledge of it into application, so as to be intelligible. And yet we find these men speaking these languages off-hand, and rendering themselves perfectly

intelligible to all that heard them. It could therefore be nothing in them.

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181

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JUNE 1.—*We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* Acts ii. 11.

THE *truth* of the miracle here recorded is *also fully substantiated*. Infidels are never satisfied, or we should think here is enough to satisfy them, for *who* are these men? These men were well known. "These men are all Galileans." If they had been strangers, it might have been said, "O, they knew these languages and they only pretended that they had become suddenly acquainted with them." But the men, their characters, and their pursuits were well known; it was well known they were poor fishermen of Galilee: and then observe *their judges*, if they had spoken in one language only the others might not have detected it; but everyman, whether Crete or Arabian, heard them speak in the dialect of his country. Observe the *place*, also, in which they spake. They did not go to a distance to tell their tale: they began when the Jews were around them, who were their bitter enemies. Observe the *season*: what large multitudes were present on the occasion. And mark their *boldness*: they charged the Jews with having "killed the Prince of life," and denounced upon them the heaviest judgments of God. And what did Peter, who had denied his Lord and Master through fear—does *he dare* thus to accuse and to denounce them; and could he have done this unless God had fulfilled his promise—"It is not ye that speak but the SPIRIT of your FATHER which speaketh in you?" And then mark *the result*; the hearers were pricked in the heart, and many gladly received the word and were baptized, and the same day there were added to the church about three thousand souls. Thirdly, This *miracle was predicted*. When our Lord was going to leave his disciples, he said, "These signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they *shall speak*

*with new tongues.*" Fourthly, *This miracle was necessary.* Miracles were never performed merely to excite wonder—all were to answer some useful purpose; and so it was in this case. If these disciples had gone first to learn these languages, what an expense there would have been in time and labour. And even if they had gone out with interpreters, how could they be sure that those interpreters would be faithful and trustworthy. But difficulties are

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182

nothing in the way of *Omnipotence*; he can remove all, and effect his purposes. Fifthly, *Miracles were continued for years*—to the end of the times of the Apostles. Sixthly, The gift was *extensively distributed*. Many had it who perished. It had no connection with the *salvation of the soul*. Finally, *The absence of this miracle in the church, in the work of evangelizing the world, must now be supplied by human learning.* And we ought to be very thankful to God that his word has been translated into so many tongues. But the time is coming when all the inhabitants of the earth shall read "*in their own tongues* the wonderful works of God."

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JUNE 2.—*That I might preach him among the heathen.*

Gal. i. 16.

THE Apostle preached the gospel to the Gentiles long before he preached it to the Jews at all. "I am the Apostle of the Gentiles," says he; "I magnify mine office." The Jews in general, having been the peculiar people of God, were exceedingly jealous of the extension of these privileges to others. It has been supposed that, for the announcement of this, Isaiah was sawn asunder. The Apostle cites this as an instance of great moral heroism. Isaiah is very bold, and says, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by name." And even the minds of our Lord's own immediate disciples were beclouded by this prejudice, and it required a miracle

to deliver the Apostle Peter from this tendency. But it was otherwise with this Hebrew of the Hebrews. Oh what a noble soul had he from the beginning! He rejoiced in proportion as the blessings of the gospel became common and general. "Would to God," said he before Agrippa, "that all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." It delighted him to think his head would not sparkle alone, but that the heads of them also that love the Saviour's appearing would be equally adorned with the same crown. Thus it was God's design that the Gentiles should become partakers of the promises of Christ by the gospel. While "without Christ" they had been "aliens from the commonwealth of

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183

Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, living without hope, and without God in the world;" enveloped in ignorance, darkness, idolatry, superstition, and every kind of vice and wretchedness. But it was predicted that "in his name should the Gentiles trust," and to him should "the Gentiles seek." Simeon was enabled to perceive this when he embraced the infant Saviour, and blessed God that he had seen his salvation, "which was prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of his people Israel." The Jews had despised them; considering themselves *children*, they always called them "*dogs*"—viewing themselves as "citizens," they considered them only as "outcasts." But, says our Saviour, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." What goodness, yea, what abounding grace was here! It says to the most unworthy,

"Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream.

Let us therefore be encouraged, when most sensible of our guilt and misery. Unto us, as well as unto these Gentiles, has been sent "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

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JUNE 3.—*An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* 1 Pet. i. 4.

AN inheritance properly signifies patrimonial or hereditary property, as distinguished from what is obtained by purchase or received as wages or reward. And this blessing, this glory, comes to us from relationship, for we are children and heirs. "If children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." But we would have regard rather to the nature of this object than to its name; and yet, what do we know of this object? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;" but though it be "glory to be revealed" as to its full disclosures, it is a glory already revealed as to its reality and essence. We have allusions if not resemblances; we are told what it is not, rather than what it is; and Peter

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184

furnishes us with four articles concerning it, telling us that this inheritance is, First, *Incorruptible*. Everything here tends to dissolution—kings die, and thrones moulder away. Where now is all that was venerable in relation, and all that was sacred in office; all that was once dear to affection and lovely in appearance?

"A heap of dust alone remains of thee,  
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be."

All that our eyes behold is going, and we are going. The world itself is doomed to perish. Secondly, This inheritance is *undefiled*. Sin is the source of mortality. Of all we possess and enjoy here, sin is the worm at the root and the mildew in the bud. There are few inheritances which are undefiled. If we trace them back we shall find them frequently originating in violence, knavery, or injustice. And how are they held? What forgetfulness of God! What improper hoarding, what improper expenditure, what provisions for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof! They may well be called in general the "mammon of unrighteousness." But into *that* world enters "nothing

that defileth;" the pure in heart only shall see God. The Author of that blessedness is holy, the companions of it are holy, the pleasures and the enjoyments of it are holy—"the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Thirdly, This inheritance *fadeth not away*. The meaning here is not only that there shall be no annihilation, but no decline, no variation. Not only that all will be living, but always living—always new—always flourishing and green.

"There everlasting spring abides,  
And never withering flowers."

Fourthly, It is "*reserved in heaven for us*," and therefore it is safe. Whatever tabernacles we build here we shall surely have to take them down again. As long as we remain here we shall hear a voice saying, "Arise and depart hence, for this is not your rest." Thus when the Jews were in the wilderness, the inheritance which God had promised them was reserved in Canaan for them, and they could not reach it until they had passed the river Jordan. Christians who are now in the wilderness, and between whom and their inheritance the Jordan rolls, need not be afraid. The foot

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185

of our High Priest will divide the stream and give us a dry passage, and then we shall have no objection for the waves to unite behind, and to exclude us for ever from a world lying in wickedness and woe. We shall have gone the way we shall not return, nor shall we desire it.

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JUNE 4.—*The hope which is laid up for you in heaven.*

Col. i. 5.

IT is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that there is another and better state of being; and there are two things in general we may always remark concerning heaven. We may view it as a STATE and as a PLACE. It is principally to be considered as a STATE. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." The natural man supposes that we must ascend up millions of miles through the sky to get into heaven. There are some living who

know the truth of our Saviour's declaration: "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." "The kingdom of heaven is within you." At Bethel, in consequence of what he saw and what he heard, Jacob exclaimed, "This is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven." When he looked around him, the situation convinced him he was not in heaven; but his manifestations and communications induced him to believe that heaven could not be very far off. Happiness is not a local thing; it does not depend on external things; it is mental, it is cordial. There may be wretchedness in a palace, and there may be contentedness in a mud-wall cottage. What were all his distinctions to Haman, while Mordecai the Jew sat at the king's gate? But hear Paul, a prisoner, and in view of martyrdom: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed against that day." "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." But although heaven is principally to be viewed as a *state*, yet it is also to be considered as a *place*. A place it necessarily must be, because it is to be the *residence of finite beings and embodied beings*, and because it is to be the residence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who as a man is clothed in a body like our own. Heaven is where the glorified humanity of

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 186

the Saviour is. Our Saviour said to the dying thief, "This day shalt thou be *with me* in paradise." This was somewhere. And to his disciples he said, "I go to prepare a *place* for you; and if I go to prepare a *place* for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that *where I am* there you may be also." We cannot imagine to what a perfection locality can be advanced. We know how superior the scenery of one spot of earth is to another. We know how charming and enchanting nature can be rendered under the arrangements of art. Who can tell what Eden was, the residence of Adam and Eve, especially after it came under their culture? Who then can imagine what the attractions and glories of heaven may be, even consi-

dered as a place? What a place must that be which does not “stand in need of the sun or of the moon to shine therein, for the glory of God and the Lamb are the light thereof, and where there is no temple therein, for the glory of God and the Lamb are the temple thereof.” But the principal thing with, us should be, Is it accessible?

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JUNE 5.—*I looked, and, behold, a DOOR WAS OPENED in heaven.* Rev. iv. 1.

HEAVEN had been closed by sin, and of this we have a very striking emblem furnished us very early, for we are told by Moses that God drove out the man, “and he placed at the end of the garden cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.” Telling us thereby clearly enough that the attainment of heaven upon terms of the first constitution was rendered impossible, and if ever we can re-approach it, it must be by another way. Concerning this way the Scripture affords us abundant and satisfactory information. It assumes that it has been accomplished by the interposition of him who is the Mediator between God and man, who, when he had “overcome the sharpness of death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers;” and Paul says, “Being made perfect through sufferings, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Having become our substitute and the surety for sinners, He was himself excluded from heaven, nor could he enter it until he had “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” for

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187

which he had become answerable; till he had “borne our grief and carried our sorrow;” till he had “magnified the law, and made it honourable.” But having accomplished this work, he could make a meritorious claim for our entrance into heaven. He having “entered with his own blood once into the holy place,” and “having obtained eternal redemption for us,” he also made a passage for *our* entrance too, for he did not enter himself as a private individual, but as our

head—our representative—our forerunner, announcing our coming, and securing accommodation for us when we came—our trustee of the covenant of grace, taking possession of heaven in our name and in our nature too; in other words, “his blood cleanseth us from all sin.” His righteousness justifies us before God, and gives us a peace that passeth all understanding. His grace renews our hearts, and his Spirit “seals us unto the day of redemption.” Neither is there salvation in any other. He himself says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Some think of opening a door into heaven for themselves by their *innocence*. But where is their innocence? for there is “no man that liveth and sinneth not;” and “cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” Some think of gaining admission to heaven by their own *doings*; these they call “good works.” Alas! some of them are not good works in themselves, and others which are morally good, are yet evil in their motives, and motive is essential to moral action. Those that are good may be good for the building, but not for the foundation; be good for fitness, but not for procurement. And if these are placed in the room of Christ, we wrong our own souls, and rob him of his highest glory. If we had not been, as to all hope in ourselves, irrecoverably lost, he would not have come into the world at such an expense to save us. If we had not been in bondage, he would not have given his life a ransom for us. If we could have obtained eternal life by our worthiness and doings, he would not have come in order that we “might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly.” We cannot imagine that he bled and died needlessly. He undertaking to save us, could not save us by a volition of his will, nor by an exertion of his power. No: when he made us he had only to *speak*, but

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188

when he would save us he had also to *suffer*. He made us at the expense of his *breath*; He saved us at the expense of his *blood*. Let us remember, therefore, our obligation to him—that to him we owe the bread we eat, the water

we drink—above all, we owe our eternal all. He has enriched us by his poverty, we live by his death.

“He sunk beneath our heavy woes,  
 To raise us to his throne;  
 There’s ne’er a gift his hand bestows  
 But cost his heart a groan.”

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JUNE 6.—*Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree,  
 and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.*

Isa. lv. 13.

TWO general remarks are suggested by the character of the moral transformation as thus expressed. First, That *naturally there is no difference between men as to their state.* Whatever diversities and inequalities may characterise their duties, and however varied may be their sins, there is no difference as to their state. “All we like sheep have gone astray;” although we may “turn every one of us to his own way.” All are descendants of a fallen original, all are streams of a polluted and infected fountain, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” and are unfit for his presence and his service, without a change. Therefore our Saviour said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” This extends to the people of God themselves; and Paul, addressing the Ephesian Church, says, “Ye were by nature children of wrath, even as others.” Secondly, *Grace makes a difference.* It never leaves us as it finds us. It never finds us near to God, and never leaves us far from him. It never finds us in love with holiness, and never leaves us in love with sin. It never finds us with our conversation in heaven, and never leaves us walking according to the course of this world. This change is *figuratively expressed.* What a difference is there now between the “thorn” and the “fir tree!” How unsightly, how worthless, and how injurious the one! How lovely in appearance, how valuable in trade, how profitable in use the other! Such, and nothing less

than this, is the difference in man viewed in his natural state, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Take such a man; he was once a profane wretch, see him now. The swearer has learned to fear an oath; the drunkard has become sober; the Sabbath-breaker now calls "the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable." See *that* man: he was once avaricious. See him now—his "conversation is without covetousness," "he deviseth liberal things." See *that* man: he was once a proud boaster, trusting to himself that he is righteous, and despising others. Where is he now? at the foot of the cross. What is he saying? "God be merciful to me a sinner." Look at Manasseh, who had sinned away all the advantages of a pious education, had become a worshipper of Baal, and a murderer, but "in his affliction Manasseh sought the Lord, and was found of him." Behold Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious! Where is he now? Oh, he is *no more*; but here is something *instead* of him—instead of a blasphemer, here is an adorer at the feet of Jesus, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—instead of a persecutor, here is a disciple, a preacher of the faith which he once destroyed—here is a martyr, "not counting his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course with joy" in his service. Then look at the character of the Corinthians, as given by Paul. Could hell itself either have made or wished them worse than they were? and yet, says he, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Oh, what surprise such changes have produced! "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." Some have said, "This is he; "others have said, "He is like him;" but he has said, "I *am* he," and yet not he; the same, yet not the same; physically the same, spiritually another;

"While the wide world esteem it strange,  
Graze and admire, and hate the change."

It is needful, however, to observe, that every conversion is not *equally* remarkable. There are some who, *before*

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190

were decent, and moral, and amiable. They continue to avoid the same sins, to perform the same duties, and to attend to the same means and ordinances as before, only *now* with new views, principles, motives, and with new feelings. In such there is an invisible agency at work, to which they were strangers before. Nor is this transformation always accomplished *suddenly*; but whether the work be sudden or more slow, whether it be in consequence of the “thunder,” or the “still small voice,” still, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new;” there is a change not only in his state, but in his character, not only in his condition, but in his very nature.

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JUNE 7.—*And it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.* Isa. lv. 13.

WE may observe four things with regard to the results of this moral transformation. First, That it is supposed that this effect is *the work of God*. And it *is* and it must be so, and the very quality of the effect shows its origin and its author. “He that hath wrought in us for the self-same thing is God.” God it is who “works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.” This is the promise which he has given us—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you;” and all the subjects of Divine grace will readily avow, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” Secondly, This is to be to him for a *name*, that is, a *praise*; both these words are used together in another passage—“They shall be to me for a *name* and a *praise*.” The latter is explanatory of the former. While *all* God’s works praise him, he derives his praise principally from his people. “This people,” says he, “have I formed for myself, and they shall show forth my praise.” And again, “I have placed salvation in Zion for Israel my glory;”

the people from whom I principally derive the revenue of my praise in the world. And God does derive more glory from the common actions of his people, who, whether they eat or drink, do all to the glory of God, than from the

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191

very religion and all the works of other men. If Christians are to be to the Lord for a name, let us take care it be a good one, a becoming one, and that we “walk worthy of God, who has called us unto his kingdom and glory.” And as we are charged with a portion of the Divine glory and praise, let us carry it down unsullied to the grave, “harmless and blameless, the children of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we are to shine as lights in the world.” Third, This moral transformation is to be unto the Lord for a “*sign*.” A sign is a manifestation or token. In the Scripture it is commonly used to indicate a kind of external evidence or pledge. As God said to Moses, “If they will not believe the first sign, show them a second sign.” “Now the conversion of souls to God is a moral miracle; it is a striking display on God’s part to save. It is truly a sign—a sign that God is not unmindful of his covenant—that he has not forgotten to be gracious—that he has not forsaken the earth—that he has not abandoned the country where such conversions take place. Such converts are the greatest blessings to the community, by their prayers, their influence, and their examples—a sign that with him is “no variableness nor shadow of turning,”—that “his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, nor his arm shortened that it cannot save”—a sign to encourage hope with regard to ourselves, and to preclude despair with regard to any of our fellow-creatures, however abandoned they may become; that “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is exceeding abundant with faith and love,” and that he “is able to save unto the uttermost.” Observe, fourthly, The *duration* of all this. It is “to be to the Lord for an *everlasting* sign, that shall not be cut off.” Towers, temples, pillars, statues, whatever has been designed to perpetuate the praise or

fame of distinguished men in our world, are exposed to the ravages of time, and will perish; but the people whom the Lord hath set apart for himself shall remain for ever the triumphs of his faithfulness, and the monuments of his mercy and grace, that he may be admired *in* them and glorified *by* them.

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192

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JUNE 8.—*And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.* Acts ii. 12, 13.

THE audience on this occasion were divided into three classes, and these three classes are always to be found. Some wondered, some mocked, some believed to the salvation of their souls. First, *Some heard with wonder*. "Are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our tongue, wherein we were born?" What does all this indicate? What is it likely to lead to? What does it forebode? So it is now. The preacher seems to speak parables. The natural man discerns not the things of God, neither can he discern them; hence they marvel at the doctrines taught, at the precepts inculcated, and at the change effected in the lives and characters of those who receive the truth. This is often attended with a good effect, for it induces examination. On the other hand, the wonder often dies away. Secondly, *Some heard in mockery*, and so it is now.

"Thus the wide world esteem it strange;  
Gaze and admire, and hate the change."

That which devils believe, and which makes even them to tremble, becomes a matter of mirth and mockery with some men—only serving to excite their contempt. The seat of the scorner is for the highest class of sinners. Some of these mockers were once professors. The apostate generally does all he can to defame the characters of others, so that the last end of that man is "worse than the first."

Some mock *from affectation of greatness*. "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" These things, say they, may be very well for the common people, but will not do for men of taste. Some mock *from affectation of wisdom*. "What will this babbler say?" "Christ crucified" was "to the Greeks foolishness." Some mock *from ignorance*. Hume confessed to a friend that he had never read the New Testament. Many of these mockers are afraid to read or hear the truth, lest it should disturb their peace and confidence. "This," says Peter, "they *willingly* are ignorant of." They

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193

turn their backs upon the light. Some cannot deny certain facts which are before them, but then they show their malignity by accounting for them. The zeal of Christian's they ascribe to disappointed hopes, to ambition, a sanguine temperament, a heated imagination, to enthusiasm, etc. So it was here. The multitude ascribed the energy of the Apostles, and their knowledge of languages, to *drunkenness*: "These men are full of new wine." Peter met the charge by an appeal to their candour and to their social usages: "It is," says he, "but the third hour of the day"—that is, nine o'clock in the morning. But if the charge had been true, what could drunkenness do in teaching men the knowledge of languages? but men will say anything for the sake of objection. Thirdly, *Some heard and believed*. And thus it is now, and thus God's word is never preached entirely in vain; and therefore while some neglect or despise, and others mock and insult, there are others convinced of sin—others who receive the "faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and the gospel becomes to them as "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life."

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JUNE 9.—*Be ye filled with the Spirit*. Eph. v. 18.

THIS is peculiarly the dispensation of the Spirit: and the influences of the Spirit are essential to the success of preaching, and all other means of grace. We are *not now to look*

*for supernatural gifts.* These were necessary at first; but the pledge being once given it does not need to be repeated, otherwise it would cease to be miraculous. But the *ordinary* influences of the Holy Ghost are still needed, and are still granted. Ministers have still the “treasure in earthen vessels,” and are as dependent as ever upon God. Means are not given to cut us off from God, but to lead us to him, and to induce us to cry, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” The Spirit of God is still the “Spirit of grace and supplications;” “the fruit of the Spirit” is still “in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth;” the Spirit still fills the believer with all peace, and strength, and joy. The Bible is full of this doctrine. Let us then beware of practically denying it, or of “limiting the Holy One of Israel;” and also beware of “grieving”

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194

the Holy Spirit: remembering that it is said the “sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven.” We do not know what that sin is. God has not designed we should know. And the reason is obvious. If a person who wishes to preserve his grounds from thieves and intruders affixes to some part thereof a notice that spring guns are placed thereon, he would not mention the *precise* spot on which they were placed, because then every other part might be approached without danger; and if we would avoid the sin against the Holy Ghost—be quickened by the Spirit—pray in the Spirit—walk in the Spirit—and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—let us give heed to the Apostle’s injunction, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit:” and to the encouraging declaration of the Saviour, “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit unto them that ask him?”

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JUNE 10.—*Thou hast stricken them, hut they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, hut they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.* Jer. v. 3.

HERE we may observe three things. First, That *sin is the source of all our perplexities and miseries.* This is the troubler of this world, and this is the “abominable thing which God hateth.” This is the worm gnawing at the root, which causeth our gourds to wither. “Fools make a mock at sin,” and they are only fools who will ever think lightly of sin, or roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongues. Sin has produced hell and prepared “Tophet of old.” It has “brought death into the world, and all our woe.” There is not any one thing that can hurt us if we were free from sin. But while we have any connection with sin, we have Ezekiel’s roll, “written within and without with lamentation, mourning, and woe.” Secondly, It shows us the *inefficacy of mere suffering to bring a man to a proper state of thinking and feeling.* The heart may be broken, and yet may not be softened. It may be humbled and yet not humble. A man may be deprived of his weapons and yet still be disposed to fight. The enmity may remain, for the

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195

“carnal mind is enmity against God.” And even in his very suffering the sinner adds to his sin, and throws the blame on God, rather than take the shame to himself. Afflictions do not necessarily produce moral consequences. They *ought* to produce, and are naturally adapted to produce, salutary results; but there is antagonism enough in the depraved heart of man to counteract all this. It is said of Ahaziah, that “in his affliction he sinned yet more and more;” and Isaiah also says, “The people turned not to him that smote them.” So also here Jeremiah says, “Thou hast stricken them, and they have not grieved.” Third, We here *see the reality of a moral providence.* There is a two-fold providence of God. His natural providence and his moral providence. By the one he provides, by the other he governs. The one regards us as creatures, the other as

subjects. And he has made us subjects as well as creatures. He has given us reason as well as passions, conscience as well as appetites, laws as well as blessings; and he will arraign us for our disobedience to the one as well as our misimprovement of the other. It is proper that sin should be punished; and though the present is not properly a state of retribution, yet we see there is even here a connection between sin and wickedness. There is a tendency in it to produce misery, and we say, that is God punishing a man. Now what does God punish? Man's sins. The man sins; God need not go through all the plagues of Egypt in order to punish him. He says, "He is joined to idols, let him alone." If God leaves a sinner to himself he is his own tormentor, and sin is made to do the work of Divine justice in its effects.

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JUNE 11.—*Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Sigh God? Micah vi. 6.*

OF all questions this is the most important and interesting; where shall we find an answer? The world cannot satisfy the inquiry, for the world by wisdom knew not God. Philosophy cannot; it says, It is not in me. Nature says, It is not in me. Providence says, It is not in me. But God has "magnified his word above all his name;" and this blessed book contains the revelation of the mystery; and in

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196

words so ample, and in a manner too simple and plain to be misunderstood, tells us that "no man cometh unto the Father" but by him who has announced himself as "the way, the truth, and the life." We can only come before the Lord and bow before the Most High as we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us consider this exalted privilege. For "it is with him we have to do" mainly and principally, in the concerns of the soul and eternity. He is not only the greatest and the best of beings, but we are most intimately and perfectly related to him. We derive everything from him; we depend upon him; we are responsible to

him. He is the fountain of life, and he must be to us the supreme good. Let us view man in three states with regard to this privilege. First, We may view him *before* the fall, and in his original condition. Then he was one altogether with the Lord. He wore his image. He lived in his presence. He enjoyed his smiles, and carried on continual intercourse with him; and he was no more afraid to meet him than a child is afraid to meet the tenderest of fathers and the most endeared of mothers. But ah! how is the "gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed." This condition was broken up by sin. Let us, therefore, Secondly, View him *in his fallen state*; there we see him in a state of alienation or distance from God, in which he is "far off," penally and morally from God; for when man departed from God in the way of obedience, God departed from man in the way of favour. When the angels sinned they were banished from heaven; when Adam and Eve sinned they were banished from Paradise; and when the Jews transgressed the commandments of the Lord they were exiled from Canaan. All these things are designed to show us that the tendency of sin is to separate between God and us, and hence results our degradation and wretchedness: for, says God, "Woe unto you when I depart from you." Thirdly, View man in his *renewed state*. Here we behold him no longer "without God in the world." He now feels his need of God. Now he returns to him from whom he has deeply revolted, with weeping and with supplication, saying with the Church, "O Lord, other lords beside thee have had dominion over me, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." He not only inquires how he may come before the Lord,

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197

and seeks after the enjoyment of this privilege, but he finds him, to the joy and to the rejoicing of his soul.

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JUNE 12.—O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! Job xxiii. 3.

OBSERVE here the object of the patriarch's solicitude. Although he does not express the *name* of God, his mind was full of it. Here we see an addition to his distress; he was now in a state of *desertion*. God was absent from him. God can never be absent from his people as to his *essential* presence, or even as to his *spiritual* presence; because he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But he may be absent as to his *sensible* presence, or as to the manifestation of his favour and of the design of his dealings with us. This greatly enhances any external affliction. For the presence of God, which is always necessary, is never so sweet as it is in the day of trouble; and often have his people found, when creatures have withdrawn that God has favoured them with peculiar communion with himself: the less they have had of the *world*, the more they have had of the *Word*—the less of *earthly* the more of *heavenly* good. But oh, to have tribulation in the world without realizing peace in him, and comfort from him: to say with David, "My *bones* are vexed," and to add, "My *soul* is also vexed; but thou, O Lord, how long?" Yet let none imagine that this is peculiar to them. Isaiah says, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." "He hideth himself from the house of Jacob." This was Job's case here. God had retired, and though searching he could not find him. "I go forward," says he, "but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him. On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him." Therefore, "O that I knew where I might find him." Observe, Secondly, The *earnestness* of his desire. "That I might come even to his seat." Nearness to God in duty is a very distinguishable thing from the mere exercise itself. There is such a thing as praying in

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198

prayer, and praising in praise, and hearing in hearing. This should be our concern; for in vain we draw near to

God with our mouth, while our heart is far from him. To “enter into the secret of his tabernacle,” as David did, to “enter into the holiest of all,” as the apostle speaks of, “by the blood of Jesus,” to get near to his very seat, as Job has it here, to get so near as almost to get away from feeling the influence of the world—leaving it very far behind for the time—to draw so near to him as to see his beauty, and as to feel his influence—so near as to have our hearts fixed and fired and filled too. This is a possible thing, and should be our aim in our public and private devotions, and will be so in proportion as we are concerned to have the life of God advanced in our souls.

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JUNE 13.—*Who is on the Lord's side?* Exod. xxxii. 26.

THERE is no neutrality in religion. There are cases in which neutrality is possible, and in which it maybe excused, if not admired and commended. In family disputes, the quarrels of neighbours, it may be well to keep neutral. Two nations may wage war against each other, and waste their resources, and a third nation, however urged, may remain neutral, securing its subjects and husbanding its wealth. Some have thought it to be an excellence in a senator to belong to no party. But a man must take a part with one side or the other, for he can do nothing as a neutral, whether in politics or in religion; or otherwise he will have no influence with either party, but be disowned of both. But even if it were not so in these cases, there can be no neutrality here; and this cannot be repeated too often—“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” “Whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God.” “If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him.” But there are some, blessed be God, who are with him, and on his side. This is their glory, and this should be their joy. They are with him, and on his side now, and they shall be with him for ever. They are now suffering with him, and they shall

199

“also reign with him.” They now are bearing the “reproach of the cross.” They shall soon share with him in the glory of the crown. They are now on his side engaged in the toils of the fight; and they shall soon be with him in the triumphs of victory. And he will fulfil his own words: “Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne.” “Ye are they,” says he, “who have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” If we are on the Lord’s side, we are on the right side, on the safe side, on the rising side. We are on the side which, by-and-bye, will annihilate the opposite side, and become a universality. We are with him—are advancing with him. Here is the Saviour—here are his people; they are weak, he is Almighty—He is at their head. Therefore we need not be afraid to go forward. Let us therefore come to a decision, seeing there can be no medium between loving Christ and hating him; and that when the dispute is between God and Baal, there is to be no “halting between two opinions.” Let us also remember that we are not only required to “cease to do evil,” but “to learn to do well;” and that every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, though it bring forth no bad fruit, is “hewn down and cast into the fire.”

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JUNE 14.—*He that is not with me is against me.*  
Matt. xii. 30.

THERE is nothing which shows the real character of men more than their attractions and aversions. Who are the objects of our choice and preference? With whom do we most readily and pleasingly associate? There is an old adage just in point: “Tell me a man’s company, and I will tell you his character.” Congeniality is the inducement and the bond of union. To be against some persons would expose us to general indignation. Who would like to be opposed to a Thornton, a Howard, a Wilberforce, a Leighton,

a Fenelon? But here we have "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." What a picture of Christ have the four gospels given us

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200

After looking at this, we might ask, Is there any being in the world odious enough to be against him? He is possessed of all excellencies. All the excellencies found in creatures, separately and imperfectly, are found in him, combined and complete: all that was innocent in Adam when in Paradise; all that was tender in Joseph, meek in Moses, patient in Job, and all that was zealous in Paul; all that is good in the spirits of just men made perfect; all that is wise in the innumerable company of angels; and even the aggregate Would be no more than a drop to the ocean or a ray to the sun. To be against him is therefore to be against all truth, and righteousness, and peace; against the glory of God and the happiness of mankind. Nothing is more unreasonable, vile, and shameful, than to oppose a Benefactor and Friend who has laid us under peculiar obligation, upon whom we had no claim, and who has yet spared no expense, no pain, in order to serve us. "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world," what do we owe thee? To thee we owe the bread we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe. If we are allowed to remain in the land of the living, it is owing to thy intercession on our behalf; if we have been redeemed, it is with thy precious blood; and if we have entertained a hope of a better world, thou hast altogether inspired it. The Saviour asks, and he has a right to ask, "For which of these good works do ye stone me? Is it because "he remembered us in our low estate?" because, for our sakes, "though he was rich, he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich?" Is it because "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and died that we might live, that any are against him? Against Him! Be against the benefactor who plunged into the flood to save us from drowning! Be against him who generously paid our debt, and released us from the confinement of the dungeon, and re-

stored us to the bosom of our family! Be against the father who has laboured to train us up and provide for us I Be against the mother who bare us, and at her bosom fed us! and we should be a thousand times less infamous than we should be if we are against *him*. The Apostle Paul was not revengeful; he was the most compassionate man alive; and yet, when he came to reflect on the case, he made no

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201

scruple to say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha!"

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JUNE 15.—*I would order my cause before him.* Job xxiii. 4.

THIS shows us, First, That the worship of God is a "reasonable service." This "order" does not so much regard words as things; everything should be "done decently and in order," says the Apostle. A Christian in private devotion, before he bows before the Lord, should say to himself, What do I now most need? In what relation do I stand before God? What is my present condition? What is my office? What duties and dangers are lying before me in the course of the day, requiring his assistance?" Were we always to do this for a few moments, we should then be much less embarrassed than we often are in prayer, and be furnished with more materials. Secondly, Another part of the order of which Job speaks, which Solomon mentions, and which we should never forget, is to remember that "God is in heaven and we upon earth, and therefore let our words be few." We must never imagine that we are *heard* for "our much speaking," and using "vain repetitions, as the heathens do." Thirdly, There is another part of this order in prayer which our Saviour teaches us when he says, "Seek ye, *first*, the kingdom of God and his righteousness." *Nature* may speak in prayer, *but grace* must speak *first*. Our Lord teaches us this in his own blessed model prayer. He teaches us to say, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," before he allows us to ask for "our daily bread."

And we must never pray for other things as we pray for spiritual blessings. We cannot be too importunate with regard to the one, and we cannot be too calm and resigned, referring ourselves entirely to his wisdom and goodness, with regard to the other. Whenever we go to God, however numerous and heavy may be the burdens we feel, there are no burdens so heavy and distressing as the burden of our sins; and anxious as we may be in sickness for the recovery of our health, this is not to be compared with the earnestness with which we should inquire after the "balm in Gilead" and the "Physician there," in regard to our soul's health.

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202

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JUNE 16.—*I would fill my mouth with arguments.* Job xxiii.4.

NOT that these are necessary to excite and move a being who is love itself, and who is always more ready to hear than we are to pray; but these are proper, in order to affect and encourage us. The case is this: God speaks to us in a way most agreeable to our state and the most easy to our apprehension; and he leads us to speak to him in the same way. He must, if he addresses us, speak in human language, or he will never be understood; and we must, in speaking to him, speak in human language, for we have no other to speak in. We never need be discouraged, nor at a loss for one moment for arguments with which to fill our mouths—when we go to the throne of grace. There is not a circumstance belonging to our case, not an attribute pertaining to the Divine nature, not a promise or invitation in his word; there is not an example of his mercy and grace recorded there, but may furnish us with matter when we have to plead with him. If a beggar came to our door, we should know pretty well beforehand what arguments he would make use of—that he is more to be pitied than blamed—that he has seen much better days—that it is only a little he wants now—that he will not come again—and that he will not tell of your bounty, so as to

plague you by bringing others to call upon you. But the reverse of all this we must feel and plead when we address the God of all mercy and grace. The strongest and the sweetest arguments we can ever employ must be drawn from the mediation of him who "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," and who ascended into heaven, where he is now; and it is from him we are to derive our most available plea when we go unto God and say, Thou, Lord, hast already not "spared thine own Son, but hast freely given him up for us all; wilt thou not, with him, freely give us all things?" And is not every end that could be answered by my destitution equally and entirely answered by his precious death? Lord, I do not come to ask thee, in pardoning and saving me, to trample on thy law, or to deny thy word and thy righteousness, for "mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Here thy law is even "magnified and made honourable;" here sin is condemned while it is par-

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203

doned; and I, therefore, only plead for glory to thyself in the highest, by the extension of peace on earth and goodwill towards men. And the Saviour has thus encouraged us to plead: "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name;" nothing compared with what you ought to have asked, and compared with what you *might* have asked; but now "ask and receive, that your joy may be full." " whatsoever ye ask in my name, believing, ye shall receive."

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JUNE 17.—*And will look for him.* Isa. viii. 17.

THIS language only suits one being in the universe, namely, a Christian mourning after an absent God. It is a sad thing to be without the presence of God; but it is far worse to be insensible of our need of it. This never will be the case, never can be the case, with those who are partakers of the grace of God in truth; each of them will be disposed to say, in such a condition as this, with David, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled;" and make this re-

solution of the church their own: "I will wait upon him who hideth himself from the house of Jacob, and will look for him." And the language only suits such. If we were to ascend up into heaven, we should not hear anything compared to this; *there* they *have* found him, and "in his presence is fullness of joy;" they "behold his face in righteousness, and are satisfied." And were we to descend into hell, we should hear nothing like this. There they are saying, "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." And if we go forth and examine the thousands of our fellow-creatures around us, we should find them minding their farms and their merchandise; we should hear them saying, "Who will show us any good?" And as for the child of God, who is walking in the light of his countenance, though he desires the continuance and the increase of this, yet he properly does not use this language, he has found him whom his soul loveth. No; but it is the language of him who, after having been favoured with intercourse with God, after having seen him in his word, and enjoyed him in his ordinances, now finds himself in darkness and alone, conflicting with his numerous difficulties and dangers, and saying with the church, in the

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204

days of Jeremiah, "The comforter who should relieve my soul is removed far from me," and therefore, as it is here, "I will look for him." This desire and determination to seek after God's presence arises from three causes. First, it proceeds from their *new nature*; persons will desire according to their convictions and their disposition; being born of God, the believer naturally aspires towards him, and passing by those creatures which attract and detain others, he says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Secondly, This desire to find God arises from *experience*. When they first sought after God, they felt their need of him but then they had never tasted that he was gracious—*now* they have; and there is nothing they remember more vividly when they look back,

than places, and seasons, and exercises, made sacred by their communion with God, and during which they have said—

“While such a scene of sacred joy  
Our raptured eyes and souls employ,  
Here we could sit and gaze away  
A long, an everlasting day.”

Thirdly, It arises from a *consciousness of their dependence upon him*. They feel that all their sufficiency is of God. They know that he does not stand in need of them; but they know that “without him they can *do nothing*,” that they *are* nothing, that “in him they live, move, and have their being.” I need his presence, therefore, says the Christian, every moment. I want continually the joy of his salvation, the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and the upholding of his free Spirit. I cannot stand longer than he upholds me, I cannot walk beyond where he leads me, I cannot see farther than he enlightens me, I cannot act but as he strengthens me, I cannot live but as he enlivens me. He is “all and in all” to my soul. What wonder, under his absence, he should make this resolution his own, and say, “I will wait upon him that hideth himself from the house of Jacob, and will look for him.”

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JUNE 18.—*I will hear what God the Lord will speak.*  
Psa. lxxxv. 8.

IN general a Christian wishes to know the Divine pleasure

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205

concerning him. Hence the prayer of Saul of Tarsus when he was converted, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” and the resolution of the Psalmist here is to the same intent, “I will hear what God the Lord will speak,” in his providence, in his word, concerning me. How do I appear in his eyes? “It is a light thing to be judged of man’s judgment; he that judgeth me is the Lord.” What does he think of me? What does he say concerning me? As Job says, “I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.” Not

only in reference to the path of providence and duty, but also in answer to prayer. A good man will not be satisfied with the mere performance of the duty, but will look after the result of it. He is unwilling to depart without a reply, and is anxious to know whether the answer will be repulsive or favourable. How little importance do many attach to prayer, and how regardless they are of God's answer to it! What should we think of a husbandman who, after having sown the seed, would never walk forth to look after it; to see "first the blade; then the ear; then the full corn in the ear;" should we not deem this indifference culpable? Or what should we think of a person who, if he knocked at our door, would not wait or even look back to see if the door were opened? Should we not consider this a mere insult? And is it not thus with regard to many of our prayers? Do we not in effect mock God when we call his attention to our wants and miseries, when at the same time we do not regard his voice or his influences? Moses said, "The Lord heard me at that time also;" and it shows us how he remarked, in looking back upon his history, places and seasons where God heard his supplication. And if we also observe these things, we shall not fail to discover that this is the way to have our gratitude excited and our confidence strengthened. Let us, therefore, ascertain how God has answered us in such and such instances, and what he is now saying in answer to our requests; and then we shall also say with the Psalmist, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications; because he hath inclined his ear unto me: therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

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206

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JUNE 19.—*I drew them.* Hos. xi. 4.

THE form of divine goodness here declared is attraction; and we may observe that the attraction is *to* God, as well as *by* him. This is implied in the very word itself, "*I drew them.*" In pushing and driving we urge anything

from us; but in drawing, we bring it towards us. And this is the aim of God in all his dispensations; it is to bring us to himself. This aim regards *the state we are previously in*—a state of *distance* and *alienation* from him. Man is a fallen creature, and his fall consists in his departure from the holy and blessed God; and, therefore he now lives without God in the world. God is not in all his thoughts; and when God would enter them, he is repelled as an invader and intruder, and he says unto God, “Depart from me, I desire not a knowledge of thy ways.” As in this state we see our *sin*, so we equally see our *misery*; for with God is the fountain of life, and we can only be happy in proportion as we are with him. Herein appears the prerogative of man—that, of all the creatures in this lower world he alone was made capable of knowing and enjoying God, and was intended for it; and consequently he is necessarily miserable without it. Though he is now in a lapsed condition, he retains the same essential relation to God as his supreme good; and in the absence of God, therefore, he goes to creatures to supply his place, but in vain; they can afford him no satisfaction; in the midst of his sufficiency he is in straits. But though these things cannot satisfy the mind, they can engross it; and it is by these diversions that he secures anything like inward peace. This peace, however, is only a delusion that can continue only for his life; and what is our life? a vapour, that appeareth for a moment, and then vanisheth away. How dreadful it is to think of entering into a future state with our present passions and appetites. Oh, what a mercy to be drawn to God; drawn to his word; drawn to his house; drawn to his people; drawn to his throne; drawn to his table; drawn to the cross of his Son; that place of appointed interview, and peace, and friendship, and intercourse between the sinner and God; for God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

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JUNE 20.—*I drew them with the CORDS OF A MAN with BANDS OF LOVE.* Hos. xi. 4.

OBSERVE the MANNER in which this attraction is accomplished. "I drew them with the cords of a man," that is, *rationally*; and hence religion is called a "reasonable service," and every Christian is required to "be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him." We cannot convince, inform, or reason with a beast. A beast is inaccessible to argument and motive. We therefore coerce a beast. But it is otherwise with a man. When we wish to influence a man we reason with him—we inform his mind—we argue and persuade. This is precisely the manner in which God deals with us; and therefore the Apostle says that "he works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure;" not to do without being willing; that would be tyranny and force; but to will and to do—and what we do willingly we do with pleasure. Though it will be readily conceded that there is a Divine energy employed in the conversion of a sinner, yet it is always employed in a way suited to the nature of the being on whom it is exerted; and this being is a rational being. God always begins therefore by opening the eyes of our understanding, by shining into our hearts—"I drew them with bands of love," that is, *affectionately*. Now there is something very winning and attractive in love; indeed, there is nothing else that can draw others towards us. Power may cause a man to be dreaded—wisdom may cause him to be feared—wealth may cause him to be envied—but it is love alone that can cause him to be loved. Therefore, says Solomon, "He that would have friends must show himself friendly." Go and tell another that he ought to love you—command him to love you—reproach and threaten if he do not love you. Have you succeeded? Why you are farther off than ever. No, there is no way of being loved but by appearing lovely; no way of being loved but by possessing and displaying tenderness and benevolence, and a concern for others. Dr. Doddridge had a lovely daughter, of whom he was deprived at the early age of nine years. One day, when he said to her,

“My dear, how is it that everybody seems to love you?” she answered, “I do not know, papa, unless it is that I

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208

love everybody.” Now this was not only a striking answer, but it was really a philosophical one; it accords with the sentiments of Seneca, who has given us a love charm; and what was the recipe? Why, he says, “Love, in order to be loved.” No being ever yet drew another to him by a display of authority and terror. God himself never drew one soul to him by the law, which is only a system of authority and terror, but by the gospel, which is his scheme of mercy and grace. The whole of Christianity may be considered as an infinite expediency, devised by the only wise God, to dispossess our minds of bad and unworthy thoughts of him, and to fix in our trembling bosoms confidence, which should be the principle of our return to him; and thus to bring us to him is the simple design of the gospel. And Paul says, “Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope.” And, says Peter, “God raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.”

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JUNE 21.—*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*  
Gal. ii. 16.

THERE are truths which are essential to religion, and which, so to speak, regard not the form of the windows and of the doorway, but the foundation itself, which regard not the railings and the ornaments of the bridge, but the keystone; which regard not those members of the body which may be injured or removed, while vitality remains, but the head, the breast, and the lungs. Such a doctrine is the fall of man, by which the human race are now all found in a state

of guilt and depravity and helplessness. Such is the doctrine of justification by faith, the article, as Luther observes, by which a church stands or falls. And such is the doctrine in these words, which is most fully and clearly set forth in the New Testament, and particularly in this Epistle and in the Epistle to the Romans. "Therein," says the

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209

Apostle, speaking of the gospel, "is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith." "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." But now the righteousness of God without the law, that is, without the works of the law, is manifest, being witnessed by the law (that is, Moses) and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, which is unto ail and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "By him, therefore," said Peter to the Jews, "all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses;" and, says Paul, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth:"—"righteousness," by rendering the obedience the law demands, and by suffering the penalty it denounces; for the penalty is as righteous and as divine as the precept. It is founded in eternal rectitude. God could no more dispense with it than he could dispense with eternal rectitude; that is, do wrong. But, "is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." This and this only is the way in which sinners can return to God, and become one with him again. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." And how? "In Christ Jesus. Ye who were sometimes afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the

forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." All who believe in Jesus are interested in this inestimable blessing, and should rejoice in it. Following the example of the church in the days of Isaiah, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed, me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself

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210

with her jewels." Why should we be so affected with our external circumstances, however trying they may be? As subjects of this grace and the heirs of that glory which shall be revealed in us, we should

"Sing of his lore who sought us,  
When far away from God,  
The precious price that bought us  
Was his atoning blood."

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JUNE 22.—*Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house.* Luke xix. 5.

BEHOLD the Saviour, how he "prevents us with the blessings of his goodness." Behold what extensive knowledge he possesses. He knew the name of this individual, he knew his abode. With what authority and freedom, condescension and kindness, he speaks! "To-day I must abide at thy house." Thus not only indulging his simple desire in seeing him, but giving him an opportunity to enjoy his presence and to hold conversation with him. What is all this to us? It is much every way. First, That Jesus *now comes and, asks for admission.* He comes and offers himself in his people, and he that receiveth them receiveth him. He comes now in his word, which we have in our own language and in our hands. He comes in the public ministry, in the preaching of the gospel. He comes and stands before us with love in his eyes, with compassion in

his heart, with salvation in his hands, that we may hear and receive him. He urges this upon us by the dispensations of his providence, by a thousand kindnesses, by personal and relative affliction, by the death of relations, by the convictions of conscience, and by the operations of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, *It becomes us to receive him*. When he thus comes and invites himself he deserves to be entertained by us. Consider his *dignity and greatness*. The most magnificent titles become him. He said himself, "A greater than Solomon is here. Here is one greater than the temple." Fine language for a mere man to make use of! He is greater than angels. As much above angels as he is above man, as also "above every name that is named, not only in this world but in that which is to come." Consider *his proprietary in us*. He is the lawful owner of the house, and it was designed

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211

for him, originally prepared for him. Every other possessor is an intruder, an usurper. Let us consider our *need of Mm*. What are any without him but wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked—patients without a physician—wanderers without a guide—debtors without a surety. "He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Let us consider the *blessings* he brings. When he enters salvation comes to the soul—a free, full, and everlasting salvation. "There is salvation in none other." but with him is "plenteous redemption." "To as many as received him gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." In receiving him we receive all, and are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him." Obed-edom received the ark under his roof, and God "blessed the house of Obed-edom for the ark's sake." Upon which Mr. Henry remarks that the ark is a guest that always pays well for entertainment; and surely it is much more the case here. If he be received as a guest, he will bring all his entertainment along with him.

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JUNE 23.—*He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.* Luke xix. 6.

ZACCHEUS was filled with astonishment and surprise at such unlooked-for notice and address. But this was not all. This voice, this look, was the voice and look of the Master of mind, the Sovereign of hearts, which produced in him an immediate change, of which he gave most abundant and convincing proofs. "He made haste, and came down and received him joyfully." And we must receive him as Zaccheus did—that is, we must receive him with alacrity, with humility, and with pleasure. He "made haste." He did not yield to a spirit of procrastination. There was nothing in him like Felix, who was temporarily affected by Paul's preaching, and said, "Go thy way for this time; at a more convenient season I will send for thee,"—no, but without excuse, without a moment's delay, "he made haste to receive him." So David

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212

—"I made haste and delayed not," and "turned my feet unto thy testimonies." The King's business requires haste. Zaccheus made haste and *came down*, and what he did *actually* we must do *morally*. Many have been humbled who are not humble, and are as proud as they are poor. Naaman was one of these; he would not "come down" when Elisha sent a messenger to bid him "go and wash in Jordan and be clean." He was wroth, and went away; he could not come down. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." He was remonstrated with, and advised by one of his attendants, and subsequently "came down "to the waters of Jordan, in which he dipped himself seven times, according to the saying of the man of God, "and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." The Jews would not "come down," they were "ignorant of God's righteousness, and went about to establish their own righteousness," and therefore they submitted not themselves "to the

righteousness which is of God." How many are there in the same condition! they will not "come down" from their legal dependencies, high thoughts, exalted imaginings, their proud reasonings, and their creature dependencies so as to deny themselves and take up the cross, so as to be willing to be wise in another's wisdom, strong in another's strength, righteous in another's righteousness, so as to give all the glory of their salvation undividedly to the "praise of the glory of his grace," to acknowledge that they live entirely on alms—to come to him not to buy, but to beg, and if to buy, without money and without price.

"It is enough, my All in all,  
At thy clear feet to lie;  
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,  
And none can climb more high."

He received *him joyfully*; that is, he entertained him with the most cheerful hospitality, knowing that the obligation was all on his side. Many of the Jews were ready to exclaim, Ah! you will pay dear for your curiosity by taking in such a leader, with all his herd of followers; but he looked upon this as the happiest day of his life, and only grieved

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213

that he did not come sooner, and that he was to depart so soon. But though the Saviour departed, as to his bodily-presence, the spiritual blessings which he had to bestow were to abide, and did "abide" with him for ever. For Zaccheus received him not only into his house, but into his heart—into all the powers of his soul, as the "unspeakable gift," and there we ought to receive him. The gospel is not only a "faithful saying," but it is "worthy of all acceptance," and can never be duly received unless it awaken up sentiments and desires such as nothing else can engender. "Blessed," says David, "are the people who know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance."

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JUNE 24.—*Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

HERE is a combination of Deity and humanity. Such an union is unparalleled in the annals of the whole universe. It is not necessary to prove that the Saviour was really a man. Those who in the beginning of the gospel day, under the notion of doing him honour, contended that his flesh was a mere phantom, and that it was a corporeal *appearance* only, and not a reality, have long ago disappeared. John much opposed them, and we may observe in his writings how much stress he lays on our believing that he is come in the flesh, that is, that he was really incarnate. This we fully admit; we know that “a body “was “prepared him.” We know that he “took upon him the nature of the seed of Abraham;” that because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that “he increased in wisdom,” as well as “in stature;” that he had all the innocent infirmities of our nature; that he hungered, and thirsted, and wept and slept, and groaned in spirit; and yet we have as much reason from the Scriptures to believe his Deity as to believe his humanity. The conclusion is undeniable; unless it is allowed that the sacred writers wrote in order to perplex and puzzle, or to lead astray, or, at least, that they should not be understood by the common people and unlettered. For continually, and without any reserve, they ascribe to

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214

him the most *magnificent titles* to be found within the compass of language. They ascribe to him *attributes* which Deity only can possess—they ascribe to him homage which Deity alone can claim and justify. The union, therefore, is indispensably necessary in order to our understanding and explaining Scripture. We find things said of him which do not agree with him as man, and we find things said of him which do not agree with him as God. Paul says to the elders of Ephesus, “Feed the flock of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.” He that is Divine cannot bleed, and he that bleeds cannot be Di-

vine, but there may be a union of Deity, and humanity in his wonderful person. And this is the case. John, in the beginning of his Gospel, says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." And yet, says he, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And Isaiah thus speaks of him; "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Here we have time and eternity blended, the finite and the infinite, the "Child" and the "Mighty God," the "Son" and the "Everlasting Father." Oh! how can these things be? There is the mystery. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

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JUNE 25.—*The word of the Lord was* PRECIOUS.  
1 Sam. iii. 1.

"Precious|" means valuable, costly, something of worth and importance. The preciousness of a thing is very distinguishable from the truth of it. Nothing can, indeed, be valuable and important that is not true; but a thing may be true without being valuable and important; but

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215

here both the truthfulness and the preciousness of the gospel are conjoined. According to the word of the Apostle, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This may be inferred not only from the Author, but from the design. What is the design of the word of God, but the restoration of man from all the effects of moral evil,

and placing him in a condition superior to that in which he was originally created? "These things are written," says the Apostle, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." Here the mighty questions are answered—What must I do to be saved? "How shall I come before the Lord, and bow before the High God?" The most precious book in the world to me ought to be that which contains "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;" and this volume does contain it. We are commanded to "search the Scriptures," for in them we think we have eternal life, and they are they which testify of him. The heathen knew something of the Pall: they must have felt the effects of it in the troubles of life—in the uneasiness of conscience—in the discord of their passions—in the dread of futurity—and in what the Apostle Paul calls their "subjection all their life to bondage through fear of death."—We know that they did try to obtain relief; but they knew nothing of the "balm in Gilead" and the "Physician there;" they were "without Christ," and therefore they were "without hope, and without God in the world." O, how precious is one declaration of this book—the testimony of John. "We have known, and believe," says he, "the love he hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." How precious is it to have a standard of doctrine with regard to our belief; so that if we feel perplexities—and perplexities there needs will be on such a subject—we may call in the judgment of God the Father himself. How satisfactory is it to have a rule of duty with regard to our conduct. How wretched we must feel if we had been left to conjecture what God would have us do, and how he would have us walk. But this is not our case; he hath shown us what is good; he has told us

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216

what he requires of us; he has furnished us with information, and this information is in proportion to the importance of the thing. As to matters of moment, here everything

is so legibly inscribed, that "he may run that reads it." Where information is necessary to us, there the light of day is thrown upon the subject; where additional information would only amuse us, and draw us off from the "one thing needful," there the Scripture becomes silent as death and dark as the grave. And is not this an excellency? Thus the Bible teaches us by what it conceals as well as by what it reveals. Just as Lord Bacon observes, "The shade of the sun on the sun-dial serves to show the hour as well as the sunshine." And how advantageous is it to have, also, a manual of piety—a *vade mecum* of devotion, with everything comprised in it that is necessary to life, and in so small a compass that we can carry it conveniently along with us. Ah, says Solomon, take this book, "bind it about thy neck, write it upon the tablet of thine heart; that where thou goest it may lead thee, and where thou sleepest it may keep thee, and where thou walkest it may walk with thee."

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JUNE 26.—*The word of the Lord was precious* IN THOSE DAYS. I Sam. iii. 1.

WE may consider Samuel as one of the finest characters recorded, in all history. Here we have his birth, his dedication to God, his employment in the temple, and his call to the prophetic office. Here we notice the character of the period in which the vision came. The days were evil—profligacy had invaded the sanctuary of God—the priestly office was prostituted to the vilest of purposes, so that men "despised the offering of the Lord;" "and the word of the Lord was precious in those days." Here we have the *veracity* and the *excellency* of divine revelation. "The word of God" was "precious," and also the season of its preciousness "in those days." The word of God would be "precious" in itself, if no one ever regarded it; just as the jewel is equally valuable, though the swine trample it under its hoofs. But it is with the word as it is with the Author of it, "to them that believe, *he* is precious," and to them that believe *it*, it also

217

is precious. Good men have always so regarded it. Job said, "I esteem the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food;" and David says, "More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold." But there are seasons in which the word of the Lord is particularly precious. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." What days? First, *The days of destitution*. Such were the days of Samuel. This was the case in after times with the church. We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet." This was implied in the *prophecy*, "Thy teachers shall not be removed into a corner any more." It is expressed in the *threatening*, "Behold the days shall come when they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it." How precious was the word of the Lord in the days of King Josiah, who had but once seen a copy of the law in his life; and when a copy was found in the temple, he ordered it to be read, and wept again and again. How precious were the Scriptures before their translation. How many were they to whom they were inaccessible. It was like a spring shut up—a fountain sealed. And after its translation, how precious was it, owing to the trouble and expense of transcription, before the art of printing. In the days of Henry the Eighth, and of his bigoted and persecuting daughter, Queen Mary, when by the former its use was partially, and by the other totally, prohibited; and in the days of Elizabeth, so precious and scarce was the word of God, that a large Bible was ordered to be chained to a ledge in the aisle of every parish church; and in later days, when, unless by stealth and in concealment, and at night, the people could only hear from their persecuted teachers the joyful sound. And it was no uncommon thing at the time of the formation of the Bible Society, for several families to possess one Bible as their common joint property, each family having the use of it for a week or a month successively. There may be something like those days of destitution in some individuals now. They may be produced by accidents, by disease, by deafness. "O," said one who was seen committing the Scriptures to memory, "I am

making provision for a dark day, that when I can no longer read, in the multitude of my thoughts I shall have comfort left to my soul." We all know the value of a thing by the

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218

want of it. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." What days? *The days of conviction*. When, by some influence, or some sermon, or by some providence, the carnal heart was broken up. When some have said—

"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace that fear relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed."

How precious was the word of the Lord then. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." What days? *Days of affliction*. This is my comfort; in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days." What days? *Dying days*. These we have not yet experienced, but we must experience them. What was it comforted the saints while passing through the valley of the shadow of death? The blessed gospel of salvation; that taught them that "to die is gain," and enabled them to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

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JUNE 27.—*For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found. Psa. xxxiii. 6.*

HERE is an encouragement to hope. It assails despair by an assurance that "the Lord may be found." "We are saved by hope." We fell originally by the loss of confidence in God, and we can only rise by the renewal of that confidence in him. The very first step in the return of a sinner to God, conscious of his guilt and desert, must be a persuasion that "with the Lord there is mercy;" that "with him there is plenteous redemption." And what a foundation is laid for this hope in the "*word of the truth of the gospel*," the word of salvation, the design of which is, that, "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures,

we might have hope." What a foundation is laid in the character given of *God himself*—"A God hearing prayer;" "The Father of mercies and the God of all grace;" "The God of all comfort;" "The God of peace." What a foundation is laid in the *provision* which he has made. He has "devised means that his banished ones may not be expelled from him," and harmonised the exercise of mercy with the

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219

claims of justice. He has delivered his own Son "for our offences, and raised him again for our justification." "He has raised him from the dead, and given him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God." Thus every hindrance to our return is removed. Thus the law is fulfilled and made honourable. Thus the truth of God remains inviolate; thus he is the "just God and a Saviour;" thus he is just in "justifying the ungodly;" thus "he is faithful and just in forgiving our sins, and in cleansing us from all unrighteousness." And what can the blessed God consistently withhold now, after what he has conferred upon us. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." What a foundation is laid in his *invitations*—"Look unto me and be ye saved;" "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" "and him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." What a foundation is laid in *the promises*—"Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." What a foundation is laid in *his performances*—"He has not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain;" and he has never repulsed any returning sinner, however vile and wretched, because of the number and heinousness of his offences. "Look," says he, "at Manasseh, an idolator, a necromancer, and a murderer, who made the streets of Jerusalem to run down with blood," he

sought the Lord, and he was heard, and knew the Lord; and Saul of Tarsus, whose blasphemy and ferocity against the church of God was such, that he seemed beyond the possibility of being reclaimed. Yet, says he, "I obtained mercy," "that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." As much as to say, "Let any one despair now, if he can." How encouraging is all this. *Impossibility* will *sometimes* move people, and if probability will *commonly* move them, how much more will actual *certainty* influence them, when the prize is nothing less than

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220

the possession of God—the God of all grace and glory. It is thus we are encouraged to "seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near."

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JUNE 28.—*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.* Isa. lv. 6.

WE may consider these words as a security from presumption, as well as an antidote to despair. They plainly hint that, though God *is* to be found, he is not *always* to be found. The awful decision of Solomon may be here appealed to: "They shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me;" "for that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord." How is this intimation to be understood? First and principally, it regards *the difference between time and eternity*. The one is compared in the Scriptures to a *way*, and the other to an *end*; the one to *seed time*, the other to *harvest*; and the Apostle says, "God is not mocked! Whatsoever a man soweth shall he also reap; for he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." It is upon this principle Solomon says, "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest."

*There is no throne of grace in hell.* But there is an inferior illustration of this principle to be found even with regards *the present life itself.* In this view, what a period is *youth!* Then the body enjoys its health and strength, the mind its activity and sprightliness, the memory its retention, the affections their tenderness, the conscience its sensibility. Note for the most part, they are free from the cares which, if they live, will embarrass, and the troubles which will vex them in their future life. Everything, therefore, unites to call upon them to “remember now their Creator,” and to “seek the Lord” “in the days of their youth.” Hence God says, “they that seek me early shall find me.” So shall others seek him; but there must be an emphasis in the promise; and the meaning is, that if others attain the same *things*, they will not attain to them in the same *mea-*

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221

*sure* and *degree*, while there are *many* things which they *never* can attain if they seek him later, for there are many honours, many pleasures, many opportunities for usefulness, which are peculiar to those who seek and serve the Lord in their youth. What a period, in this view, is the *Sabbath.* How many have sought and found the Lord *then*—a day for the soul, a day for eternity, a day for God: a day in which we are drawn back from the world’s concerns, and have an opportunity more expressly to wait upon God. Much has been said, and much improperly said, of a day of grace. And though while there is life there is hope, for

“Life is the time to serve the Lord,  
The time to ensure the great reward,  
And while the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return,”

yet it must be allowed that there are periods of a more propitious nature than others, when the attention is excited, the heart softened, and the conscience roused. Such is the season of *affliction.* Then not only the *word* of God, but the *providence* of God, says, “Call upon me in the day of trouble.” This is the *design* of the trouble, as

it is also the *tendency* of it. We naturally seek assistance when we are in straits and difficulties. God therefore says, "I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge me and *seek* me, for in their *affliction they will seek me early.*" Lastly, There are some who have sought and found the Lord in the highest and most exalted manner; all, indeed, who really seek him find him here; but not according to David, when he said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake up in thy likeness." Oh, there are many who have realised this. They sought him here on earth, and now they serve him in heaven, and they see his face, and they wear his name upon their foreheads.

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JUNE 29.—*Arise, he calleth thee.* Mark x. 49.

WHEN our Saviour was passing along the road, a blind man who sat by the wayside begging cried out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me." And he

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222

stood still, and commanded him to be brought; and the multitude then said to the man, "Arise, he calleth thee." It is just the same with regard to many things now. He is thus calling many now. A season of affliction is a time in which he may be now, as he often has been, found. And how concerned we should be not to suffer such a season to pass unseized and unimproved. Do we feel our purposes broken off? even the thoughts of our hearts, and all our worldly schemes laid bare? We are thus addressed: "Arise, he calleth thee;" and by these things he bids us to arise and depart hence, to turn from the world, which is vanity and vexation of spirit, and seek "a better, even a heavenly country;" and seek to know that we have in ourselves "a better and an enduring substance." When invaded by sickness, it is still, "Arise, he calleth thee," for by this messenger of mortality he says, "now you see there is but a step betwixt you and death;" now "the Judge standeth at the door;" or when bereaved of be-

loved connections, these bereaving providences say to us, "Arise, he calleth thee." Yes, he now says:

"Why should this earth delight you so,  
Why should you fix your eyes  
On these low grounds where sorrows grow,  
And every pleasure dies?"

When these are saying to us, "You see your idol now, what can it do for you?" then may we say, "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee." And when we see Christians supported under their trials, that they are happy without those things after which the multitude are so eagerly pursuing; that while others are saying, "Who will show us any good?" they have found it, and have acquainted themselves with God, and are at peace—by these we are also addressed, "Arise, he calleth thee." Let these, he in affect says, let these be instances and examples of my sustaining and supporting grace, to excite and encourage you. O when we are alone, when God comes to us, as he did to Adam, "in the cool of the day;" when our heart, by these trials, is softened, and when powerfully impressed by the word we have been hearing, why then are we also thus addressed: "Arise, he calleth

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223

thee." O then may we say, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." "Lord, I am thine, save me."

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JUNE 30.—*Will he plead against me with his great power?*  
Job xxiii. 6.

HE might rightly do it. We deserve it. Prom hence we learn, First, That the power of God is *great*, a truth of which we need not to be informed, for who is there that cannot say, with David, "Once have I heard this, yea twice, that power belongeth unto God?" The Apostles' Creed begins with this: "I believe in God, the Father ALMIGHTY, maker of heaven and earth." This is much easier said than realised. And he not only displayed his almightiness in *making* heaven and earth, but in the manner

in which he did it. With what infinite ease! without any exertion! with his word! "He spake, and it was done; he *commanded*, and it stood fast." And how are all things upholden? He "hangs the earth upon nothing." It performs its annual and diurnal course. Why? "He upholds all things by the *word of his power*. He made iron to swim, the flames to refuse to scorch or even to produce the smell of fire on the hair of the three Hebrew children. "Why, then, should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" He can raise the dead with infinitely greater ease than we can awake the most lively creature. What, then, must it be to plead against a man with his great power? Secondly, While the greatness of Jehovah's power is a tremendous thought if we view it abstractedly, it suggests that the power of God *is engaged in behalf of his people*. We may view it as belonging to our Friend and Father, and as under the direction of his mercy and grace. Will he employ his great power against us? No! Oh, the blessedness of having this power employed for us. It is our most delightful resource to know that "nothing is too hard for the Lord," and that he will do all things for us. Oh, it is indeed delightful to hold communion with the attributes of God; when I am in perplexity, to think of his wisdom and guidance; when I feel my unworthiness, to think of his mercy and grace to pardon and renew me; when I feel my weakness, to

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224

think of his all-sufficiency, and to know that "in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." That, instead of his pleading against me with his great power, he is saying to me, "Let him take hold of my strength,"—let the ivy cling to the tree and ascend. Thirdly, Let us consider how *dreadful* it must be for God to plead against a man with his great power. He pleaded with his great power against the mighty angels who sinned, the least of whom could wield those elements and lay creation, if allowed, waste in a moment. He pleaded against "the old world" with "his great power," and drowned it with a flood. He "pleaded

against" Pharaoh with "his great power," and he sank with his hosts like lead in the mighty waters. "And," says Job, "thine eyes are upon me, and I am not"—a look annihilates; one glance by and bye, and "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up."

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JULY 1.—*But he would put strength in me.*  
Job xxiii. 6.

WE are altogether nothing without him, and "without him we can do nothing." He will therefore put strength in us for the *performance of duty*, and our work is enough to discourage us, for it looks fitter for an angel than for a feeble man, unless we look to him whose strength can be made perfect in our weakness. He will put strength in us to *enable us to suffer*, and we shall never in "patience possess our souls," we shall never endure so as to "glorify God in the fires," so as to do honour to our religion, and recommend the gospel to all around us by its influence, but as he stands by us. As was the case with Paul, he mentions a sad story to Timothy. When he had appealed to Cæsar, and had to appear before that arch-tyrant Nero, he says, "At my first answer no man stood with me. I pray God it may not be laid to their charge. But nevertheless," says he, "the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me." Whoever withdraws from us, therefore, he will be with us; and a very present help, an all-sufficient help, in the time of trouble. Paul therefore says, "There has no temptation

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225

befallen you but such as is common to men; but God is righteous, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, and will with every temptation make away also for you to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." without removing our affliction God can afford us an increasing supply of his Holy Spirit to render us adequate to our duty. He will "put strength in us" *to make us equal to our*

*enemies*. Numerous and mighty and subtle as they are, yet “greater is he that is with us, than all they that are in the world;” “If God be with us who can be against us.” He will put strength in us to enable us to *pursue our Christian course*, or we should immediately drawback, unto perdition. But “the righteous,” says he, “shall hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger.” We need not be afraid, therefore, when we feel our weakness, for when we are weak then are we strong; and we shall be able to say, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” We have *both* in him; yea, we have everything in him. Unless Christ be all in all to us, he will be nothing at all to us. As our justification depends upon the Saviour’s righteousness, so our sanctification depends upon the Saviour’s support. And as we will not dare when we appear before God to make mention of our righteousness, so neither will we go forth in our own strength *now*, but will say with the Psalmist, “I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.”

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JULY 2.—*This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.* Psa. cxix. 50.

OBSERVE the season here referred to—days of affliction. Who is free from affliction? “Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,” and Christians experience trials in common with others. Moses chose to “suffer affliction with the people of God.” One is saying, “My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart;” another is bereaved of his connections, and is saying, “Lovers and friends hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.” The eye of another rests upon the shadow of death, and under the influence of a noxious disease is saying, “I shall behold men no more with the inhabitants

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226

of the earth.” Observe, then, *a source of comfort*, “This is my comfort,” “Thy word hath quickened me.” In the

season of affliction what is so precious to the suffering Christian as the word of God? "Unless," says David, an old and a great sufferer, "unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction." The Scripture is never so precious as it is in the hour of trouble, and many have been there, and many are still there. This blessed book says, as its Author did, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." Its "exceeding great and precious promises" minister to our consolation and support. They bid us to be of good courage, and not yield to fear, assuring us that "as our day so shall our strength be." The "word" assures us that nothing occurs by chance, that all are the acts of heavenly arrangement—the arrangement of our Father and our Friend—that all will be well, for that all *is* well now, and that all our woes and all our mercies tend to promote our real, spiritual, and eternal welfare—"that all things work together for good to them that love God." "O," said Bolingbroke, under his affliction, "my philosophy forsakes me in my affliction." But did Sir Philip Sidney's philosophy forsake him, when, after a battle, he, having to undergo a dreadful operation, said to the surgeon, "Sir, you are come to a poor timid creature in himself, but to one who by the grace of God is raised above his own weakness, and therefore do not dishonour your art in sparing the patient." Nor did the philosophy of the church forsake her when she said, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation." There are persons that the Scriptures must comfort, or nothing can do; and yet, such is the cruelty of infidels, that they would rob these sufferers of their only comfort. The afflicted man goes to the house of God, and there finds God in his afflictions to be a refuge; and these wretches would pull down that refuge and leave him without an asylum, and his poor head bare to the pitiless storm. The widow begins to hope when she

227

reads, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them; and let thy widows trust in me." The wretched infidel comes and dashes away this only cup of consolation from her parched lips. We should never give countenance to them, but rather consider them as robbers and murderers of the worst kind.

"Should all the forms which men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I'd call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the gospel to my heart."

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JULY 3.—*Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men.*

Psalm xxxi. 19.

THE exclamation is well founded. David speaks of the grounds of God's goodness, and in order to impress his memory more, he speaks of it under the distinction of future and present, performed and promised, concealed and displayed. How great is the goodness which is *laid up* for them who fear and trust the Lord. This, indeed, is the principal part; this surpasses all representation and conception too. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Eternity will be given us to develop the glory that shall be revealed; and yet "how great is the goodness he has *wrought* for them." Though they have more in reversion, they have much in possession; though they have more in hope, they have much in hand. It is said the Jews did eat angels' food, because the manna on which they fed was not produced by human instrumentality, but created immediately in the clouds, and sent down from heaven, but—

"Never did angels taste above  
Redeeming grace and dying love."

Oh how great is his goodness! Jesus, the elder brother of the family, is ours; all creation is ours; redemption is all our own. And in our redemption by an infinite price, in our justification by a righteousness wrought out and

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228

brought in, a righteousness which is of God, in the renovation of our souls by the operation of almighty grace, in our guidance through all the intricacies of the wilderness, and in the gracious provision for our daily wants by a peculiar providence—oh! what rewards will those that fear him hereafter find! oh, what exquisite delight will belong to them, and them only! As yet, it is not day with them, but it is the dawn; and the one will infallibly bring on the other. As yet the good work is not finished in them, but it is begun. An infinite good is being wrought out in them as well as for them; and “we are confident,” says the Apostle, “of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

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JULY 4.—*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon, him the form of a servant.*  
Phil. ii. 6, 7.

HERE is a combination of grandeur and humiliation, and this may be traced through the whole of the Saviour's ministry. Nothing could have been attended with more obscurity and privation and hardship and abasement than the circumstances of his *birth*. And yet was there ever son so honoured and dignified? At the birth of what other son did the heavens assume a new star, did wise men come from the east to worship him, did the angel of the Lord descend from heaven and assure the shepherds of glad tidings of great joy which should be to all people, of “a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and goodwill towards men?” At the birth of what other child did God say, “I will shake the

heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come?" We often find him *praying*, and prayer argues an inferior nature—prayer is the exercise and expression always of dependence and indigence. But we find him also receiving adoration and prayer too without rebuke. The Apostles prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." Stephen died invoking him, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord,

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229

lay not this sin to their charge." As he came into the world, "all the angels of God," and they were commanded to do it, "worshipped him." We find him at sea; wearied nature required repose, and he was asleep even in the storm, and it required an effort of his disciples to awaken him. But he arose, and stood upon the deck, rebuked the wind and the waves, and said, "Peace, be still, and there was a great calm." Unable to pay the temple tribute, he commanded a fish to furnish it. He was hungry in the morning, and found no fruit on the fig-tree; he cursed it, and in a moment it withered away. He was thirsty when he came to the well of Samaria. He asked the woman for a draught of cold water, but he promised her the water of eternal life. When he was in the garden he was "exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" he was "sore amazed;" his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and yet there an angel ministered unto him; there he healed the ear of Malchus; there he but said to the Roman guard who came to apprehend him, "I am he," and "they went backward and fell to the ground." He was "crucified through weakness," yet at the same time what grandeur was displayed! The earth shakes; the heavens rend; the veil of the temple is rent in twain from the top to the bottom; the graves are opened; the dead are raised and appear to many in the city; the sun hides his face in darkness; the centurion watching there exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." The dying thief addresses him as if he had been upon his throne, to whom he said, "This day

thou shalt be with me in paradise." He descends into the lowest parts of the earth. He is entombed, but again the earth rends, and the angel of the Lord comes down and sits upon the stone of the sepulchre, his face like lightning, his raiment white as snow, his looks make cowards of the Roman veterans who had made the world to tremble, and they flee, and He undresses himself from his grave clothes, and folds up the napkin that was about his head, and lays it in a place by itself, and opens the door, and comes forth the "*Resurrection and the Life.*"

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230

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JULY 5.—*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.* Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

HERE is a combination of tenderness and severity, and both these opposite characteristics were continually displayed by the Saviour in all their strength in his personal ministry, and in all his dealings with men in the days of his flesh. He was at once, as the Apostle says, "a merciful and a faithful high priest." David says, referring to this combination, "Kiss the son lest he be angry, and ye perish by the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in him." It is impossible to do justice to his tenderness, and Watts says—

"His heart is made of tenderness,  
His bowels melt with love."

His love passeth knowledge. He was to come down "like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth," and did he not? It was foretold of him, "a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench till he shall bring judgment unto victory," and did he either? When he said in language as soft as the ether of

heaven, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young"—did he not this when he taught his disciples "as they were able to bear," and when he said to Peter, "Feed my lambs?" But oh, to see him as his fore-runner also describes him, "His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Observe him in dealing with the Scribes and Pharisees, and mark also that he uses no such severity with any other characters—it was only with those sanctimonious pretenders to piety, who had so deluded the common

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231

people with their pretensions that they were accustomed to say that if two persons enter heaven, one of them must be a Pharisee—"Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," "ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" John saw him in his vision as the "lion of the tribe of Judah," and also as "a lamb that had been slain." What a combination of gentleness and dreadfulness does this express. He has patience, but he does not connive at sin, and if we go forward to the last scene we shall see the heavens rolling together as a scroll, and every mountain and island moving out of its place. "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondsman, and every freeman hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne; and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

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JULY 6.—*For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.* 1 Cor i. 22, 23.

IN the beginning of the gospel we find two classes of persons, Jews and Gentiles, neither of which forsooth could find evidence enough to believe it. The Jews—O they could not believe that Jesus was Messiah, though they stood by and saw him open the eyes of the blind, and raise the dead by a single word, and in a moment; but they could believe the traditions of their elders and the stories of their rabbis—the greatest impositions on human credulity that ever were invented. Then the Greeks—O, said they, how absurd it is for persons to believe in and adore as a God one who suffered and died on the cross; at the very same time they acknowledged and adored as gods, beings whose infamous lusts and passions they allowed, as if sinning was less incompatible with divinity than suffering. It is the same now; the evidence ventured upon by men as to their everlasting all is such as they would be ashamed to act upon in the lowest concerns of life. The

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232

faith of a Christian! What does a Christian *believe* compared with the man who believes that the Scriptures are a cunningly-devised fable? It is to the *sceptic* we may plainly apply the exclamation, "O man, great is thy faith." We indeed believe difficulties, but he believes absurdities. We believe mysteries, but he swallows absolute impossibilities. O Christian, your faith does not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the word of God. Yet the wisdom of man has always been on our side. Down to this very hour, infidelity has not produced one first-rate scholar or genius. What are the names to be found in the lists of our adversaries to weigh against our Newtons, our Boyles, our Bacons, our Lockes, our Miltons, our Joneses, and numbers more. Christians can appeal to miracles numerous, performed in public, and in the presence of those who would have detected the imposture if there had been any. We can appeal to the

character of the sacred penmen, and here we say to the deist, "Were these penmen good men or bad men? You can take your choice of the alternatives, for either one will equally support our argument. If you say they were good men, how came good men to tell falsehoods, and profess that they received a communication which they never had received, and to declare, 'Thus saith the Lord,' when the Lord had not spoken? If you assert them to be bad men, how came bad men to enforce all holy tempers and conversation, and to censure and condemn themselves for ever in every line they wrote?" And if we take up the Bible and examine it internally, we shall see that it is worthy of God. When we read the Scriptures we feel the impress of the Divine agency. We are perfectly sure that whoever was the author of the book, he was a holy, a wise, and a benevolent being, who knew us perfectly, and was concerned for our welfare. And be it observed that the gospel can only impress us according to our impressions of the nature of its claims, if we receive it as human we shall naturally regard it humanly; if we receive it as Divine we shall regard it Divinely. It was thus the Thessalonians received it; and the Apostle acknowledges the consequence, "Ye received," says he, "the word of us, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

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233

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JULY 7.—*Thou hast magnified, thy word above all thy name.* Psa. cxxxviii. 2.

THAT is, above all other modes of manifesting himself; for God has displayed himself in various other ways. He has shown much of his power and his wisdom in the constitution of nature, and in the dispensations of providence; yea, and much of his goodness, too. Some contend that he has shown enough of his goodness there to answer all the purposes of religion; but very unjustly: for the display of his goodness there is often intermixed with other

effects, that more than neutralise it. We thus witness not only zephyrs, but hurricanes; not only health, but sickness; not only ease, but cholera; not only life, but death. And these awful consequences will always produce more fear in the guilty (and every mind is conscious of guilt) than the pleasing appearances will ever have power to produce hope. We see that this accords with the history of idolatry and superstition in every age of the world. It has not only been absurd and foolish, but also cruel and bloody. The character altogether upon which man must return to God as a sinner to obtain pardon and peace, is the only view we can have of God that will give us confidence and bring us to himself; namely, as the "Father of mercies" and "God of all grace;" as "ready to forgive;" as engaged to renew and sanctify us: this is only to be seen in "the face of Jesus Christ." In its influence and efficacy, God has magnified his word above all his other works, not only with regard to the illumination of the mind, or the relief of the pardoned conscience, or the setting of the man's poor heart to rest, so that he shall no longer run up and down this wide world, crying, "Who will show us any good?" but this efficiency is also seen in his moral transformation. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." And our Saviour therefore said unto the Jews, "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and life;" "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." We see that it did this on its original proclamation. We see that though Plato complained that he could not prevail upon the inhabitants of a single village to walk according to his maxims and rules,

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234

the fisherman of Galilee never complained so. Did Corinth refuse, or Home, or Thessalonica, or Ephesus? Did either or all these places refuse to receive the gospel? No. "The kingdom of God was not in word, but in power." They "received the word;" "were made free from sin, became servants to God; having their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." And the same effects arise from

the same doctrine now. For God's grace and God's truth always go together wherever the gospel is received; it comes not in word only, but, as the Apostle says, "both in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." The drunkard becomes sober; the swearer learns to fear an oath; the man who lived in chambering and wantonness no longer follows the desires of the flesh; the proud are humbled; the avaricious become liberal; and they who walked by sight walk by faith. And where the word of God is not available to renew, it restrains; where it does not sanctify, it civilizes; and it is this that humanizes mankind. We might have gone through the whole of the pagan world, and not have seen a hospital or a poor-house. It is this that softens the fierceness of the passions, and corrects the savageness of the manners of the multitude. It is this that will finally beat the sword into the ploughshare, the spear into the pruning-hook, and put an end to war. It is this that will finally banish slavery; and it is this that has raised marriage to its original institution, and, by excluding polygamy and divorce, at once reduced it to a state of purity, peace, and happiness. It is this that has raised the tone of morals amongst us, and the very vices which the most admired characters of antiquity practised and dared themselves to avow, now drive a man from the dregs of society. It is this that makes us revere the memory of a Howard or a Wilberforce, because they pitied and relieved the distressed. Thus the Scriptures have closed the numerous avenues of wretchedness, and opened to mankind scenes of comfort. What would be the state of every family and every nation, if the precepts of this book were universally obeyed, and the spirit of this book universally felt? Why, our earth would be turned into a paradise. The few words of the Apostle, "By love serve one another," were they

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235

enthroned in every heart, soon "the wilderness and the solitary place would be made glad, and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose."

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JULY 8.—*I laid meat unto them.* Hosea xi. 4.

WORDS in time vary a little in signification. The word meat is now almost exclusively applied to flesh; but in the Scriptures it means food at large. "He hath given meat to them that fear him." Meat here signifies food, and it means food for the mind. Let us therefore consider the PROVISION divine goodness has made for the relief and supply of his people. There are some who have no more regard for their souls than if they had none. To get money and spend it—to dress and adorn their bodies—to nurse them in sickness, to pamper them in health—is all their concern. But God knows the infinite value of the soul, and therefore in the gospel he "blesses us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." To show the *plenitude* and the *riches* of the gospel provision, it is represented in the Scriptures by a feast; not a common feast, but a royal feast; not a common royal feast, but the feast of a great king at the marriage of his son; and even this does not go half far enough to express the *amplitude* of the feast which the great King of heaven and earth has made to display the magnificent goodness of his heart. Therefore it is said, "In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." Our Saviour therefore mentions the *duration* of it. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." It is everlasting, not only in itself, but because it communicates immortality to those who partake it. "Your fathers," said our Saviour, "did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." As if he should say, "There is in this provision a reality, an excellency, and a satisfaction that rises above all other enjoyment. But *where is this provision found?* Where is it that our heavenly bene-

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factor has *laid* this meat unto us? Why, he has laid it unto us in the *Scriptures*. Here is a book that tells us how we may save our souls: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." And this is the main subject—"I am that bread of life." Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them;" and, says Job, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." It is laid unto us in the *preaching of the gospel*. It is the delightful office of ministers to spread this provision before us, and to invite us, or to compel us to come in, that God's house may be filled with inhabitants, and his table with guests. It is laid in *every good book* that treats on the subject, and that comes in our way. It is laid unto us *in all the means of grace*, and in *all the ordinances of religion*, and peculiarly so in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, where he is said to be made known unto us "in the breaking of bread."

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JULY. 9.—*I have broken the bands of your yoke.*  
 Lev. xxvi. 13.

THIS is exemplified with regard to the Jews when he delivered them from the bondage of Egypt; he then took off the yoke from their necks, and this is what God in his goodness does still for his people. What yoke? The yoke of *Judaism*. What a yoke were their carnal ordinances, their numberless observances, and their painful rites. The ritual of the Jew, when he came to the end of the year, had taken away one-third of his whole time. Three times a year, however remotely situated from the capital, had they to repair to Jerusalem, notwithstanding the badness of the roads or the weather, to appear before God. We know nothing of distinction of meats, further than a regard to our health, or our taste imposes; but how many were their directions and restrictions with regard to their food! and if they touched a dead body or a grave, they were shut up for days. What a number of feasts and festivals had they! What precepts had they for building, for travelling, for

ploughing, for sowing; regulations for the material and make of their garments, and they could not even cut their hair

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237

without being subject to a divine ordinance! A Jew could hardly move without violating something belonging to his religion. Its rules were so numerous, so trying, and so oppressive, that well might Peter say it was "a yoke;" "a yoke," says he, "which we nor our fathers were able to bear." No wonder that our compassionate Saviour should wish to free the Jews from it, and therefore said, "Take *my* yoke upon you, and learn of me, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." What yoke? The *yoke of Popery!* Popery is called the "son of perdition," because it is doomed to perish, and because it has occasioned the temporal and spiritual destruction of millions. It is called the "man of sin," as if it were wickedness personified; and who can be versed in the annals of Popery without seeing how it has abounded with every kind of abomination. Oh, how mysterious was the providence of God to suffer such a system as this to rise and to prevail so long, tyrannizing over and enslaving the nations of the earth! But at length came the Reformation, which broke the bands of this yoke from the neck of our forefathers, so that we are allowed to purchase, and possess, and read the Bible in our own language; so that we are at liberty to lay our hands upon the celestial volume, and to say with David, "I have taken thy testimonies as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart." What yoke? The yoke of *persecution*. The Reformation did not destroy all this. They who had shaken off the tyranny of Rome have been too eager to impose burdens on the consciences of others. How many suffered and perished by it in England and in Scotland; and many fled from it to the wilds of America. We ought to look back and to remember the former times, and to be thankful for "the revolution" which broke from us the bands of this yoke. *What yoke? The yoke of bigotry.* There will always be some difference of opinion with regard to many inferior subjects in religion; and the differ-

ence is often of little importance if it be not injurious to our spirits, if it hinder not our religious co-operation, if it does not invade our religious fellowship and intercourse. What yoke? *The yoke of legality.* "Many there are who," the Apostle says, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, are going about to establish their own righteous-

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238

ness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God." From this yoke Christ has delivered his people; "for not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us." The Gospel hath made us free indeed from this yoke. "We are not under the law, hut under grace." Let us, therefore, "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be no more entangled with the yoke of bondage." What yoke? *The yoke of ignorance.* "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Let us pray, therefore, that our knowledge of the gospel may be reduced to experience and practice, and that we may never be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. What yoke? *The yoke of sin.* This is what the Apostle calls the bondage of corruption. "And the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Let us fall in with the design of the Son of God in thus delivering us, and "serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life."

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JULY 10.—*With loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*

Jer. xxxi. 3.

THERE is everything attractive in the goodness of God, and we may observe the loving-kindness of God under four aspects, each of which is peculiarly attractive and powerful. First, It is *undeserved*; and undeserved kindness is very attractive and powerful, that is, when its recipient has no claim upon the giver, and when the boon is entirely of

pure favour. What right to support and wages has a servant who has run away from his master? What right to the protection of his sovereign has a subject who has become a rebel and a traitor? By sin we had forfeited every favour from God, and rendered ourselves unworthy of the least of all his mercies. It is therefore of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. Secondly, It is *disinterested* kindness; and this is very attractive and powerful, when it tends to the advantage of the person receiving it, and not to the profit of the

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239

giver. A perception of selfishness in the exercise of beneficence will destroy all its influence. There is very little benevolence that will bear examination. Men are perpetually looking towards their own reputation or honour; but what could God look for from us? "Can a man," says Elihu, "be profitable unto God?" "Our goodness," says David, "extendeth not to thee." God is exalted above all blessing and praise, and as he was happy without the fallen angels, so he would have been happy without us. Thirdly, It is *magnanimous*; and therefore exceedingly attractive and influential. If a man had the liberty and life of an adversary at his disposal, and he should save his life and restore his liberty, and bestow an estate upon him, surely this would be very winning; and what should we think of the wretch who would not be drawn by it to love and praise his deliverer and benefactor? "The soul," saith the Scriptures, "that sinneth shall die." We were under the law and under the curse; we were entirely in its power; and while we were waiting for condemnation, he stretched out his sceptre and said, "Touch and live." "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Hard is the heart that does not feel this. Fourthly, It is *costly and expensive kindness*; and on this account most attractive and powerful. Zeleuchus, in order to save one of his son's eyes, consented to lose one of his own; and what should we think of that son who could ever view a father so devoted to him without

emotions of attachment? But, be it observed, this was for a child. When Edward III. took Calais, he consented to spare the place on condition that six of the principal citizens should surrender themselves for execution; and would have forgot his humanity but for his queen, who threw herself at his feet, implored him, and obtained the lives of the noble victims who had offered themselves to save the lives of their fellow-citizens, their friends, their relations, their wives and their children. There cannot, however, be produced an instance in which a man has sacrificed himself knowingly for his adversary. Oh, this remains to be displayed. No, it does not—it was displayed on Calvary; and God commendeth his love towards us, “in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

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240

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”

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JULY 11.—*Seek the Lord and his strength. Seek his face continually.* 1 Chron. xvi. 11.

NOTHING shows the fallen depraved state of man more than his alienation from God, and his endeavour to live without him in the world, uninfluenced by his presence and perfections, careless of his grace, and regardless of his glory. But while this shows the *guilt* of man, it equally proves his *misery*. “They that forsake thee,” says Jeremiah, “shall perish.” We cannot do without him; with him is the fountain of life. He is the supreme good, the good of the soul, the good of eternity; it is therefore good to draw near to him. We need *pardon*, and “who can forgive sin but God only?” We need *renovation*, and he has said, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean.” “From all your idols will I cleanse you.” We need *strength*. “In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” “We are spiritually sick and dying, he bringeth to us *health and cure*.” He is all and in all.

When we are convinced of this we begin to seek him; and here we are *enjoined and encouraged to seek him*; to seek his favour, his presence, his image, his strength, his service, and to seek communion with him. To seek him in the Son of his love, in whom he is reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; to seek him in the Scriptures, at his throne, in his house, in the preaching of the word, at his table, and to seek him among his people. Now this seeking is to be *constant and repeated*; for though there is a time when we first seek God, there is no time when we may cease doing it, and therefore this injunction to “seek his face evermore.” We shall always need fresh supplies from the God of all grace, and we should pray, “Evermore give us this bread;” we should long after a fuller possession and enjoyment of God.

“Whoever says I want no more,  
Confesses he has none.”

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241

The grand evidence of a real work of grace in the soul, is “holding fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.” That which is Divine will always be durable, and that which comes from God will always lead to God. The prophet, speaking of sorrow, says, “They poured out a prayer *when thy chastening was upon them*;” and Job, speaking of a hypocrite praying, says, “Will he *always* call upon God?” There are many who seek God like persons in a storm at sea, but their devotion subsides along with the winds and the waves. The devotion of a real Christian is *aided* by external excitements, but it does not rely upon them. The devotion of a natural man is like a land-spring, depending upon the falling of the rain; but the devotion of a Christian is like a stream fed by a perpetual spring. The zeal of a natural man resembles blazing straw; the zeal of a regenerate man is like the fire on the Jewish altar, which was kindled by the breath of heaven and never went out. We should admire the goodness and condescension of God in issuing such an injunction as this; that he should make our welfare our duty, and bind a concern for our own happi-

ness upon us by a sense of authority and Divine authority. He does not command us to seek him because he needs us—no, but because we stand in need of him, and because he knows that without him we are undone for ever.

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JULY 12.—*He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.* 1 John iii. 7.

HERE the righteousness of sanctification is unquestionably intended, as in that Scripture, “The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.” The justified state of a man leads to sanctification of life; for “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away and all things have become new.” If we are justified by Christ we shall be sanctified through Christ. The *objective* grace of God in the gospel will never be abused where the *subjective* grace of God is in the heart. Of what use is it to hold these doctrines, or any other in mere credence, if it be held at the same time in “unrighteousness?” The doctrine of justification by faith is misunderstood and misrepresented by the

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242

people of the world continually. They will have it that it leads to licentiousness, and that it is unfriendly to holiness and to good works; although the very Apostle who most fully set it forth has as fully proved the contrary, declaring that “the grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world;” and hath enjoined upon all Christians, that “as he which hath called them is holy,” so are they to “be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness.” They, after all, do furnish the best proofs that these doctrines of grace are friendly to and promotive of holiness and good works. In their shops men may see the justice and the fairness of all their dealings. In their houses see the cleanliness, the order, the harmony, and the affection that is there. See how the “husband loves his wife even as himself,” and how the

wife "reverences her husband." See how the parents "train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," while the children "obey their parents in the Lord." See how masters "remember that they have a Master in heaven;" and how servants obey, and purloin not, nor answer again, that the doctrine of God our Saviour may be glorified. See how patient they are in suffering, how humble under honour, how liberal as wealth increases upon them, and so of the rest. Oh, if all Christians did thus live, reproach would soon be rolled away, our hearts would be encouraged and our hands strengthened. Let us therefore be concerned to "let our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven."

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JULY 13.—*Who knoweth what is good for man in this life?*  
Eccles. vi. 12.

MEN think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. "Vain man," says Zophar, "would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." Yet how liable is he to be deceived and deluded. How unable is he to distinguish between appearances and realities; how incapable of knowing how he is to fill and act in a new and untried condition; and even the very limited knowledge he may

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243

possess may be influenced by the strongest prejudices; it may be used and it may be misapplied, so that his ignorance may become error; and error is often worse than ignorance. How often, when we look back and examine and compare the past, do we find how different have the same things appeared to us, as they were viewed in prospect or retrospect! How often have we been mistaken both on the side of our hopes and fears! How often have we been anxious for things which have proved to us some of our severest crosses, and how eager have we been to decline other things which, after a while, we have found to be some of our chiefest and choicest mercies! How have we erred when we thought

ourselves most sure, and how have we been deceived when we were most confident! Our pains and pleasures, our hopes and disappointments, our enemies and our friends, have differed exceedingly from those we have reckoned upon when we have portrayed, these things in speculation only. Had some of our connections and some of our situations in life—yea, had the principal events which have taken place in our history been previously announced to us, should not we have exclaimed, with the unbelieving nobleman, “If the Lord should make windows in heaven might this thing be.” “The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”

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JULY 14.—*And Hazeal said, What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? 2 Kings viii. 13.*

WELL might the prophet exclaim, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself.” This fact is confirmed by all history, profane and sacred. Here is a scriptural instance. Elisha the prophet settled his countenance steadfastly on Hazeal, until he was ashamed. And Hazeal said, “Why weepeth my lord?” And he answered, “Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.” And Hazeal said, “But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” He was then sincere in these feelings, for he was a private individual; but, says Elisha,

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244

a change of condition and circumstances will produce a change of character and conduct. “The Lord hath shewed me that thou wilt be King of Syria.” And so he put off humanity, and put on the crown; becoming all that he had execrated, in the comparison, and perpetrated all the atrocities and cruelties which made the man of God mourn. Thus, how incapable are we of judging of our real character by present circumstances and appearances! how

liable to be deluded by present views and feelings! whereas new situations, and new scenes and circumstances, will materially alter our character, and induce a totally different course of action. The reference to the accounts given of the infamous Robespierre, in connection with the horrible atrocities committed during the French Revolution, may serve as a further illustration of the sentiment. This man originally seemed an amiable character: so he was deemed in all his neighbourhood. He was a civilian. He published two books, one on Electricity, the other on the Code of Criminal Jurisprudence, lamenting that it was so sanguinary, and endeavoured to ameliorate it. But the current of the Revolution laid hold of him, and the flood hurried him away, and he became the reverse of all he had appeared before. Thus we see that man is a fallen creature, and much of the effects of the fall appears in the derangement of the operations of his natural powers. So that it is undeniable that the clearest convictions of his conscience, his decision, his judgment, can be neutralized and counteracted; so that, as the heathen said, "Men see and approve things, and follow worse."

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JULY 15.—*Then, tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.*  
Acts xi. 22.

THIS little sketch of biography is very pleasing, valuable, and useful. The ancestors of Barnabas had left Judea, and had settled in the island of Cyprus, for what purposes we know not. There Barnabas was born. He was called at first *Joses*, but after his conversion to Christianity, *Barnabas*, which signifies "the son of consolation." For this

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245

change in his name, two reasons, not at all incompatible with each other, are assigned. First, *Because of his benevolent disposition*. He was a wealthy man, and had disposed of his landed property, and "brought the money and

laid it at the Apostles' feet," for the purpose of relieving the necessities and miseries of the poor and afflicted members of the church. And secondly, Because of the *distinguishing character of his preaching*, it being eminently calculated to console the people of God, and to encourage poor awakened sinners to come to Christ; and because, being full of the Holy Ghost himself, in his public ministering he always dealt much in "the comforts of the Holy Ghost." In this respect ministers often differ very considerably from each other. Some may be called "Boanerges," that is, "Sons of thunder," their ministrations being bold and striking, and very alarming to the consciences of the unconverted. Others are more gentle and persuasive, having "the tongue of the learned, that they should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Ministers should never be placed in opposition to each other, or be put in comparison with each other, thereby to inflame or blow up one pile of straw, and trample under foot another. But they should be viewed in reference to their station and circumstances, to their work, and to their adaptation. If this is always done in charity, they will be found equally respectable and worthy of regard. However they may differ in their situation, their position, their natural or acquired endowments, their gifts, or their graces, the church needs them, and can fully employ them all. Let Paul therefore plant, and Apollos water; let one "comfort the feeble-minded," another be "set for the defence of the gospel;" one lay the "foundation," and another build thereon. Each has his own proper work assigned him, and each shall have his own proper reward. It was Barnabas who introduced Paul to the disciples of Jerusalem, when they were afraid of him, and drew back as he approached them, as a number of sheep and lambs would have drawn back in a field if a wolf was approaching them; and it was not until Barnabas had convinced them of Paul's conversion that they received him into fellowship with them. From thence he was now sent on a

missionary business to the newly-planted church at Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians. It is much to be regretted that they have ever been called by any other name. And “when he was come to this city, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”

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JULY 16.—*Who when he came and had seen the grace of God.* Acts xi. 23.

THE dispositions of persons may to a very considerable extent be discovered by the objects which awaken their attention and desire, when they first enter a country, or a town, or a village. Some are immediately looking about for rural scenery, some for natural curiosities, some for modes and kinds of trade and commerce, some for public buildings and the mansions of the great and the noble, some for libraries, some for paintings and statuary. Barnabas was alive to something else. This was the *one* thing, the chief object of his solicitude and regard. He immediately looked after the cause of God, the last about which some professing Christians at this season, in their travels for health or recreation, concern themselves. In the administration of the gospel, the reception of it by those who heard it, whether it came in word only, or in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, he saw the grace of God, and was “glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” The discovery he here made is the subject of the present meditation. “He saw the grace of God.” The grace of God is a principle; how then could Barnabas see it? Seen it must be *by God*, “to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid;” and known it may be by the *individuals themselves* when they look within, and in examining themselves, become conscious of the working of their own minds. And it may be seen by *others*, and *that by its effects*, and this is the only way it can be seen. We cannot see life in itself, but we can

see the individual alive and in motion. We cannot see health in itself, but we can see the freshness and vigour of the eye, and the hue of the countenance, and the

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247

eagerness of the appetite, and the strength of the arm, and the swiftness of the foot. A tree is known not by its rind or its fibres, but by "its fruits." God says, "I will put my spirit within them." But who is to know, or who can see this? Let us read on. "And I will cause them to walk in my statutes, and they shall keep my judgments and do them." And this will be visible enough. "Show me thy faith," says James to the professor of religion, "without thy works; I will show thee my faith by my works." I will show thee the spring by the stream; I will show thee the sun in the shining, and I will show my creed by my conduct; I will show thee my principles by my deeds, and will "show thee my faith by my works." This was wise and well; for though it is faith, objectively and instrumentally, alone which can justify the soul, it is its practical development, that is, by works alone, that proves it to be the operation of God. God has determined to be glorified by his people in this world; therefore he has said, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise;" and "all nations shall acknowledge them that they are the seed whom the Lord hath blessed." If God's grace is to be thus visible in his people, it is necessary, therefore, that there should be something in them more than experience; though this experience in itself is invaluable, for without it there is no genuine religion. It is the inward dispositions which must satisfy our own minds that we belong to God. But there are those around us who are to be impressed, and convinced, and edified by our religion; these cannot read our hearts, but they can read our *lives*; therefore the Saviour said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

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JULY 17.—*The wrath of God.* Rom. i. 18.

IT is delightful to contemplate God's goodness, and his abundant mercy, and the exceeding riches of his grace. It is delightful to dwell on the glory and blessedness of the heavenly world. But here with Paul, who is called by Augustine the herald of grace, our reflection will turn upon the wrath of God. Observe, first, its *nature*; it is difficult to

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248

speak of wrath in connection with God. Among men it is known to be a passion; it is well known also seldom to be a righteous passion. But it is not a passion in God. "Fury is not in me." "Wrath" in him is a principle; in him it is the love of order, a determination to maintain equity, a resolution to punish sin. It results, therefore, from the perfection of his nature, and is not the effect of malignity but the conviction of judgment. The legislator is not angry when he promulgates his laws, the judge is not under the influence of passion when he pronounces sentence of death on the criminal. Tet it does him honour when he does it with tears. But the case is this: that society cannot be maintained without laws, and laws are nothing without penalties and sanctions. In all well-ordered countries crime is punished and must be punished; and can it escape in the empire of a Being "who is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works?" It is essential to the very character of God; we could not esteem him nor love him if we supposed that he viewed equally truth and lies, honesty and injustice, cruelty and benevolence. An earthly magistrate would not be "a praise to them that do well," nor "a terror to evil doers," if, when he had before him the incendiary who had burned down the house of one, and the murderer who had killed the child of another, he would smile and say, This does not concern me; go in peace. God is the dictator of the universe, and he is of "purer eyes than to behold iniquity." "The wicked," he says, "shall not stand in my sight; I hate all workers of iniquity." Therefore he has pronounced in the Scriptures a peculiar curse upon the man who presumes upon impunity. "If it come

to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst, the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." So much for the nature of this wrath. Secondly, The *dreadfulness* of it. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." If the wrath of a king be, as Solomon says, as the roaring of a lion, what must the wrath of God be? Who knoweth the power of his anger? Can

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249

the angels that sinned tell us? No, they cannot; they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." And there is as much difference between their present and future state as between imprisonment and execution. Neither can lost souls in perdition tell us the dreadfulness of Jehovah's wrath: they are yet only spirits. All the miseries that rushed into them through the body, and by the eye, the ear, and the other senses; all these parts of woe are necessarily postponed till after the resurrection, for want of a system of organization to receive them. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." In many cases the *evil* is far less than *the fear*, and when the reality comes it is found to be nothing compared with the apprehension. But *here* the reality will equal, yea will *surpass* all imagination. When one drop of his wrath has fallen upon a man judicially from God, he has been driven into despair, his soul has preferred "strangling and death rather than life." And even when a little of it has been felt by the Christian himself, under conviction of sin, he has "eaten ashes like bread;" he has "mingled his drink with weeping;" he has slept, but he has been scared with dreams and terrified with visions; he has said with David, "When I suffer thy terrors I am distracted;" he has said with Solomon, "A wounded spirit who can bear?"

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JULY 18.—*The wrath of God* is revealed from heaven. Rom. i. 18.

LET us consider *the revelation* of this wrath. It is made known in various ways. First, It is revealed to our *faith*. And this is done by the sacred Scriptures; faith sees it plainly enough in this book; there “hell is naked before it, and destruction has no covering;” there faith beholds the outer darkness, where there is “weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Those who believe this volume must admit the misery, and those who deny the misery must get rid of the volume, that is, get rid of the truth of it; before they can feel satisfaction, they must believe that this book is “a cunningly devised fable.” And who can believe that a scheme so harmonious in its parts, so

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250

sublime in its discoveries, so wise in its contrivances, so holy in its nature; breathing such a pure morality; so benevolent in its tendency, so conducive to the welfare of man individually and socially considered—a scheme preserved by Providence, established by miracles, in defence of which the best of men have died, and the wisest of men have lived—who, we repeat, can believe that all this is the offspring of a weak or wicked mind? Secondly, It is revealed to the *conscience*. Thus it is revealed in those uneasinesses and apprehensions which attend the commission of sin. It is hard, if not impossible, for an individual to deliver himself from these. And why so? We are generally referred to the apprehension of human detection and human punishment; but what are we to do when we find these apprehensions where no human detection is expected, where no human punishment is reckoned upon? Whence is it that any unusual appearance or awful occurrence gives to the mind a kind of fearful perturbation? When Joseph’s brethren were in the prison, they said one to another. We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.” What was there here to remind them of Joseph? O there

was enough. Inhumanity deserves and demands punishment, and conscience *knows* it. And when Belshazzar was at his feast and saw the fingers inscribing some characters on the ceiling, his face and his heart were filled with terror, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. Why? Since he does not understand the writing, how does he know but that it is an eulogium upon his character, or an announcement of the raising of the siege by Cyrus, or that it is a prediction of the extension of his reign? There was something *within* him foreboded of evil, and the interpreter, therefore, only came in to confirm the exposition of his own feelings. It is commonly supposed that Herod was a Sadducee; and if so, he denied the existence of spirits, and the resurrection of the dead; and yet, when he heard of the fame of Jesus, he said, "It is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works are done by him." His conscience was too strong for his creed. Thirdly, It is revealed to *our senses*. This is

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251

conclusive; all nature abounds everywhere with tokens of God's displeasure against sin. Proofs of the Deluge, for instance," are everywhere to be found. What diseases, famines, hurricanes, and earthquakes sometimes desolate our earth; sufferings of every kind have been inflicted upon individuals, upon families, and upon nations. These result by the appointment of him who has established a connection between sin and misery. And to a reflective mind there is enough to be seen to produce the conviction that there *is* such a tendency in sin to produce misery; and that, were the obstruction that now hinders the tendency in various particulars to be removed, it would work out and issue in all the dreadful things the Scriptures have made known. Thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, to our faith, to our conscience, and to our senses. And we observe that while the existence of this wrath shows the holiness and justice of God, the *revelation of it displays his mercy and, his grace*. He would not take sinners by surprise; he would not strike before he spoke.

He has revealed his wrath—why? To inflict it? No, but that we may escape it: revealed it in order to make sin terrible, that sin may produce flight, and that flight may induce us to enter the refuge of hope set before us in the gospel.

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JULY 19.—He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. Ps. lxxviii. 20.

IT is thus the church makes her boast in the Lord, and calls him *the God of salvation*; and so he is in every sense of the word; for every kind of deliverance is from him. If we have been raised from a bed of sickness and suffering, if we have been delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, if we have escaped fires and floods, it is to be ascribed alone to him to whom belong the issues from death. He is the “preserver of men,” and “in him we live, move, and have our being.” And none of these deliverances should be overlooked by us. But there is a deliverance emphatically in the Scriptures called “salvation,” “a great salvation;” “so great a salvation;” “an everlasting salvation;” a “deliverance from the wrath to come,” from the power of darkness,

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252

from the tyranny of the world, from the slavery of sin, from all its remains and consequences; “salvation with eternal glory.” And of this salvation the purpose, the plan, the execution, the application, and the consummation are of God and of grace, according to the language of the Apostle, “for by grace are ye saved through faith.” The church also exults in *God’s relation* to them. “He that is *our God*.” This every Christian can join in expressing. A child of God may be poor, but, “having nothing,” may yet possess all things; he may have no portion in this world, but he has a portion in God. Yea, and God is his portion. He can therefore say, with Jeremiah, “The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.” And every Christian has a much greater proprietary

in God than he has in anything else. Indeed, there is nothing else that is his own; neither his substance, nor his time, nor his children, nor his body, nor his soul is his own, but God *is* his own. And he may say, "God, even *our own God*, shall bless us. "As he is his *really*, so is he *eternally* and *unchangeably* his, and surviving all other dissolutions. "This God," says the church, "is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." The relation between God and his people is such as to authorize us to call him ours, and results from two things: *donation* on his side, by which in the covenant of grace he makes himself known to his people, saying, "I am thine, and all that I have is thine; and by *dedication* on our side, giving ourselves and submitting ourselves unto God, saying, "Lord, I am thine, save me; and fully surrendering ourselves up unto him to be at his disposal, inquiring, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Thus, in the prophecy of Zechariah, God says, "I will bring the third parts through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name and I will hear them. I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." God chooses them and they choose him. God loves them and they love him. God takes pleasure in them, and they rejoice and glory in him. The latter indeed is the effect of the former, and therefore it becomes the evidence, and we are to judge of the one by the other.

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JULY 20.—*God is love.* 1 John iv. 8.

WHEN John says, "God is love," he means not only that love is God's *attribute*, but that it is God's *character*. Indeed, we cannot apply the word *character* to God precisely as we do to men. Among men, character is always the consequence of habit, as habit is frequently the result of previous disposition, and always the result of repeated action. But love is God's character, inasmuch as he is pecu-

liarily distinguished by it: and that all his perfections are, so to speak, so many parts and modifications of his love. His wisdom is love devising; his power is love executing; his truth is love fulfilling; his holiness is love forbidding whatever would be injurious to us. His anger, chastising us for our faults and reducing us to reformation and repentance, is the expression of his love to us, and it is our guard and our warning, and is designed to prevent the very evil it denounces. Let us, then, illustrate the doctrine, "God is love." We observe, therefore, that God has written two huge volumes upon this subject. It would take years and ages to read them through properly: all we can do is to quote a chapter or a verse or two from each of them. The first of these volumes is *Creation*. Creation is immense; but let us fix upon our own world, with its seas and continents, and all the seasons of day and night, summer and winter, succeeding each other in a regular order, so that they are prepared to melt into each other without any disruption, and all of them bringing forward their appropriate advantages and pleasures, so that the year is crowned with his goodness. There, we may observe, it is that God intended not only to provide for our wants, but for *our gratification*; not only for our support, but our *delight*. Eating and drinking are essential to our support; but our God might have rendered our food as nauseous as medicines. He has rendered them agreeable, so that, in partaking of them, we never think of necessity, but only of gratification. The perfume and the beauty of the rose and the lily can only be designed for indulgence. The apple-tree yields a fruit important to man, but God could have caused it to yield this fruit without the precious power of blossoming; this was intended to charm us before it enriched us. But

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254

let us glance at the other volume, the volume of *Revelation*, which is much larger and nobler than the first. God has "magnified his word above all his name;" as sings good Dr. Watts—

“God, in the person of his Son, Hath all his mightiest works outdone.”

But general reflections impress little compared with facts and incidents. The one is like surveying a province from a high hill; the other is like descending into the vale and examining each particular scene or object. The author of the book of Job, “the finest drama,” says the poet-peer, “in the world,” shows his genius when he would display the perfections of God in the universe; he brings forward from the universe four or five specifications, each of which he has rendered a perfect picture; and who does not know that the very essence of poetry is to be found in the absence of abstract terms used in the blending of individualities. Upon the same principle John proceeds in this epistle. Having asserted “God is love,” he immediately mentions an instance of it, from which the angels fetch their fairest and fullest proof of our doctrine; for, says he, “herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

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JULY 21.—*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* 1 John iv. 10.

THIS fact and incident is mentioned by the Apostle in order to set forth and illustrate the doctrine that “God is love.” Let us notice, first, *the grandeur and the dearness of the gift.* He sent not an angel, but the Lord of angels; not a servant, but a Son. His “own Son,” his “only begotten Son,” the “brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.” “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” This gift insures and includes every other. “With him he will freely give us all things.” Observe, secondly, the *condition he entered.* It was not the angelic state; this would have been a mighty condescension, but he became lower; “the Word was made flesh.” Then our

Saviour appeared in the most inferior forms of our nature. He lived a life of penury, of reproach, and of persecution. Peter had a home of his own. John had a home. "The foxes have holes," says he, "the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." There are few who are destitute of *all* sympathy and compassion; but, says he, "I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." There are none who are strangers to sorrow of some kind; but he was a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." But who can imagine or describe his *inward* sufferings, when he was in the garden and was "sore amazed," and "very heavy," when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" when his sweat was "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" when he exclaimed on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And yet "it pleased the Father to bruise him," and for our sakes, and for our recovery. "God is love." Observe, thirdly, *the unworthiness of the persons for whom he was sent to suffer and to die*. Paul has been beforehand with us here. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We were all criminals, we lay entirely at his mercy, and he could both righteously and easily have bestroyed us, but he did not. Herein is love. Behold, fourthly, *the beneficial consequences of the dispensations*. "In this was manifested," says the Apostle, "the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." God, says the Saviour himself, "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." What is it to *perish*? Not the loss of worldly substance, but the loss of the soul—not *the physical* loss of the soul—not the loss of its *being*, but the loss of its *well-being*—the loss of its happiness—the loss of it for ever. And what is everlasting *life*? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And is it a light thing for my soul to be like his soul; my body to be like his body; my condition to be

like his condition? Is it a light thing that when he who is my life shall appear I shall appear with him in glory, and

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256

walk with him in white, and sit with him at his table in his kingdom, and "inherit all things?" And even now this everlasting life is begun, even *now* our emancipated spirits feel a freedom already, and "do enter into rest," and "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Fifthly, the *number of the partakers*. It is a multitude which no man can number, compared in the Scriptures to drops of morning dew, to the stars of heaven, and to the sand of the seashore. Half mankind die in a state of infancy; and surely if "of such is the kingdom of heaven," here is half of the human race mercifully disposed of already. Oh how many would appear if we knew all! for the Lord has his "hidden ones." How many have been saved since the foundation of the world! How many are the subjects of Divine grace, now passing through this vale of tears! And we are looking forward to better times, when "a nation shall be born in a day," when "he shall sprinkle many nations, when all nations shall fall down before him, and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God together."

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JULY 22.—*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* 2 Tim. i. 12.

THIS knowledge, which the Apostle possessed with regard to personal salvation, was not *miraculous*. He was "a *man in Christ*" as well as an "*Apostle of Christ*." Paul's official character did not interfere with his private character as a Christian. Neither was it the knowledge of an enthusiast, but a rational knowledge, in which the end was sought for in the use of means; a knowledge derivable from *sources open to ourselves*. It was derivable from the perfections of God, from his power, goodness, wisdom, patience, and his faithfulness. It was derivable from the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." It was derivable from

the “exceeding riches of God’s grace in his kindness toward us by Christ Jesus;” and the Apostle found it so by his own experience. It was thus Asaph checked his despondency, saying, “This is my infirmity;” and thus the Apostle says, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God;” and thus also David said, “I know,

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257

O Lord, that thy judgments are right;” and thus Paul here says, “I know whom I have believed,” &c. Thus, while the religion of the Bible enjoins us to be humble, and forbids everything like presumption, yet it admits of *confidence and assurance*; and what a recommendation is this to our religion. Nothing is more distressing to our feelings than uncertainty with regard to any invaluable interest, such as the issue of a malady, the title to an estate, or the success of an enterprise; and the wretchedness must be greater if there be no confidence and certainty possessed with regard to “things which are unseen and eternal.” But this confidence and certainty are attainable. A Christian is not like a man who is floundering in the mud and mire, and pressed down lower by the weight of his own person. No: his feet are “upon a rock, and his goings are established.” “A new song is put into his mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and turn unto the Lord.” The Christian can gain this confidence and assurance with regard to the *doctrines* of the gospel. We cannot exercise too great candour; but nothing can be more pernicious than to apply this to the great leading and fundamental truths of Christianity. “It is a good thing,” says our Apostle, “that the heart be established with grace.” This assurance may be gained with regard to the *privileges* of the gospel. There is such a thing as enjoying “the comforts of the Holy Ghost,” “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and relief under a distressed conscience, by the application of the blood of sprinkling. Christians can gain this confidence also with regard to their *own personal interest in all this*. We do not affirm that all the subjects of divine grace have this

assurance, or we should "break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax." "We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." And Christians may gain this certainty with regard to the *end and issue of afflictive dispensations*. So did the Apostle. Did he say, "I desire, I hope?" No: "We know that all things work together for good." And this is the very spirit of the text which serves as a motto for this morning's meditations.

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258

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JULY 23.—*I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob.* Isa. viii. 17.

THE providence of God is oftentimes very mysterious. Thus it was here with the ancient Church. And Jacob their progenitor also said, "All these things are against me;" but he judged prematurely, and partially, and after the flesh; for while he said this, at the very time "all these things" were working for his good and subserving his real welfare. How perplexed and embarrassed Joseph must have been to reconcile his being thrown into a pit, and sold to the Ishmaelites, and imprisoned as a criminal; how difficult he found it to reconcile all this to those dreams which assured him of his future elevation. Yet we see at length it was made perfectly plain. "Yes," said he, "you *sold* me, but God *sent me*." You "meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." Thus will it be with all Christians by-and-by, when in his light they shall see light; for "when Messiah, who is called Christ, is come, he will tell us all things." And we can gain this confidence with regard to distressing providences even now. Let us seek after it, and keep this thought in our minds under all these dark and painful dispensations, that "though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion;" that though he afflicts, "he does not afflict willingly;" that though "no chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peace-

able fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." Thus shall we be able to "walk by faith" until we shall "walk by sight," and be able to see that all the paths of the Lord have been mercy and truth. However perplexed we may now be by the dealings of Providence, we shall then find that all things have been working for our good, the darkness as well as the light, afflictions and pain as well as health and comfort, the opposition of foes as well as the kindness of friends, losses as well as gains. "Behold, we count them happy which endure; ye have heard of the patience," as well as the perplexities, "of Job," "and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

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259

"Yet a season, and we know,  
 Happy entrance shall be given,  
 All our sorrows left below,  
 And earth exchanged for heaven."

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JULY 24.—*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

HOW important it is that we should be able to derive this confidence with regard to the end and issue of our afflictions. From these none are exempted. "Man is born into trouble as the sparks fly upward." If there be no outward trouble, there is the *heart's* bitterness, which is known only to the sufferer. If the "thorn in the flesh" be so deeply inserted as not to be seen, it may be on that very account the more painful. A pious female who had been much indulged by the providence of God, once said to the writer, "You see my *sails*, but you do not see my *ballast*;" and there is always something as "ballast" connected with the successes and indulgences of Christians. While the cup of affliction is going round from family to family, and individual to individual—while one is saying, I am "made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome

nights are appointed to me"—and while another is saying, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness"—these afflictions may be very useful, they may "work for us" the most blessed results; they may subserve the very purpose of our salvation, and they are much more likely to do this than mere successes. The Christian character is more formed from trials than from indulgences; for "Happy is the man whom the Lord correcteth." Many can bear testimony to this, and how many can say, "It is good for me to have been afflicted!" They have found in "the valley of Achor the door of hope." The first meeting with God was on the bed of affliction or in the chamber of sickness. "Oh," says one, "if it had not been for these trials and bodily infirmities I might have gone astray: I might have lived according to the course of this world, and perished at last along with it." If the vine had reason, it would be

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260

thankful for the sharpest cuttings of the gardener's knife; or if the fallow ground had reason, it would be thankful for the ploughshare which tears it up, and prepares it by this process for the reception of the seed. If we are in trouble, it is blessed to know how light and momentary will be every trial, and that "all things are working out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." Oh! what will all outward losses be if we can only add, "I have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

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JULY 25.—*It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.* Ps. cxix. 71.

HERE we see *what will be the disposition of mind* under sanctified affliction. And it is very desirable for us to know, if we are in trouble, whether we are of the number of those of whom it is said, "Happy is the man whom the Lord correcteth," or if we are able to say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Then when the affliction is sanctified, man is the

scholar and God is the teacher, and though the man may be restive at first, yet under his influence he will be brought to the state of mind in which God heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus:—"Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented, and after that I was instructed I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." And so will it be with every man when God is thus dealing with him, and sanctifying his afflictions. "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him; he putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." We see also how we may *improve our afflictions*, and how to *render them not only harmless, hut even BENEFICIAL*. And this will be when, like David, we are turned towards him, and ask, "Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" and "though no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." The

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261

ploughman is not angry with the ground, but he drives the ploughshare through it to prepare it for the reception of the seed; the gardener is not angry with the vine, but he cuts it and prunes it, in order that it "may bring forth more fruit." As constantly as the ox is in the field of labour he must have the yoke on; and Jeremiah compares affliction to a yoke, and says, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." Let but the Lord impose it upon us, and it will sit easy and wear well; and we shall not be anxious to put it off till we put off the body. And thus we are comforted concerning the care of our hearts and of our hands; thus while we learn that godliness does not exempt its votaries from afflictions, it supports them under them, and turns them into blessings. And let us remember that we need every one of them—

“They all are most needful,  
Not one is in vain.”

And while they teach us “what an evil thing and bitter it is to sin against God,” they are often the “fruits to take away sin.”

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JULY 26.—*O Lord, I know that the WAY OF MAN is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*  
Jer. x. 23.

THESE are three ways of speaking with regard to God. There is a speaking *for* him, defending his truth and his cause from cavils and misrepresentations and falsehood. “I have yet to speak,” says Elihu, “on God’s behalf.” There is a speaking *of* God, making his purpose, his doings, his works, the subject of our discourse. “Hence,” says David, “I will speak of the glorious honour of thy Majesty, and of thy wondrous works, and men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts, and I will declare thy greatness; they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.” And there is a speaking *to* God, addressing him as if he were present—and he is present; as if he heard us—and he does hear us; as if he concerned himself in our affairs—and he does concern himself in our affairs. There are many who speak for God and of God, who rarely, if ever, speak *to*

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262

him, and yet in this our sincerity and spirituality must principally appear. In this it is we hold communion with him; and when a man has once through the mediation of the Saviour and under the agency of the Holy Spirit sought and found God in Christ, and feels that he has “boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him,” “a glorious high throne from the beginning” will be the “place of his sanctuary.” He will find it good to draw near to God to pour out his heart before him, sometimes in adoration, sometimes in confession, sometimes in supplication, sometimes in complaint, and sometimes in acknowledgment.

Here is an address to God: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Observe here a REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN LIFE. "The way of man." All writers, profane and sacred, have been accustomed to speak of life under various comparisons; sometimes it has been by a state of *servitude*, wherein the term of labour is prescribed and the season of release appointed; and hence Job says, "The servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and an hireling looketh for the reward of his work." Sometimes it is represented as a state of *warfare*, in which there is always something to be resisted, something to be overcome, something to be obtained, in every relation and in every condition. And it will be well for us if, when we come to the close, we can say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight," and can "lay hold on eternal life." But it has been more commonly represented by a *way*. In this way we are all travellers. We begin our journey at our birth. We travel on through the successive stages of infancy, childhood, and youth, and of manhood, and old age, and we end in the grave, where we say to corruption, "Thou art my father and my sister." Now the weather is not always the same with us, the road is not the same, our companions are not the same, the treatment we meet with is not the same. The course of some is very rough—oh, how rough!—while the passage of others is comparatively smooth. Some go straightforward and uniformly, but as to others there are many wanderings and turnings, and they can seldom see any distance before them. But whatever diversities there are among all these travellers, one thing belongs to them

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263

all equally: they are all under a higher appointment, and guidance, and influence, than their own. "O Lord, I know that the way of a man is *not in himself*; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

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JULY 27.—O *Lord*, I KNOW that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Jer. x. 23.

LET us consider the conviction here expressed in its SOURCES. "I know," says he. It was not a matter of opinion and conjecture, but certainty. "I *know* that the way of man is not in himself." Yes, but Jeremiah was a prophet; and prophets were called *seers*, and can see when other people are in the dark, and "they reveal things to come." But the sources from which Jeremiah derived his convictions on this subject are the very same which are open to us all, and some of them have been much enlarged since. They are five. The first is the *nature of our condition*. It is a dependent one; we are not our own, and therefore are not at our own disposal. We belong to God entirely; we are his servants, his subjects, his children, and he has over us the rights of a master, of a sovereign, and of a father. He has an absolute property in us. He has "made us, and not we ourselves," and in him "we live, move, and have our being." If God were to summon us before him and to say to us, Take what is thine own, what should we be told to take away with us, what faculty, what possession, what comfort? Could we retain even our own existence? No, we should immediately relapse into our original dust. The second source of this conviction is the *limitation of our powers*. Men think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. There are thousands of our fellow-creatures who would much rather be considered as knaves than fools. The last offence people ever forgive from others is a reflection upon their understanding. "Vain man," says Zophar, "would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." When he grows up, even when he comes to what is called years of maturity, of discretion, how liable is he to be deceived and deluded! how narrow then is his horizon of vision, and how foggy and cloudy is it! how liable to bias and to misconception, and therefore unable to distinguish between appearances and realities! The third

source of conviction is *history*. Take the case of Abraham and Lot. They differed, and it was found necessary that they should separate. Abraham said unto Lot, "Is not the whole land before thee? if thou depart to the right hand then I will go to the left, if thou take the left hand then I will go to the right." Lot was the nephew and the youngest, he therefore should have suffered Abraham to take the preference; but observe not only the indelicacy but the principle of his choice. It was his senses, his passions, his vanity, his love of worldly things, regardless of moral and religious considerations. And Lot chose all the plain of Sodom. What was the consequence? He was burnt out of house and home by a storm of fire and brimstone. Then his wife having become attached to the place, looked back, and became a pillar of salt. An instance in the history of David will furnish another illustration. In his fear of Saul he said, "There is nothing better than that I should escape into the land of the Philistines. In doing so he took the worst step he could have taken; a step which was calculated to alienate from him the affections of Israel, justify the reproaches of his enemies, deprive him of the means of grace; that would familiarize him with the usages and the evils of the heathen round about; that would put himself out of the Divine protection; and that would lay him under obligation to those whom he could not oblige without betraying the cause of God. We know the embarrassment and distress which soon followed, and yet he thought this was the best thing he could do. Paul spake with much confidence to the elders of Ephesus, that they would see his face no more, and yet he did see them again after his first imprisonment. He said to the Romans," I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual gifts, to the end ye may be established." How little did he imagine, when he wrote that letter, he was to see them at Rome; that he should go there not as an Apostle but as a prisoner; that he should be wrecked on his voyage; that they would edify him before he could edify them; for when he came to Apii-forum and the three taverns, and saw the brethren from Rome who came to meet him, "he thanked God and took courage." Joseph went forth

in the morning to inquire after the welfare of his brethren who were in the plain of Dothan, but he never came back;

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265

he was soon thrown into a pit, then sold a slave into Egypt, then he was imprisoned, and "the iron entered into his soul." There is the case of Hazael, who, when a private individual, was met by Elisha, and told what evil he would do to the children of Israel, said, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" But though sincere in his feeling then, he did not know what a change in his character, a change in his condition would produce; for when he became king of Syria, he became all that he had execrated, and that the man of God had predicted. The fourth source of conviction is *experience*. God commanded the Jews to remember all the way by which they had been led in the wilderness; and in doing so we shall not fail to see that the same things will appear to us very different according to the prospective or retrospective aspects under which we view them. How surprised we should have been, had some of our situations in life, and the principal events which have transpired in our history, been previously made known to us. So true is it, the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Lastly, *Scripture* is another source of conviction. Its concurrent testimony is, that "a man's goings are of the Lord; how then can a man understand his own way?" "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him."

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JULY 28.—*Even to-day is my complaint hitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning.* Job xxiii. 1.

THIS is not always the case; sometimes our "groaning" is much "heavier" than our "stroke." This often induces God to employ severer measures, and to resemble in his dealings with us the father of a proud child, who, when he finds him

crying for nothing, sometimes makes him smart that he may cry in earnest. We have all things "given to us richly to enjoy," and yet are prone to murmur and repine, and if a trial befall us, however common to man, or however alleviated, we become all uneasiness in ourselves, and occasion distress in those around us by our sighs and our lamentations. In some this may be considered as a natural in-

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266

firmity arising from a morbid constitution. In others this is a moral infirmity arising from pride, and unbelief, and discontent, against which it becomes us always very carefully to guard. But there are some whose "complaint" is indeed "bitter," and whose stroke is heavier than their groaning, real mourners, deep sufferers, who if they mourn do not murmur. They can hardly be considered as "groaning;" if they open their mouths it is only meekly to say, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." See this good man before us, how well might he have said, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath; he hath led me and brought me into darkness and not into the light." Behold him one day in the possession of more than heart could wish, then suddenly despoiled of all, deprived of his substance, of his servants, and of his children, bereaved of his health, covered with sore boils from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, railed at by his wife, abandoned by his relations, misunderstood and condemned by his friends, sitting among the ashes, scraping himself with a potsherd, his head bare to the pitiless storm of adversity. And as we look at him let us resolve never to say again, when we are afflicted, "Behold and see if ever there was sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted in the day of his fierce anger." Ah, we shall do well to compare ourselves with others. Those who have lost *some* property should compare themselves with those who have lost *all*. Those who have been bereaved of *one* child, should compare themselves with those who have

been bereaved of *five*. Those who are walking on crutches should compare themselves with the bedridden. There is no situation in which we can be placed that is incapable of being worse.

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JULY 29.—*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.* Psalm xxxvii. 23.

THOUGH God has declared that the way of man is not in himself, and it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, still he has not left us without encouragement. For he has

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267

given us the assurance that if we acknowledge him in all our ways he will “direct our paths.” And we may notice here three grounds of encouragement. First, God is *able* to direct our paths. His understanding is infinite. He sees the end from the beginning, and knows what is best upon the whole and in the end. And—

“Since all the downward tracts of time  
His watchful eye surveys,  
O, who so wise to choose our lot  
And regulate our ways.”

Secondly, God is *willing* to direct our paths. He is so condescending as to bestow upon us his counsels and his care. There is something exceedingly wonderful in this, and we may well exclaim with David, “Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him? and with Job, “What is man that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?” Yet so it is; the Lord careth for us. And when we come to *the cross*, and when we reflect upon what God *has done there*, there is nothing incredible in this assurance; for “he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” Thirdly, God has *engaged* to direct our paths; he has said, “The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way.” And he says by Isaiah, “I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will

lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." These are the true sayings of God; and as these promises are "exceedingly great and precious," so they are all, "yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us." Talking and doing may be different things with men, but they are not so with God. "Heaven and earth may pass away," and will pass away, "but not a word shall fail of all that the Lord hath spoken." Let us endeavour to realize this, and to "commit our way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass," or render the failure a blessing. Thus our "soul shall dwell at ease." Thus we shall "live in quiet from the fear of evil." Thus "he will keep our mind in perfect peace, being stayed on God."

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268

What can we want more than to be able to say, as we may say, "This God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death."

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JULY 30.—*Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am.* John xiii. 13.

OBSERVE THE TITLE THEY ASCRIBE TO HIM: "Ye call me Master and Lord." Nothing can be more honourable; and yet he acknowledges that it was just and true. He is then the Master and Lord of his people. They learn in his school as disciples, and they serve in his house as attendants. He is their Master as he teaches them, and he is their Lord as he governs them. In both titles the main idea is authority; the one is the authority of the master over his pupils, and the other is the authority of a lord over his servants. The latter is here principally, though not exclusively, intended. Let us consider, first, That he is our Lord by *creation*. He made us, and as our Maker he has an infinitely greater proprietary in us than one creature can have in another creature; for they derive their possession, their power, yea their very existence itself, from him. His life, favour, and

visitation preserve and indulge them. If, therefore, he were to call into his presence a monarch or a philosopher, a Boyle or a Newton, and say, "Take that thine own is and go thy way," what could either of them take away with him? Why, not even his existence. Secondly, He is our Lord by the claims of *redemption*. "Know ye not," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, "that ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." And we are not left to conjecture what that price was, for we are told that we are "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"—a price to which nothing can ever be added. Now redemption gives him a greater claim than even creation. Redemption advances us to greater blessings than creation. Redemption is accomplished by a much more expensive process than creation. When he had to make us, he had only to speak; when he had to redeem us, he had to suffer; he made us at the expense of his breath, he redeemed us at the expense of his blood. And where is he when he prefers his claims? Why, in the garden

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209

of Gethsemane, on the cross of Calvary. How is he appalled when he comes effectually to rule in us? Dressed in a garment dipped in blood. Thirdly, He is Lord of all as *Mediator*, and even as a partaker of our flesh and blood. "The Father loveth his Son, and hath given all things into his hand." There is not a being in the universe that is not either his servant or his slave; all the angels of God worship him; devils are under his control; he is King of kings and Lord of lords. They are all raised by his power, governed by his providence, amenable to his authority; they all subserve his purposes: "the very wrath of man praises him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain." God has given his Son "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." It is therefore a matter of promise, and therefore he will be able to realize it in due time. He has all the resources of nature and providence at his disposal. "The nation and the kingdom that will not serve him shall perish." But "he is *head*

over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." He reigns over them particularly. Let us therefore observe, Lastly, that he is our Lord by *our own choice and submission*. Once he did not rule over us, that is, not as he does now. We were not called by his name. But he opened a passage to our hearts, and made us willing in the day of his power. A look or a word from him was enough, and he knew where to find us and how to call us. He turned and looked upon Peter, and his poor heart was melted, and he went out and wept bitterly. He said to Matthew, as he was sitting at the receipt of custom, "Follow me," and he arose and followed him. He said to Saul of Tarsus, only, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," and he was disarmed of his enmity, and the lion became a lamb, and at his dear feet he exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Thus they gave themselves to his service; and the glory of his dominion is here, that he reigns over the souls of his people; and that he does not govern them only by external rule, but by internal influence; that he enthrones himself in their consciences; and that he puts his laws into their hearts, and so renders their obedience wholly natural, pleasant, and delightful. He illuminates their understand-

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270

ing, and displays to their view his loveliness as well as his power. And then they run after him, for he draws them with "the cords of a man, and with bands of love." Thus they call him their Master and Lord, in their addresses to himself, in speaking of him to each other, in their profession of his name, and in joining with his Church in holy communion.

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JULY 31.—*If I then, your lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*

John xiii. 14.

HERE is their obligation involved in the title they ascribe to him! In exemplification of this let us notice, First,

He claims our exclusive service. If he then is our Lord and Master, *we ought to renounce connection with every other*. This is not only becoming, but it is absolutely necessary, for “no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” “Call no man master upon earth, for one is your Master even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” Thus he releases his subjects from every other authority as to conscience but his own; and if we “stand fast in the liberty wherewith he has made us free,” we shall never implicitly resign our understanding, our creed, or our obedience to any man, nor shall we follow him further than he followeth Christ; let us therefore remember that our Saviour here designs to set us free from the yoke of bondage to custom, to tradition, to councils, to superstition, to will worship, and to all authority in religion but his own. Secondly, *Then we ought to obey his commandments*. There cannot be a better evidence of sincerity than this. “If ye love me,” says he, “keep my commandments.” We are not our own masters, and therefore we are not “to live to ourselves,” “nor to the lusts of men, but to the will of God,” ever saying, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” For a knowledge of his orders we must repair to the Scriptures. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them,” and do them impartially; for though imperfect obedience may be sincere, partial obedience cannot. We must avoid all he forbids,

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271

and do all that he enjoins, “esteeming all his commandments concerning all things to be right, and hating every false way.” Thirdly, *Then we ought to submit to his appointments*. And he gives us our work when, and where and how we shall labour and serve him. Fourthly, *Then we ought to imitate him*. “If any serve” me, he says in another place, “let him follow me.” “If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up the cross and follow me.” We see this exemplified and enjoined

here: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." This does not regard the letter but the spirit of the action. Why, the letter may be maintained without the spirit. The Pope annually washes the feet of a few paupers in a silver vessel. And, on the other hand, the spirit may be maintained without the letter. Fifthly, *We should esteem all we have as his, and act accordingly.* Our endowments and our talents, whatever they may be, these are to be preserved, employed, and improved for him. Sixthly, *We should be willing to partake with him in his estates.* If we are to "reign with him" hereafter, we must "suffer with him" now. If we are to live with him in heaven, we are to be dead with him on earth. Do we feel anything of this now? When his word has free course, and runs and is glorified; when sinners are added to the Church daily; when professors walk worthy their high vocation, does this delight us? On the other hand, are we grieved for the afflictions of his people; and is the reproach of Christ our burden; and are we humbled and grieved when we hear of the miscarriages of professors? How desirable is it that we should feel this oneness of mind and heart with the Lord Jesus. And this will be the case if we are found faithful to the obligations under which we are placed. Seventhly, *Then we may depend upon him for all the advantages of the relation.* The Apostle writing to the Colossians says, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ."

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272

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AUG. 1.—*They which run in a race run all, hut one receiveth the prize.* 1 Cor. ix. 24.

EARTHLY good is always uncertain. Here we must always reckon upon disappointment: all cannot win; and where

one succeeds there are numbers who grieve over mortifying disappointments, and after a long and painful pursuit in the competition of it, we too, perhaps, may find that just as we are about to grasp the prize, another bears it away. The truth is, that worldly distinction and eminence depend on a concurrence of events and circumstances such as rarely take place. "I saw," says Solomon, "that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill, but" what we call "time and chance happeneth to them all." The truth is, that a great deal of what is called earthly greatness is placed beyond the reach of many, whatever they may do. Many are poor, and they have not the opportunities and the means of becoming affluent; many cannot fill the seats of learning and science: they have not capacities to acquire the needful treasures. Here is a reason why we should seek those which are always sure in their attainment. Over these is inscribed always, "Ask and it shall be given; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you; for whosoever asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." No condition in life, however disadvantageous it seems, is a barrier to elevation here. In the work of the Lord the servant may become equally great with the master; for moral greatness does not consist in doing great things, but in doing little things with a great mind. And these are accessible to all. "The poor have the gospel preached unto them," and may be "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him." All may obtain, however destitute, those blessings which are to be bought "without money and without price." "The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err" in the heavenly road, under the Divine guide. A man, however illiterate, can acquire the knowledge which makes wise unto salvation, under the heavenly Teacher; for the Teacher here affords not only light

but eyes, not only sound but ears, not only lessons but the faculty to receive them. Hope is the mainspring of action; if probability will invigorate a man in his exertions, how much more will certainty, especially when the objects depending are of such unspeakable value. We see, then, the advantage which the Christian has over all other candidates. The husbandman soweth in hope, but his hopes may perish by excessive moisture, or by mildew, or caterpillars; but here "he that soweth in tears, shall reap in joy." The soldier fights in hope, but war is a precarious thing. "Let not him that putteth on the harness," says the proverb, "boast as he that putteth it off." Conquerors have been often conquered; but Christians will be found "more than conquerors." They enter upon their warfare under peculiar advantages. If they have not struck a blow, they may strike with confidence; or if they have fallen through a blow received, they may look up and say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." So that we may say—

"Assured that our King  
Will put our foes to flight,  
We'll on the field of battle sing,  
And triumph in the fight."

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AUG. 2.—*God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ.* Acts ii. 36.

HERE we observe—First, That it is important that we should *entertain proper apprehensions of Christ*. He is not only a Saviour, but he is also a Sovereign. He is our Lord and Master. Is Christ divided? This is impossible in the reality. But there are some who would thus separate what God has joined together, in their views, in their creed, and in their practice too. There are some who would receive him as their Redeemer, and yet would not hail him as their Sovereign; and concerning these he says, "As for those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me." Such is the doom

of those who take his sceptre and dash it against his cross. Let us not forget that he came by water as well as by blood;

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274

that there is pollution in sin as well as guilt; that sin defiles as well as condemns; and that therefore we need cleansing as well as pardon. Secondly, Let us *beware of insincerity and inconsistency*. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" Why do you wear my livery, while you are regardless of my concerns? "If I am a master, where is mine honour?" "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "What doth it profit, my brethren," says James, "though a man say he have faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" Yes, faith can save him, but not such faith; so it is to be understood. Faith without works is dead. Oh, the inconsistency that is observable in many professors of religion! Let us, therefore, make it manifest that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we are concerned to promote his cause and glory in the world. Thirdly, Let those in whom there is some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, *make it manifest by immediately and sincerely taking him for their Lord and Master*. Oh that these would "take with them words, and turn unto him," and say, "Lord, take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." Oh that such may realize the language of Isaiah: "One shall say I am the Lord's," and "another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and name himself by the name of Israel." What a privilege is early dedication to God! Beza says in his will, "Lord, I thank thee that at the tender age of sixteen I was enabled to give myself up to thy service." There are many who can say the same, and they are daily blessing God that they were enabled to remember him in their youth; excited and encouraged by those blessed words that have adorned many an early tomb: "I love them that love me, and those that seek

me early shall find me." Those have found the Saviour worthy of all their homage and service; "that his yoke is easy and his burden is light." And that "godliness is profitable in all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

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275

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AUG. 3.—*I will look unto the Lord.* Micah vii. 7.

THE Church here resolves to *look unto the Lord*; that is, to seek him in prayer, for his help and relief. The Jews *looked* to the brazen serpent to obtain relief. God, in the prophecies of Isaiah, says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." David, speaking of the righteous, says, "They looked unto him and were lightened." And thus we are to look to the Lord: First, *For explanation under our afflictions*. "Of all troubles," says an old writer, "my dumb ones are the most distressing; they strike, but say nothing; I put my ear down close to them, I listen, and hear nothing." This was the case with Job. He could neither find comment nor commentator. But he says, "He knoweth the way that I take"—though he did not know it himself. This was a very trying state, and a very disadvantageous one; for if we know not in our afflictions for what it is that God designs to reprove us, what it is that he would wean us from, what it is that he would urge us to pursue, how is it possible for us to apply ourselves to the purpose? We should therefore go to him for information, and address him as did Job: "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." Secondly, We are to look to the Lord for *support in our trouble*. It is very honourable to religion when we can possess our souls in patience—when we can say, "I know, O Lord, thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me; let thy loving-kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." The Christian feels under the dispensation; and this is allowable, and even necessary—morally necessary. There is no grace in bearing what

we do not feel—there is no submission or resignation where there is no sensibility. But sensibility may be excessive—may be breaking down our spirits; and while we do not “despise the chastening of the Lord,” on the one hand, we may, on the other, “faint when we are rebuked of him.” What is to prepare us for this? “If we faint in the day of adversity our strength is small.” What is to prevent this? What prevented it in David? “In the day that I cried,” said he, “thou heardest me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.” Thirdly, We are to look to him

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276

*that our afflictions may be sanctified.* That these afflictions, which are “the fruit of sin,” may have the effect to “take away sin”—that from the sins of our condition we may be preserved—that all the graces becoming the condition may be exercised and improved by us—that we may “glorify God in the fires,” and that we may come forth as gold purified and refined, and be “found unto praise and glory and honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Fourthly, We are to look to him *for deliverance from our afflictions.* This is allowable. Afflictions are not immutable dispensations. Our Saviour himself prayed, “Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me,” with perfect submission; and we may do the same if we can add, as he did, “nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.” To this we are encouraged by God himself in his promise to prayer, “Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” And we have records in the Scriptures of deliverances which he has wrought for his people in adversity. And his power and grace are still the *same*. If we look unto him as the God of salvation, we shall find that he knows how to deliver—that “nothing is too hard” for him, and we shall exemplify the language of Watts—the “beautiful language of Watts,” as Cowper calls it (how capable was he of judging!)—

“The Lord can clear the darkest skies,  
Can give us day for night,

Make drops of sacred sorrow rise  
To rivers of delight.”

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AUG. 4.—*Therefore I will look unto the Lord.*  
Micah vii. 7.

As if he had said, There is no confidence to be reposed in, and no consolation to be derived from creatures, friends, and relations; I will therefore go beyond them, I will repair at once to God. If they are weak, he is strong; if they are false, he is faithful; if they are unkind, he is merciful and gracious. “I will look therefore unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation.” He turned, away from creatures, knowing they were broken

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277

cisterns—cisterns that could hold no water; and turned towards God, knowing that he was “the fountain of living waters.” He turned away from creatures, who he knew were broken reeds, and turned to God, whom “he knew to be the Rock of Ages. “Therefore,” he says, “I will look unto the Lord.” Observe, first, That this is a *designed experience*, and not a casual one, so to speak, on *God’s* side. God is concerned for our welfare, infinitely more than we are ourselves; and, therefore, he does not wait for our application, but he excites it. For this purpose he has given us the Scriptures. He has also given us the Sabbath. He has given us the sanctuary, he has given us the preaching of the gospel, and all these dispensations are arranged in the same subserviency with the purposes of his grace—and especially our afflictions. He therefore says, “I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face; in their affliction, they will seek me early.” So Elihu, reviewing afflictive dispensations, says, “All these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.” Observe, secondly, It is a *necessary experience* on our part. God does nothing needlessly, and we may be assured that he

doth not "afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." We have a strong propensity to turn away, and to make flesh our arm, and earth our home; but "the prosperity of fools destroys them," "their table becomes a snare," and the things ordained for their welfare prove "a trap." Hence, these dispensations, however trying, improve us by the goodness of God. Hence the ploughshare goes through the fallow ground to prepare the soil for the reception of the seed. Hence God "hedges up our way with thorns," that we may not be able to "find our paths." Hence he embitters earth, that heaven may be endeared, and verifies the truth of the language of Dr. Young—

"Our hearts are fasten'd to the world  
By strong and various ties,  
But every trouble cuts a string  
And urges us to rise."

Oh, it is a *blessed* experience when, with the Church, we are thrown from ourselves and from creatures, upon the Divine resources.

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278

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AUG. 5.—*He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.* Luke ix. 55.

THESE are the words of our Saviour to two of his disciples. The circumstances which led him thus to address them are thus recorded: "When the time was come that he should he received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face, and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem"—that is, these Samaritans perceived he was going to attend a Jewish festival, and not one of their own, and the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Now it is remarkable that they were just by the very place where Elijah had inflicted those judgments of God which came upon the men Ahaziah had sent to apprehend him; this, probably, led

these disciples to think of asking permission to follow his example. And so when his disciples James and John (oh sad!) saw this, that is, the conduct of these Samaritans, they said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" This showed some love to their Master, and also a willingness to do nothing without his consent and approbation. This was good; but there was something else with which he was acquainted. "He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Elias did not act from private resentment; he did not act as a man; he acted as a prophet of the Lord—he had a special call to do what he did. You have no such call. His was pure zeal for God; *yours* has in it a sad mixture of the leaven of prejudice, subsisting between the Jews and the Samaritans, above which you are not able at present to rise. You should consider, also, that the dispensation under which he was placed, and the dispensation under which you are placed, are very different from each other; for "the Son of man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." *Elias* was under the Law; *you* are under Grace. "Grace as well as truth came by Jesus Christ." *Elias* came in order to inflict judgment upon the wicked; "I am come to seek and to save the lost." Yes;

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279

the gracious and compassionate Saviour went about doing good. He never destroyed one life; he never injured one individual. No; "he came to bless us, in turning every one away from his iniquities." And in him may we be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

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AUG. 6.—*They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*" 1 Tim. vi. 9.

PAUL here refers to two classes of person. First, to *evil* men, who yet may have made a profession of religion. Of these Solomon speaks when he says, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." "Their table shall become a snare and a trap." The Apostle compares these to persons shipwrecked; they sink to rise no more; they are drowned in destruction and perdition. Then, secondly, he refers to *good* men, and compares them to passengers or travellers going along the road, but instead of pursuing their course only, they happen to see some inviting fruit at the roadside, entangled all round with thorns and briars, and they must get it, and they tear their garments and their flesh to reach it, and tear them again in getting back from it. "These pierce themselves through with many sorrows." The fact is, that even good men, with regard to earthly riches, want peculiar grace, or they will not be proof against their evil influences. Christians seldom, if ever, improve by their rising in the world; but many have been greatly injured by it. Many have been less constant and regular in their attendance on the means of grace, though they have had more leisure. Many have given less afterwards—not less comparatively, but less absolutely. We believe the Scriptures, where God testifies of the danger of temporal prosperity. If these things were safe and good for Christians, they would have them; for "God taketh pleasure in his people." But he sees they would operate as manure to their depravity—he sees they would provide for the lusts of the flesh, and so tend to cherish and keep alive those

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280

evils which it is our duty and our privilege to have starved to death, as far as possible—such as pride, and vanity, and self-importance, attachment to earth, and an unwillingness to leave it and go to the Father. Let us seek durable riches and righteousness. These are not only attainable, but safe. These are not only blameless, but profitable—profitable unto "all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." These, instead of polluting the mind, will purify it; they will draw us from the earth,

instead of allowing us to settle here. Instead of elevating us, they will clothe us with humility; instead of leading us away from God, they will connect us with him; they will prepare us for every condition in which we can be found. Therefore let us fix no bound to our desires; God does not. He says, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." "Ask and receive, that your joy may be full."

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AUG. 7.—*And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a hush: and he looked, and, behold, the hush turned with fire, and the hush was not consumed.* Exod. iii. 2.

THIS immediately refers to the state of Israel in Egypt; they were greatly afflicted and oppressed. 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; and I am come down to deliver them." God has always had a people for his name; and the Jewish Church and the Christian are substantially the same. And the bush burning with fire, yet unburnt, represented the Church of God blessed with his presence—suffering yet sustained, and exposed yet secure. Observe, first, *the emblem in which the Church is here held forth.* Not a tall tree—not a lofty cedar of Lebanon, but a "*bush,*" a common bush; and very probably a bramble bush. If numbers and splendour are the marks of a true Church, where should we find for many ages the Church of God? Seldom in the Old Testament, never in the New. At this time it consisted of a number of slaves and brickmakers. And the prime ministers in the kingdom of Christ were a few fishermen taken

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281

from the lake of Galilee. The followers of our Saviour were the *common people.* "They heard him gladly." "Have any of the *rulers,*" it was asked, "believed on him?" Observe *the condition in which it was found.* "It was burning with fire." Fire is in Scripture one of the

emblems of distress and suffering. Hence we read, "Glorify God in the fires." "I have also chosen thee in the furnace of affliction," and of "fiery trials." Israel was now grievously oppressed and persecuted. And this has ever been the case with the Christian Church. And we ought to call to remembrance the former times in which our forefathers, "of whom the world was not worthy," suffered for God; and to be thankful for our exemption, and that we are permitted to "sit under our own vine, and under our own fig-tree, and none daring," lawfully, "to make us afraid." "In the world ye shall have tribulation," says our Saviour; therefore, we find that private, personal, or relative privation and distresses may, under the providence of God, subserve the same purposes as did the persecutions of former times, and they actually do so. Thirdly, *Observe its preservation*. It was "not consumed." Thus the Church has continued till this hour. Other cities with their memorials have perished, but Mount Zion abideth for ever. The Saviour assures us that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Yea, we see from history, the more it has been oppressed and persecuted the more it has multiplied and grown, and that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. And this is true of every individual believer, as well as of the whole Church of Christ. Not a limb from his body—not a child from his family—not a gem from his diadem has been destroyed, or ever shall be destroyed. Observe, fourthly, *The cause of this security*. Why was it not consumed? Was it not combustible, and will not fire pervade and overcome everything? The cause was that the angel of the Lord was in the midst of it. "Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel," says Isaiah, "in the midst of thee." And David says, "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved." And thus saith the Lord, "I will be unto her a wall of fire round about her, and will be the glory in the midst of her." And God is with his

Church, and is *in* it now. He is with his people in their low estate; with them in their sufferings; in a way of sympathy, assistance, and succour. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." And he still says, "I will be with thee in trouble;" and "when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

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AUG. 8.—*And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Sere am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.* Exod. iii. 3-5.

HERE observe the attention and inquiry this extraordinary appearance awakened. "Moses said, I will turn and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." And what Moses did we should do. "I would magnify thy works," says David, "which men behold." "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure in them." Let us, therefore, turn aside and contemplate the same object. Moses had here much to excite his surprise. He saw no fire around him; he saw no fire descend from heaven. How could it be? Though this was surprising, there was something still more so. The fire continued; yet not a spray or leaf of the bush was consumed. Then he found a living personage also uninjured, and addressing him from the midst of the bush. So that we see attention and inquiry was naturally and unavoidably excited in him. And when are we not in danger? When are our motives entirely pure, or our actions sinless? Even things innocent in themselves, and things that are commanded may be carried too far through our depravity, and our imperfections become injurious. Let us observe, secondly, *God's prohibition*, or rather *the regulation of the disposition* in Moses, to turn aside and inquire why the bush is not burned. "And when the Lord saw that he

turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here

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283

am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We may observe that this was designed to be a *check upon our curiosity*. This principle operates naturally in us all, though in some much more than in others, and we should be careful not to give way to it, even in the common affairs of life, but much more in religious matters. There is no countenance given to this in the word of truth; for when a man asked our Saviour, "Are there few that be saved?" he did not answer him, but said to them who were present, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" and when Peter asked, "Lord, what shall this man do?" he said, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." And Moses himself delivered the maxim which all religious people should remember: "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." We should be satisfied with the facts of Christianity without the philosophy of them. The religious controversies which have occupied so much time, and which have injured so many fine tempers, have commonly been concerning things too deep for human reasoning to fathom, too lofty to be inquired into without presumption, or too insignificant to merit regard. Observe, also, that this was to be considered an *intimation of the humility with which God ought to be approached*. The tokens of reverence have differed in many ages and places. The taking off the shoes here was much the same as taking off the hat with us. Therefore Solomon says, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools." Nothing like trifling is to be indulged in drawing near to God. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me." "God is greatly to be feared, and to be had in remembrance of all them

that are about Him." We should always remember that "God is a Spirit," and that He "seeketh such to worship Him." And that God is to be glorified in our bodies as well as in our spirits, which are his. "Therefore," says the Apostle, "let us have grace whereby we may serve Him with reverence and godly fear."

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284

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AUG. 9.—*Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. Exod. iii. 1.*

THERE is hardly an instance to be found recorded in Scripture, in which God appeared in the way of distinction and privilege to any who were not engaged at the time in some useful employment. Satan visits people when they are idle; God comes to them when they are employed. Matthew was called while sitting at the receipt of custom, and James and John while mending their nets. The woman of Samaria found the Saviour while drawing water. The angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds while they were watching over their flocks by night. And Moses was here extraordinarily indulged when he was tending the charge of his father-in-law. Though learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians—though very delicately brought up in a palace as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he does not think the employment beneath him. "I keep sheep—a man of my breeding, and education, and talent!" He says nothing like this. Humility is a noble virtue; it enables us to accommodate ourselves to the will of Providence, and teaches us how to be abased as well as how to abound. There are many who know *what it is* to be abased as well as to abound; but they do not *know how*. Their minds do not come into harmony with their situations. They are humbled, but not humble; they would rather break than bend. How much more respectable is a trade or a profession, than idleness? What are hands given for? Are they to be folded, and to do nothing? The Jews have a proverb, that if a man brings up his son without business, he teaches him to be a

thief. Saul of Tarsus had a university education, yet he was taught the craft of tent-making; and we see in a particular emergency of what advantage it was to him. To this day no man can be the Sultan of Turkey unless he understands some mechanical business. Adam and Eve were placed in Paradise, not only to enjoy, but "to keep it." Moses was neither degraded by this employment, nor miserable inconsequence of it. There is no drudgery in the world which is not far preferable to the situation of men who have nothing to do. Oh, it is easily imagined that these were the happiest days of Moses's life. There, by the side his inno-

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285

cent charge, he had time for reflection. There he could enjoy his poetical musings; for he was a poet of no mean order, if we may judge by the Divine songs which he composed. There he wrote the book of Genesis, and sang how the earth rose out of chaos; and there, probably, he wrote the book of Job, with its numberless beauties.

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AUG. 10.—*Call upon me in the day of trouble.* Ps. 1.15.

THIS is the privilege of the real Christian, that he knows to whom he can go in the hour of distress; that though all be rough under foot, all when he looks up is clear overhead; that when he has little of the creature he has more of the Creator," God over all blessed for evermore." Jeremiah found him in the dungeon, and Daniel in the lions' den, and the three Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace; thus, when David was stripped of all he had in Ziglag, he encouraged himself, it is said, "in the Lord his God;" and this enabled him to say afterwards, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee; when my heart is overwhelmed within, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Thus it was with Manasseh in his affliction; he sought the Lord his God, and he was found of him. Had any of those who applied to our Saviour in the days of his flesh reason to complain either of those personal or relative troubles or afflictions which urged them to his feet? Here is the

way, Christian, in which we are to learn, and to improve, and to sanctify the regrets, the disappointments, and the trials of life. We should be careful in our troubles that we do not fight against God, and creatures which are his instruments. Our troubles should lead us to God. And if they bring us to him, they can by no means hurt us. Our welfare can only be secured and promoted by intercourse and communion with God. It is well to be "drawn to him" by the "bands of love" and the "cords of a man." It is better to be driven to him, if we are driven as Paul was, by the buffetings of Satan, rather than that we should keep away from him. "Now I am weary of the world," says a Christian; "I would not live here always; such a comfort is gone, and another is gone, and all are going, and I am going; and I am come, O Lord, to deal with

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286

thee on the subject." "Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee." Our afflictions are sent us in mercy; they come and knock at the door of conscience, and say, "Well, what think you of sin now? Is it not an 'evil and bitter thing?' What think you of the world now? Is it not a poor resource? What think you of creatures now? Are they not 'vanity and vexation of spirit?' What think you of the Saviour now? Can anything sustain and comfort you but the resurrection and the life?" Are we burdened? God is a burden-bearer near us, who is saying, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

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AUG. 11.—*Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled.*  
Ps. civ. 29.

HERE is a reference to the saints of God who *are bewailing the suspension of Divine manifestations*. "Thou hidest thy face." The sun is always in the sky, but it is not always visible. So God hides himself from the house of Jacob; and if we belong to the house of Jacob, we shall be affected by it as the Psalmist was when he addressed to

God this complaint. Here it may be necessary to remark, that we must not consider this suspension of Divine manifestation as a mere effect of Divine sovereignty; for God doth not “afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,” much less his own children, who are infinitely dear to him. He himself, by the prophet Isaiah, has explained the case both negatively and positively: “The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you.” It is therefore either as a prevention of sin, or a correction for it. “I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early.” Or is it to rebuke for some duty omitted, or some object idolized. We shall do well, therefore, to think, if this be our experience now, of the address of Eliphaz to Job: “Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?” Is there no worm at the root of our gourd? “O,” says Joab, at Beth-Maachah, “I do not wish to injure the

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287

place, but I am pursuing a traitor, and I will have his head; throw this over the wall, and I will blow the trumpet, and withdraw all the besieging forces.” And so it was. Thus we should apply this—thus should we say—

“The dearest idol I have known,  
 Whate’er that idol be,  
 Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
 And worship only thee.

“So shall my walk be close with God,  
 Calm and serene my frame,  
 So purer light shall mark the road  
 That leads me to the Lamb.”

There is a *depth of distress experienced*. “They are troubled.” But who can find language to describe the wretchedness produced in the minds of the godly by the hiding of God’s face from them? How in such a case does the soul in its darkness mingle its drink with weeping!

The heart's bitterness is known only to itself. Distress of circumstances—worldly disappointments—bodily pains—the desertion of friends—family bereavements—all these could be borne, and borne well, if God is *near*; if God be *with* us, if God be *in* us—but, O the thought, I am forsaken, I am forgotten of God! This misery may be accounted for by three things. The first is, that the Christian *loves God*. He does not love him *perfectly*, but he loves him *supremely*; and we all know that love can never be reconciled to the absence of its object; distance is painful, but the thought of separation is intolerable. Secondly, He *entirely relies upon him*. He knows and feels that he is to him all and in all—that his God is more necessary to him than the sun is to the earth, or the soul is to the body, and that without him all must be darkness, dreariness, desolation, and death. And thirdly, *Because he has enjoyed him already*. He has had an experience of communion with God, and this stimulates his desire, and makes him long for more. Thus it was with David: “My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.”

“My God, repeat that heavenly hour,  
That vision so divine.”

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AUG. 12.—*The Lord shall comfort Zion*. Isa. li. 3.

WE may observe here three things—First, *That distresses and discouragements are not incompatible with religion*. We may sometimes think that our case is peculiar and hard to bear, and that no one has ever been so exercised as we have been, or have experienced such depressing and melancholy feelings as ourselves; arising out of the unfounded and unfavourable conclusions respecting our state, character, circumstances, and prospects, which we have been more disposed to cherish than to suppress. In reference to these we may be ready to say with David, “I shall one day fall by the

hand of Saul." And with Paul, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" And Zion had said just what we have feared: "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." Secondly, We here see *how concerned God is not only for his people's safety, but also for their comfort*. Their doubts and fears might continue, and they at the same time would be perfectly safe, but he will not have them perpetuated; he is concerned to have them and the causes of them removed. He has left us "exceeding great and precious promises," that we "might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." He not only threatened the base prophets in the days of Jeremiah, who "made the hearts of his people sad," when he had commanded them to "make them merry," but he issues this commission to all his ministers: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Thirdly, If the Lord has thus graciously promised to comfort Zion, and has made such ample provision that she may be comforted, *we should fall in with his gracious design*; we should be humbled, and mourn over our ignorance and perverseness, our impatience and unbelief; that we have entertained such hard thoughts of God; that we have charged God foolishly, unrighteously, and unkindly. Let us remember how dishonourable these conclusions are to him; how injurious to ourselves; and say, with David, "Why art thou cast down,

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289

O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." It is better that a Christian should err on the side of *privilege* than on the side of *legality*. It will have a better influence over his experience and practice. Let us take care that we are not in any measure or degree robbed of our confidence in a God of grace. Our confidence is our security. Without this, how

can we rejoice, or *ought* we to rejoice? But “my sheep,” says he, “hear my voice, and I know them, and give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”

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AUG. 13.—*A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.* Prov. xvi. 9.

THIS is the testimony of Scripture, and it is important in all such cases as these to make our appeal to “the law and to the testimony;” and here we read in one place, “Who knows what is good for a man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow.” In another Ave read, “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise nor yet riches to men of understanding; nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance”—what *men* call time and chance—“happeneth to them all.” And again in another place we read that “the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;” and again, “Man's goings are of the Lord; how then can a man understand his own way?” And here is a parallel passage: “The heart of man deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.” This book assures us that “he performeth the thing that is appointed for us, and many such things are with him.” This book assures us “that our God is in the heavens;” that he has done “whatsoever pleaseth him;” that he “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Not that God ever acts arbitrarily; he does act sovereignly, but we should remember that sovereignty always refers only to good, and never to evil. God *blesse*s sovereignly, but never *punishes* sovereignly. He “does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” He is always excellent in wisdom, and he doeth this or allows

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290

that, as our Saviour in addressing him says, “because it seemeth good in his sight.” What seems good in our sight may often be an imposition, but what seems good in the

sight of God must always be a reality. He has always reasons for what he does in the concerns of nations and churches, and families and individuals. These reasons are often "far above out of our sight;" for "he giveth no account of any of his matters," but they exist, and he is always influenced by them, and these reasons now satisfy himself, and they will satisfy us when they come to be developed.

"Since all the downward track of time  
 God's watchful eye surveys,  
 O who so wise to choose our lot,  
 Or regulate our ways?"

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AUG. 14.—*Hath God forgotten to lie gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* Ps. lxxvii. 9.

THERE is an infinite difference between the judgments of God and the judgments of men. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," saith the Lord; "for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." This Divine assertion may be addressed not only to unenlightened sinners, who are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them," but also to those who have "received the Spirit of God," that they may "know the things which are freely given them of God." Their illumination at present is partial; their views, in many cases, obscure; they frequently come to very erroneous conclusions, and sometimes they err where the glory of God and their own welfare are deeply concerned. We have a striking instance of this in the passage which will engage our attention this morning. Here is a mournful complaint: "*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*"—language which at least implies that God had ceased to be gracious towards the writer, and that he no longer exercised his care over him, and exhibited towards him no affection; while in reference to themselves, the wicked think too much

of the goodness of God, by mistaking the effects of his general bounty for evidences of his peculiar friendship.

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291

While living regardless of his praise, they yet persuade themselves that he will not be severe to mark what they have done. Yet the very reverse of this is the disposition of all the subjects of Divine grace. They know that self-deception is *tremendous*—that it is *probable*; and they know, too, that self-deception is *common*, and therefore they are afraid of it. And they often carry their solicitude beyond the point of duty; and in reading and in hearing they will apply to themselves what was intended only for others; for, as an old divine says, “There is no beating off the dogs without making the children cry;” and therefore they still refuse to be comforted. They think too little of the favourable side of the question, and dwell too little on the kindness and tenderness of God. Though they are concerned to please him, they often “walk mournfully before the Lord.” They are anxious as to how matters will go with them at last, and sometimes despair of ever seeing the goodness of God in the land of the living; and that he “has in anger shut up his tender mercies, and will be favourable no more.” Not that this is always the case. There are moments when their feelings are in unison with those of the Apostle when he said, “In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us;” “for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Then, again, the sky which was clear is overcast with clouds. Alas! he sighs, will the Lord cast me off for ever, and will he be favourable no more?

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AUG. 15.—*I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.* Ps. cxxx. 5.

THIS supposes some delay in God's appearance on behalf of his people. These delays have always been common. God "is not, indeed, slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." He is never beyond his own fixed time, but is often after the time which we have fixed for him; and, according to our apprehensions and feelings, he seems frequently to be inclined to be "favourable no more,"

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292

and to have forgotten to be gracious. But can this be the fact? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget thee." But "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," and especially when we deeply feel our want of a thing, when we are exceedingly attached to it. O, to look for God and see nothing of him! to inquire of all who pass by, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" and to look upwards and say, "When wilt thou comfort me? when wilt thou come unto me?" Oh, how trying is this, when we have waited for important intelligence by letter, or with anxiousness and eagerness the arrival of a friend or relative from a distance! How has time flapped over us with leaden wing! If we were knocking at a door and we saw a lion at a distance coming towards us, should we not feel every moment an hour ere the door was opened to allow us to enter in and find safety? And have we not been in a situation similar to this when we were constrained to say, "Make haste to help me, make no tarrying, O my God?" Here is the need of patience, lest we should not persevere in the course of duty, waiting on the Lord, and still keeping his way. The danger is, that we should abandon the door which we think is not open to us; or, in other words, that we should turn away from the throne of grace, saying, with the unbelieving prophet, "Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" "We may be assured that the enemy of souls will be busily at work, in order to act on our impatience, which is so natural to us; but "he that believeth shall not make haste;" he will "both hope and

quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Faith will preserve him from making use of improper means in order to obtain premature deliverance. Trouble in Scripture is called a prison. When God places us in it, we are not to endeavour to escape by breaking open the door or the windows. We may indeed, through the bars, look to see if he is passing along; and we may then, when we see him, cry, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name." "The righteous shall compass me about, but thou shalt deal bountifully with me." Here is the advantage of faith. It will tranquillise the mind at such a time. It will produce waiting by such considerations as these:—I will

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293

wait upon the Lord, for he is such a Saviour, and I have no claims upon him. I will wait for the Lord; how long did he wait for me—days, and weeks, and months, and years. I will wait for the Lord, for his time is the best time. He is a God of judgment; and "blessed are all they that wait for him." I will wait for him, for I know that in due time he will appear for my good, and I shall not be ashamed; for he has said, "None shall be ashamed that wait for me."

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AUG. 16.—*Be content with such things as ye have.*  
 Heb. xiii. 5.

FOR if we are not content with such things as we have, we shall never be content with such things as we would have. Hainan's riches and honours availed him nothing so long as he saw Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Ahab was the king of Israel, yet he was not satisfied with his dominions. No, he covets Naboth's vineyard; and because he cannot obtain it he is sick forsooth, and taketh to his bed, and can eat nothing. Adam and Eve in Paradise had a whole new world to themselves, but they were not satisfied. No, they must have a little more indulgence and a little more knowledge. The angels in heaven, were they content? Oh, no; Lucifer says, "I will set my throne

among the stars, I will be like the Most High." Thus do we find that there is no worldly portion which can satisfy the longing of an immortal mind; that "in the midst of their sufficiency" the owners are "in straits." Let us look at Solomon in all his glory, and hear what he says, after looking on all the works his hands had wrought, and all his labours to obtain happiness. "Behold," says he, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." So that we see that those who have attained to an affluence of earthly good, find themselves no nearer happiness than before, and that the fault lies in the things themselves. This is a reason why we should seek "the things which are above," which are satisfying and produce heart contentment. Moses prayed that he might be early satisfied with God's mercy. And God says, "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness." Oh, says David, "I am satisfied." "My soul

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294

shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." And says the Saviour, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." Among all the complainers, therefore, in our world there are some who have found what has set their poor hearts at ease; they have found the light of God's countenance; and this has put "more joy into their hearts than when their corn and their wine and their oil increased." They want more indeed *of* this good, but they do not want more *than* this good. They can say with Paul, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Contentment is a kind of self-sufficiency. Contentment cannot suffer a man to desire or want more than the providence of God affords him; he is therefore happy. He has a sufficiency—he has other resources—he has other compensations. The grace of God produces in him anew character; it makes him a "stranger and a pilgrim on the

earth," and leads him to judge of himself, not by what he has in the way, but what he has in the end. It comes to him and says, in the homely verses of Bunyan's shepherd boy in the valley of Humiliation,

"Fulness to such a burthen is,  
That go on pilgrimage,  
Here little, and hereafter bliss,  
Is best in every age."

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AUG. 17.—*God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* 1 John iv. 16.

CHRISTIANITY is the only religion of the heart, the only religion founded in love, and requiring only love in return. As to all other systems of religion, they always want the full assurance here expressed. Missionaries from abroad have declared that they never found anything among idol worshippers like love, real love, even to their gods and goddesses; they only dreaded them, and therefore hated them. No; there is no religion of love but the religion of Christianity. If we compare Protestantism with Popery, ob-

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295

serve Scotland, and compare it with Ireland. If we compare America with Spain, and England with France, it will be seen that Christianity operates according to the degree of the truth and spirit of it which are received. See what Christianity has done; it has not only been the power of God to the salvation of many, but where it has not operated *savingly*, what great moral and social advantages has it produced! As persons have received the truth "as it is in Jesus," they have always been distinguished by their humanity, by their benevolence, and by their exertions to do good. As Christians, we have reason to be fond of the religion which comes to us with this proclamation: "Now the end of the commandment," that is, Christianity, "is charity, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." But while we admire, let us remember the words of Young in another case: "Nor stop at wonder: imitate and love." Let

us keep this truth alive in our thoughts: "God is love." Keep the belief of it in our *prayers*, that we may feel not again the "spirit of bondage again to fear," but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry "Abba, Father;" that we may have boldness and access by the faith of Jesus. Let us keep alive the belief of this in all our *efforts* to do good, in seeking the welfare of souls, and in all our *trials*; it is this and this alone which will produce acquiescence. A view of God's power and of his authority may suppress murmurings and complainings; but it is a view of his love in these *dispensations*, that "he does not afflict willingly;" that it is for our profit, and that our advantage will be answered by it:—It is this that will bring us to his feet, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Lord, here I am; "do with me as seemeth good in thy sight." We should think of this and recommend it to all around us, and say, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Let it induce us to render our obedience cheerfully and affectionately, and by the mercies of God may we "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service," and thus he followers of God as dear children, patient like him, forgiving like him, liberal like him, "who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not;" "for if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

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296

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AUG. 18.—*The whole world lieth in wickedness.*

1 John v. 19.

THE world here means, First, *The world of which the Saviour said, Satan is the prince, and of which Paul says, Satan is the god.* "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not;" and therefore he grieved, and all Christians will like him grieve, that the world is ignorant of its real spiritual character and condition, and of its eternal welfare. Satan is called "the

prince of this world," because the people of the world are his subjects, and he rules over them and in them. And he is called "the god of this world," because they love him; and, however astounding, it is a fact, an awful fact, that Satan has his Sabbaths and his sanctuaries, his ministers, his preachers, his means and ordinances, as well as the God of Truth. When, therefore, a sinner is converted, he is said to be "turned from the power of Satan unto God"—turned from his power as a prince—turned from his power as a god. Secondly, The world here means the *disobedient and unbelieving* world, and it is always in the Scriptures spoken of as being in the way of destruction, and therefore we are dissuaded from it, and charged not to be conformed to it, lest we perish with it. Thus we read, that to "walk according to the course of this world," is to "walk according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Hence, says James, Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. And hence, says John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Thirdly, *The wicked are called the world*; not only because they are worldly, but because they have been, down to this time, immensely the majority of mankind. For there was a time when every imagination of the heart was evil continually, and when Noah was seen alone righteous in that generation. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah, but ten righteous men were not found there. How few would have preserved Israel in the time of Jeremiah! "Run ye to and fro through the streets

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297

of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." And, says the Apostle John in the Scriptures, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." Oh, yes, some are ready to say, but it is not so now. But suppose we take a globe, and colour all the parts of the earth where Christianity in any form, in any degree, prevails,

our feelings would be greatly shocked at the sight of the smallness of the dimensions, and we should be ready to fall upon our knees, and say, "Let thy way be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations." And if we take a Christian country, and examine the inhabitants—take a single village, and observe the tempers and lives of the natives, and then see whether the stones in their churchyards are chargeable with truth or falsehood, when they tell us that all the parish is gone or going to heaven. Then, if we take a congregation, one of a more evangelical complexion, and follow the people out of the house of God into common life, and let candour itself tell us how many of these abide with God in their calling—how many walk in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

"Broad is the road that leads to death.  
And thousands walk together there,;  
But wisdom shows a narrower path.  
With here and there a traveller."

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AUG. 19.—*Let thine eyes be on the field, that they do reap.* Ruth ii. 9.

WE are here called upon to be observant of what is transpiring at this interesting season of the year, and to magnify God's works which we behold in the valleys as they stand thick with corn, and the little hills which are rejoicing on every side. And the Christian has this special advantage over other beholders: he can look upon the works of creation and say, "My father made them all." Many months have rolled over our heads since the joyful shout of "harvest home" imparted delight and gladness to the heart of the careful husbandman, to whom this interval has been one of active exertion and patient anxiety. He prepared

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298

the soil, into which he cast the precious seed, the rains and snows from heaven watered the earth and made it to bring forth and bud. The winter's winds howled over the spiral blade. The tender blade became a stalk, the ear burst

from its soft and silken covering, and then appeared the full corn in the ear; and now the husbandman has given directions to his men to put in the sickle, for the time for them to reap is come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe. This is no new occurrence; these scenes are witnessed as regularly as the seasons revolve, and men think but little of him who controls the elements, that gives strength to labour, and blesseth the springing thereof, so that there may be seed for the sower, and bread for all. Let us therefore look upon the "fields that they do reap;" and observe, first, *The power of God*. When our Saviour brake the five loaves, and multiplied the particles, sufficiently to feed five thousand persons, the people, after they had eaten and were filled, wondered exceedingly. God, however, performs, if possible, a greater miracle before our eyes every successive season, in causing the earth annually to yield her increase; the difference is in the manner in which this power was exercised; this one was sudden and unexpected, the other is slower in its progress and constantly occurring, and therefore expected; and men wonder not at the power of God thus put forth, while the constancy of the event magnifies rather than diminishes the importance of the fact. Observe, secondly, *The faithfulness of God*. There was one year of universal famine on the earth, and but one, and Noah was full of fear; but to pacify his fears God set his bow in the cloud as an assurance that it would be so no more, but that so "long as the world should continue in existence, winter and summer, seed-time and harvest should not cease." And every season displays the truth and faithfulness of God. Observe, thirdly, *The goodness of God* herein displayed. What provision, how suitable, how abundant, how gracious. On whose behalf is all this accomplished? Why, on behalf of those who are not worthy of the least of all God's mercies; ungrateful, sinful worms, rebels, traitors, who try his patience and despise his long-suffering, who abuse his goodness and pervert his mercies; who are untractable under

his teachings, incorrigible under his correction, ungrateful under his favours, and unimproved and unprofited under all the means provided for their welfare. Observe, fourthly, The *wisdom of God* as displayed in the arrangement of the seasons; in the combined influences of earth, air, heat and cold, rains and snows, and the dew, which promote its growth; and in the connection between the providence of God and the exertions of the husbandman. It is the earth which produces the corn, but man must cultivate the soil; while it is God who produces the seed, man must sow it; and while it is God who ripens the corn, it is man who must reap it. "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

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AUG. 20.—*But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.* Isa. xlix. 14.

WE have here a mournful complaint. Let us trace it up to its source. There is a philosophical notion prevailing, and which is of a semi-infidel complexion, which supposes that the providence of God is general and not particular. It supposes that the Deity is engaged in managing concerns of whole worlds and systems at large, and regardless of individualities. As if it were beneath God to provide for what it was not beneath God to produce. But he who wings an angel guides a sparrow; and the mite lives by him as well as the elephant; and the glowworm shines by him as well as the sun. "He clothes the grass of the field," and "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." It is not, however, a philosophical notion, but a *religious despondency*, that thus affects Christians now, as it did the Church of old, and by whom the complaint was made. First, This despondency arises from *unbelief or weakness of faith*. Faith may be real, and yet weak, and *very* weak too. Our Saviour said to his disciples, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Our comfort must always be therefore according to our faith. "In whom," says Peter, "believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

There is always consolation here: in God's "riches of glory by Christ Jesus;" but these can only be apprehended by faith. There is always fruit enough on the tree of life,

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300

but faith is the hand by which alone we can gather it. There is always water enough in the wells of salvation, but by faith we must draw it; so true is the language of the prophet: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Secondly, It arises from *ignorance*. This is very distinguishable from the former; a man may believe as far as his knowledge extends. There are persons who have a very defective acquaintance with the grounds of a sinner's acceptance in the Beloved, and of the efficacy of the Saviour's blood to cleanse from all sin, and of the perfection of his righteousness as entitling us to everlasting glory, and of the permanency of the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things and sure," and which places out-standing more secure than it was before we fell.

"More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits above."

Now, although it will be allowed that the believer's *safety* does not *depend* upon the degree of his religious knowledge, yet his *comfort* must always be very materially *influenced* by it; and this is a reason why it is "a good thing for the heart to be established with grace." Thirdly, It arises from *desertion*. There is a suspension of Divine manifestations. Jonah felt this when in the belly of the fish: "Then I said lam cast out of thy sight." "The Lord hath forsaken me," says the Church here. Fourthly, It arises from *the conflicting troubles of life*; although these indeed might, if viewed properly, be considered as proofs that God has not forsaken and has not forgotten us; "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." But so it is that in our afflictions, and when they are various, and numerous, and some of them inexplicable, then we are ready to say—

"If I am his why am I thus?"

The fact is, all suffering is the consequence of sin, and therefore naturally reminds us of it. It *seems* to indicate *wrath*, and therefore we pray, "Do not condemn me." God is the source of light and comfort; and when there is no light and comfort with us, it is not so easy to persuade ourselves that God is with us. "If he be with us," said

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301

Gideon, "why then has all this evil befallen us?" When "deep calleth unto deep," it is no easy thing for the Christian to possess the "peace which passeth all understanding." Lastly, It arises from the *delay of God in the accomplishment of prayer*. "God is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness." He always *has* a time of his own, and this is the *best* time; and he never *goes beyond* this time; but then we expect him at an *earlier* time; and so when he does not come, or come so soon, we are surprised and confounded, and "hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Blessed are all they that wait for him. "It is a good thing for a man both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." We should always learn to distinguish between the *acceptance* of prayer and the *answer* to prayer. God always immediately *hears* the prayer of faith, but he does not always immediately *answer* it. *He waits* to be gracious.

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AUG. 21.—*Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.* Isa. xlix. 15.

OBSERVE, first, *The improbability of the fear thus affectionately reprov'd.* "Zion said the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me;" but, by a striking and touching metaphor, God here shows us how unreasonable and unrighteous were those fears. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" It is not probable that she should, but it is possible. It is the honour of females, that they are not only the fairer but the tenderer sex. The

young of all creatures are lovely and attractive always; but let us survey the image here. Here is a child, a harmless object, a helpless object, an endeared object, and towards which any one may feel compassion and tenderness. But we may observe that the child *here* is the mother's *own*, "the son of her womb," lately a part of herself, and endeared by the anxieties of bearing it, and the pain and peril of bringing it forth. Nor is this all; for the mother is a *nursing* mother, and the child is a *sucking* child, looking up with ineffable satisfaction to his benefactor, and with his little hands stroking the cheeks of her who feeds him.

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302

This is the image, and therefore you must allow that it is not likely that a woman should "forget her sucking child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb." But then, though it is improbable, it is a possible case. "Yea, *they* may forget." More than one of them: "*they* may forget." There are two supposable cases here. The first is, the mother may be bereft of reason, or not survive, and so not be able to remember. And the other, that she may be criminally and unnaturally led to hide herself from her own flesh. The instances are not rare in which the wretched mother has destroyed her own offspring—sometimes under the pressure of want, and sometimes to hide her shame. When, therefore, we apply images to God, we must strip them of all their imperfections; we must apply them to him completely, and as far as possible divinely. The feelings of nature are nothing compared with the kindness of God. The heart of a Thornton and Howard was all ice and all steel compared with the benevolence of our God. He inspires all the tenderness that creatures feel; and he infinitely surpasses them himself. "If ye being evil," says he, "know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you," says he, "yea, and much more abundantly; "she *may* forget, yet will I not forget thee."

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AUG. 22.—“*Yet will I not forget thee.*” Isa. slix. 15.

OBSERVE the *certainty of the assurance*: “Tet will I not forget thee.” Here we have to assure us his word—his own word—the word of a God of truth and of faithfulness—a God “whose faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds”—who is as unchangeable as he is incomprehensible. A Being concerning whom Balaam, all wicked as he was, could say, the Lord “is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” The word of a Being who is free from all the sources of unfaithfulness—such as forgetfulness—such as a change of mind—such as a failure of resources—to make his word good. To render all this more striking

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303

to us, hut not more binding to him, he has been pleased to add to his word his *oath*; and because he could swear by no greater he sware by *himself*; and, says the Apostle, “An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife.” “Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise”—not to make, but to show—“the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things,” for his word was as immutable as his oath—“that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” Hence, says God in the fifty-fourth chapter, “This is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee; for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.” Here we find that God’s oath interposed with regard to two things—the drowning of the world, and the desertion of the Church. We believe the former, *entirely* believe it. Why do we not dread a

second deluge? It is not because we think there is not water enough to drown the earth again; but it is because he hath sworn that he will not. We rely upon his oath; and whatever enemies may assail his Church, he has said, "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." How then can the Church, that is, *his* Church, be in danger? In all this, as Dr. Watts says, he—

"Lays the foundation of our hope,  
In oaths and promises and blood."

Covenants formerly were ratified not only by oath but also by *sacrifice*. So was this covenant of God by the sacrifice of his own Son—a sacrifice of infinite value. Is not this enough? No, he has not only given us the assurances in all these modes, but he has done everything he can do at present in the way of *pledge* and *earnest*; for we are not "yet come unto the rest and inheritance which the Lord God

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304

giveth us." All this will be done as surely as he hath remembered us in our low estate; as surely as he has given his own Son for us; as surely as he has called us by his grace; adopted us into his family; loved us with an "everlasting love, and with loving-kindness he has drawn us." "For 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?" "If while we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life."

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AUG. 23.—*Many will intreat the favour of the prince:  
and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.*

Prov. six. 6.

WE all naturally look towards creatures, especially if they are placed above us, if they are wealthy or powerful, and seek to gain their countenance and their assistance. But there are four differences between our seeking after the favour of a mortal and our seeking after the favour of God.

First, In seeking after the favour of a mortal we may *debase ourselves*; we maybe required to submit to mean compliances, and to make improper sacrifices in order to please such an individual. But in seeking the favour of God the very exercise elevates us; it dignifies, it improves, and profits us. Secondly, In seeking after the favour of a mortal we are *never sure of success*. After toiling for weeks or years we may find that we have been labouring in vain, and spending our strength for nought; but if we seek the favour of God we are sure of succeeding. "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find;" "Their hearts shall live that seek God." Thirdly, If we gain the favour of a mortal we are *never sure of retaining it*. Who has not been tempted, in passing through life, with David to say in his haste, "All men are liars." This appears to be uncandid and uncharitable; yet, after all, the Scripture says, "Men of high degree are vanity, and men of low degree are a lie: if they are tried in the balance together, they are altogether lighter than vanity." "Confidence," says Solomon, "in an unfaithful friend is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint," not only *useless* but *painful* to us. Whereas if we

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305

obtain the friendship of God we *are* sure of keeping it. There is no changeableness with him; he is "without variableness, or the shadow of turning." "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." And then, fourthly, If we could not only gain but even retain the favour and friendship of a superior mortal, yet *what, after all, could it do?* What could it do for us in the many emergencies and incidents of life? What could it do for us in the agonies of conscience—in the adversities of life—in a dying hour—and in the judgment of the great day? But when God says, "I will never forget thee," this is saying everything; this meets every want, every feeling, every fear. Oh, his presence can sustain us under the loss of every possession, or comfort us under the loss of every relative or friend; and we may say with our Saviour, "I am alone, and yet not alone, because the Father is with me." If he

says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," why, what is it but saying, I will guide thee with my counsel; I will keep thee with my power lest any hurt thee; I will sympathise with thee in all thy sorrows; I will attend thee in all thy afflictions; I will not suffer thee to be tempted "above that ye are able to bear;" "my grace is sufficient for thee;" and "my strength shall be made perfect in your weakness?" On this assurance we may rely, and say with David, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Leaning on this assurance we may witness with composure the dissolution of the universe; and looking beyond it say, "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

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AUG. 24.—*Who went about doing good.* Acts x. 38.

THIS is the eulogium which Peter pronounced upon our Saviour. The eulogium is indeed short; but oh, how beautiful and glorious. It reminds us of David's acknowledgment with regard to the Supreme Being: "Thou art good and doest good;" and the Saviour was the image of the invisible God. Let us hearken to his own language, and observe what his humility must have been if he was

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306

conscious that he was only a man or a mere mortal. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" "my Father worketh hitherto and I work;" "believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very work sake;" "I and my Father are one." But here we can contemplate God in the face of Jesus, and are fully persuaded that the power and the patience, and the tenderness and the readiness to relieve and pardon by which he was distinguished in the days of his flesh, are the attributes of the Deity. In him we may place all our confidence; in him our peace is secured; and in him our joy is fulfilled. We here find what only can meet our souls'

necessities: "God manifest in the flesh." And here we hold communion with the Father of our spirits—

"While Jews on their own works rely,  
And Greeks of wisdom boast,  
I love the incarnate mystery,  
And there I fix my trust."

Oh, how delightful it must have been to have followed him, while he was upon earth, from place to place, as in these journeys of mercy he went about doing good; and to have stood by him while he fed the hungry multitude upon the grass; while he opened the eyes of the poor beggar by the wayside; while he raised the widow's son to life and delivered him to his mother; while he was preaching the gospel of the kingdom to the poor; while the common people heard him gladly; and while he healed all manner of diseases among them. And this pleasure we may in a degree enjoy even now, as we peruse by faith the evangelical history, where the sacred writers have recorded the works of their honoured Lord with unexampled simplicity and faithfulness.

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AUG. 25.—*We have known and believed the love God hath toward us.* 1 John iv. 16.

This is the language of all those in whose hearts the love of God hath been shed abroad, who have been made to differ from those whose hearts are at enmity with God. These are blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places with

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307

Christ," and are made willing to stand forth and declare—

"—to sinners round,  
What a dear Saviour they have found."

Thus, as God's witnesses, they gratefully and practically testify of the love God hath towards them. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and hath sent his Son to be the propitiation of our sins." They are ready to say, Ah, he found me under the curse of the law, a

wanderer from himself, yea, in rebellion against him, and he spared me; he fed me, he clothed me, he called me by his grace; he has forgiven all my trespasses as if they had never been committed; he has admitted me into his house and into his family, and he holds communion with me now; and I walk with God, I lean upon his arm, and I am waiting for the “manifestation of the sons of God,” when “that which is in part shall be done away,” and I shall be “presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Yes, “God is love,” and if there were no other proof in the universe, I am the everlasting monument of this truth. I am a monument of this truth, inscribed *TO THE GLORY OF GOD*. And what then will it be when this acknowledgment comes, not from an individual, but from myriads—from all the redeemed, from all the sanctified? And even then the exemplification of the subject will not be absolutely complete; it will be always growing, for ever and ever it will be growing, in the evidence “God is love.”

“Glory be to him who gave us,  
 Freely gave his Son to save us,  
     Glory to the Son who came,  
 Honour, blessing, adoration,  
 Glory from the whole creation,  
     Be to God and to the Lamb.”

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AUG. 26.—*I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* Exod. iii. 6.

ALL along from the beginning God showed favour to some for the sake of others. The principle of his dispensations has ever been the promotion of personal godliness for rela-

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308

tive considerations; teaching men that if they were blessed, they were also to prove blessings to others; and above all it was intended to turn them to the belief of the mediation of the Lord Jesus, for whose sake all the nations and all the

families of the earth were to be blessed. Under the law the Lord was addressed as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because the covenant made with them was for Israel, in whom they were blessed, and for whose sake they received all things. But now the covenant made for the spiritual Israel was made with a far more glorious character, who was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, ere the earth was. His name is Jesus; it is in him that we are accepted, and "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places;" and it is for his sake that we receive all things; and therefore, while to the patriarchs and to the Jews he was known and worshipped as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," he is now under the gospel addressed as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." There are two things derivable from this address—"I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The first is, that unquestionably *Moses had some knowledge of a future state*. The very promise which God had made to the patriarch implied this. He said to Abraham, "I am thy God;" "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession." How was this verified with regard to his life? He never had actual possession of the land of Canaan. All the possession he ever had there was a burying place, and that he dearly paid for. "By faith, therefore, he sojourned in the land of Canaan, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;" for "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and whose maker is God." Wherefore the Apostle says, "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." Therefore our Saviour referred to this when, addressing the Sadducees, he said, "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."

Their spirits were living in an intermediate state. But even this is not the principal thing: their bodies were to live in the resurrection of the just. And he speaks of it as if it were already accomplished; for purpose and fulfilment with God are the same. He does not say he *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but “*I am* the God of Abraham,” &c; “their spirits are with me now; their renewed bodies shall be by-and-by, as certainly as they are now in the dust.” We also observe that *God sustains his relationship to those of our connections who are gone before*. Delightful considerations! Where is the heart that has not bled?—where is the person who has not said, “*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness?*” How pathetic was the reflection of Jacob when he was dying. He looked back to the cave which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, in the land of Canaan. “*There,*” says he, “*they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah; and there I buried Leah.*” There is one now ready to say, “*There I buried my darling child.*” “*There I buried,*” says another, “*my precious husband.*” “*There,*” says another, “*I buried ‘the desire of mine eyes, removed from me with a stroke.’*” Where are these dear spirits now? With God. Where are their bodies? Sleeping in his bed; not perishing; but by-and-by to be raised up; they are all living unto him.

“God their Redeemer lives,  
And often from the skies  
Looks down and watches all their dust,  
Till he shall bid it rise.”

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AUG. 27.—*And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which worketh all in all.* 1 Cor. xii. 6.

IF we take a comprehensive view of the whole human family, we shall find existing among them numberless and striking differences. They differ in their country, their condition, their complexion, in their stature, in their speech, in their apparel, and in their manners. Yet there is

also a great resemblance among them. They all walk erect; they all reach maturity by degrees; they all eat, and drink,

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310

and sleep; they all decay and die. And we should observe that the things in which they agree are far more important than those in which they differ. The resemblance regards what is essential in human nature. The variety is what is accidental only. That which makes us rich or poor, European or African, is far inferior to that which constitutes us men. This may be considered an image of the Church of God. Let Christians differ in their opinions, in their speculations, in their discipline, in their various religious usages, in their forms and ceremonies—these are only the *dress* of religion; the *body* is essentially the same. God has promised “I will give them one heart and one way.” And he has ever since been fulfilling this in every age of the world. Under every dispensation and in every grade of society, his people have been the same; their wants the same; their dependence the same; their tastes the same; and their principles the same. Hence the prayers and praises of those who lived very remote from us, both as to time and place, furnish mediums for the expression of our own desires and complaint. Whatever differences may characterise them, they can all adopt as their own the language of David, when he says, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;” or the language of Jeremiah, when he says, “Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; or the language of Nehemiah, when he says, “Remember me, O my God, for good.”

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AUG. 28.—*The good will of him that dwelt in the hush.*  
Deut. xxxiii. 16.

A VERY touching and striking incident occurred in connection with these words being spoken. Moses, the servant of the Lord, had received an order to ascend up unto Mount Nebo, and die there. He readily obeyed, but before he left the people whom he had brought up out of

Egypt, he was determined to leave a blessing behind him, and so he blessed all the tribes of Israel. But when he came to Joseph, he said, "Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things

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311

brought forth by the moon, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth, and fulness thereof, and for the *good will of him that dwelt in the bush*: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren." We here see how he was impressed with the scene which happened forty years before. How vividly he called to remembrance the place whence he had seen the burning bush, and had heard the voice of God out of the midst of the bush. How many things are impressive in remembrance. Distressing things are the most impressive, and the most adapted to enter into our feelings. But there are also many pleasing scenes which will be remembered, if we have possession of our faculties and the exercise of our reason, even when we come to die. Thus David says, "My soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar,"—the little hill where probably he had received some signal tokens of the divine favour which he could never forget. And thus it was with Jacob, when he was returning after a very improper journey: "Let us arise and go to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." And when Moses was looking back to this period, he said, "The Lord was with Jacob." It was as much as if he had said, There is nothing like it for a nation, or a tribe, or an individual, or the dearest connection—nothing like "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush." Oh! what sacrifices some persons make, and what pains they take, what meanness they submit to, in order to gain

the goodwill of some fellow-creature, who is elevated above them, and able to serve them, but who can do little for them in their principal exigency. Oh! let us seek the Lord, who is infinite in all his resources. Our fathers tried, and trusted him, and all the multitudes before the throne speak well of his name. If we had all the world we should be miserable, unless we had his good will. "The good will of him that dwelt in the bush" will be sufficient for us, and nothing else. He will thus remove the curse of affliction, and the sting of death, and thus enable us to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

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312

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AUG. 29.—The inheritance of the saints in light.  
Col. i. 12.

NOW are believers the "sons of God;" though the period of their manifestation is not arrived, though they are minors now, and under age, they are "heirs," and they receive their remittances, and their supplies, and they have their trainings, and their attendants, and their preparations. Witness the language of the Apostle here: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Let us notice the inheritance itself. Observe, first, *Its character*. It is spoken of as *one common state*. As there is one common salvation, so there is one common inheritance. An earthly inheritance is impaired and diminished by division, but it is otherwise here. Here the number of pensioners really adds to the happiness of every individual partaker. And if we consider its *magnitude*, how shall we *estimate* this inheritance? by what standard shall we judge it? Compared with this, what is the inheritance of the worldling, abounding with all the honours, riches, and pleasures of the earth? Compared with this, what the inheritance of the Jews in the land of Canaan—"a land flowing with milk and honey, and the glory of all lands?" What was the inheritance of Adam previous to

his fall? what was Eden? what was the tree of knowledge, compared with the tree of life, in the midst of the paradise of God? What is the inheritance of angels? He who is their *Lord* is our *elder Brother*.

“Never did angels taste above  
Redeeming grace and dying love.”

John, therefore, in the vision, saw the saints nearer the throne than the angels. What are we to think of that blessedness that it is intended to display—the value of that blood which purchased it, the blood of God—that blessedness which is designed to show in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of his grace—that blessedness which exhausts all the world of nature in furnishing images to express it—that blessedness which after all the Scriptures have told us concerning it, is glory that is *to be* revealed. Observe, secondly, Its *possessors*. “It is the inheritance of

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313

the *saints*.” This is a term abused and ridiculed by many but it is the language of Scripture, and “God is not mocked.” The word simply means, holy beings. Of such importance is the possession of this attribute, that we are assured that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” The design of the gospel is to make us holy. We are not such by nature. “Therefore,” says the Apostle, “we are *called* to be saints.” This will apply to the external call by the Word, and to the internal call by the Spirit—the one requiring, the other producing it. All God’s people are to be considered as saints: they partake of holiness now; they love holiness, but they are not *completely* holy: at present they are “encompassed with infirmities,” and “groan, being burdened,” but it will be otherwise at death. *Then* they will drop their imperfections; *then* they will join the “spirits of just men made perfect;” *then* they will be “presented faultless” before the throne of God; *then* they will be as innocent as Adam in Paradise, as holy as the Son of God himself. For though “it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” we know that “when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall

see him as he is." Observe, thirdly, *The region in which it is to be enjoyed.* "The inheritance of the saints in light." Hell is darkness, "outer darkness," where there is "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." The world is darkness, therefore our deliverance from it is represented as being "called out of darkness into marvellous light." But the Church is light; all the members of it are "children of light and of the day;" they are "not of the night nor of the darkness." And yet while they are here, they are able only to survey the dawning and the glimmering of the day. *Now* we "walk by faith, not by sight;" *now* "who can understand his errors?" *now* how often do we mistake appearances for realities? *now* how often does evil cheat us under the notion of good? *now* how often are we baffled in our inquiries, turn which way we choose, in order to move on? *now* what is conjecture but a thorny maze? *now* how unable are we to discern our own privileges, and what distress arises from our doubts and fears? *now* how frequently we mistake our best friends for our enemies, and charge God with foolishness and unkindness, while his wisdom

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314

and goodness are peculiarly at work to advance our happiness. But—

"There is a land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign,  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain."

This is the "inheritance of the saints in light." And heaven is light—all light; there is no darkness at all—perfect light; endless light. Our sun will "no more go down by day, nor our moon withdraw her shining, for God shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended."

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AUG. 30.—*Which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.* Col. i. 12.

HAVING noticed the inheritance, let us now proceed to consider *the meetness for it*. In order to take a correct view of our fallen condition, it is necessary to remember that we are both guilty and depraved, and therefore, in order to our restoration and to the enjoyment of this inheritance, two things are necessary—a change of state and a change of nature; the one is derived from, the righteousness of Christ, the other is derived from the Spirit of Christ; the one is accomplished for us, the other in us. The one gives a title to the inheritance, the other gives us the meetness for it. Observe, with regard to this meetness, first, *The nature of it*. This meetness consists in what the Scripture calls the “renewing of the Holy Ghost,” giving us new views, principles, and inclinations, and gendering in us heavenly habitudes. We are made meet for heaven by doing the work of heaven, and by enjoying the pleasures of heaven. Now, what is the work of heaven? It is to praise and serve God. And thus Christians are praising and serving God. Now, what is the happiness of heaven but to see his face and hold communion with him? And Christians are doing this now. All adventitious circumstances are there unknown; all physical, local, social, and religious distinctions will be there done away for ever, and none remain but those which have resulted from character. And if I am made meet for heaven, I must be rising above all adventitious

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315

distinctions already, and be prepared to say, “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” No bigot, therefore, will be meet for such a state. The party to which he belonged in this world will then, as such, have no existence; and if it had, it must be very small indeed compared with the multitudes which no man can number, gathered out of all kindreds and nations, and people and tongues. Secondly, *Its necessity*. The higher the destination an individual has in view, the more necessity is there for a meetness for it. This is the case with a prince; this is the case with a minister. And Christians

are exalted to both these dignities; they are "made kings and priests unto God." And can this require no meetness? All aptitude is the relation of two things to each other, by which they approximate and touch and unite. It is obvious a man under the influence of bodily disease cannot enjoy the pleasures of the healthful. Without an ear for music, even melody or harmony will be regarded with irksomeness or indifference. The pleasures of temperance have no charm for the drunkard. God does not therefore, as some people imagine, exclude any as unregenerate from heaven; they exclude themselves. The impossibility does not arise from his decree, but from the nature of things. Therefore, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Happiness does not arise merely from the excellence of an object, but from the faculty of being rightly suited to it. That makes us happy which meets our wants, accomplishes our hopes, and affords gratification and indulgence to our minds and feelings. Thus it is with regard to heaven, and so necessary is this meetness for it. Observe, thirdly, *The author of it*. It is God "who hath made us meet." As the Apostle finely remarks in another place: "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." If we are a building, we are his workmanship; if we are fruitful, in *him* "is our fruit found." We indeed bear it, he produces it. By the grace of God we are what we are. Observe, fourthly, *The certainty of it*. "Who hath made us meet?" "Oh," says the Apostle, "the thing is done, and it is done *in us*; and we *know* it is accomplished." Many will readily acknowledge that God is the author of

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 316

this meetness, who are afraid they are not the subjects of it; they fear frequently they have no part nor lot in the matter, and that their heart is not right with God. But the "full assurance of the hope" unto the end is not only *desirable*, but it is also *attainable*. A Christian may be destitute of the assurance—he *never* can be destitute

of the desire, and therefore he will be found upon his knees continually praying, "Say unto my soul I am thy salvation," and "Give me a token for good."

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AUG. 31.—*He that cometh unto God must believe that he is.*  
Heb. xi. 6.

IT is very desirable and absolutely necessary to be fully and correctly informed concerning God. Our consolation and our duty equally require that we should know who and what he is, what his connection with us, and what are his purposes towards us; for our apprehensions of God are in the quality of first principles; and if the first principles be erroneous, all the consequences deducible from them will partake of the error. The standard of all perfection must be his *nature*; the rule of all worship and obedience must be his *will*; the source of all happiness must be his *favour* and *friendship*. But where is this all-important knowledge to be obtained? Pythagoras was a heathen philosopher; he believed in the transmigration of souls; he possessed great talents and learning and reputation; and it is reported of him that when he was asked, "What is God?" he required two days to consider it; at the expiration of which he required four days; at the expiration of which he required eight days; and so continued to enlarge the period of reflection; and at length confessed that the more he considered, the more he was at a loss to determine. We take up the same question this morning; but we are going to address it, not to a heathen philosopher, but to a fisherman of Galilee, John—"What is God?" "God is love." But here another question immediately arises: "How came this fisherman of Galilee to be possessed of this knowledge, and to be prepared to answer this question so satisfactorily and so readily?" "Because he was a partaker of revealed religion, was one of those to whom were committed the oracles

of God; one of those who knew the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation." "For the world by wisdom knew not God." Men soon learned indeed to construct ships, build houses, and to handle the harp and the organ, long before the Flood; and ages afterwards we find Assyria, Greece, and Rome successively improving upon each other; in the arts and sciences they excelled. And if we would see a fine piece of statuary *now*, we must fetch it from the ruins of past ages. But as to the knowledge the heathens had of the things of God, we have not only the testimony of the Apostle, but we have their own history and writings to convince us that "professing themselves to be wise they became fools," they were "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened." And there is not a peasant in this country who possesses the Bible, however unlearned he may be, but knows more of God and of his gracious purposes towards mankind than all the sages of antiquity. Yes—

"Tis God's own sovereign power and love  
That crowns the gospel with success,  
And makes the babes in knowledge learn  
The heights, and breadths, and lengths of grace.

"But all this glory lies concealed  
From men of prudence and of might,  
The prince of darkness blinds their eyes  
And their own pride resists the light."

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SEPT. 1.—*And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.* Exod. iii. 6.

HERE we see, first, that *Divine manifestations always produce self diffidence and abasement.* "Moses hid his face." Those are always pleased with little things, who have not been abroad to see great ones; but those who have travelled much, and have had their attention directed to great and noble objects, have had their minds proportionately enlarged. Such will no longer think their own little hills

and rivulets a-head of the Nile and the Alps. So if a man who thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think, is placed in the company of men of real intellectual greatness, how soon his little swelling self-importance

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318

will subside; how soon is he reduced to his proper level; so is it with the man who has become acquainted with the glorious God. He will say with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" or with Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" or with Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," on his perceiving his power in the miraculous draught of fishes. We see here also how little we can physically bear. "Moses was afraid to look upon God;" "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The splendour would be too much for the eye; the sound would be too much for the ear; the poor frame would break down under that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We can only bear a certain degree of sensation. How soon is nature overpowered! When Jacob heard of the prosperity of Joseph, "there was no more spirit in him." And when John saw his Redeemer, though he knew him well, and had often reclined on his bosom, and we should imagine that he would not be afraid to meet him again, yet, "When I saw him," he says, "I fell at his feet as dead." God proportions his dispensations to our present condition. It was commonly said in those days, "No man can see God's face and live." Moses believed this. But then, do we not often forget our principles? Some time after this, Moses even prayed for this manifestation; in mercy God did not grant him his request. Moses prayed, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And the Lord said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And

he said, Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord said, Behold there is a place by thee, and thou shalt stand upon a rock, and it shall come to pass while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee into a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen."

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319

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SEPT. 2.—*I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.* Isa. xlv. 19.

HERE is an intimation, and more than an intimation, a gracious assurance, that God is the hearer and answerer of prayer. According to some, the success of prayer is confined entirely to its exercise and influence. That there is an influence derivable from the exercise of prayer cannot be doubted. But though this is truth, it is not the whole truth, nor the principal truth. Prayer benefits us by its very operation, because it brings us into a proper state and frame of mind, and because if we pray sincerely we shall act correspondingly. But if we look into the Scriptures, we shall find many cases where the blessing could not have resulted from the operation of the prayer, but from the interposition of God as manifested in answer to prayer. Jacob's prayer did not soften Esau's heart by its exercise, for Esau knew not that he was praying for him, but it was softened by the answers of God. The same with Hezekiah. The addition of fifteen years to his life was not the result of the sanative operation of his prayer, like the application of the bunch of figs to the boil, but it was the answer of God to it. And if there be any meaning in the Scriptures, there is something to be done, something to be communicated by God himself as a God hearing and answering prayer. The husbandman's labour does benefit him, for it aids his harvest; but he wants a crop: and he manures, and ploughs, and

sows with this view and expectation, and he obtains one. And if a man prays aright and according to the Scriptures, he will believe in this, and be affected by it: that God does something, that God conveys something in the course of his providence and grace in answer to prayer. The answer to prayer should be always regarded, but there are many persons who pay no regard to their prayers. Nothing can be such a mockery of the majesty of God as appearing to draw forth his attention when there is no intention of noticing his benefits. In reference to answers to prayer it must, however, be allowed there is some difficulty in explaining and understanding the subject. God does not always answer by granting the same things we implore, but he acts like a wise and

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320

kind father who gives not according to the child's desire, hut according to the child's necessities; not according to what he asks, but according to what he requires; not according to his wishes, therefore, hut according to his wants. The child may wish for a holiday, but he wants school; he may wish for sweetmeats, but he wants medicine. The goodness and wisdom of the Father must appear in giving him not what he asks or wishes for, but what would be really good for him. So it is with God; many of these answers to prayer come in the way of great troubles and huge afflictions, and so they are not recognised, they are the last things in the world we should suppose to be answers to prayer. God is the Lord of all, and without going out of his ordinary course of nature and providence, he can answer prayer; and thus many answers escape our notice, because we look for something too particular and too remarkable. After all, if we do find a difficulty in the case, if we cannot easily determine what is an answer to prayer, let us adhere to the language of Scripture, and remember that we cannot pray in vain, for he hath not said unto the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." Here we may rest,

here we may have a full persuasion that "it is good for us to draw near unto God."

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SEPT. 3.—*The Lord shall choose our inheritance for us.*

Psa. xlvii. 4.

HOW much very often depends upon a single step in life. Our reputation, our comfort, our usefulness, our character, may depend upon the movement, and repentance may be quartered upon us for life. The effects with regard to the present state may be irretrievable. We are commanded therefore to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise. We are morally to keep always awake; to have our senses exercised to discern between good and evil. We are always to watch and pray. This should induce us to repair to God in humble and earnest prayer and say, Thou, Lord, shalt choose our inheritance for us; for if we do not pray as well as watch, we shall watch in vain. And those who are just stepping into life, who are issuing into the world, should say from this time unto God, "Thou art my Father, he thou the guide of my youth." And those who are in per-

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321

plexity, and in difficulty, should wait upon God, and let integrity and uprightness govern them in all their movements; and not only wait upon God in prayer for direction, but they should wait for the manifestation of God's will as displayed in the events of providence. Always remembering the case of the Jews; they had a pathless wilderness before them, and how were they to find the way? Oh, there was a fiery cloud and pillar to guide them—fiery by night and cloudy by day. By this they were always to be influenced; and if the cloud began to move, though it were at midnight, the watchman immediately ran through the camp exclaiming, "The pillar is moving." "In what direction?" "In such a direction," and they immediately followed it: if it turned to the right, they turned; if it turned to the left they turned; when it paused, if it were for a day, or a week, or a month,

or a year, they rested too. They would not go without their guide, and they would not suffer their guide to go without them.

“Through each perplexing path of life  
 My wandering footsteps guide,  
 Give me each day my daily bread,  
 And raiment fit provide.  
 Such blessings from thy gracious hand,  
 Lord, humbly I explore,  
 And thou shalt be my chosen God  
 And portion evermore.”

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SEPT. 4.—*The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*  
 Rom. i. 18.

HERE we have the objects against which the wrath of God is revealed. It is against *ungodliness*. Ungodliness comprehends all the sins against the first table of the law. Ungodliness consists in a disregard of God. The ungodly do not fear him, do not love him, do not worship him, do not confide in him. God is not in all their thoughts; they practically say unto him, “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” It is a dreadful mistake which many make in supposing that they may be very godly characters, provided, they are moral, for religion is

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322

nothing without godliness. What can be the duty we owe to any of our fellow creatures compared with what we owe to him who is our Maker, our Preserver, our Benefactor, our Governor, our Saviour? The servant that regards every one but his master, and the child that is dutiful to every one but his father, would be very inadequate images to hold forth the condition of the man who professes to pay a proper regard to other beings, while he lives without God and without hope in the world. On the other hand, though there may be morality without godliness, there can be no godliness without morality. We are therefore reminded that the wrath of God is revealed against *un-*

*righteousness.* Unrighteousness comprehends all the sins against the second table of the law. Unrighteousness is injustice in our dealing with our fellow creatures. "Let no man," says the Apostle, "go beyond and defraud his brother." But this does not go far enough; a person may be unrighteous and yet keep within the bounds of law and civil decency, and yet be unrighteous in other respects and instances. It is unrighteousness "if we render not to all their due." It is unrighteousness if we do not afford relief to those who are in distress when we have it in our power to do it. "Withhold not," says Solomon, "good from them to whom it is due." "Whosoever hath this world's goods," says the Apostle John, "and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" It is impossible if we regard the commands of God, and the design of Providence, and the claims of our common nature. And this is not all. It is revealed against "ALL unrighteousness"—the concealed and the open, the refined and the gross. Men are for ever laying down rules which God does not sanction, and distinguishing between things which have no difference in his sight. They do not "worship a graven image," but they "take the name of God in vain." Others do not swear, but they "profane God's holy day." Many who would deem it sinful to employ a carpenter or a mason on the Lord's day employ others. Some would not for the world steal, but they can surround the tea-table and bear witness against their neighbours by the hour. They would not murder, but they covet. And are not *all*

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323

these forbidden? And we are to regard all these without partiality; for all unrighteousness is sin.

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SEPT. 5.—O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.  
Ps. civ. 24.

GOD is wonderful; and in his works the Most High has displayed the glory of his infinite perfections. Not only are they great and marvellous works, they are also great and manifold. Who can estimate their *number*? If we only consider the heavens, the work of his fingers, and think of the stars which cannot be numbered,

“Our thoughts are lost in reverent awe.”

Infidelity has displayed its gross ignorance in mocking at the idea of comparing the number of stars to the sands upon the sea shore; for the discoveries of astronomers have proved the comparison to be perfectly consistent with facts. And if we turn our attention from the heavens and look upon the face of the earth, how “manifold” are God’s works there; how numerous and diversified its inhabitants; what numbers visible; and what vast numbers are there which are invisible. If we look at the trees, herbs, plants, and flowers, are we not compelled to exclaim, “How manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.” Let us consider their *diversity*. How large are some! how minute are others! If we take up the microscope and the telescope, and examine them, we shall be constrained to say of each, This is “the finger of God.” What vastness in the sun! what smallness in the mite! And the animalculæ, all of them, however imperceptible to the naked eye, have their peculiar qualities, their tribes, their families, their birth, their breeding, their education, their government. Only observe the commonwealth of the ants, and the monarchy of the bees; how manifold and how marvellous are these works! Thirdly, If we consider the *means of their support*, they are all provided for; there is sufficient for all and for all seasons; so that we are constrained to say, “The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season;” “thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”

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324

Then, lastly, What wisdom do we behold in *their structure*! If we examine only one of the vegetable tribes, how mys-

terious its growth, how simple its form, and yet how beautiful! so that our Saviour said of one of them, "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." What man contrives man can comprehend; and the more admiration is excited the more disappointed we feel because we see that what we behold admits of improvement. Whereas in the works of God, all fully answer the ends for which they were intended; and the more frequently and minutely we examine them, the more abundantly are their beauties seen and admired. We sometimes wonder how we shall employ the successive ages of eternity; but we need not be at a loss here. In the human frame—the soul, the mysterious junction of the two, the particles of earth, an insect, a blade of grass; here is more than enough to engage the study of the longest life. We find that we are in the region of perfection; and also in the region of infinity. "The earth is full of thy riches."

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SEPT. 6.—*This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes.* Ps. cxviii. 23.

ALL that the Lord hath done and is doing is worthy our attention and admiration. It is pleasing to contemplate his *agency in nature*, especially the successive seasons of the year; and to observe how he maketh the "outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice;" and how he is at the present season "crowning the year with his goodness." so that "his paths drop fatness." It is pleasing to contemplate his *providence* in presiding over the affairs of empires and nations, and families, and individuals, so that a sparrow falls not to the ground without his knowledge; and "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." But it is much more interesting still to see him, as the "*God of all grace*," go and fetch a soul to himself; to see him go and take a sinner from the ruins of the fall, and make of him an eternal excellency; to see him go and call a sinner from a state of nature into a state of grace, and then from a state of grace usher him into a world of glory and hap-

piness. And God is perpetually doing this thing. This is the Lord's doing, and displays marvellous wisdom and

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325

loving-kindness; and we are called upon to "magnify the works of God which men behold." But where are we when God is doing these great and marvellous things, that we are not observing and admiring and adoring? This is a representation, not of visionary-scenes, but of veritable facts, of interesting and important realities: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." And there are four things connected with the Lord's doings in grace and salvation which should never be lost sight of by us. First, That we either *are or may become the subjects of this blessedness*, arising out of these manifestations of God's mercy. Secondly, That we may become the *means of this blessedness* and glory to others, being "fellow helpers to the truth;" and though we cannot efficiently, yet we may instrumentally, "convert the sinner from the error of his way, and save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Thirdly, That the *partakers of this blessedness*, and the monuments of this mercy, *are continually increasing in numbers*; and notwithstanding some desponders who are ever looking on the dark side of things, and are expecting the end of the world to be nigh at hand, we are looking for a more extended and universal evangelisation of it. And, lastly, That the Lord's doings will go on *attracting the notice and eliciting the adoring admiration of his people*, until "all flesh shall see the salvation of our God together." Oh, there is nothing of which we can be more sure than that the cause of Christ, on whose behalf the Lord's doings are specially put forth, is the noblest of his works in the world; and that of the day in which they shall become objects of universal interest and admiration we as yet have only witnessed the dawn; but that this dawn will shine more and more unto the perfect day.

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SEPT. 7.—*Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.* Rom. i. 6.

OBSERVE here the calling of the Gentiles by Jesus Christ. This work was assigned to him in ancient prophecy, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee." Among whom, says the Apostle, addressing a Gentile

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326

Church, "are ye the called of Jesus Christ." Mankind were always under a dispensation of forbearance and mercy, founded on the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He therefore "never left himself without witness in the world, in that he was continually doing men good, sending them rain and fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness;" as if he would have "called" them to himself by the seasons of the year, by the beauties of nature, and by all the comforts of life. And he has "called" men also by affliction; he has called them to consider the evil of sin, the vanity of the world; he has called some by the mortality of others to remember their own; and to live as dying creatures. He has "called" them by conscience, sometimes in whispers, sometimes in thunders. We too are "among the called of Jesus Christ." And thus he has called us a thousand times. But observe the calling here intended is principally *by the gospel*, and especially by the *labours of his servants*. As to his own ministry he was the minister of the circumcision only; he was only "sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And yet, says the Apostle to the Ephesians, "He came and preached peace to them that were far off, and to them that were nigh." Them that were "nigh" were the Jews, them that were "far off" the Gentiles; but he never preached to them personally. The Apostle therefore in that place of Scripture, as also in this, refers to the dispensation which the Saviour had established after his resurrection, when he said to his Apostles, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Go forth preaching "repentance and remission of sins among

all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." And Jesus appeared to Paul, and sent him to the Gentiles, to "open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light; from the power of Satan unto God;" to call them from "dumb idols, to serve the living God;" from superstition to worship "the Father in spirit and in truth;" from the vileness and misery of sin to the beauties, the glories, and the blessedness of genuine religion, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost. And wherever the Bible comes, if a man is able to read it, he is there "called "according to this testimony by the Lord Jesus. It is however chiefly by the preaching of the

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327

Word. This was at first ridiculed; it was called the "foolishness of preaching." Yet by this God chose to "save them that believe." The wisdom of the plan is however generally acknowledged and sanctioned. The Saviour when he ascended up on high, and received gifts for men, gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the Saints for the work of the ministry to be perpetuated to the end of time. Observe, secondly, His gospel was not only to inform them, but to *accomplish their pardon*. But his calling them was to *awaken their attention*. Before then there were none seeking after God. Though they all felt their want of happiness, they were seeking after it where it could never be obtained; and therefore he came forth in the gospel and called them, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c. And thirdly, his call was to *justify the appropriation of the blessings displayed*. When a man becomes convinced of the wrongs and dishonour his sins have done to God, he will find it no easy thing to believe that God is willing upon his return to receive him graciously. There will always be something within that will always be ready to check him, and to say to him, But what warrant have you for this? The man in this case can immediately reply, Here is my warrant, here is my authority; I am allowed, I am invited to come and partake of these blessings; I am called to do it. An invitation to

go to court is called a command of her Majesty; an invitation to us to come and partake of these blessings must be considered as a command from the King of kings and Lord of lords. And it is thus expressed in the Scriptures: "This is his commandment; that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent." Oh, here is enough to meet the tremblings of conscience; here is enough to show us that if we decline to accept these blessings, even if it be from a sense of our own guilt and unworthiness, it is an act of disobedience against the will of heaven. This is his commandment, "Look unto me and be ye saved."

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SEPT. 8.—*The wiles of the devil.* Eph. vi. 11.  
Satan, says one, had not been a devil if he had not first

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328

been an angel of light, and therefore he was originally a superior being; but he has been improving his skill by experience in his beguiling and seductive artifices for near six thousand years. Hence the Apostle thus speaks of the wiles of

"Satan, the fowler, who betrays  
Unguarded souls a thousand ways."

This fowler never "spreads his net" in the sight of any bird; he covers it, conceals his guns and his snares, till unaware we are entangled or caught. Sometimes he falls upon us from quarters where we had little or no apprehension of danger. Sometimes, and indeed how frequently, how invariably, he approaches us in the hour of success, and while enjoying the smiles of prosperity, when our fears are laid asleep. It is very true, as Watts says—

"We should suspect some danger nigh  
When we possess delight."

Some of his greatest temptations come even after spiritual enlargements and privileges. We see Paul was in danger of being exalted above measure, owing to the abundance of revelation; and good Hezekiah, after he was delivered from the Assyrian invasion, and recovered from his sick-

ness, and had fifteen years added to his life, was puffed up with pride, "therefore there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem." We sometimes think of being safe when alone. David was alone when he was overcome; and how can we be safe in solitude if this being has access to us, and possessed as we are of a deceitful heart? How secure Peter seemed; he said: "Though all men shall be offended yet will I never be offended." And when our Saviour came so much the nearer, and said to him, "Peter, before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice;" he said, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." A *few hours* only after this "he began even to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man." Oh, how often does Satan overcome us by "the deceitfulness of sin," and by false and flattering names! He comes to one and says, I would not have you covetous—covetousness is a very bad thing, but only *lay up for the children*. To another he says, I would

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329

not have you proud; pride is a very bad thing, but only show a *becoming degree of spirit*. I do not wish you to be revengeful: this is very unchristian; but *when you forgive, never forget*. Ah, says the Apostle, "We are not ignorant of his devices."

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SEPT. 9.—*For there is no difference*. Rom. iii. 22.

NOTHING is more strikingly apparent, when we survey mankind, than the differences which obtain among them, in country, complexion, in language, in feature, and in manners. Indeed, the differences seem to be almost endless. And yet there may be general points of resemblance, and they are, after all, the most important, inasmuch as they make manifest the fact that, amid all the circumstantial variety in the human family there is an essential sameness; so that the Apostle says, "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We have heard much about the doctrine

of equality. If this equality intends an equality of substance, it is a very foolish and absurd thing, for, in the first place, it is unattainable; secondly, if it were obtained it could not be continued one year, one month, one week, perhaps not one day; and, thirdly, if it were attained and continued it would be far less desirable and useful than the distinctions designed by Divine Providence, for it would preclude or injure the exercise of those virtues and the performance of those duties which are now called forth by the various relations and ranks in the community. Yet there is such a thing as equality, and this equality is of three kinds: First, There is *a civil equality*, an equal right to unequal things; that is, a poor man has as much right to his cottage as the nobleman has to his mansion; a journeyman has as much right to his wages as the master has to his services. The law which secures the privileges of the peer, also secures the rights of the poor. The mower in the field lays his homely garments and food under the hedge, while he works freely on, and the law says, he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of mine eye. Secondly, There is also *physical equality*. This is both original and final: "He has made of one blood all

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330

nations of the earth;" the human race derive their existence from the same father, Adam, the same mother, Eve, and the same maker, God. "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them both." They have the same limited faculties and the same wants, are subject to the same pains and diseases, and they are heirs to the same immortality; they are doomed to the same grave: "the small and the great are there, and the servant is free as his master." There is, thirdly, *Amoral and spiritual equality*. All men are in the same spiritual condition as men, and all Christians are in the same state and have the same privileges as Christians. There is no difference, says the Apostle. There is no difference as to *men*, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is no difference as to *Christians*, all of them "being justi-

fied freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

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SEPT. 10.—*The Son of man*. Matt. xx. 28.

THIS was the testimony our Saviour here gave to his own character. It is not, perhaps, peculiar to the New Testament; at least, David speaks of “the Son of man whom God had made strong for himself.” This *probably* alludes to the Messiah. Daniel also speaks of “one like the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven.” This *certainly* refers to the Messiah. But we find the expression constantly in the four Gospels; and it is used there not by the four evangelists, but always by himself. And how frequently, how constantly he calls himself “the Son of man!” and yet how often did he give intimations of his divinity! There are things spoken of him which are certainly not true of him as man: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And here are things spoken which do not apply to him as God: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” He hungered and thirsted as man: he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; as man he suffered; as man he sympathized and wept with other sufferers; and as man he died. How, then, is this difficulty to be solved? Why, only by this—that there are the Divine and the

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331

human natures conjoined in his wonderful person. While thus he called himself the Son of man, he gave frequent and distinct intimations as to his divinity. First, *By proclaiming himself always* the subject of his own ministry: and though he was meek and lowly in heart, yet he was always preaching himself: “I am the bread of life;” “I am the light of the world;” “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me;” and “I am the resurrection and the life.” Secondly, *By claiming the attributes peculiar to Deity*; as, for instance, with regard to one—and one is enough; for if he be so possessed of one attribute pecu-

liar to Deity, he must possess all. As to his omnipresence: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And, thirdly, In suffering *others to ascribe the same perfections to him, and allowing himself to be adored and worshipped* without rebuking the adorers and the worshippers. This being premised, we may notice two satisfactory reasons why he was accustomed to call himself "the Son of man." The first is, because he *would gradually develope himself* This aim continued with him even to the end. Just before he was leaving the world to go to the Father, he said to them, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" "Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself;"—he will not be the author of a new dispensation, but will confirm and establish mine;—"He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." And the other is, *because our concern with him principally lies in his assuming human nature.*

"Till God in human flesh I see,  
My thoughts no comfort find."

And therefore the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, says, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." He makes the incarnation of the Saviour the very medium of our salvation; and so it is, and every view of it will convince us of the necessity of it. Being man, as our teacher, his terror does not make us afraid. Being man

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332

he becomes our *complete example*; which he could not have been had he been God only. How could he have gone before us with regard to all that impulse and reverence, obedience and humility, tenderness and suffering, which we see in his character? And yet, how much of our religion is connected with this! Being man, he can gain our confidence and be able to sympathize with us in our distresses, which he could

not have done as God only. "In that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." And being man he could become perfect therein, and "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

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SEPT. 11.—*And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber, that was in Samaria, and was sick.*  
2 Kings i. 2.

THE Bible abounds with biography. We do not, indeed, meet with many full-length likenesses, but we have many sketches of characters which enable us to distinguish them, accompanied with facts the most interesting, instructive, and profitable. The Scripture not only encourages, but warns; not only records good examples, but evil; and he who said, "Remember Lot's wife," calls upon us this morning to remember Ahaziah. Ahaziah was the son of Ahab and Jezebel. Where both parents are wicked, and notoriously wicked, as in this case, what depravity may be looked for from their united example, authority, and influence! "One sinner destroyeth much good;" and although his course was short—for he filled the throne of Israel only two years, but during these two years what guilt did he contract, and what misery did he produce!—we have here his *affliction*. This was two-fold. First, national. Moab, who had been tributary to the king of Israel, now rebelled against him, and thus his revenue was curtailed. And, secondly, personal; "he fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber, that was in Samaria." To how many evils are we exposed! How much do we owe to the providence of God as the preserver of men! There are many who think they are only in danger when they travel by land or by water, in winds, or tempests, or in hurricanes; but we are daily and hourly, yea we are *always* in danger, when we are walking in our gardens, and in danger even

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333

when we are walking in the rooms of our dwellings. His affliction was the result of *accident*, that is, as to the suf-

ferer himself; but "shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it." Though his providence is *never* to be *blamed*, it is *always* to be *owned and acknowledged*; and of every affliction we may say, as our Saviour did to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, unless it were given thee from above." He was also sick, but whether from the fall and the fright, which was probable, or whether it was an addition to the accident, cannot be determined; but he was sick. Afflictions seldom come alone. The clouds return after the rain. But as God "doth not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men," why is this? He himself asks the question: "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more." "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." And we often speak *as if they were peculiar to the righteous*, whereas Paul says to the Corinthians, "There has no temptation befallen you but such as are common to men." Yea, there are some troubles and sufferings from which religion secures its possessors. Though afflictions be the effect of sin, according to Isaiah, "they are the fruit to take away sin," they are designed for our profit. Yet they could do little of themselves. When they *find* principles in us, they can *actuate* those principles, but they cannot produce them. Seed, sun, and showers may cause vegetation, but where nothing is sown nothing can be brought forth. It is well when chastening and teaching go together. As David says: "Happy is the man whom the Lord chastens, and teaches him out of his law," and which was his own experience; "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." But how seldom is this the case! How many there are concerning whom we exclaim with Jeremiah, "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved. Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock. They have refused to return." And this was the case with Ahaziah under all his complicated afflictions; on his bed of languor and pain he is devising mischief, and seeking to work wickedness.

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SEPT. 12.—*Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.* 2 Kings i. 6.

“SKIN for skin,” says even Satan, “yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.” Who does not “love life and wish to see many days?” But a man of the world like this man, what can wrench him from life except violence? Observe then, first, His *inquiry*. He sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron. If the inquiry showed a love of life, the manner of it displayed the love of idolatry. Ekron belonged to the Philistines, and Baal-zebub was the god of flies; the heathens made gods of everything which they imagined would secure them from apprehended evils; guilt is always fearful, fear is always superstitious, infidels are often some of the most credulous of mankind; it is only the testimony of God *they* cannot believe. They can believe any thing else, *every* thing else—improbabilities, yea, impossibilities. Those who would condemn others as guilty of the folly of idolatry, would do well to remember that a man may make gold his hope and fine gold his confidence; he may make an idol of reputation, of friendship, or of anything else; and if Ahaziah is worthy of censure for inquiring of a heathen god, what shall be said of those who go to fortune-tellers, and to prophetic almanacks, and to dreams and inspirations, or to anything else in order to obtain the knowledge of futurity which God has designed to keep from us! It is not for us to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his power; “secret things belong unto God, but things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children.” Now we see that God considers himself insulted even by neglect, or by preferring others to him as our portion, our guardian, or our guide. And thus he might, by a similar mode of interrogation, reprove many. But it is not because there is

no help in God that we make flesh our arm. It is not because God refuses to direct our steps, that we neglect to ask counsel of him, but lean to our own understanding. It is not because there is no power in the gospel

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335

that many go about to establish their own righteousness, and will not submit themselves unto the righteousness which is of God. Let us therefore observe, secondly, The *rebuke* and the *threatening he received*. The messengers were now on their way to Ekron; the Lord knew all. He saw them going from the sick chamber, and he knew the way by which they were going, and sent Elijah to meet them, who gave them this message of rebuke and threatening, which he charged them to deliver to their royal master. Although the messengers appeared to have been ignorant of the person who addressed them, they however soon returned with the message they had thus received from the prophet. Alarming and confounding as it was, Ahaziah was not so affected by it—or at least he pretended not to be affected by it—as not to inquire concerning the person charged with such a declaration, or reproof and foreboding; and after hearing the description they gave of him, he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite. We see from hence that Ahaziah was not ignorant of the character of his reprover, and therefore he sinned against light and knowledge, and this aggravated his following conduct. Now let us see the *effect* of this message, which he knew to come from the prophet of the Lord. We know how it was with Hezekiah, when Isaiah came to him with this message: “Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.” “He turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight; and Hezekiah wept sore.” And surely we shall find Ahaziah with a broken heart, and with a contrite spirit; surely we shall find him in the dust of self-abasement, crying, “Lord, save me or I perish,” “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

He believed the message; at least it is probable that he did, but he is not influenced by his convictions. Does this seem strange? And who *are* influenced by their knowledge? Whose practice *is* conformable to their principles or belief? Are we not continually meeting with persons who have the sentence of death in themselves; who by years, or accident, or disease, or infirmity, are forbidden to think of their return to life, and yet are no more con-

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336

cerned to be prepared for the grave than the young and the healthful. It is not the *certainty* of the thing that sways with men. No, but it is the *thinking* of it; it is the *realizing* of it by *meditation*, bringing it *home* to ourselves. It is thus the belief becomes practical.

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SEPT. 13.—*I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.* Psa. cxix. 63.

MAN is a social being, and as soon as he comes under the power of religion, the social principle will be sanctified as well as other things. The man who before could not be even pulled away from scenes of vice and vanity, is now able easily enough to give up his sinful pleasures and ungodly companions. Another party now rises in importance in his view; these draw away his mind, and respecting whom he now says,

“In such society as this  
My willing soul would rest,  
The man that dwells where Jesus is  
Must be for ever blest.”

Oh now he feels his need of the blessings which constitute their portion, and therefore prays, “Remember me with the favour thou bearest unto thy people; look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto them that love thy name.” He loves the same exercises in which they are engaged; delights to go with them to the throne of grace; to the house of prayer and of praise; to the table of the Lord; and to walk with them henceforth in

all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blameless. How often Christians look back to the period when everything pertaining to the people of God became attractive and inviting to them. If they saw the name of one known to be a sincere Christian, it seemed to endear him to them. As they have been passing the meadow, or the field, or the house of a pious individual, they could not help saying: O, how I envy those to whom this belongs, and who live under that roof. And could they have turned to the individual they would have said, as many have injudiciously done, Oh that I were like you; Oh that I were in your state. And as they have looked upon the communicants at the table of the Lord, they have been ready to exclaim, "How

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337

goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; and thy tabernacles, O Israel." They were companions of them that feared the Lord in principle, and by inclination; before they might have been so by circumstances or by profession; and if they did not "take hold of the skirts of him that was called a Jew," it was not from want of love, but from shrinking back through fear, and by a sense of their unworthiness to be associated with them. But after a while, after they had sung and sighed,

"Oh, let me see thy tribes rejoice,  
And aid their triumphs with my voice,  
This is my glory, Lord, to be  
Join'd to thy saints and near to thee."

Oh then they united themselves with them in the bonds of a covenant which shall never be broken. We here see what it is that makes people valuable: not worldly distinctions, not adventitious circumstances, but this, that they feel and exemplify the qualities which David ascribes to the citizen of Zion, whatever be his circumstances, "They fear the Lord," and "keep his precepts."

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SEPT. 14.—*Let him do what seemeth him good,*  
I Sam. iii. 18.

WE are not at our own disposal here. We should therefore submit ourselves to the will of our Lord and Master, and say, "Here am I, let him do with me as seemeth him good." We must not, therefore, complain if he restrain us; we must not murmur if he tries us; we must not repine if he bereaves us. The gardener having a rare and beautiful flower, feels interested in it, and views it with pleasure, but when he goes by the parterre some day he finds it is gathered, and he says angrily, Who has gathered this flower? looking around. One says to him, "The master, he gathered it," then he is silent. So was another when he sustained such a loss. "And Aaron held his peace." And David, referring to his feelings under similar bereaving circumstances, said, "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth because thou didst it." And God himself says, "Be still and know that I am God." He has a right to determine our connections, the bounds of our habitations, and the way in

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338

which we are to glorify him. And he never exercises the right but for our own welfare, because he is infinitely wise and infinitely kind; we may therefore well resign ourselves to him. He calls some to public stations; he orders others to walk in the shade; some at his bidding cross over land and sea. They also "serve that wait," and they also that suffer. And frequently Christians have been the most useful in glorifying their Lord in the fires of tribulation. Thus they have awakened attention, and when their temper and their demeanour have said in their sorrows, Though I mourn I do not murmur; I know, "O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." "Let thy loving-kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word, unto thy servant." "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." When this has been the language and the experience, what an impression has often been made. How it has displayed the excellency and the efficacy of the gospel in showing its rich supports and consolations.

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SEPT. 15.—*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.*  
Rev. ii. 4.

IT is very desirable to have a friend: one who will wipe off the dew of an unwholesome evening from our brow, soothe us in our sorrows, guide us in our perplexities and in our weaknesses; and, above all, one who will kindly tell us of our faults, for they are our own faults, and we ought to know them; and they are our own faults which, if we are wise for ourselves, we shall endeavour to correct, and however we may be pained we shall not be offended at the discovery. We shall rather say with David, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." "Faithful are the wounds of a friend," and such a friend is Christ. "He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." "He is a friend who loveth at all times," "a brother born for adversity;" and as his friendship is without change, so is it without flattery. He can praise, but he can also censure. Therefore he says, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten;" an instance of this we have in these words: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against

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339

thee." This reproof was prefaced by a very high commendation, which this Church received from the lips of the Saviour: "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil, and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars, and hast borne and had patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured and hast not fainted." But after all this he adds, "Nevertheless." Oh this regretful word! how painful to hear praise followed by censure. How mortifying to see beauty associated with blemish. Who does not lament to see an exquisite piece of workmanship marred by some *one* defect? In this case the proximity and prominence of these excellencies render the fault more offensive. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee;" and where is the individual against whom he has not some charge to bring? Alas! in

many things we offend all. We ourselves, with all our self-love and all our ignorance, can see much in ourselves which is amiss; how much more can he discern who is infinitely wise and infinitely holy—who sees more vileness in our duties than we ever saw in our sins. How nothing against thee, O my soul? Nothing against thee in thy prayers, in thy services, in the state of thy heart, and in thy motives as well as in thy actions? Our prayer should ever be, “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

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SEPT. 16.—*Thou hast left thy first love.* Rev. ii. 4.

WE should always make a difference between unavoidable infirmities and those declensions which, by the grace of God, we may escape. None of us advance as we ought to do; but this is still very distinguishable from turning into by-paths, or drawing back when in a proper road. How then are we to understand this charge? If we consider the words as applying to the *Church of Christ in the present day collectively*, then the charge may refer to the declension in the number and graces of the present race of professors, as compared with their predecessors; and this is no unusual thing. The gospel, when introduced into a place, is commonly more successful at first. The Church resembles a newly-opened *mine*, which works freely at

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34<sup>o</sup>

first, but afterwards requires much labour and yields little; so that by-and-by the owner abandons it, only leaving round the mouth some rubbish and cinders to tell the passengers there was once a mine. Everything in the Christian profession is prone to degenerate. Where is the denomination or church that has long remained in its glory? This reproof will apply also to *individuals*. There were those who had fallen, and the charge is, the declension of their *first love*. In order to understand this, we may observe that a Christian's feelings towards Divine things are commonly very lively and warm at first. They have the charm of novelty, and there is a simplicity of character

which is lost afterwards, through changes arising out of new connections, new conditions, new circumstances, which by their intermixture debase, though they do not destroy, its nature. The young convert resembles a child, more remarkable for affectionate feelings than for knowledge or courage or anything solid; and such a character is very pleasing. "A tree," says Mr. Newton, "is most valuable in autumn, when laden with fruit; but more lovely in spring, when covered with blossoms." God himself notices this in his address to the Jews by Jeremiah: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." God loves a warm heart in religion. This is peculiarly desirable, and more acceptable to God than dull, dry indifference; man judgeth by the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart. If Christ were to address us from heaven, might not his language be, concerning us—It is true you serve me; but it is rather from a sense of duty than privilege. It is true you hear my word, but not with that lively attention as at the beginning. It is true you observe my Sabbaths; but you do not hail them as heretofore, singing at their dawn,

"Welcome, sweet day of rest,  
That saw the Lord arise,  
Welcome to this reviving breast  
And these rejoicing eyes."

It is true you do not altogether "restrain prayer before God;" but where are those strong crying and tears by which it was once distinguished? where are those frequent and fer-

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341

vent ejaculations, "Lord, help me?" It is true you do not verbally deny me before men; but how often do you find it difficult to confess me? You sometimes wish to escape the *shame* of the cross; how then can you *glory* in it? You have not abandoned my cause; but where is the *zeal that* induced you to say, "Who is weak, and I am not weak! who is offended, and I burn not!" But we may understand the charge *generally*. It is said of Jehoshaphat that

he walked in *the first ways* of his father David; and it is a sad implication that his *first* ways were his *best* ways. We have reason to believe that the king never equalled the shepherd in devotion.

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SEPT. 17.—*Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.* Rev. ii. 5.

THIS admonition includes three things. It enforces, first, *Recollection*: “Remember whence thou art fallen.” All religion begins in serious thought: “I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” There is nothing more useful than self-recollection. There is no means better adapted for reviving the soul than a review of former experience. It is therefore the very thing the Apostle makes use of to the fallen Galatians: “Where is the blessedness of which you spake?” as if he had said, “Have you gained anything by the exchange?” and in this case, sanctified recollection was the means employed to restore this church to her first love. Secondly, It enjoins *repentance*. We are to view it as a state full of self-condemnation, self-abhorrence, and grief. This is enjoined not only on sinners, but also on saints, and they will be the subjects of it as long as they remain in the world, as long as the performance of duty has a deficiency in it; and how much of this does the believer discover if he looks back only a week, a day, or on a single exercise of religious worship. Some may think Christians thus circumstanced must live a very deplorable life; but he is never more blessed than when he can feel: indifference arises from our insensibility. The Christian’s repenting days he call his best days; he finds *that* to be the most blessed state, when he is under the cross pouring forth blessed tears of sorrow and joy, while he beholds him

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342

who was pierced by him and for him. Thirdly, It enjoins upon us *renewed obedience*; “do the *first* works;” begin again, be as simple, as earnest, as patient, as circumspect, as at first. There had been a manifest declension in those

performances which had previously distinguished this church. This is obvious by the reproof, *Thou hast left thy first love*, being followed immediately by this admonition, "Do *the first works*:" they abounded before in works, in labour, in patience, in faithfulness, in zeal; and they had long persevered in all these, and were actuated by a regard to his dear name. This was "their first love," and these their "firstworks." Now there was a deplorable declension; and the Saviour here enjoins a return to their former love and service. And as the Saviour *demands* this, so we must acknowledge he *deserves* it. Provision is made not only for a Christian's perseverance in the ways of God, but for his increase; and this is commanded, "Give all diligence to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity."

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SEPT. 18.—*Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: ... who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.* Psa. ciii.

I, 2, 4.

GRATITUDE is our subject this morning, and a very interesting subject it is. It is worthy of our observation, that when the Apostle is speaking of the heathen, he says that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, *neither were thankful.*" Gratitude to God is to be expressed in the thoughts of the mind, the language of the lips, in the actions of the life, which testify a concern to make suitable returns, while it is not in our power to make compensatory ones; these are David's words. By nothing was he more distinguished than a disposition of thanksgiving and praise. His gratitude here has three attributes. First, It is *personal*; "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Our religion must be social as well as personal; but while it

must not end at home, it must begin at home; and relative religion without personal will always be found wanting in excitement, in energy, in extent, in continuance, and very commonly in success. Secondly, It is *fervent*: "And all that is within me bless his holy name." All my thoughts, my feelings, my understanding, my will, my memory, my conscience, my affections, and my passions. Thirdly, It is *rational and well founded*: "And forget not all his benefits." Nothing can properly affect or influence us when it is out of our recollection. Out of sight, out of mind: and out of mind, out of motive. Whence arose the ingratitude of the Jews of old? Bad memories. "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten the God that formed thee." "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." It should, therefore, be our concern, not only to recal our mercies, but to reckon them. Lastly, It is *specific*. David here specifies five things, but this morning we shall only dwell on one of these—the kindness of God in providence. How blessed have we been in the seasons? How is the year crowned with his goodness. How has the earth been filled with "his riches." We depend upon the brutes more than they depend upon us; and nothing pertaining to their welfare can be indifferent even to our selfishness. And has not his tender mercies been over all his works, so that he has provided for the wants of every living thing? He has made the grass to grow for cattle, as well as herbs for the service of man. The cattle have never sinned; they have never forfeited the care and kindness of their Creator. But where is man? the sinner, the rebel, the traitor. How has he been regarded? What has been done for him? We saw the sower going forth; a season always of peculiar solicitude—and then, after the months of winter, we went forth and saw God blessing the springing of the earth. We saw first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. We heard the little hills rejoicing on every side; we saw the valleys standing thick with corn; we walked through the waving fields, and while we paused in the midst of the cross path,

lifted up our eyes and hearts, and said, "Thou hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor." And the heart

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344

preached from these words of thanksgiving. What clear shining after the rain, and what suitable weather afforded for gathering in the precious produce of the fields. And after this shall we expose ourselves to the reproach of Jeremiah: "Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season. He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

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SEPT. 19.—*And nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee.* Isa. lv. 5.

IT early obtained belief in the Christian Church, that, for predicting thus freely the calling of the Gentiles by Messiah, the prophet Isaiah was sawn asunder—indeed, Paul mentions it as a proof of his moral heroism; for, says he, "Isaiah is very bold," &c. Let us notice First, The *ignorance of the people*: "the nations that knew not thee." They were, as Paul says, "without Christ;" that is, without a revelation of him. They never heard of his name, and they knew nothing of his redeeming blood and renewing grace. He was unknown even to the princes of the world, who lived either near or among the people to whom pertained the oracles of God: for "had they have known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Jesus, when he was dying, said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Peter says to the Jews: "I wot, brethren, that ye did it in ignorance." Paul, educated at the feet of Gamaliel, referring to his persecuting the Church, declares that he did it "ignorantly and in unbelief." And when the Saviour appeared to him, and addressed him, he said, "Who art thou?" It is not the reality of things, therefore, but the knowledge of them which must affect and influence us. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever

believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Let us notice, secondly, The *Saviour's attraction*. Observe the *centre*. "They shall run UNTO THEE." The dying patriarch said: "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Israel also said: "To thee shall men come." And Peter said: "To whom can we go but unto thee, for thou hast the words of eternal life?" Where

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345

else in the universe can we find one who is "made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption?" Where else can we find "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places?" If there were only one well belonging to a town, all the inhabitants must go to that for supplies, or perish with thirst. In the time of famine, all the multitudes that repaired to Pharaoh were authorised by him to go to Joseph. "He has," said he, "all the storehouses and all the supplies." Thus the gospel says to sinners: Go to Jesus, "in him all fulness dwells." There you can be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Let us, therefore, repair to him and say: I am perishing, but thou hast bread enough and to spare. My heart is a stone, oh turn it to flesh. I am guilty, blot out my transgressions. I am sinful, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." And to encourage us, let us remember that he is as willing as he is able, and as free as he is full; that he is now saying, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Observe also the *swiftness ascribed to them*. It is not said they shall walk, but "*they shall run* unto thee." We should never overlook the words which the Holy Ghost uses. There are other terms of similar import. There is "flying." "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows," away from the storm? The Apostle employs another term: "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us;" alluding to the manslayers, who were running away from the avenger of blood to a city of refuge. What can there be

in any case that might induce a man to run that might not be applied in a much higher degree to sinners who are seeking salvation by Jesus Christ? Would the nearness of danger make men run? *They* know that hell is pursuing them. Would the magnitude of the object make them run? They know that "one thing is needful," and that compared with this everything else is less than nothing and vanity. Would extreme want make them run? Their earnest exclamation is—

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"Give me Christ or else I die."

Would the strength of desire make them run? "They now

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346

hunger and thirst after righteousness;" and now, "as the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth their soul after" him. Would the shortness and uncertainty of their opportunity of effecting it make them run? Would a man run if he saw the bridge ready to be drawn, and the door ready to be shut? *They* know that life is all their season; that "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

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SEPT. 20.—*In whom we have redemption through his blood.*

Eph. i. 7.

REDEMPTION supposes a price; and here we see

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"The precious price that bought us  
Was his atoning blood."

Observe, first, It is here only a *poor burdened* conscience can find relief. Under a sense of guilt, by the blood of the cross we can approach the footstool of mercy, and bow before the most high God. He hath showed us what is good. We hear the voice that cries: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And it is this that constitutes the gospel glad tidings of great

joy. It assures us that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin.” There are those who have made the trial of it, and can therefore speak of its sufficiency from their own experience. By believing they have entered into rest; not only have their consciences been tranquilized, but they even joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, “in whom we have redemption through his blood,” and “by whom they have now received the atonement.” Let us follow their example, and say—

“Jesus, my great High Priest,  
Offer’d his blood and died;  
My guilty conscience seeks  
No sacrifice beside.  
His powerful blood did once atone,  
And now he pleads before the throne.”

Observe, secondly, That the *love of the Saviour* as herein displayed should *powerfully impress our minds*. The monarchs of the earth have often sacrificed the lives of their subjects for the safety of their own. Yea, and when their own has not been in danger they have immolated thousands and millions on the altar of their pride and vanity and revenge. Where was

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347

one of them ever to be found who gave his life for the lives of his subjects? But it is said of Jesus that “he shall save the souls of the needy,” that “precious is their blood in his sight.” He said himself, “I give my life for the life of the world.” “Herein is love”—truly “greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.” Jesus has done tiiiis. He has done more—he died for his enemies. Lastly, If “in him we have redemption through his blood,” *we are not our own*. What a man has purchased is surely his own. If he has purchased us, we have no right in ourselves to anything we are, or anything we have, but we belong entirely to him. And what a clear and undeniable claim has he to the whole. It is here he has wooed and here he has won. It is here he has drawn, and here he binds us “with the cords of a man and the bands of love.” It is, as Cowper says, “a soul redeemed,” and there-

fore passes through the world perpetually singing, "To him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever." And let this be said not only "by our lips, but also by our lives," "by giving ourselves up to his service and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days."

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SEPT. 21.—*Ye are not your own.* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

CHRISTIANS are not their own; they are bought with a price, even "with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." This, therefore, is not only a great, but oh! what a powerful claim. Therefore, we have no title to ourselves, and having no title to ourselves, how is it possible that we can have a title to anything we now call our own? "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; so that living or dying we are the Lord's, for to this end he both died and rose again, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and the living." Our time, our talents, our endowments, whatever they may be, are to be employed and improved for him. "Occupy till I come," he says; and when he comes, he will expect to receive "his own with usury." Let us therefore remember that, as our

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348

time is not our own, we may not lie as long in bed in the morning as we please, or that we may lounge and loiter in the day as we choose. We shall soon have to appear before a Being who has said to us, "Redeem the time." Nor can we suppose that our tongues are our own, and that we may use them as we please. We shall soon be summoned into the presence of him who has said, "For every idle word that men shall speak they must give account thereof in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;" and who inspired his Apostle to say, "If any man among

you seemeth to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth himself, that man's religion is vain." Nor is our substance our own, that we may either hoard it or expend it as we like. We shall soon be in the presence of a Being who has told us "to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Our thoughts are not our own to be placed upon what subjects we please; but they are to cluster around him, and we should be able to say with David, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them." We have passions, and we ought to be able to say with Watts—

"If there be passions in my soul,  
And passions, Lord, there he,  
Let them be all at thy control,  
My Saviour, all for thee."

And, whatever be our talents, "as every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same." "If any man speak, let him speak according to the ability that God giveth," "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever."

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SEPT. 22.—*Then came the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on the left, in thy Kingdom.* Matt. xx. 20, 21.

NOTHING is said on this occasion of the father or husband.

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349

He might have been dead, he might have been absent, he might have been otherwise minded. Without indulging in illiberal reflections or in invidious comparisons, it is well known that the maternal heart is too easily accessible to the emotions of children, and a female heart too much alive to the distinctions of rank. Here we have a mother soliciting for her two sons places of trust and power.

And these two sons were James and John. We have reason to fear the motion originated with them, though it was proposed by the mother; and if so, it is humiliating in the extreme, that after all the instruction he had given them, his disciples should have been such dull scholars as yet to think his kingdom was of this world, that he was come to deliver them from the Roman yoke, to place them at the head of nations, and to lead them forth conquering and to conquer. In thus requesting precedence in this secular empire, as in all other places, for themselves, they betrayed not only their ignorance but their carnality, their pride, and their ambition. The best of men are but men at the best. But Jesus answered and said, "Ye know not what he ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you. But whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Thus our Saviour not only rejects their motion, but seizes an opportunity to inform them concerning the end for which he came into our world, and by which they were to regulate their expectations and their lives. It regards three things: his character, his

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350

life, and his death. It shows us his condescension in life, his grace in death. In the one he was a servant, in the other, a sacrifice and a Saviour. May we ponder these

thoughts and these reflections this morning, and say with Watts,

“Be thou my pattern. Make me bear  
More of thy gracious image here,  
Then God, the Judge, shall own my name  
Among the followers of the Lamb.”

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SEPT. 23.—*Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.* Col. iii. 23.

IT is impossible a Christian can ever serve God for nought. Even Satan admitted the principle that “godliness is great gain,” although he attributed a mercenary spirit to the patriarch, “Doth Job serve God for nought?” In this insinuation falsehood and fact were strikingly blended. “Verily there is a reward for the righteous.” Oh, say some, but it is a reward of grace. Who would deny this? This renders it the surer and the sweeter—this renders it the greater. This enables us, since it is a reward of grace, to believe in its greatness. “Great is your reward in heaven.” But there is not only a recompense after the service, but even in it: “In keeping his commandments there is great reward.” If the Queen of Sheba envied Solomon’s domestics and said, “Happy are these thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom,” how much more should we hail those servants of the King of kings and Lord of lords, “who dwell in his house,” and” are still praising “him, each of whom can say with David, “On thee do I wait all the day.” Oh, as surely as he is our Lord and Master, he will support us; he, like a wise and good master, will consider all the injuries done to us as done to himself; he will not lay more upon us as his servants than he will enable us to bear. He will make our strength equal to our day. His grace shall be sufficient for us. He will not “cast us off in the time of old age, nor forsake us when our strength faileth.” No; he regards the “hoary head

351

as a crown of glory when found in the way of righteousness." And he beholds such with pleasure, and says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth." Yes, in eternity, in time, in life, in death, in prosperity, in adversity, in all lively frames, and in all gloomy ones even, every servant of the Lord Jesus will be able to say, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord."

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SEPT. 21.—*Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.* Luke x. 42.

AND what was said of this pious woman will apply to all Christians. All other things, however good in themselves, and whatever "part" or portion we have in them, are transient, and perish with their using. What is all history but a relation of the revolutions to which all worldly things are liable; of the rich despoiled of their wealth; of nobles stripped of their honours; of princes dethroned, exiled, imprisoned, and put to death? If these instances are too peculiar, and too remote and national to produce impression, let us look nearer home. What is *honour*, but a noisy breath? What is *popularity*? It hangs on the wavering tongue of the multitude, who are now crying "Hosanna," and now "Crucify him, crucify him;" the people one moment called Paul a murderer, and not worthy to live, because a viper had settled upon his hand; and then the next moment they would have adored him as a god, because he had shaken it off into the fire, and had got no hurt. And what are *riches*? They are called in the Scriptures not only "the mammon of unrighteousness," but "uncertain riches." Riches, says Solomon, "make to themselves wings, and fly away;" not like an owl, towards the wood; but like an eagle, towards heaven, to carry thither the tidings how they have been received, used, and improved. Job Orton, in a note to one of his sermons, says, that a friend of his having received by legacy a sum of money to distribute in the way of charity, in a single year after he had come into possession of it,

he was applied to for a share of it by no less than twenty-three individuals who had rode in their own carriages. And here is another thing to be taken into account too.

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352

Allowing that these things were possessed by us, and could be perpetuated in our possession to the end of life, they can be possessed no longer. We have only a life interest in them. Shall we therefore set our heart upon that which, is not, and that from which we are so soon to be removed? This, therefore, is a reason why we should choose that "good part which shall not be taken away" from us. He that makes this his treasure has seized a blessedness which is independent of external accidents— independent of the revolutions of states, of the ravages of death, and of the universal conflagration. When the earth and all the works therein shall be burnt up, at the last day, he will be able to stand upon the ashes of the universe and say, I have lost nothing. "I look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Oh, here all is sure and certain. Is the Christian pardoned? He is pardoned for ever; if his sins are sought for they shall not be found. Is he accepted in the Beloved? then he may exult and say with an Apostle, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Has he a "building of God?" it is a "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Has he an inheritance? it is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Hoes he "return and come to Zion?" "it is with songs of everlasting joy upon his head." He is inspired with everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, and may say and sing with Doddridge—

"Engage this roving, treacherous heart  
To fix on Mary's better part,  
To scorn the trifles of a day  
For joys which none can take away."

“Then let the wildest storms arise,  
 Let tempests mingle earth and skies,  
 No fatal shipwreck shall I fear,  
 But all my treasures with me bear.”

SEPT. 25.—*Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew. Zech. viii. 23.*

THESE words may be considered both as a prophecy and a promise. A prophecy and a promise agree in this: they both refer to futurity, but they differ in their nature. Any event may be the subject of prediction, but a promise *only* contains some good. A prediction only requires omniscience; a promise requires efficiency. God foretels evil, but he never produces it; but if he insures good he must accomplish it himself, for all goodness is from him alone. Whenever a promise is given to us we immediately look to the fidelity and ability of the promise-giver. The giver of the promise may fail in the execution of his engagement, either from forgetfulness or change of mind, or through inability. But nothing of this will apply to the blessed God; he forgets nothing, for his understanding is infinite; he never changes his mind; with him is no variableness nor shadow of turning; he never feels weakness; he is the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength—the Almighty. Therefore the prophet here prefixes to his promise a title, importing power, dominion, and resources, to show that he who has promised is able to perform; for “thus saith the Lord of hosts.” And with regard to the period when the prophecy shall be accomplished. It may be considered as having reference first to the accession of proselytes to the Jewish religion, in consequence of the dispersion in Babylon and their return home, and the diffusion of their Scriptures and the lives and prayers of the godly, and the character and examples of

such men as Ezra, and Nehemiah, and Daniel, and the three Hebrew children, and the marriage of Esther with Ahasuerus, and the deliverance thence resulting, and all the miracles performed in their favour, and their rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple, having overcome all opposition. In consequence of these, surprising events were to take place, and many were to become converts to the Jewish Church. We often find a reference to this in the prophecies, and especially in Isaiah. But, secondly, These

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354

words were to be accomplished in the commencement of Christianity, when people from Greece, from Borne, from all countries under heaven, were by the preaching of the gospel turned away from dumb idols to serve and worship the only living and true God; and to believe in him who was the consolation of Israel, the desire of all nations, and the hope of all the ends of the earth. It will therefore be observed that the subject of this passage is ATTRACTION. And here let us notice what is said of the *attractors*. They are called Jews. This is wonderful enough. The Jews were generally a very despised people; they had no commerce—they were not famed for arms, or distinguished by the arts and sciences, and yet they were to teach their conquerors wisdom after being overcome and enslaved, and degraded by them, and all the countries were to come to learn of them—yes, and to learn the knowledge of him “whom to know is life eternal.” They only were the depositaries of revealed religion; to them were committed the oracles of God. “He showed his wisdom unto Jacob, and his statutes unto the children of Israel.” But why is all this spoken of “a Jew?” Jesus Christ was a Jew; his immediate followers were Jews; the twelve Apostles were Jews; the seventy Disciples were Jews; all the first members of the Christian Church were Jews. And therefore if persons were to embrace revealed religion, or even Christianity itself, they must come to their writings, and must take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew.” Besides, as the Apostle says, “He is not a Jew which is one

outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." We are of the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." "If ye be Christ's," says he to the Galatians, "then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." So that the word "*Jew*" is not used here to distinguish Israelites from Gentiles, but saints from sinners. It applies to all partakers of Divine grace; according to the address of the Apostle to the same Church, "And as many as walk according to this rule,

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355

peace be on them and mercy, and upon the whole Israel of God;" that is, the Church of God whose members may be derived from any nation, as they may live in any period.

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SEPT. 26.—TEN MEN OUT OF ALL LANGUAGES OF THE NATIONS SHALL TAKE HOLD OF HIM THAT IS A JEW. Zech. viii. 23.

HERE we have the SUBJECTS OF THIS attraction. Observe, first, *Their number*, "Ten men," &c. When we read the words "ten men," we are not to take the number literally and definitely; it is here used to denote a large number, as we may see from the preceding verse: "Many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord." We use the word in common conversation in this sense; we say "ten times further," or "ten times worse," &c. Among the Jews it was a number of perfection. "Thou hast changed my wages," said Jacob to Laban, "ten times." "You have provoked me these ten times in the wilderness," said God to the Jews. And when they would render a number countless, they did it by attaching the word *ten*, as we find in the prophecies of Daniel: "I saw thousands standing before him, and *ten thousand*

times *ten* thousand, and thousands of thousands,” to intimate that according to our mode of calculation they were absolutely innumerable, By the ignorance of some, and the sneers of others, and the bigotry of many, the people of God are now often improperly diminished. If there be a sense in which they may be considered as few (as there surely is), so there must be a sense in which they are many, and very many. This will appear to be the case peculiarly when we look forward. Down to this hour we have only seen individuals called, or now and then a whole family (that is indeed a lovely sight to see—God multiply such sights). But when we look forward we read of a nation that shall be born in a day, we read of “the *nations* of them that shall walk in the light of the Lamb.” Already the number is great, and we are fully persuaded the number is increasing, “The Lord add to his people, however so many there be, a hundred-fold.” One thing we are perfectly sure of, namely, that

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356

these promises have not as yet been accomplished; there has been nothing as yet in the course of divine providence and grace sufficient to embody them; nothing sufficiently durable or wide in extent, or powerful in energy, or glorious in magnitude, to do anything like justice to these glorious assurances. Hence we infer there are better days for the world before us than the world has ever yet seen. But, secondly, We see the *variety* as well as the number. “Ten men *out of all* the languages of the nations.” The Jews had been the peculiar people of God before, but it is obvious now that the Gentiles were to be made fellow-heirs of the same body, and partakers of the same promise in Christ by the gospel. The Jewish religion, though it was of divine original, never could in the nature of things have become a universal religion. For instance, and to specify one thing only, how could all the males of all the countries of the earth repair three times a year to “Jerusalem to worship and to sacrifice?” There is nothing

in Christianity either local or restrictive. It regards man not so much circumstantially considered as essentially. It regards man in his grand wants. Where man lives, or whatever his outward circumstances, we shall always find him guilty and depraved, and needing pardon and renovation—a great and dignified being destined to immortality, which immortality would be a curse instead of a blessing, separate from the forgiveness and holiness of the gospel. But the gospel provides for the whole of these wants. The civilised need its influence, and the savages are not excluded from its benefits; the illiterate can learn its lessons as well as the scholar; and the poor can purchase its blessings as well as the rich, because they are to be bought without money and without price. And even the poor slave can be the Lord's freeman. And the Apostle says, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus." There is no difference, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. And therefore, when John "saw a multitude whom no man could number," he tells us that it was extracted from all the differences of human condition; it was "gathered out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue."

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357

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SEPT. 27.—*The Son of man came not to be ministered unto.*  
Matt. xx. 28.

THERE is something in this that fills us, at first, with astonishment. When we consider his grandeur, the place from which he descended (for he came down from heaven), and the honour and glory and homage he enjoyed there, it is natural for us to conclude that when he enters our earth, he will be welcomed in a manner becoming his dignity, that he will have numerous attendants who will be all ready to run and fly at his nod, and to anticipate all his wishes. But what was the fact? "He was in the world, and the world knew him not; he came unto his own and

his own received him not." When a sovereign visits a part of his dominions, when he enters the mansion of one of his own subjects, what exertion and sacrifices are made! Our Saviour could derive nothing from external appendages. What could any of those distinctions have added to the greatness of a Being who opened the eyes of the blind, raised the dead, calmed the sea in a moment—a Being who by a word could make worlds, and before whose look the heavens and the earth shall flee away. He could therefore dispense with all those things; and, though he knew how much they were valued and idolised in our world, and that persons are very much estimated according to them, yet he would dispense with them. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." We read of "women who ministered unto him of their substance," and their names are recorded in the book of life; and wheresoever the gospel is preached, that which they did shall be told for a memorial of them. But, alas! this very ministering unto him was a part of his humiliation. How reduced must he be to stand in need of assistance and succour of the very creatures of Lis power! His reproached followers should remember that he was "aworm and no man," and "a reproach among the people." And let his poor and afflicted people remember also, that while the "foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, he had not where to lay his head." He assumed no state, and required no waiting upon. We only read of his riding once in his life, and then it was "upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass;" all his other

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358

travels were on foot, and many a stray step did he take for tis. "He went about doing good," and not only seized opportunities when they *offered*, but sought after them when they did not present themselves. And for this purpose how often did he refuse himself needful refreshment, and give up the enjoyment of the sweets of retirement! See him in the house of Lazarus, lamenting that he had given so much trouble, and commending Mary who sat at his feet to hear his word, while he kindly reproved Martha for her being

“cumbered about much serving,” to indulge an appetite which he never indulged; for he came to feed, not to be fed, “he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”

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SEPT. 28.—*The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister.* Matt. xx. 28.

THERE are persons who will often dispense with the attendance of others on themselves, who are not willing themselves to attend upon others, and especially those who are below them; but what do we see yonder? “Jesus rises from supper and lays aside his garments, and takes a towel and girds himself. After that he pours water into a basin and begins to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded; and he said, Know you, my disciples, what I have done? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another’s feet.” Not as to the action, but the principle of the action; this we are to seek after. Jesus came to minister. He may be considered a servant: “Behold my servant,” says God, “my righteous servant. “He took upon him the form of a servant.” He was emphatically “the servant of all;” and there never was a servant yet in the world that was so attentive to the calls of his office. Here a centurion has a servant sick of the palsy; the word is a slave. He addresses him on his behalf; immediately he says, “I will come and heal him. Behold the Lord of lords and the King of kings, proceeding at a moment’s notice, and passing through the mansion to a hinder apartment and standing by the pallet of a poor diseased slave. The Son of man came “to minister.” There is a large

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359

class of mankind who are trampled upon or overlooked by those around them; they are the poor. He at once enriched their minds and fed their bodies; “he had compassion on the multitude because they had nothing to eat,” and “he taught them many things,” and “the poor had

the gospel preached unto them." Here is a poor woman following a funeral; it was her own and her only son, and she too was a widow. Already she had entombed her husband, whose grave was now to be re-opened, to awaken all her tears and to receive the remains of one who was her last prop struck from under her. Our Saviour saw her, and had compassion on her, and said unto her, "Weep not." And he said, "Young man, I say unto thee arise; and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And"—O what a present!—"he delivered him up to his mother." The Son of man came to minister to the relief of a guilty mind. We talk of *anguish*; can anything heal the pangs of a distressed and wounded conscience? Here is a woman taken in adultery. By the law of Moses shewas condemned to be stoned; she is mercilessly dealt with, and at length turned over to the Saviour by a company of wretches, every one of whom was guilty of the very same crime, though they had as yet escaped detection. And he turned to the woman; instead of condemning her, he said, "Go, and sin no more." On another occasion he dined in the house of a Pharisee. While he was there, a woman in the city that was a sinner, knowing that Jesus was there, came, and, ashamed and afraid to look him in the face, got behind him, and stood at his feet weeping, and "began to wash his feet with her tears and to wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment." What said our Saviour to her? "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The Pharisee murmured. Never mind, said he: "Woman, I say unto thee, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister."

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SEPT. 29.—*Take unto you the whole armour of God.*

Eph. vi. 13.

AND with regard to the armour which is provided for the

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Christian warrior, the Apostle enables us to remark four things. First, He specifies *the articles of which it consists*. "Having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Here it will be perceived there is no armour provided for the back. He therefore that flees is wholly defenceless, and is sure to perish. Secondly, He tells us of the nature of this armour. It is the "armour of God." It is Divine. It is the armour of God by *institution*, that is, it is appointed by God. We read of "the instruments of a foolish shepherd," and there are the weapons of the foolish soldier. Soldiers are not allowed to choose their own armour in a war. These are determined by the authority under which they move. Nothing is to guide or to be considered binding upon the Christian soldier but "Thus it is written," and has the sanction of this blessed book, which contains all the articles of the holy war. But it is also God's armour by *constitution*. It is not only appointed by him, but provided by him. It is all of his own workmanship; it is therefore of Divine temper, and will abide the severest trial; no part of it can ever be destroyed or injured. Thirdly, He speaks of the *appropriation* of it. For armour is nothing unless it be laid hold of and used; and therefore, says the Apostle, "Take unto you the whole armour of God." He means that we should apply it to the various purposes for which it has been provided. There are some who are ignorant of it; these cannot "take it to themselves," and they are perishing for lack of knowledge. Others know it, but despise it; they never make use of it, their religion is all speculation; they "know these things," but "they do them not;" they believe, and "the devils believe and tremble." The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, has come to them in vain; for it does not teach them to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to

live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world." Such knowledge is like the letter which Uriah carried in

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361

his bosom, and which placed him in the very front of the battle. For if our knowledge is unimproved, it will enhance our guilt and our condemnation. Observe, fourthly, He remarks the *entireness of the appropriation*: "Take unto you the *whole* armour of God." God forbids nothing in vain enjoins nothing in vain, provides nothing in vain; and therefore every part of this defensive and offensive armour is necessary. This armour of the Christian warrior may be considered with regard to his principles, his practice, his experience, his comfort, and his profession. And oh how important is it in each of these that neither of them is to be left in him exposed and undefended. He is to stand complete in the armour of righteousness; he is to be "perfect and entire, lacking nothing." We are, however, here to distinguish between the *aim* and the *attainment*. Imperfection is compatible with sincerity in religion, but partiality is altogether alien to it. We must "esteem *all* his commandments to be right, and we must hate *every false way*," and be able to say with David, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments."

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SEPT. 30.—*That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.* Eph. vi. 13.

TWO inquiries have here to be answered. The first regards the *posture*. What does the Apostle mean by "standing" and "withstanding?" It is a military term: the one is opposed to *falling*; a man is said to "fall" when he is slain in battle; and he does so literally. It is also opposed to *fleeing*; we often read of fleeing before the enemy in the Scriptures; this cannot be standing. The other is opposed to *yielding* or *turning back*, and so the Apostle says, "Neither give place to the devil;" every step we yield he gains, and every step he gains we lose; every advantage he gains fa-

vours his gaining another. Every encroachment of his is an encouragement for him to go on, whereas, says the Apostle Peter, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." The second regards the period; what does the Apostle mean when he says, "Withstand *in the evil day?*" All the time of the Christian's warfare may be so called in a sense,

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362

and a very true sense; but the Apostle refers also to some days which are peculiarly "evil days." Days of *suffering* are such. The infirmities and privations of old age; these "evil days" will come when hearing and sight and strength will fail; when we shall say "I have no pleasure therein." Paul says, "Redeeming the time because the days are evil." Days of *persecution*. Days like those in which the martyrs lived and suffered were "evil days," They could not confess and follow Christ without imperilling their substance, their liberty, and their lives; but they *stood* in the "evil day." Thus Daniel stood when he knew his adversaries had obtained the decree against him. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, his windows being opened, and he prayed and gave thanks before his God as aforetime." There are "evil days" *morally considered*, perilous periods in which "iniquity abounds and the love of many waxes cold," and in which many have "turned aside from the faith and given themselves to vain janglings." It was an evil time when many, offended with our Saviour's discourse, "went back and walked no more with him," and he said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" And Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." It was an "evil day" when Joseph was assailed by his mistress alone in the house, but he *stood* in the "evil day," and said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? "It was an "evil day" with Nehemiah when Sanballat and Tobiah endeavoured to intimidate him, and induce him to leave off the work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, but, said he, "Should such a man as I flee?" He stood in the "evil day," and maintained his ground.

“Strong in the Lord of hosts,  
 And in his mighty power,  
 Who in the strength of Jesus trusts  
 Is more than conqueror.

“Stand then in his great might,  
 With all his strength endued,  
 But take to arm you for the fight  
 The panoply of God.”

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363

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OCT. I.—*I am with you.* Jer. xlii. 11.

WILL God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? The question is answered, “The tabernacle of God is with men,” and “the Lord God will dwell among them.” The foundation of his promise in this view was laid in the incarnation of his Son, and therefore his name was to be called “Immanuel, that is, God with us.” But he was to be with us, not only in his humanity, but in his Divine nature. As to his *essential* presence, God is with *all* his creatures. His immensity fills heaven and earth. Reason shows this as well as revelation. Satan and the fallen angels, as well as ourselves, “live and move and have their being in him.” But when we read in the Scriptures of the presence of God in the way of promise or privilege, we may be sure it means something distinguishable from the perfection of his nature, that is, from his Omnipresence in which he is with all his creatures. It is therefore said that “the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart,” that “the Lord is nigh to them that call upon him.” And this was assuredly the meaning of the promise given to Moses, “My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” Effects prove agency, and God’s agency proves his presence. All the works of God around us in nature and in providence show that he cannot be far off from any one of us. Here is the work, and therefore the Agent must be here who produced it. “We look this morning into the Church, here are works, wondrous works,

which prove that he is near. Here is one who was "darkness," but now "he is light in the Lord." He saw no form nor comeliness in the Redeemer that he should desire him. Now he is "all his salvation and all his desire." Here is another who was careless, but it is said of him, "Behold he prayeth." Here is another who was a self-righteous Pharisee trusting in himself that he was righteous, and "despising others," but now he says, "In the Lord Jehovah have I righteousness and strength." Here is a drunkard who has become sober; a swearer who has learned to fear an oath; here is a man who was a burden to himself, and a curse and a plague to all the neighbourhood, but since he has been delivered from the stings of a guilty con-

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364

science and the tyranny of his vile passions, he has been softened; and now having obtained mercy, he delights to show mercy, and is a devoted follower of him who went about doing good. God is surely with such persons as these, as he was not once, as he is not now with others. He is *with* them so as to be *in* them at the same time, working in them both "to will and to do of his own good pleasure," enabling them to walk by faith, to live above the world whilst they are in it, and to have their conversation in heaven.

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OCT. 2.—*Whosoever will be chief among you let him be your minister, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister.* Matt. xx. 27, 28.

WHEN a man rises above his fellow-creatures; when he ascends a little in the world, he is generally attended by a number of servants. The fact is this, man must be great, and as he is not so *really*, and cannot be so really, he must be so in appearance. It is worthy of observation that titles, and a thousand other things that are supposed to indicate greatness, are really and only founded on a want of it; for if men were sufficient without these, they would be unnecessary. But, alas, poor little man cannot get on without them, and thus the shadow of greatness is called in to

supply the place of the reality. But the Lord of all came not be ministered unto but to minister. And what is the proper use we ought to make of this fact? It would be an abuse of it if we were to run down in consequence of it the distinctions of life, for the Scripture always countenances these, and enforces the various duties arising from them; and not only the social welfare, but the individual welfare of man requires the maintenance of them. But there are two views to which we should apply these representations. The first is, *To admire the Saviour's condescension*. Condescension must be viewed by the previous dignity of the being who stoops. What a stoop indeed! "Ye know," says the Apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." The second is, *To resemble him therein*. God forbid that ever we should consider him as some do—a mere

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365

example. He is infinitely more than an example, yet "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself to walk even as he walked." And herein is the advantage of our evangelical system—while we proclaim him to be our sacrifice our righteousness, our strength, our God, yet we are at liberty to speak of him as our Exemplar. We should look at him and learn how to bear and forbear, and to walk in love as he also hath loved us. This is what the Apostle enjoined upon the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And what was this mind? We may learn from what goes immediately before, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind; let each esteem others better than himself. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." But we learn more from what follows: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." Alas, that there should be those who bear his name who are seeking great things for themselves and cherishing a

fondness of distinction, and who refuse to condescend to men of lowly condition; who are haughty and disdainful in their deportment, refusing to perform an humble office for a fellow-creature or a fellow-Christian when Providence places an opportunity for this in their way. Alas, that there are those who, while they give a little of their substance, seldom, if ever, "visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction," unlike him who came "not to be ministered unto but to minister."

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OCT. 3.—*Repent, or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove thy candle-stick out of his place, except thou, repent.* Rev. ii. 5.

AFTER all that philosophers have said, man needs motives to excite him to the performance of duty; and after all divines have said about disinterested love to God, the Scripture holds forth motives to obedience. God addresses them to every principle of our nature, to every passion of our soul, to our hopes and to our fears. Our Lord here comes forward as one having authority, as one able to save or to

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366

destroy, as one having the supreme dominion over his church. And justly might he destroy; but before he strikes he announces his intention: he warns before he smites. In this solemn threatening we may observe three things. First, *The manner of its accomplishment.* It is accomplished when persons fall into such languor and insensibility in divine things as to be incapable of edification. If a man cannot use aliment, or if he cannot digest it, it is the same in effect as if it was taken away. And such is the case with thousands who, from week to week, hear the gospel. It makes no impression on them; they hear it, but they are sermon proof. It is accomplished more literally and expressly when a church is deprived of the ordinary and stated means of grace; and this may be done by the tyranny of governments, or by foreign enemies, by the death of evangelical ministers, and by the introduction of others of

opposite views and sentiments. In these cases, the gospel is substantially removed. Take away from the gospel the doctrine of salvation through a crucified Saviour, and the candlestick is removed, and "Ichabod" may be written in the place: "The glory is departed." Observe, secondly, *The dreadfulness of this calamity*. Some might not view this as so great an evil. Like the Gadarenes, they may even desire that Christ, as revealed in the gospel ministry, might depart out of their coasts. But by all Christians the gospel will be received as our guide, our guard, our asylum in danger, our comfort in trouble, our health, and our food, and we shall do well to reflect on the advantages, the instruction, the comfort, and the holiness which is derived from public ordinances, and to ask ourselves what it would be to be deprived of all these. Those who by sickness or accident or distance have been deprived of sanctuary privileges will bear testimony to this, that though God has not left them *alone* in their sorrows, yet they know that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion *more* than all the dwellings of Jacob." But, above all, let us take our estimate of these privileges from the Saviour himself. We have his *benediction*: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." We have his *promise*: "I will give you *pastors* according to mine own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and

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367

understanding." We have it, above all, in his *threatening*: "The days," says he, "shall come that I will send a famine in the land." Not a famine of bread. *This* is dreadful! Famine has rendered the most unwholesome thing delicious, and has led to the adoption of the most horrible expedients to satisfy the cravings of the appetite. No, it is something far worse than this. Not a famine of bread, not a dearth of water; but of "*hearing* the word of the Lord;" and "they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." If God were to declare the *sun* should never shine again upon this country, or that no *rain* should drop upon the land, it would be an

infinitely less judgment than it were to withdraw the gospel and the means of grace. For this judgment does not so much regard the *body* as the *soul*, or *time* so much as *eternity*. Some judgments are *corrective*, but this is *penal*. Some judgments are meant to *convert*, but this to *destroy*. Thirdly, Let us glance at *the certainty of its fulfilment*. He who has denounced this threatening is *faithful*, and we shall find him as faithful in executing threatenings as in performing promises. Besides, he is *Almighty*. We are reminded by the very image which he has employed that it is as easy for him to deprive us of gospel privileges as it is for us to take a candle out of one room into another, enlightening that we *enter*, and darkening that we *leave*. Besides, he has *already executed this threatening in many instances*. Is it likely that God will continue the *manna* when it is despised? The gospel is immensely too great a blessing to be thrown away. It is not a thing unheard-of for God to unchurch a people, and to withhold the means of grace when they have been neglected or abused. The case of the Jewish church is a striking and an illustrious instance of the means by which it may be accomplished. "If he spared not the natural branches, take heed," says the Apostle, "lest he also spare not thee." What became of the very church at Ephesus here addressed? Where once the doctrines were as ointment poured forth, nothing is now heard but the blasphemies of the Koran. Though with regard to the church *universal* "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," it does not follow that he may not remove the candlestick from a *particular* place.

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OCT. 4.—*He hath glorified thee.* Isa. lv. 5.

WITH regard to the glory here accorded to the Messiah, observe, first, *Its source*: "The Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, he hath glorified thee." Here is the oneness of the relation. He is the God of the one, because he is the God of the other. Therefore, our Saviour said

to his disciples, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father to my God and your God." Observe, secondly, *The nature of this glory*. There were some rays of glory beaming upon him and from him while he was here on earth; his people, therefore, could say: "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." But it was not a worldly glory, and especially in his transfiguration, when on the mount with his disciples he was transfigured before them; in reference to which Peter speaks of his having received from God the Father honour and glory. "When there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He was glorified, in a degree, even in his death. His cross was a throne, all creatures paid homage to him in death. The earth shook, the rocks rent, the graves were opened, the dead arose, the sun veiled his face in darkness. Prodigies of grace accompanied the miracles of nature. Gethsemane as well as Calvary witnessed the glory of his power. There the Roman guard drew back from him, and fell to the ground at a word. In the Judgment Hall he displayed the glory of his grace, when, with one of his all-loving Almighty looks, he turned his face upon Peter, and broke the disciple's poor heart, and "he went out and wept bitterly." The Apostle Peter speaks also of the glory which followed his sufferings. To this the Saviour looked forward when he said: "The hour is coming that the Son of man shall be glorified." For this he prayed; he said: "Father, glorify thy Son." He was "declared to be the Son of God, with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." The descent of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, was in recognition and in honour of him. And "he was exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repent-

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369

ance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins," and "he ascended far above all heaven, that he might fill all things." Thus was God glorified in him. Observe, thirdly, *The*

season. He *hath* done it. When the prophet uttered these words, it was of *futurity*, and a futurity too at no little distance. His language marks the *certainty* of the accomplishment that he would assuredly be then glorified; it tells us that purpose and accomplishment, promise and fulfilment are the same with God. Were we able to take God at his word, we might say: "Now are the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." We may say even now, "He hath quickened us, and raised us up, and made us sit together in heavenly places." We may say in the midst of conflicts: "Now in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that bath loved us." Observe, fourthly, The *connection this glory has with, and the influence it has over, the conversion of sinners*: "They shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and the Holy One of Israel, who hath glorified thee." The case is simply this. His glorification is the ground of all our confidence in God. We could have neither believed nor hoped in God without the mediation of Christ, and how could we have known that this mediation in our behalf was available and effective, if he had not been raised from the dead and glorified. And, says Peter, "God raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God." And surely this is enough to encourage us. And further, this glorification furnishes him as Mediator with power to save: "Wherefore he is able to save unto the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." It is now that he is "mighty to save;" he has power given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. Yes, and his glorification ensures the salvation of sinners as his grand reward and recompense. It was "for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross." It is here that he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied; and it is thus that he shall sprinkle many nations, and become God's salvation unto the ends of the earth.

OCT. 5.—*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* Rom. iii. 23.

HERE is a twofold description of the condition of men. Observe, first, "ALL have SINNED." The Apostle here immediately refers to Jews and Gentiles. There was a grand distinction between them, and there seemed an immense difference between them, and, as to dispensation, indeed there was. As to dispensation, the one is spoken of as "nigh," the other as being "far off." The Jews were distinguished by miracles and ordinances, and a thousand peculiar privileges; but these did not prevent them equalling the Gentiles in guilt. Hence says the Apostle: "What then? are we better than they? No, in nowise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;" "that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." "All we," and this includes all men, wherever they live and whatever their external condition, not that all transgress in the same way—"All we like sheep have gone astray," says Isaiah, but we have turned every one to *his own way*. The very same evil may be diversified by a thousand causes and in a thousand instances. Not that all sins are equal in their *heinousness*. Our Saviour calls some "beams," some "motes." Some will be beaten with "few stripes," and some with "many stripes." Not that all are *actually guilty in the same degree before God*. But "all have sinned" in *their head and representative*, Adam; for "as in Adam all die," so in Adam all sinned. Not only are men mortal, but they are also depraved. "All have sinned" in *their own persons*, in actions, in words, in thoughts, and in imaginations. Omissions of duties are sins: for he who forbids also commands. Ingratitude is a sin, as also a want of love to God, and of love to our neighbour. If covetousness be idolatry, anger murder, surely all have sinned; all are transgressors, and as such, all are under the curse. "As it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Observe, secondly, That "ALL HAVE COME SHORT OF THE

GLORY OF GOD." God designed his own glory by man's *creation*, but all have come short of this glory. All have

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371

come short of the glory of his *law* in not obeying it; of his *image* in not resembling it; of his *favour* in not desiring it; of his *presence* in not seeking after it. All are in the same state, because *all stand in need of the same remedy*, and the *very same remedy is applied to all*. If all need the Physician, all are sick; if all need to be cleansed, all are polluted; if all need to be renewed, all are depraved; if all need to be pardoned, all are guilty; if all need to be redeemed, all are in bondage. Yes, and all Christians, whatever be their present condition, will be ready to acknowledge that they were "foolish, disobedient., deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice, and envy, hateful and hating one another." Such is the state of all men. The existence of sin and misery in our world is undeniable. The Deist can no more deny it than the Christian. But while Deism leaves us without explanation and without remedy, Christianity comes to us and says: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help found." "Look unto me, and be ye saved: For I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour." It is our wisdom to attend to this. Persons often reason where reason can be of no avail, while submission and prayer would avail everything. Suppose an individual passing along a meadow, and heard the cry of a fellow-creature in a pit. He approaches the spot, and sees the poor creature sinking deeper and deeper in the mire. And he says to him, Here, take my hand, I will endeavour to raise you up. Instead, however, of his laying hold of the aid extended to him, he begins questioning and cavilling how the pit came to be left there, why it was not fenced round to prevent persons from falling in; how shameful was the owner of it. But the individual says to him, My friend, you are perishing; this is not the place nor the time for inquiry or complaint; give me your hand, here is deliverance; let me draw you forth, and after your deliverance

you will be able to abide the result of the inquiry; when you have found that the evil can not only be remedied, but that it has been remedied in your case.

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372

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OCT. 6.—*Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord.* Is. lvii. 19.

TWO things are here to be regarded. First, *The mercy of the Proclamation.* “Peace, peace.” Now from this word the gospel derives its name and its quality, as it is written, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace.” It is well known that among the Hebrews and the Easterns the word *peace* was frequently used to express wealth or happiness at large, or what we commonly mean by prosperity. Thus Joseph said to Pharaoh, “God shall give Pharaoh an answer of *peace.*” Thus Artaxerxes superscribed his letter, “And at such a time, *peace.*” Thus David says, “Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.” But the term is *here* taken in its more appropriate significance, as intended to convey to us the idea of *reconciliation*. The case is this: By our sins and transgressions we had provoked the anger of Jehovah, and he could have justly destroyed us. For we deserved his wrath, and had no claims upon his pity; and there was nothing before us but a “certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.” But “God, who was rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us,” provided for our deliverance from the wrath to come, by sending his only begotten Son into the world “not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” “He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” And “that he might reconcile us unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to them which were afar off, and to them which are nigh.” This proclamation makes known to us the fact that

we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and that now he is waiting to be gracious; and that he will be merciful to our unrighteousness; and our sins and iniquities he will remember no more. Observe, secondly, *The persons* to whom this proclamation is addressed. It is not to a few, but to many; not to one class, but to all persons of every condition. "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." This regards the Jews and the Gentiles.

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373

The Israelites were, as it is said in the Psalms, "a people near unto him, "because his residence was among them. There were his oracles, his ministers, his temple; on the other hand, the Gentiles were far off, because they were destitute of all this, living "without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world." This distinction between Jews and Gentiles continued till the death of our Saviour, for when he was upon earth he was the minister of the circumcision only, but after his death, when he had "made peace by the blood of his cross," and when he was risen from the dead, then his language accorded with the nature of the evangelical dispensation which had now commenced. He therefore gave a command to his disciples to go and make this proclamation unto the world: "Preach," said he, "repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." "And they went forth preaching everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following."

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OCT. 7.—*And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.* Eph. ii. 17.

THOUGH these words regard, as has been already intimated in the previous meditation on a parallel passage, the Jews and Gentiles, by a parity of reasoning that may be extended to all diversities and distinctions of the human race. Those, therefore, that are "nigh," and those that are "afar off," will represent persons of peculiar advantages,

or those who are destitute of these advantages. In this view, those that are born of godly parents, and who have had a religious education; who have kneeled at the family altar; who "from their childhood have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation," may be considered as "nigh;" while those who have had no such advantages are "afar off." Some are nigh, that is, they are moral in their lives, amiable in their tempers, are teachable, candid and virtuous; they only seem to require decision. Such a *one* our Saviour addressed when he said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Others are "far off;" that is, they are grossly vicious, of aban-

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374

doned habits, despisers of the good and good things; they turn away from the Sabbath and from the sanctuary, they are drunkards, and profane swearers, and seem so "far off" as to be beyond the reach of mercy. Some are "nigh," that is, young; they are now free from the cares and toils which will hereafter engross them; their understandings are not yet perverted; their memories are not filled up with vanity and vice; their consciences are yet tender; their hearts are not yet hardened through the "deceitfulness of sin." Others are "far off;" they are old sinners, who can see when they look forward only gloom, and when they look back ward only guilt; whose vices are deep rooted; whose habits have become second nature; and sooner may the "Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots, than they who are accustomed to do evil learn to do good," or cease from doing evil. But with God all things are possible. The number of those who possess advantages which others do not might be greatly enlarged; and men lay much stress upon these adventitious distinctions, which the gospel does not; for instance, some are rich and some are poor, but the poor can be "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him." There are some learned, and others who are illiterate, but none are incapable of learning Divine things under Divine teaching; and the "wayfaring man, though a fool, shall

not err therein." Some fill high and honourable stations in society; but a servant can be as great in the sight of God as his master; a subject as great as his sovereign. There are some who are assured of their interest in Christ, and they are certain of their future salvation; but there are others who, though they are equally safe, have many apprehensions and many suspicions concerning it. The blessings which they are pursuing seem to recede as they advance; and if even they see the "King in his beauty, and the land" which is promised to them, it seems, alas, now to be "very far off." But, blessed be God, the gospel is addressed to all men without exception or exclusion. If there were any exclusion or any exceptions with regard to individuals, or any omission or reservation with regard to the promises or invitations of the gospel, the man whose conscience is awakened would draw the unfavourable con-

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375

elusion that he was the person excepted. The gospel therefore addresses us as sinners, because at first we must come under this character, and we can only receive encouragement to do so as sinners. Let our views respecting ourselves be ever so discouraging, yet we cannot question whether we are *sinners*; and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. We cannot question whether we need salvation; and unto sinners is "the word of this salvation sent." If we do not think ourselves too good, Christ does not think us too bad to come to him and to be saved by him. We must stand somewhere, either "far off" or "nigh:" "And Jesus came and preached peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh."

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OCT. 8.—*Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* Jas. iv. 1.

THESE words breathe battle; and who is a stranger to the fact that war is a great evil? Alas, that we should, become familiar with the language and imagery of war. But ever

since man became an apostate from his God, he became an enemy to his brother; and from the death of Abel to this hour our earth has been one field of blood. Isaiah says, "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise;" the thrillings of the trumpets, the orders of the officers, the prancings of the cavalry, the clashings of the weapons, the shouts of the victors, the groans of the vanquished and dying, "and with garments rolled in blood," some enclosing bodies already dead, others enclosing bodies dismembered or wounded, rolling in rueful anguish from side to side in gore, and with the destruction of animals, especially of the generous horse, and with the demolition of buildings which had housed happy families before, and with the tears, and sighs, and lamentations, and sufferings of widows and orphans, and with the temporary suspension of all the laws of morality. No wonder, therefore, that Jeremiah exclaimed, "My bowels, my bowels. I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war." And no wonder the

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376

Church should have said, "Scatter thou the nations that delight in war." In the words of the Apostle James, we are reminded of the *source* from whence these dreadful scenes originated: "Only by pride cometh contention," and "Whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" For sin, in all its forms,

"Brought death into our world and all its woe."

Dire as is the evil, we may rejoice even in hope. A philosopher has said that if the ages of the world be compared with the ages of human life, the world has not yet passed its childhood, for, like children, we have not left off to quarrel and fight about trifles. But a better era is dawning. Nations will recover their senses, and learn their true interests, and to see that all wars are expensive and injurious, and that none of them, however skilfully conducted or successfully terminated, are ever gainful; and they will have

recourse to negotiation and arbitration, rather than appeal to warfare. And do not the Scriptures of the God of peace tell us that a period shall arrive when they shall "beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks?" when "nation shall no more lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more?" "And what he has promised he is able also to perform." Is anything too hard for the Lord? Then these contentions among nations should lead us to think of something better; to rise from things seen and temporal to things unseen and eternal. And here we shall find the sacred writers going before us. They describe genuine religion as a warfare—a warfare, but a good warfare; and they represent Christians as soldiers—soldiers, but good soldiers of Jesus Christ, fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life.

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OCT. 9.—*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* Rom. iii. 24.

THIS is the condition in which all Christians are. "Being justified." Let us first contemplate the *nature of this blessing*. Justification is a legal and not a moral term; it refers not to disposition, but to a condition; it does not make a

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377

man righteous, but declares him to be so. Sanctification and justification, while they always go together, are distinct blessings; they are combined in the purpose of God in the purchase of the cross, and in the experience of every Christian. But these blessings are at the same time as distinguishable as they are inseparable; the one is without, the other is within; the one is relative, the other personal; the one a change of state, the other is a change of nature; the one gives a title to heaven, the other a meetness for it; the one is gradual, the other is complete at once. The justification which all believers have in Christ has two properties: it *is full*, extending to all transgressions, they are "justified from all things;" and it is *perpetual* and irre-

versible: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Observe, secondly, The *source of this blessing*: "Being justified freely by his grace." This seems to be a tautology, for if it be "free," it must be of "grace," and if of "grace," it must be "free." Paul was a man who loved to speak with energy and emphasis; he also understood human nature, and he knew there were many cases in which there must be "line upon line and precept upon precept," and he knew this was one of these cases, and a very peculiar one; he knew that men are naturally as proud as they are poor, and that though they are daily compelled to beg their bread of God, yet, when they come to deal with him concerning spiritual things, they come rather as merchants than as suppliants, and that nothing will satisfy these poor but proud creatures unless they merit the very things they need. Hence the language of the Scripture so frequently and fully upon this subject. Therefore the Apostle says we are "justified freely by his grace." It is obvious that God was not compelled to do it. There is no power beyond or above God to constrain him. It is equally certain that he was under no obligation to do it. We had no claim upon him; as sinners we were entirely at his mercy, and that it was for him to determine whether we should be punished or pardoned. It was impossible that this justification could have been accomplished by our good works, for these are all performed by the grace of God, and they are all defective, and therefore if they deserve anything it is condemnation; and

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378

even if our good works were perfect they could not atone for our former guilt. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." Where is despair then, if we are justified by faith and grace? It is excluded. By what law? the law of Works? Nay: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for *righteousness*." Observe, thirdly, *The medium of this Messing*: "Through the redemption that is in Christ

Jesus." The price of our redemption was his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. The death of Christ is to be considered, first, as *the effect of God's love*, "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son a propitiation for our sins;" and, secondly, as the *medium through which his goodness extends to the guilty children of men*. A way strictly harmonising with all the perfections of his Divine nature; for if "Jacob is to be redeemed," God is to be "glorified in his redemption;" if the transgressor escapes, the law must be "magnified and made honourable;" if sin be pardoned, it must also be condemned in the flesh. "For it became him from whom are all things and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings; and being thus made perfect through suffering he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; "thus he "once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," and that now in Christ Jesus "we who sometime were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

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OCT. 10.—*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* 2 Cor. vi. 2.

THERE are three ways of understanding this. The "time" in which the Messiah was accepted as Mediator between God and man, "loving us and giving himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour," evinced by his resurrection from the dead, and his being crowned with glory and honour; the "time" when God accepts the supplications of sinners in his name; and the "time" when sinners "accept" the Divine mercy, are

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379

made "willing in the day of his power," and are induced to submit themselves to the righteousness which is of God.—"Behold, now is the day of salvation." When it is considered that a season is named by anything which peculiarly and supremely abounds in it, we need not wonder that the

Apostle should call the gospel dispensation the “day of salvation;” because salvation is its design, its grand aim, all its business, and its supreme distinction and glory. Observe, first, The *blessing*, “salvation.” It is the *salvation of the soul*; a “*great salvation*,” “*so great salvation*,” including deliverance from all possible evils, and the bestowment of and introduction to all conceivable good. It is “an *everlasting salvation*.” It is “salvation with eternal glory.” It is therefore a “*full salvation*,” leaving no evil unremoved, no want unsupplied, no hope uncompleted. It is a *finished* salvation so far as regards its purchase and procurement; and its actual accomplishment will be fully and perfectly performed in the day of Jesus Christ. Secondly, “The day of salvation” intends first the season in which it is *plainly revealed*. It was early announced in the garden of Eden, and revealed unto the patriarchs, and shadowed forth in types and ceremonies. To them the Saviour was far off, but *now* he has approached; they saw him through a veil, we behold him with open face. And the day of salvation is “now;” because it is *fully proclaimed and freely offered*. The invitation is, “Whosoever will, let him come.” It is the “day of salvation” when Gentiles are made partakers of the same body, and Jesus Christ is God’s “salvation to the ends of the earth”—when he sends forth his servants into all the world to proclaim it. It is “*now*” the day of salvation, because “now” it is *actually enjoyed*. It is not a future blessing merely, but it is a present benefit; and therefore “*now* is the day of salvation.” Many have experienced it, and are enjoying it; and what numbers more shall experience and enjoy it? The present day is a day of discovery, a day of the spread of liberal opinions, of education, of new openings in trade and commerce; but the time in which we live is pre-eminently the day of a full, free, finished, and eternal salvation. Observe, thirdly, *The attention it deserves and demands*. Let us “behold,” in order that we may remember

and admire the goodness of God. Let us behold and consider that this day terminates with our lives; and what is our life but a vapour? "Behold," how much of this day is already gone, and how uncertain the remainder of this brief and diminished period is; and that if the season be lost, it is irrecoverably gone; and if the season closes before the blessing be possessed, this will be the bitterest aggravation of the sinner's doom. "Behold, now is the day of salvation;" therefore let us endeavour to bring others into the enjoyment of its distinguished blessings; and though we cannot save them meritoriously or efficiently, we may instrumentally. And let us remember, too, that it is their day of salvation as well as ours, and their only season as well as ours. "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

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OCT. 11.—*We wrestle not against flesh and Mood, out against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*  
Eph. vi. 12.

LET us consider the FOES with which every Christian soldier has to fight. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," says the Apostle. Yes, they did; all ranks and conditions of men were opposed to them. "Marvel not," said our Lord, "if the world hate you; ye know that it hated me before it hated you." But he means that these were not the *only* or the *principal* foes, that they had more tremendous adversaries. The Apostle refers here to *spiritual* adversaries in distinction from those that are merely human; he speaks of "standing against the wiles of the devil," and of "spiritual wickedness," or "wicked spirits," as it is in the margin. It is not necessary to lay any stress on the distinction between Satan and these wicked spirits; they may be considered as all one: he the leader, and they employed in his service. We should neither metaphysically or curiously inquire after the mode of

diabolical existence or influence, but our aim should be to get our minds impressed with a sense of our danger from these awful and adverse beings. And our danger arises

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381

first, *From the advantage they find in the world.* This world is in many respects their own. We therefore read of the “world lying in wickedness;” of the “god of this world;” and of “the prince of this world.” And in these depraved regions of ours he finds all the machineries, all the auxiliaries, all the aids that can enable him to deceive, or excite, or alarm, or allure. And, secondly, It arises from their *having in league and correspondence, a party,* and an active party, IN OURSELVES; in all the powers, principles, passions, and the necessities of our nature, so that here it is peculiarly true, “A man’s foes are they of his own household.” Thirdly, *From their number.* “Their name is legion, for they are many.” Fourthly, *From their mightiness.* Who knows the energy or the force of any one of these wretched creatures? We see what they have done by the permission of God; how they have cast down many mighty; yea, “many strong men have been slain by them;” and princes, and heroes, and philosophers, and moralists; and how they overcame Adam and Eve in Paradise, when there was no fallen nature to operate upon. Fifthly, *From their invisibility.* If they were “flesh and blood,” why, we could escape them, we could secure ourselves from them by walls, or gates, or doors, or bars, or bolts; but what are we to do with spirits? How can we hinder these, who move like the pestilence that walketh in darkness? Sixthly, It arises from their *artfulness.* We read of the “wiles of the devil,” of the “depths of Satan,” of the “beguiling of Satan,” and we read of his “devices.” And, finally, The danger arises from their *malignity;* Satan is called “a destroyer and a murderer from the beginning.” He bears hatred to us as we are men, as we are the creatures of God, more indulged and favoured than himself, but especially as we are redeemed, as we are renewed, and as we have forsaken his

wretched service and abandoned his ways. He thus pursues us as Pharaoh pursued the Israelites when they left Egypt, determined rather to exterminate his own vassals than that they should be employed in the service of the living God.

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382

OCT. 12.—*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* Isa. xlv. 10.

THE word counsel now signifies advice, direction, deliberation, but when the Bible was translated it more commonly signified scheme, purpose, design. Hence it is said, "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Hence we read in the liturgy of the Church that from God "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all good works do proceed." Good "counsels" there, means just aims and designs; they are distinguished from "holy desires" going before, and "good works" following after. *Here* the word intends the scheme, the purpose, and the design of God with regard to the salvation of his people; and it is so called not because God deliberates or consults, but to show us "wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." To bring sin into the world was an easy thing; to take it away was a work to which God, and only God, was equal. *We* have imperfect views of the evil of sin, and also of the holiness and justice of God, and therefore we are not sufficiently struck with the difficulties that stood in the way of our salvation; but God knows them perfectly, and his scheme for removing them all and restoring us to himself is contained in the gospel. And that is what Paul means by "the counsel of God," which he made the principal subject of his preaching. It was not human science, though he was a man of genius and education, nor the politics of the world, though he knew that the Christian did not abolish the man and the citizen, not the petty interests of mortality; he "looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," knowing that "the

things which are seen are temporal, but that the things which are not seen are eternal." He considered himself as "the servant of the most High God, to show unto men the way of salvation," even Jesus, who is "the way, the truth, and the life;" to show how a rebellious subject can be reconciled to his displeased and injured sovereign, how a wretched slave can be redeemed from the curse of the law, and the bondage of corruption, and enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; how the guilty can be justified freely from all things; how the unholy can be sanctified;

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383

how the weak can "hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger;" how the opposed can be "more than conquerors through him that hath loved them;" how the most abject, miserable, and the mortal, and the dying can enter into life eternal; how the poor and the needy can obtain the unsearchable riches of Christ, and be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him; how (in a word) man, the sinner, can be raised above the angels who never sinned, and not only have life, but have it more abundantly; how sin can be pardoned and yet condemned; how the law can suffer the sinner to escape and yet be fulfilled, and magnified, and made honourable; how mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other; how, while he redeems Jacob, he "glorifies himself in Israel;" and how "Glory to God in the highest" can be blended with "Peace on earth and good will toward men." This is the counsel of God, the good pleasure of his will, which is to be published to the ends of the earth; and for its universal diffusion the dispensations of Providence are all at work, until "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

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OCT. 13.—*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* Acts xx. 27.

IT has already been shown that "the counsel of God" here refers to the gospel; and here with that reference we observe, first, That there is in this subject itself, and the manner of its announcement, a *fulness of affluence and harmony*. Though it be a *whole* yet it has a thousand parts; and the whole is a mighty whole too. The Apostle therefore calls it the "unsearchable riches of Christ" which he was to preach among the Gentiles, and he prays for the Ephesians that they might "be filled with all the fulness of God." Secondly, It is intimated that it must *he preached without partiality*, both with regard to the persons addressed, and to the subject of the address. To all hearers he says he had declared the "counsel of God," without abridgment, reserve, or concealment, so that by "the manifestation of the truth he had commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight

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384

of God. Thirdly, It is intimated that in doing this he had to *withstand and resist many temptations*; and these temptations still exist. If a minister brings forward the doctrines of grace in all their fulness and harmony, he will be subjected to the charge of Antinomianism; and if he enforce the precepts in all their spirituality and extensiveness, embracing all personal and religious duties which they enjoin, he will subject himself to the charge of legality; and if he unfold the work of the Spirit as experienced in and by all real Christians, so that they may say with Newton, I have "learned by experience," or that "true religion," as Hart says, "is more than notion, something must be *known* and *felt*," he will be charged with enthusiasm, as if either love or sorrow could be unfelt. Religion must be within in the *principle* before it can be seen without in the conduct. Now when all these things, this doctrine, this experience, and this practice are combined, when regardless of the charge of Antinomianism, these doctrines are preached clearly and fully; and when, regardless of the charge of enthusiasm, Christian experience and the agency and influence of the Holy Ghost in the souls of men is brought forward and insisted upon; and when, regardless of the charge of legality,

pious tempers and a holy walk and conversation becoming the gospel is enjoined, the minister can also say with Paul, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Considering the mixture there was in the congregations which heard Paul preach, and that there is always in every congregation, it is probable, if not certain, that the preacher who does not "shun to declare unto all the counsel of God" will give some offence. But says the Apostle, "If I seek to please men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Daniel reprov'd Belshazzar as if he had been a common man; and John's doctrine was as rough as the garments he wore; and he dared to tell majesty to its face, that it was not above law any more than one of his subjects: "It is not lawful for thee to have her." Paul knew the character and conduct of Felix and Drusilla, but "he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." It is a poor sermon, says George Whitfield, that gives no offence, that neither makes the hearer displeas'd with himself, nor with the preacher. It was a noble eulogium

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385

that Louis XIV. pass'd on one of his preachers, Massilon: "I don't know how it is; when I hear my other chaplains I admire them, but when I hear Massilon I always go away displeas'd with myself." There could not be a finer encomium. And, says the Apostle, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and in godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." And he knew that this satisfaction of his would bear attestation. "I call God," says he, "to witness that I am pure from the blood of *all* men," and the blood of souls is the most defiling, and cries out the most for vengeance; for "I have not shunned to declare unto *you all* the counsel of God."

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OCT. 14.—*They shall take hold of the shirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. Zech. viii. 23.*

KNOWLEDGE is necessary to all influence, but all knowledge is not influential. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them;" but we here see that the knowledge of these people was effective; it constrained them to "lay hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you." This is a simple and striking expression. We have seen a dear little infant, when he wished to engage the attention of his mother, pulling her by the clothes. When a child has been walking along with his father, and has been afraid that he would leave him, he not only cries, but lays hold of his coat. When the cripple had been healed at the beautiful gate of the temple, he held Peter and John, and was afraid to let them go (probably dreading a return of his former misery), as much as to say: You shall not go, and if you do I will go with you, and you shall draw me after you. Just so it is here. It shows conviction, attachment, eager attention, a wishing to be among them and to be of them. Ah, says one of them, I see they are rich, they are happy; oh that I was with them in glory everlasting. I see that they are travelling, and they are bound for that very country which I now long to enter. I must join them. Will they receive me into their number?

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386

God is with them, and it is God I now want. I have been living without him in the world, but I can live without him no longer. It is God I now want—his favour—his presence—the comforts of his Holy and Blessed Spirit. What can I do without God? If I find prosperity in the world, my prosperity will destroy me, and what can I do with adversity, if it should come upon me, without God? What shall I do, if I have no God, when I come to die? Before this other qualities, other companions, attracted and drew the man; but, as the Apostle says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," he has new views, new feelings, new hopes, new pleasures, new aversions, and new companions.

How much depends on association. While the “companion of fools will be destroyed,” “he that walketh with the wise shall be wise.” He that chooses good men for his companions will have God as his Guide, Guardian, and Comforter, and Portion in the land of the living. We shall have fellowship with them while we live, and when we come to die we may say as a good man once said, “I am going to change my place, but not my company.” Death will take us to our home, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, where

“For us our elder brethren stay,  
And angels beckon us away,  
And Jesus bids us come.”

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OCT. 15.—*We have heard that God is with you.*  
Zech. viii. 23.

OBSERVE here the *knowledge which others have of the Christian's state and privilege*. They could not have “*heard*” it, unless it had been reported. Religion has many reporters; some very false ones, and some very true ones. God sometimes constrains even the enemies of his people to bear testimony in their favour; and therefore, says Isaiah, “Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all they that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.” But though others may make known their religion, they must make it known *themselves*; they must not only *be* but also *appear* religious. They must not only “believe with the heart,” that is

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387

beyond the ken of their fellow-creatures, but “confess with their mouth unto salvation,” and “hold fast” not only the reality, but “the profession of their faith without wavering.” As the praises of men should never *draw us out* of a corner, so the frowns of men should never *drive us into* one. Daniel did not court publicity, but he made no scruple, when the writing forbidding it was signed, to go into

his chamber, the windows being open, and give thanks three times a day as aforesaid. It was predicted of the Saviour himself that he should say to the prisoners, Go forth, and to them that were in the darkness of obscurity, Show yourselves. They shall feed, says he, "in the way, and their pastures shall be in all high places," where they can be seen, feeding, preserved, and blessed. It is not easy to conceal religion; where it is real it will break out in some way or other. Repentance will get into the eye, and be seen in tears. Meekness will sit in a man's face, and smile like a morning in May. The man's hand will slide into his pocket before he has time to think about other things. Then "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." It is not easy to restrain powerful emotion. When those angry hypocrites, the Pharisees, came to our Saviour, as the common people and children were crying Hosanna, they, with long faces, said, Lord, rebuke thy servants, that they should hold their peace; all this will bring religion into contempt. Oh, said the Saviour, If I were to command them to hold their peace it would be enjoining upon them an impossibility. And moreover I tell you that "if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out." So when Peter and John were ordered by the council to speak no more in His name, Oh, said they about that we are determined; "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," whatever may be the consequence. How much good is often done by a verbal, but still more by a practical testimony. "Actions speak louder than words." Our meekness under provocation, our humility under applause, our liberality with growing wealth, our patience in affliction, our readiness to forgive when injured, should tell whose we are, what we are, whence we are born, and whither we are bound. We are to be "the epistles of Christ, read and known of all men." And our neighbours and friends should never be

in doubt concerning us, but we should by our whole spirit and conduct “declare plainly that we are seeking a country, and a heavenly country, and that we are only strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

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OCT. 16.—*And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine that toe may enter into them; and forthwith Jesus gave them leave.* Mark v. 12, 13.

IF we reflect, on the one hand, on the extreme limitation of our faculties, and, on the other, on the depth of God’s designs, we shall not wonder at being called to walk by sight, and not by faith. Well, a period of development is hastening along, when we shall understand what we now believe. Now, even now, we are able to trust the Lord in the darkness, and now, even now, we may study his doings, and the discoveries we make will amply reward our diligence. The narrative before us affords materials for a variety of reflections. One view of it only we intend to notice; that is, prayer—the prayer of devils: “And all the devils besought Jesus.” Here is their acknowledgment of the Saviour’s power over them. They could not injure even brutes without his permission. Their creed is beyond that of many who profess and call themselves Christians. None of the devils in hell disbelieve the Divinity of Christ. They believe and tremble. And so do men. How many things do they admit to be right, and yet in their practice deny or oppose their convictions. And all Christians know with regard to themselves, that the contemplative and the speculative surpasses that which is experimental and practical in religion. Our truest wisdom will be, not in yielding submission to the dictates of philosophy, falsely so called, in disbelieving the existence and agency of evil spirits, but in resisting the devices of beings of whom we are necessarily ignorant. Blessed be God that we are conscious the tremendous power of our adversaries is limited and completely controlled by him who is our Saviour and our Friend, who loved us and died for our sakes.

But will devils pray, and will they be heard? Yes: "And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. Astonishing! Was it

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389

out of affection for them, or sympathy with their design? Impossible! But what was the design of their request? It was founded on malice and mischief. No longer permitted to torment the man, they entreat permission to enter the swine; not out of spite to injure the property of the Gadarenes, but to render Christ obnoxious to them through the spoiling of their goods. And so it fell out. These Gadarenes, though dwelling on the other side Jordan, were Jews, and possessed of and engaged in the disposal of contraband property—property which it was unlawful to sell, to eat, to touch, or to possess. Satan knew that they were expressly violating the Divine command. He knew as well as Paul what was the "root of all evil." He was acquainted with the history of Achan and of Gehazi, and knew that man would sell body and soul, God and heaven, and everything else, for profit. He knew their hate would drive off the Messiah, who interrupted these unrighteous and sordid gains. Therefore this permission to enter the swine was sought by these evil spirits. Permission was given. Yes; in judgment, and deserved judgment. This is an awful part of the subject. Satan desired to have Peter that he might sift him as wheat is sifted. Thus Satan desired to have Job; and he destroyed all he had, not in spite against his sons and daughters whom he killed, or against his servants whom he had taken captives, or against his flocks and herds. No; but it was solely in malice against the proprietor. "Yet in all this Job sinned not." He triumphed in his trial, which was found unto praise and glory and honour. The same permission was given to Satan to tempt the Gadarenes. How different the result! The gold will endure the furnace; the dross will be consumed. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

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OCT. 17.—*And behold the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw Mm, they besought Mm that he would depart out of their coasts.* Matt. viii. 34.

HERE was a sight enough to melt hearts that were not of flint. The people, hearing of what had befallen the herd of

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390

swine, came out of the city in large numbers; and when they came they saw before them that wretched being whom no man could tame, though he were bound in chains and fetters, who had his dwelling among the tombs and mountains, ever cutting himself with stones—they saw this poor wretch dispossessed and tranquillised, clothed, and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. Surely this was a sight to endear the Saviour to them; but as soon as they discovered what had befallen the swine, every tender thought was annihilated. Instead of bringing their sick and poor folk to be healed and blessed; instead of praising this Divine Benefactor, or inquiring of this Prophet, so mighty in deed and word, they prayed—*yes, for once they prayed* (for they were afraid to offer him violence)—that he would depart out of their coasts. He heard their prayer, took shipping, and withdrew, and they saw him no more. How dreadful is this prayer! Alas, how many have offered the same, and even encouraged a hope that it would be answered, and that they would be rid of Christ in time! While Moses has been crying, “If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence;” and David praying, “Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me;” these have been desiring that Christ would depart from them. And yet we need the Saviour’s presence as much as the earth needs the sun; without him all is darkness, dullness, dreariness, and death. “Woe to them,” says God, “When I depart from them.” Better for a man to lose his property, and embrace the dunghill, be deprived of his liberty and become a slave, or to lose his health and know not a moment’s ease, than to endure the curse, “Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.” If God leave a man, then is he left indeed. A blind man on the

edge of a precipice, a mariner sleeping on the mast-top, a child with a flambeau amongst gunpowder, is less in danger. Yet the Gadarenes desired him to depart. Alas, how many are there who, though ashamed to say so, have felt the same desire. Thoughts of the Saviour and his presence have been unwelcome and irksome; they have lamented the checks and restraints these have imposed on them, and wished they were able to go on undisturbedly; in short, to be free, to be rid of him. This is the prayer of

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391

many a look, many a gesture. By their looks and their actions many have prayed thus, when not a word has been said; but actions speak louder than words. How many have thus told a minister, a friend, a parent, to leave off! In the movement of an eye, or a finger, or the turning of their back, they have said, "Depart from us; we desire not a knowledge of thy ways;" "which say unto the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits; get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease before us." This language is their meaning. God puts it into words; and what wonder, if God in judgment takes them at their word. And thus God interprets the meaning of these prayers; he translates these actions into intelligible language, and there is nothing more awful than for the Almighty thus to put men's conduct into words, and to tell them what they say when no sentence passes their lips.

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OCT. 18.—*And he called the name of that place Bethel.*  
 Gen. xxviii. 19.

THAT is, the house of God; and wherever God meets with his people, that place may be thus very appropriately designated. There was no temple nor any edifice at hand, and yet, says Jacob, "This is none other than the house of God." This is confirmed by Jehovah's own declaration: "The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.

Where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? for all those things hath mine hand made, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at my word." It is also confirmed by the conversation of our Lord with the woman of Samaria. Her countrymen imagined that God must be worshipped at Samaria, or nowhere, while the Jews supposed he must be worshipped at Jerusalem or nowhere; but our Saviour takes this opportunity to teach her that his services are not confined to a particular place. How does this *condemn bigotry*, which induces men to say, "The temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord are we;" while nothing makes a people dear to God but their conformity to him, and that which makes a place of worship sacred is the Divine presence. As to

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392

external and intrinsical holiness, we cannot attach any to wood and stone. There were no material temples before the flood; the patriarchs had altars, but no temples; and till near the close of the third century there were no places for Christian worship and preaching expressly reared. The Apostles preached and prayed where they could find a place; and our Saviour preached from on board a vessel, and in private houses, and on the sides of the mountains, and on the wayside; and now

"Where'er we seek thee thou art found,  
And every place is hallowed ground."

There are several cases in which this remark will afford encouragement. First, When by sickness, or accident, or distance, we cannot repair to the sanctuary of God. It is our duty to go there whenever it is in our power, and a real Christian will feel it to be a privilege to be there. His past experience enlivens and encourages him when he thinks of it; he has seen his power and his glory in the sanctuary, and he remembers this, and therefore he is glad when they say to him, "Come and let us go into the house of the Lord." But we may be the Lord's prisoners; and when so, and deprived of the means of grace,

we may remember there are three things to which we have access—access to the word of his grace, access to the throne of his grace, and access to the Spirit of his grace, even when by his providence we may be deprived of public ordinances. Secondly, It should encourage those whom Providence may have placed at a distance from a gospel temple. But if from vanity, discontent, or avarice, a person moves from a neighbourhood where the privileges of religion may be enjoyed, and have chosen a situation regardless whether the gospel ministry is to be found there, then they are not in their duty; but if in the providence of Cod a person is stationed in a land, as to the means of grace, of spiritual barrenness, they may hope that the presence of the fountain will make up for the streams, and that the Cod of all grace will be with them though they may be deprived of some of the means of grace. Thirdly, It will also encourage us in the intervals of the Sabbath. The Sabbath does not last always; we cannot be always in the temple of God; but we can be with

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393

God in the closet as well as in the sanctuary. The spirit of devotion may influence us in the absence of forms. Any place, by prayer and meditation, may become to us the house of God, and thus we may sanctify every situation, and render it sacred and happy.

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OCT. 19.—*This is the gate of heaven.* Gen. xxviii. 16.

THE experience of Christians sometimes approximates toward heaven; therefore, says Jacob, not only “This is the house of God,” but “This is the gate of heaven.” There was nothing around him that was so outwardly inviting; but, oh, that ladder, the angels ascending and descending upon it; and his God above, standing and looking down, and addressing him; oh, such scenery, such language, and such communion, made Jacob think, though he saw from the place it was not heaven, that heaven could not be far off. The poor unbelieving world think that

heaven is some place millions of miles off, somewhere beyond the stars, to which they are to return when they are delivered from their trouble and toil here; but our Lord said, "The kingdom of God is within you;" and the Christian knows this. Though the harvest is hereafter, he has the first-fruits now: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "Ye *are* come," says Paul, "to mount Zion and to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, to the general assembly of the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to an innumerable company of angels." Oh, we have seen Christians in trouble and in sickness joyful in the prospect of glory; and we have heard them shout aloud for joy on their dying beds, exclaiming, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" Even "while they are here experience will convince them that heaven is a state rather than a place, and their connection with it and its commencement are already begun. There is nothing gives a Christian such an acquaintance with heaven as experience like this. Communion with God in holy exercises will give him a better idea of heaven than all the sermons he ever heard, or all the books he ever read. The best way to obtain a lively and impressive view of heaven is to contemplate our holiest frames and our happiest

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394

feelings here, and to add to them perfection and perpetuity, especially when we feel so blessed as to say, "Oh that this were to last for ever!"

"The smilings of thy face,  
How amiable they are,  
'Tis heaven to rest in thine embrace,  
And nowhere else but there."

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OCT. 20.—*This is the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.* Gen. xxviii. 16.

THE house of God and the gate of heaven are most intimately related; and Jacob mentions them together, and

in their proper order: "This is the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The one precedes the other; the one affords us the earnest and foretaste of the other. Philip Henry was accustomed to say, at the close of his Sabbath-days' exercises, "Well, if this be not heaven it is the way to it." Not that the house of God and heaven are inseparably connected; far from it. Alas! there are many who will find the word preached the savour of death unto death; and others the savour of life unto life. There are some who will find the Saviour displayed there as a destroyer, while others will find him their Redeemer; while some regard him as "a precious corner-stone," some make him "a stone of stumbling, over which they fall and are broken," and "are snared and taken." To some, alas! the house of God will be found the gate of hell too. How many have passed through the sanctuary as through a gate into perdition! Oh, the remembrance of the pulpit, the desk, and the figures of the ministers who have addressed them, and the tones of their voices, and the various sermons they preached, these will furnish the fuel to the fire that is unquenchable, and the food to the worm that dieth not. But to many others the house of God will be the gate of heaven. Those who call the "Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord," will enjoy an eternal Sabbath; they who can now say, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth," shall "serve him day and night in his temple" above, never more to go out. We should live in the ex-

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395

pectation of this. The Saviour is set forth as a ladder to teach us that when we have done with time we shall ascend to heaven. Some of the Lord's people are near the top, and are about to set their feet on the last step; while others are grasping some of the lower rounds. Let us take a firm hold, and be persuaded that we shall receive eternal life as God's free gift through Jesus Christ; that he who now is giving grace "will give glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

To all who are convinced of sin, and, renouncing self, who are rejoicing alone in Christ Jesus, and are giving themselves up to him at the foot of the cross, and are saying,

“No joy can be compared with this,  
To love and serve the Lord,”

there is not a promise in the book of God which does not belong to them. Though for awhile they may be troubled through manifold temptations, he will soon take them out of the furnace, and place them beyond the possibility of further trial: “For when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

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OCT. 21.—*And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not.*  
Mark v. 18, 19.

WHILE the Gadarenes were rejoicing at Christ's departure the poor patient followed him with tears, and kneeling on the shore stretched out his hand towards the vessel as the Lord entered it, and craved to be with him. Observe, with regard to his prayer, First, That it arose from *fear*; he connected his recovery with the Saviour's bodily presence, and was afraid lest the demons should again take possession of him. Secondly, It arose from *gratitude*; he wished to be with him for “a name and a praise”—as a monument of his grace and power, to attend him as his servant—to execute his orders, and comply with his commands. Thirdly, It arose from *love*; he wished to see and to know more of Jesus, to sit always at his feet and hear his words. And it is the desire of every one that has obtained grace that he may be with Jesus; and the prayer of every one who has tasted the bread of life is, “Lord, evermore

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396

give us this bread.” Yet innocent, pious, and praiseworthy as the poor creature's prayer was, it was *refused*: “Jesus suffered him not.” This part of the subject is full of instruction. It will serve to enable us to *think cor-*

*rectly of answers to prayer;* and lead to the conclusion that God may answer in wrath or refuse a petition in kindness; that success here is no mark of the Divine favour and friendship. The Israelites wished for flesh; God “gave them their hearts desire,” but “sent leanness into their souls.” They asked for a king in their folly; “God gave them a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath.” But to turn to the other side. God’s heart is towards his people; before they call he answers, and while they are yet speaking he hears. Thus we say with David, “I love the Lord, because he hath heard my supplications;” and we should love him more if we knew all. There are times when, if our desires had been complied with, we might have been destroyed, or materially injured. Our desires too frequently betray our imperfections and our depravity, even in our devotions. When on our knees worldly-mindedness whispers, “Ask something for me;” and pride suggests, “Ask something for me.” Alas! we “know not what to ask for as we ought.” But for our comfort God is kind as well as wise; he “waits to be gracious,” and is “exalted that he may have mercy.” He sees the end from the beginning, and knows how to distinguish between our *welfare* and our *wishes*, and is often necessitated to sacrifice the latter for our good; nor will he spare for our crying. Thus God acts towards us as a judicious parent to his child, distinguishing his wants from his wishes. Moses prayed to see God’s face; now none can see him and live; therefore God graciously refused his prayer. Christians often beg of God to tell them that their sins are pardoned, that their names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, and that they are heirs of glory. If their desires were granted, and their requests complied with, their frame would break down with the communication. Paul prayed that “the thorn might depart;” but it was too indispensable. The Saviour therefore says, I am too much concerned for your own welfare to do this. I will not deliver you from the burden; but I

will give you my supporting grace, which "shall be sufficient for you." Sometimes our way is hedged up with thorns, why? To prevent our wandering! If the passage were open and smooth, we should be tempted to stray; but mercy would throw even a hell across the road to stop us, rather than suffer us to depart from God.

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OCT. 22.—*Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; and all men did marvel.* Mark v. 19, 20.

OFTEN when men do good they think more of their own advantage and praise than of the objects of their beneficence; not only their left hand must know what their right hand is doing, but all the neighbourhood, and all the nation, if possible. But, in the pure benevolence of our Saviour, there was no ostentation; it terminated with the individual. When the poor widow of Nain was bemoaning the loss of her son, the prop of her life, whom she must now see no more, mark the delicacy of the Saviour: "He gave him to his mother." What a trophy this poor man would have been of his power, had he chosen to exhibit him, to introduce him on every occasion to the company or to the congregation. But no; this was his language: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." There is nothing in the religion of Jesus unnaturally to disarrange the decorum of social or domestic life. He that is not *relatively* godly is not *really* so. A man who is bad at home is bad throughout. It was a wise reply of Whitfield, when asked, Is such a man a good man? "How should I know that? I never lived with him," The religion of Jesus Christ calls us *into* the world as well as *out* of it. It calls us *out* of the world as to its spirit and maxims, and *into* it as the sphere of activity and place of trial. The idea of living among the Gadarenes must have been uncomfortable to the renewed mind of the poor

man. Yet he is directed to go without murmuring or gain-saying; not indeed in the spirit of the Pharisee to say:

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398

“Stand by, I am holier than thou;” nor of the rigid and bigoted professor, who, while he confesses that “a man can receive nothing unless it be given him from above,” is occupied all day in maligning and censuring his neighbours, but to display a heavenly meekness and the gentleness of Jesus Christ in his conduct and conversation; to relate his recovery, to honour the Physician, and to direct others to him. And there is nothing strikes like a fact. What attention in the neighbourhood the case of this poor man would excite. Don’t you remember John such a one, the poor demoniac who has been dwelling among the tombs? he is now dispossessed and tranquillised, and is become as gentle and mild as a lamb; he is the most benevolent creature in the neighbourhood, and is ever engaged in doing good. We should take especial care, while we recommend religion to others, that we ourselves are the subjects of it. Many professors had better be dumb as stones for the good they effect by all they say. Oh, it is a moral sickness to hear them talk of the “precious Saviour,” of “communion with God,” and “*the* gospel,” while they are at the same time vain, proud, worldly-minded, covetous, hard-hearted, and unforgiving. May the Lord give us consistency of character, sanctify our tempers and our tongues, and make us in our actions such as we are in our words, that we may make known to others the mercy we have ourselves received; that like Andrew we may find a brother Simon or like Philip a friend Nathaniel; or, like the woman of Samaria, we may bring a whole neighbourhood to Christ.

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OCT. 23.—*The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed he the name of the Lord.* Job i. 21.

IN all Job’s trials and under his most painful bereavements, privations, and losses, it is said that he “sinned not, nor charged God foolishly,” but blessed the Lord for having

“taken away,” as well as for what he “gave.” And so we may and should be thankful for our bitter mercies as well at our sweet mercies. But we have been reproached and persecuted; we have had a succession of losses and bereavements. What! are we to bless God for them? Why not? If “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth,”

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399

why not these, for they are “a part of his ways?” If “all things work together for good to them that love God,” why should not these? “Shall we,” says Job, “receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?” Not that we are required to bless God for these things themselves. The things may be considered in themselves as evils; and we are not allowed to make any evil thing the object of our desire or of our praise. But we may and we should be thankful for the principle by which these are sent to us; the covenant love of God in Christ. “Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” We should therefore be thankful for the love which sends them and attends them, and for the end which they are designed to accomplish; for, “these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” When a child comes of age, he feels thankful for many restraints and corrections which he thought hardly of during his minority. So will it be with tried Christians. “When Messias cometh he will show us all things.” In his light we shall see light, and be able to discern that “he hath done all things well,” that “God is a rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are done in judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” Even before they reach Immanuel’s land, or walk the golden streets, they shall see enough in God’s dealings with them to produce acquiescence and submission, and to answer Job’s inquiry, “Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.” But then they will see more fully what evil it has prevented, and what good it has been the means of procuring. And not only do they see enough even here to produce this submission, but to

call forth their gratitude and praise. And how many have been able to say,

“’Tis my happiness below  
 Not to live without the cross,  
 But the Saviour’s power to know,  
 Sanctifying every loss.  
 Trials must and will befall,  
 But with humble faith to see  
 Love inscribed upon them all,  
 This is happiness to me.”

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400

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OCT. 24.—*Who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*

Rom. i. 18.

THAT is, while the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodly, against all the unrighteous, and in a way of enhancement and aggravation, those especially are peculiarly obnoxious to it who “hold the truth in unrighteousness.” It more intensely burns against those who act against their knowledge, having a convinced judgment, but being wedded to a wicked life. And there is far more of this to be found than is commonly imagined. The heathen themselves never lived up to the light they possessed, never practised what they knew. This is the charge brought against them by the Apostle in this chapter: “When they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.” It was not otherwise with the Jews; *they* never practised what they knew: to whom Paul says, in the next chapter, “Behold thou art called a Jew, and restest on the law, and makest thy boast in God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law. Thou that teachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?” There is not a man in any country under heaven, or pertaining to any religious sect, that lives up to his own principles; he does many things he knows to be wrong, and he omits many things he knows to be right. The plea of ignorance, therefore, can only be

admitted in the case of idiots. All the rest are of those, as Job says, who “rebel against the light,” not only *rebell*ing against that which they *might* know, but that which they *do* know. The original is, and so it is strongly rendered, “who *imprison the truth in unrighteousness.*” That is, truth would speak in them, and struggles to be heard, but it is restrained, confined, and imprisoned. Fashion, public opinion, the love of fame, the love of money, the love of pleasure, these are the jail wardens, these are the jailers, these confine the truth in prison. Saul knew it belonged not to him to offer sacrifice; his conscience told him, therefore, that it was a sin. He struggled hard, but he yielded: I “*forced my self,*” said he, and mark the expression, there was difficulty in the case, “and offered a burnt-

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401

offering.” Herod knew John; he revered him, he considered him a just man, he knew the murder of him would be a most unjust thing—his conscience told him so, and he was very sorry when the desire of Herodias was expressed, but he overcame it, though he struggled hard—but his regard for his own word overpowered the word of God. It was the same with Pilate. Pilate was persuaded of our Saviour’s innocence, and the persuasion was increased by the dream which his wife had in the morning; and when she informed him of it, he found a struggle within him, and he forced himself, and condemned him whom he knew to be innocent. Oh, how many of those who are born in a land of light, who have attended at the family altar and who have from children “known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make them wise unto salvation”—who know such and such things to be sins and yet they practise them, know such and such things to be duties, and yet neglect them, are convinced, but not converted—with what accusing and condemning consciences they are forcing themselves on, themselves and God only know. “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is a sin;” and our Saviour says: “The servant who knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will,

shall be beaten with many stripes. For unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required."

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OCT. 25.—*Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.* Rom. vi. 11.

THIS supposes nothing *less* than that Christians avoid sin, but it implies *much more*. A man from a fear of loss or from a hope of advantage, or from a reference to his reputation, may be urged and induced to avoid what he loves, and there are many who are ready to wish it were lawful to indulge themselves with impunity in a course of open profanity and profligacy, in the violation of the Sabbath, and in the omission of public worship and the means of grace. And the Lord looketh at the heart and will give them credit for all this. Lot's wife left Sodom, but she was loath to leave it, she was not "dead" to it; her heart was in it still. This led her to look back, and "she became a pillar of

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402

salt." If all those were to become pillars of salt who profess to forsake the world while yet they hanker after it, we should hardly be able to move about. What spectacles would the house of God produce! Some would be petrified as they came up the aisle; others would be left petrifications in their pews. And all hearts are transparent in the view of God. But Christians not only profess to leave the world, they do leave it. "They are dead *indeed* unto sin" as soon as they are dead to the nature of it, and not merely to any particular instance of it: The Christian's aversion to sin is natural (not as to the old nature, but as to the new nature), and all natural aversions and antipathies operate universally. It is not to some particular vice to which he may have no constitutional propensity, or to which he may have little temptation in his outward calling and circumstances; no, but he prays, "Deliver me from *all* my transgressions," "save me from all mine iniquities." "What have I to do any more with idols?" This is the way, and, indeed, the only effectual way, to preserve us from

all sin; other provisions will be sure to fail when the power of temptation combines with opportunity, secrecy, and inclination. It is this that serves to secure the believer so effectually under it, and that distinguishes him from other men. He would not live in sin if he might. The Christian does not feel sin to be his pleasure, and therefore he does not deem the opportunity to indulge in it his privilege. If it were lawful to say to a mother, "Why, you may take your child and throw it out of the window," she would not do it, she *could* not do it. And why could she not do it? Has she not strength to open the window? Has she not strength in her arms to throw it out? Oh, but it would violate every feeling of her nature, it would be impossible. So the Apostle says that the Christian "doth not commit sin," that is, as others do, and as they once did, for "his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." And Dr. Watts says,

"Immortal principles forbid  
The sons of God to sin."

There were some that brought forward a charge against the Apostle for preaching a doctrine which implied a tendency,

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403

or a permission at least, to live in sin. And how does he treat it? Why, with abhorrence: "How shall we who are *dead* to sin live any longer therein?" Dead to it by profession, by obligation, and by inclination. As no creature can live out of its own element long without compulsion, so is it impossible for the Christian, now that he is regenerated by the Holy Ghost, to live in sin, or to love it. But negative holiness is not sufficient; it is not enough that the Christian "put off the old man," with his deeds; he must "put on the new man;" and while he must live "soberly, and righteously, and godly," not only walk not "after the flesh," but walk "after the Spirit."

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OCT. 26.—*And having done all to stand.* Eph. vi. 13.

OH how significant is this! It is an intimation that heavenward is not easy walking. The Apostle says to the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" not the procuring of salvation, it is already procured by the precious blood of Christ; not to make atonement for our sins, the atonement is already made; nor to furnish a justifying righteousness in which to appear before God, "for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The meaning of the Apostle is, that in the use of means, and in progressing and persevering to the end of life, we are to work out our salvation. The Galatians "*did* run well," but were "hindered;" they began in the Spirit, but ended in the flesh: "Ephraim's goodness was as the morning cloud and the early dew, that soon passeth away." It is not the first but the last step in the race that brings us to the goal. "Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life." "He that endureth to the end," says the Saviour, "shall be saved." We are by "patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory, honour, and immortality." Some of God's servants have been foiled after various successes, and have become affecting examples to show us that we are never out of danger as long as we are in the body, and in the world. Of Solomon, after all his attainments, it is said: "In his old age outlandish women drew away his heart

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404

from God." Joab was a fine officer, and he faithfully adhered to David in the rebellion of Absalom, but he failed in the case of Adonijah; and therefore he perished, notwithstanding all his righteousness, in his sovereign's fall. The battle of Eylau, between the French and the Russians, was a dreadful conflict; more than sixty thousand perished; both parties claimed the victory. What then is the historian to do? Why, he will inquire who kept the field; and these were the French while the Russians withdrew. It is the keeping of the field to the last, to see all the adversaries withdrawn, that is to make us "more

than conquerors through him that loved us." It is this that gives decision to the battle. Some have overcome, and then, alas! they have been themselves overcome: "What is it to gain success, and yield it at last?" Some have been often checked, they often meet with a defeat, but then they have succeeded upon the whole. And "having done all, they stand:" "Of Gad it is said, A troop shall overcome him, but *he* shall overcome at the last." And this will be the case with every real Christian. What comes from God will be sure to lead back to God: "A good man's steps are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth greatly in his way; though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."

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OCT. 27.—*Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* 2 Tim. ii. 3.

ALL Christians are called to experience a warfare, a real, trying, and a very peculiar warfare; so that every believer can say with the Apostle: "So fight I not as one that beateth the air;" for "we wrestle," says the Apostle, "we agonize, not merely with flesh and blood, but with a numerous, mighty, invisible, subtle, and malignant foe." In other wars there are some exemptions, or substitutes may be provided; but no one can engage in this warfare for us. No one can believe, or repent, or obey, or deny himself for us. And if he promises and vows all these things on our behalf, he promises and vows what he is unable ever to perform. In other wars there are dispensations allowed; for instance, as to the royal family, ministers of the

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405

gospel, the aged, the sick and infirm, and as to females and children. But there is no discharge in *this* war." Ministers must even officer *this* army. Women must become Amazons, and children must resemble Hannibal—who, at the age of nine, laid his little hand upon the altar and swore eternal enmity to the Romans. And they who

are "faint" must yet be "pursuing," and "endure *hardness* as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." And then as to the *endurance* of these hardships of war, we find there is to be no cessation in this warfare. We are forbidden to conclude a peace with these enemies, or to enter into a truce with them, or even to make an armistice with them during the burial of the dead. The war is to go on night and day, summer and winter, in sickness and in health. There is to be no relaxation either of fighting or of watching; none until death proclaims the Christian's deliverance and his triumph. And then this warfare, this contention, is not for a trifle, as is often the case with wars amongst men, as the war between England and America was—for a pound of tea. No, but here the most awful consequences are depending. Here everything is for life—the life of the soul, the life of eternity. Eternity is to result from this struggle, an eternity of happiness or woe. If we do not overcome, we are vanquished and undone for ever.

"Fight on, my faithful band, he cries,  
Nor fear the mortal blow,  
Who first in such a warfare dies  
Shall speediest victory know."

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OCT. 28.—*That I may win Christ.* Phil. iii. 8.

WHILE the men of the world are making worldly good their chief aim, and are seeking for happiness in the things of the present life, endeavouring to gain its honours, its riches, its pleasures, the Christian's aim is to "win Christ." Oh, says he, it is my wish, my grand desire, my principal aim, my daily and earnest pursuit, to win him, to realize him, to possess him, and to enjoy him. Observe, therefore, *The value of the prize.* That I may win Christ; and oh, what a prize is he. To describe the excellence of this "treasure hid in the field," this pearl of price unknown,

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406

would beggar a seraph's tongue. The sacred penmen seem to have been at a loss to find suitable expressions to set it

forth. They speak of him as being "fairer than the children of men;" yea, he is "altogether lovely." He is the "hope," and the "consolation," and the "glory" of Israel, in whom all fulness dwells, so that in winning him we gain all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, that we may become "wise unto salvation." In him it hath pleased the Father should all fulness dwell, so that in gaining him we gain all pure, spiritual, durable, and satisfying good, all spiritual blessings in time, and all the happiness and glories of eternity. Therefore, says the Apostle, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or things present or things to come. All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Observe, secondly, *The person who is thus desirous to win Christ.* This is the language of Paul. He is the candidate for this prize, and we notice, first, that this language received as coming from Paul, is calculated to *excite our admiration.* What a change has taken place in his views and in his feelings, he who verily thought within himself that he ought to do many things against the name of Christ. Haling men and women, and committing them to prison, and persecuting even to strange cities all that called upon his name; and when they were put to death giving his voice against them. Here we find the blasphemer now a worshipper of Jesus; the bitterest foe the most earnest candidate for his favour, and giving expression to unparalleled admiration. And we may also notice that this language is calculated to *excite inquiry.* It may be asked, But had he not already won the prize, and was he not now rejoicing in a knowledge of the fact? Yes, but with all who sincerely love Christ, he sought after higher attainments in a knowledge and enjoyment of his interest in Him. He says, "I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And thus it is with all Christians that love Christ so well, that they are not satisfied with what they have known and felt. "They want to see still "greater things

407

than these." Hence says the Apostle, "That I may know him," that is, know more of him, "and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable to his death." An increase in knowledge promotes humility. A Christian is not dissatisfied with the object, but with the measure of his knowledge; and therefore he is, with Paul, anxious to possess more of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord." Thirdly, Observe the *possibility of success*. This prize is attainable, and it is attainable by us. Not by way of merit, nor desert, but by an humble, penitent, and loving application to him; in an exclusive dependence upon him; and in an entire renouncing of all for him. As nothing can be a substitute for him, so no sacrifice will be deemed too great to make for him. We shall be ready to part with self and the world, "laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us," that we may win Christ. Thrice happy and blessed are all those that win Christ. Happy in time, in trouble, in death, and happy in eternity. But alas, how dreadful will it be with all those who lose the prize. Whatever else they possess, how poor, and wretched, and miserable will their state be in life, in death, and in eternity.

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OCT. 29.—RECKON YE *also* YOURSELVES *to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.* Rom. vi. II.

CHRISTIANS are herein reminded of what they are. The Apostle would have them form a correct estimate of themselves: "Reckon yourselves" as such, says he. And there are three reasons to be assigned for this. We should reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God, *in order to maintain the conduct that is suitable to such*. For our conduct should correspond with our character and condition. The way to know what we ought to do is to ascertain what we are; for our duties grow out of our conditions and relations. "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at

the right hand of God." "Seeing ye look for these things, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Christians are not to live like others; more is expected from them than from others. Therefore

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408

let us be concerned to "walk worthy of God, who has called us unto his kingdom and glory." Secondly, We should thus reckon ourselves to be such, *in order that we may be kept from wondering at the treatment of such*. By their principles and practice, Christians censure and condemn the world, and if we oppose them they will oppose us as far as they have the power. They wish to be in darkness, and hate the light that Christian conduct flashes upon them. They wish to be asleep, and they dislike to be aroused; nor will they easily forgive the disturbance. The Saviour says, "Marvel not if the world hate you; ye know that it hateth me." And why did it hate him? What he said to the Jews he could now say to many empty and inconsiderate professors of religion who live so much in the world: "The world cannot hate you" (because they were so much like it), "but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil." Thirdly, We are to reckon ourselves as being thus "dead" and "alive," *in order that we may rejoice in the portion of such*. "Oh, how great is the goodness which God has laid up for them that fear him; which he has wrought for them that trust in him before the sons of men." If the world frowns on us, he smiles. If they condemn us, he is near to justify us. Such a death and such a life as this demands self-denial and sacrifices, which will be more than indemnified if there be any meaning and truth in the Scriptures. We may be losers *in* his service, but we can never be losers *by* it. "There is no man who hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and in the world to come life everlasting;" for "the Lord God is a sun and shield;

the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

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OCT. 30.—*They overcame—by the blood of the Lamb.*  
Rev. xii. 11.

SOME are now engaged in "fighting the good fight of faith." The conflict is severe and protracted: "Without are fightings, and within are fears;" and they are saying: "Lord how are they increased that trouble me; many are they

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409

that rise up against me; many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." But though we have to wrestle against

"A numerous host of mighty foes,  
Though earth and hell our way oppose,  
He safely leads our souls along:  
His loving-kindness, O how strong!"

The conflict is ours, and ours shall be the victory. A victory the *most sure*—as sure as the truth and promise and the oath of God, and the sacrifice of Immanuel can make it. A victory the *most glorious*: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne;" "I will give him the morning star;" "he that overcometh shall inherit all things." A victory *not very remote*. If life be short, our conflicts cannot be long. A few more rising and descending suns, and our sun "shall no more go down by day, nor our moon withdraw her shining; for God shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended." A few more "fightings," and the "enemies we have seen to-day we shall see no more for ever," our warfare will have been "accomplished." But there are others who *were once* engaged in this warfare, but are not *now*. What shall we say of them? those *yonder*. Who are these arrayed in white robes, "having palms in their hands, and whence came they?" "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." Blessed spirits!

“Once they were mourning here below,  
 And wet their couch with tears,  
 They wrestled hard as we do now  
 With sins, and doubts, and fears.  
 I ask them whence their victory came,  
 They with united breath  
 Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,  
 Their victory to his death.”

They seem to be looking down from the heavenly battles, cheering us on, saying, “Once we were in the same condition with you, and soon you will be in the same glories with us.” Wherefore, let us “gird up the loins of our

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410

mind, and hope unto the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

“Then let my soul march boldly on,  
 Press forward to the heavenly gate,  
 There peace and joy eternal reign,  
 And glittering robes for conquerors wait.”

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OCT. 31.—*Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad.* Acts xi. 23.

WE may consider Barnabas as a partaker of this pleasure under three views. First, As a man of *piety*. Piety regards godliness, fears God, loves God, and is, so to speak, absorbed in the promotion of God’s glory. God’s enemies are the Christian’s enemies; God’s friends are his friends. He is “sorrowful for the solemn assembly,” and the “reproach of it “is his “burden.” On the other hand, when the word of the Lord “has free course and is glorified;” when sinners are converted and believers “walk as becometh the gospel,” then they rejoice. Yes, they must rejoice, if they possess the principle of piety, on God’s behalf, for conversion is to the “Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Whenever a man is converted, God has a subject born; here is one in whom he is then glorified. Secondly, We may view Barnabas as a man of *benevolence*. As a benevolent man he was pleased

when he saw the lame and the maimed healed, the hungry fed, the naked clothed, and the sick recovered. But he knew that the body was as nothing compared to the soul, or time to eternity. What is every other attainment compared with the acquisition of that godliness which "is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come?" From what enemy can a man be saved like his sins? What salvation can a man obtain like that which he derives from the gospel? and can a benevolent man view this and not rejoice? Besides, every subject of divine grace is not only blessed in himself, but he is made a blessing to others; he becomes then one of those for whom "the wilderness and the solitary place will be glad." When a man is converted, who can tell what he may become, or what good he may do before his death? Who can

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411

tell, if that persecutor going to Damascus is called by divine grace, what he may do by preaching the gospel which he once despised? Who can tell, when that tinker is converted from profligacy, what good he may do by writing works which may edify the world and the church to the end of time? Can a benevolent man look on persons when they become thus blessed, and prove such blessings, and not rejoice? Thirdly, We may view Barnabas as a *minister*, who had come here on a preaching tour. Salvation was the very end of his office; it was the design of his labours; it was the answer of his prayers. Barnabas had the spirit of his functions, and could say, with Paul, "God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." So will every minister who has the same disposition with Barnabas. He may have his trials—trials in common with men and with Christians, and trials peculiar to himself and to his office—but yet his hands will be strengthened, his heart will be enlivened by such a sight; he will be able to say, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord, for ye are our glory and joy." Fourthly, *His pleasure was disinterested*. Barnabas could rejoice, though he had not been the means of producing here the grace in

which he took so much pleasure. Some cannot rejoice to see things done by others, especially if they do not belong to their own communion, if they cannot pronounce the Shibboleth of their party. How many confine the operations of divine grace to their own people. But if a man has the spirit of Barnabas, he will be able to say, "Let God choose and employ what instrument he pleases, and let him bless in what instance he chooses, I will follow him and therein rejoice; yea, and I will rejoice."

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Nov. 1.—*And exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.* Acts xi. 23.

OBSERVE, first, The *importance* of the admonition—that they would "cleave unto the Lord." Who did he mean by the Lord? Unquestionably the Lord Jesus. Him they had received; in him they were to walk. He possessed every excellency to excite their admiration, and every claim upon their obedience. He and he alone was equal to the relief

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412

of all their exigencies; and therefore "he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord." If we had heard Barnabas explaining his own exhortation, probably it would have been something to this effect: Cleave, my brethren, to him; cleave to him as your Teacher; hear ye him. If others go off murmuring and complaining, saying this is a "hard saying, who can hear it," and he says unto you, "Will ye also go away?" return the same answer as we are doing, "Lord, to whom can we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Cleave to him as your *Redeemer*, whose blood cleanseth from all sin; whose righteousness alone can give you boldness and access, with confidence in all your dealings with God. Cleave to him as your *Support* in all your duties, and in all your conflicts, and in all your trials, for in him you have not only righteousness, but strength. "Without him you can do nothing," but through his "strengthening you, you can do all things." Cleave to him as your *Comforter*;

he is the "hope" and "consolation of Israel;" in him alone you can have peace; while "in the world you shall have tribulation." Cleave to him as your *Master*; remember that he bought you with his blood, and that you have dedicated yourselves entirely to his service. Cleave to him as your *Example*. Seek to be more and more like him, "to deny yourselves and take up your cross," and "follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth." Observe, secondly, *The nature of the admonition*. It was "that with *purpose of heart* they would cleave unto the Lord." Now this impulse—not only conviction but resolution—always issues from the heart; and what is religion unless the heart be engaged from the beginning to the end. God therefore says, "My son, give me thine heart." When this is given, everything else will be surrendered. When there is purpose of heart, when the heart is fixed, the possessor of it will go forward notwithstanding difficulties, and will convert opposition and hindrances into furtherances and aids. Thirdly, *The extensiveness of the admonition*. It was universal; he "exhorted them all;" not only those who were weak, but the strong; not only the young, but the aged. When is a man beyond the snares of Satan? Solomon's heart was led away in his *old* age: and does not the Apostle warn Timothy, who

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413

was young, to "flee youthful lusts?" Who is ever entitled to live without caution? Those who think they stand in need of no admonition or caution are those who are most in danger; for "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

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NOV. 2.—*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.* 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

THERE is a vast difference between the Christian and a "natural man." By a natural man the Apostle means a

man under the influence of principles and affections which are altogether natural to him. By a "spiritual man" he means an individual who is renewed in the spirit of his mind by the operation of the Holy Spirit, by whom he has been made a partaker of the divine nature. According to the promise, "A new heart 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 a heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them;" and therefore we find it stated of Christians that they are "born of the Spirit," and "live in the Spirit," and are being "led by the Spirit," and being "filled with the Spirit." It is from these circumstances they derive their new and distinguishing characteristics as being spiritual, and possessed of spiritual discernment. The natural man, being altogether under the predominating influence of natural principles and passions, is altogether ignorant of spiritual things, and with whom there is an absolute inability to judge respecting them. They cannot possibly know what a Christian is, either as to his principles, his conduct, or his resources. Here is the difference between a Christian and a natural man. The Christian knows the natural man, but the natural man does not know the Christian. The natural man has never been in the spiritual man's condition; but the Christian has been in that of the natural man. The natural man does not know what the service of God is; but the spiritual man knows what the service of the world is,

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414

and he knows it is not pleasantness nor peace, that it is not liberty but bondage: he knows that there is no peace to the wicked. The natural man thinks it strange that Christians do not run with them into the same excesses, that they should turn their backs upon scenes of dissipation and worldly pleasure; that they are tranquil under losses, and are comforted under tribulation. They see their burdens and their afflictions; but they do not see the everlasting arms beneath them, nor do they understand

how they have access to the throne of the heavenly grace, or the enjoyments and comforts they receive from the Holy Ghost. They see not the principles by which the Christian is influenced, either in reference to their conduct in suffering or serving. And then this non-discernment of Christians by natural men is often aided by their external circumstances. "The king's daughter is all glorious within," but not without; that is, in the estimation of natural men. Had we seen the tabernacle in the wilderness, we should have seen a common tent covered with badgers' skins dyed red; but if we had entered in, there was Deity upon the mercy-seat, between the cherubims. It is the same with Christians. The life of the Christian is hid, and it is hid not only in his principles, in his resources, in his experience, but it is hid in the obscurity of his condition, in his penury, in the reproach thrown upon him. The principle by which some men judge of others is external circumstances, worldly power, authority, rank; but if a Christian is to be judged by this standard, "not many wise, not many mighty are called."

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NOV. 3.—*Giving thanks.* Eph. v. 20.

OH, how little of this there is to be found! How much does our selfishness predominate! Even in our religious exercises! Even when we succeed in our applications to God for supplies, we forget the Giver. And thus it was even with good Hezekiah himself. How had God appeared for him! And he even composed a song for the occasion, and yet what was after a while the consequence? It is said, "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefits done unto him." Whatever be our condition, gratitude is required. Whatever be our circumstances, we have more to be grateful for than to complain of. Let us therefore

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415

take four views of this gratitude. First, *It is deserved.* When we reflect on the Lord having remembered us in our low estate, of his having given his Son for, and his Spirit

to us, of his redeeming our souls from the lowest hell, and of his engaging to conduct us to the highest heaven, that he hath "quicken'd us when dead in trespasses and in sins," has forgiven us all our trespasses, and admitted us into a state of holy intimacy, so that by his grace we stand, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, we must acknowledge that he has infinite claims upon our gratitude. Secondly, This gratitude is *distinguishing*. What is it that at any time will most easily and powerfully excite our gratitude? A natural man, even if he is thankful, is moved to thankfulness by a line harvest, a safe journey, or a prosperous voyage, or on account of some outward temporal good. While these should not be overlooked, nor will they be by a Christian, yet these will not *principally* draw forth his gratitude. He will say, with the Apostle, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." He will not *principally* bless God that his grounds bring forth plenteously, but that he has a plenteousness of the means of grace, and that he is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Thirdly, This gratitude *impractical*. It will be so, if we are sensible of that obligation which we are never able to discharge. Let us not with regard to God as well as to man, "love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth." David therefore says, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Upon which Philip Henry observes, that "though *thanks-giving* be good, *thanks-living* is much better. If a tree had a capacity, and wished to praise the husbandman, the only way in which it could do it would be by the excellence and abundance of fruit it produced to him." "And herein," says the Saviour, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Thus, according to the well-known and beautiful language of the Liturgy, we should be concerned to "show forth his praise not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days." Lastly, This gratitude is to be *never ending*. We shall soon have done with many things here. We shall soon have done

416

with sorrow, with sin, with a wicked world *without us*, and a wicked heart *within us*. We shall soon have done with some parts of our Christian experience and exercises. Faith will soon be lost in sight, and hope in fruition. There will be no need of patience where there is nothing to be endured or waited for. But as to *thanksgiving and praise*, though we shall change our places, we shall never change our employment, unless for higher and nobler strains. They that dwell in his house above will be still praising him, and therefore we may say—

“My days of praise shall ne’er be past,  
While life, or breath, or being last,  
Or immortality endures.”

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NOV. 4.—*The righteousness of the righteous.* Isa. v. 23.

“THERE is none righteous, no, not one.” Such was the testimony of God himself when he looked down from heaven on the children of men; not when he looked down before the flood, when it is said, “The wickedness of man was great,” but after so many means had been employed to reform the world. We may be imposed upon, we are often led to form erroneous conclusions, but his judgment is always according to truth. Whatever good opinion we may form of our fellow-creatures or of ourselves, this is the testimony of God concerning us. We are “transgressors,” and are “under the law,” and “under the curse;” and universal observation and experience accord with the testimony of God, that “there is none righteous, no, not one.” Yet the Scripture is perpetually speaking of the “righteous;” and if there were no such characters to be found, nothing could be said concerning them. The case is this. There are *none* righteous by *nature*; but there are *some* righteous by *grace*. There are none possessed of an inherent righteousness of their own; but there are those who are righteous by a righteousness derived from God. Of this the

Apostle speaks: "That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness." He tells us that "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, did not attain to the law of righteousness; and wherefore?" says he, "because they sought it not by faith;" but "they,

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417

being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, had not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." There is a twofold righteousness, however, spoken of in the Scripture; the righteousness of justification, and the righteousness of sanctification. These are inseparable, though distinguishable. The one is a change of state, and gives us a title to heaven; the other is a change of disposition, and produces a meetness for heaven. As says the Apostle: "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, old things are become new." With regard to the righteousness of sanctification, it is not yet complete. So far from it, "there is not a man that liveth and sinneth not." We are taught by our Saviour himself to pray for our daily pardon, as well as for our daily bread. This righteousness is so prevailing in the subject of it as to discriminate even to character; and when a Christian falls, he is acting out of character. In due time it will be complete, complete as the righteousness of justification. Now, as he has a new righteousness, he has new and right views, new and right feelings, new and right hopes; but all these righteousnesses have a mixture in them, but soon they will be pure and without mixture before the throne for ever. Oh, it is a thing worth dying for to drop this body of sin and death; to feel no more "a law in the members warring against the law of the mind;" no more to say, "When I would do good, evil is present with me;" to shake ourselves from our mortal dust, to put on our beautiful garments of holiness; to "meet the Lord in the air," and be "presented faultless before the throne with exceeding joy."

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NOV. 5.—*When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me: until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.* Ps. lxxiii. 16, 17.

WE have here the infirmity and excellency of a good man. What a state heaven will be when "that which is perfect is come, and that which is imperfect is done away!" The present is a mixed condition, during which we feel like a man under his recovery, thankful for his deliverance and his hope, yet feeling the sad remembrance of his former

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418

complaint; so that he cannot do the things that he would, nor enjoy himself as he would, and longing for the day of his restoration. Observe, first, *The source of his perplexity.* As a general principle he was constrained to make the admission, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart;" but here he erred, as he was unable to harmonize the principle with some of the dispensations of Divine Providence; namely, the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous. These have generally proved a stumbling-block to pious men in all ages, and the enemy of souls has never been backward to avail himself of it. Even Jeremiah said: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? "Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" So it was here with Asaph; he says, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped, for I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." Observe, secondly, *The principle which cheered him, and which led him to conceal what he could not help feeling.* "If I say I should speak thus, behold I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was painful forme." Ah! they were dear to him, and they should be dear also to us; and they will be dear to us if we are born of God, for the Apostle John says: "He that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him."

And then we should remember that it is beneath a Christian to regard only his own satisfaction of mind, or even conscience, in many things: he should regard the satisfaction of others, and be willing to make sacrifices. "Let every one," says Paul, who himself acted upon the principle, "please his neighbour for his good to edification, for even Christ pleased not himself." Thirdly, Observe *the source of his relief*. "I went into the sanctuary, then understood I their end." Thus, in every perplexity, we should repair like him to the temple of revelation: we should turn away from science to faith; we should inquire what the end will be; for, as the proverb says, "All is well that ends well." Fourthly, Observe the *candid acknowledgment he makes of his mistakes*

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419

*and miscarriages*: "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." A good man is not infallible, and therefore liable to err. There is life and principle in that man. Painting is not dying; the bough may be borne down by the violence of the flood, but when the pressure has rolled off, it will retain its erectness, and point towards heaven. To know therefore whether the infirmities of a man be the spots of God's children, we must not dwell on the things themselves, but we must look beyond; we must know the man afterwards. Is he open to conviction? Is he willing to retract? Does he say to God, "What I know not teach thou me. If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more?" Old Mr. Eyland has remarked that the three hardest words to pronounce in the English language are *I was mistaken*, but they are noble ones. They imply much wisdom, much concern for improvement. Frederick the Great was generally victorious, but he lost one great battle, going contrary to a council of war which he called. But when he wrote home to the senate, he made no scruple of saying, "I have lost a great battle entirely through my own fault." On which the historian of his life says: "This

did him more honour than any of the victories which he had gained." And here, so "ignorant was I, I was as a beast before thee."

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NOV. 6.—*Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? Psal. xxiv. 3.*

THERE are three ways in which this question can be answered respecting those who shall enter the realms of bliss. First, By ascertaining *who have entered it already*. This will go some way toward the decision. Who have they been from the first that have entered? Abel entered; and it is said that "he offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Enoch entered, and entered body and soul together; but "Enoch walked with God." Elijah also entered in a similar way, and he had been very "zealous for the Lord of hosts." The patriarchs have entered, but the Apostle tells us how, "through faith and patience, they inherit the promises." Secondly, By ascertaining to *whom it is*

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420

*promised*. And here we read: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." This cannot be a *legal* but a *gospel* right; it cannot be a meritorious but a merciful right, founded entirely in the grace of God. And he has given us the character of the heirs of promise. He has told us who will be partakers of eternal life. Our Saviour has said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Thirdly, *Who are prepared for it?* "Heaven," as the old writer says, "is a prepared place for a prepared people." We read of being made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." "Except, therefore," says the Saviour, "a man be born again, he cannot see" (that is, he cannot possess and enjoy) "the kingdom of God." Happiness does not de-

pend entirely on the excellency of the object, but on its adaptation to our condition, our views, and our desires, to our hopes, and to our feelings. It is therefore undeniable that many would be miserable were they to enter. The best way therefore to determine our title to heaven is to consider our fitness for it; to go to the Scriptures, and take from them the representations which are there given of heaven, and then ascertain whether there be anything in ourselves that would enable us to enjoy it. If we are to be there raised above adventitious distinctions, we must rise above them *now*. If hereafter all the righteous are to be one, and all the distinctions which now prevail among them will be done away, we must *now* be rising above them, so as to be able to pray that *now* "grace may be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Heaven is a *holy* place, and into it enters nothing that defileth, and without personal holiness, no man shall see the Lord. And thus we are now saying: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." The blessedness of heaven will consist much in the *fellowship of the saints*. And are these, in our esteem, "the excellent of the earth, and our chosen companions now?" It will consist in *the presence and glory of the Saviour*. And is this dear to us now? Is

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421

he regarded by us as being "fairer than the children of men" and "altogether lovely?" And are our best moments those in which we enjoy intercourse with him? In this way the question is determined, "Who shall stand in the holy place?"

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NOV. 7.—*In the world ye shall have tribulation; hut be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* John xvi. 33.

THIS is a commendation of Christianity. The Christian's course is not darkness, but light: it will bear examination. The evidences of our religion are not arguments but facts. Prophecies are not messages like the heathen oracles; they

were delivered ages before their accomplishment, and some of them are accomplishing now. The miracles recorded in the Scriptures were not done in secret places and alone, so that they could not be gainsayed or denied; but they were performed in public, before the face even of enemies. The promises by which believers are incited and comforted are as real as they are valuable, and therefore the parties interested in them are "able to give a reason of the hope that is in them." The world is like Jael standing at the door of the tent in the evening, spreading the mantle, and bringing out the butter in a lordly dish, but hiding the hammer and nail till she had smote the nail fast into the temples of Sisera. But it is not thus with Christianity as to the dangers or sacrifices which it may require; instead of concealing these, it tells us from the beginning we shall have tribulation, that if any man believe in Christ he shall suffer persecution. The Saviour calls upon us to count the cost and calculate the labour of the journey, and see whether we have resources to bear the expense of the one and undergo the fatigues of the other. Christianity does not encourage its converts by flattery, it does not comfort its sufferers by denying their trials, it allows them to feel them, and it allows them to feel them heavily, but it does enough to animate them under them all. It can enable the Christian to dispense with the world and the things of the world; the world that is everything to others. As to carnal men, when they are deprived of their outward possessions, they say with Micah, "You have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" But the Christian

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422

"having nothing, yet possesses all things." The Christian must be a very wonderful man, a man of unbounded, of infinite resources. His mouth is filled with marrow and fatness. He can dispense with plenty, and say, "Though the fig-tree does not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." He can dispense with liberty, and say, having the presence of God, he desireth not the presence

of the world. He can dispense with health and say, God "maketh all my bed in my sickness." He can dispense with life and say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." He can dispense with the whole universe; and when the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat standing upon the ashes of the universe, he can exclaim, I look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

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NOV. 8.—*Grace came by Jesus Christ.* John i. 17.

GRACE means favour, and especially undeserved favour. Indeed without this it cannot be grace. Grace is the darling word of inspiration, and is unspeakably dear to all those who feel their spiritual condition. But how did this grace come? By Jesus Christ. First, Because *he revealed it*. He published it as a doctrine, and he gave clearer and fuller views of it than were ever heard before. Grace came by Jesus Christ; "grace was poured into his lips," and all men "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." Secondly, Because *he is the effect of it*. This is his own testimony: "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" and Paul, his own inspired servant, said: "To show in the ages to come the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us by Christ Jesus." The earth on which we dwell is full of goodness, and his goodness appears in providing us not only with relief but with indulgences. But spiritual blessings are infinitely above these in their nature and in their value; and what is the chief of these but the "consolation of Israel," the "desire of all nations," the "hope of all the ends of the earth." Grace comes by the Son, and all the blessings God gives us. Grace comes

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423

by friendship, and the charms of it; but "thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," grace came by Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, Because *he was the medium of it*. He is the Mediator between God and man, the channel of all divine communication to us. God was under no obligation to save us; and therefore it follows that he had a right to determine the way in which he would be gracious to the guilty, and as he had the right so he had the power. Every thing that is worthy the name of grace in the Scriptures we find flowing from his mediation. Is it the purpose of our salvation? This was "given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Is it the exceeding great and precious promises? "They are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus." Is it redemption? "In him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Is it justification? "By him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Lastly, Grace came by Jesus Christ, because *he is the exemplifier of it*. We know not what kind of body Jesus Christ had—whether it was tall or short, whether it was full or slender, whether it was plain or beauteous; as far, indeed, as beauty depends upon the expressions of the inward sentiment, he must have been fairer than the children of men. But we know what a soul he has; that

"His heart is made of tenderness,  
His bowels melt with love."

If we go back to the prophecies given beforetime, there it was foretold that "he shall come down like the rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth;" "a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." If we go forward and look into his history, there we only see grace. What is the image of his person? "A lamb." What is the emblem of his Spirit? "A dove." What is the character of his kingdom? "Righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." If we turn to his miracles, we shall find that they were not displays of wrath, nor of the pride of mere power; they were desirable, useful, necessary, merciful, and gracious. Nor can we read his history, or witness his

conduct to his disciples, without feeling that “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

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424

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NOV. 9.—O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.  
 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou  
 understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my  
 path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my  
 ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, hut, lo,  
 O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Psa. cxxxix.  
 1-4.

WHAT a *preservation from sin* would the continued reflection of this solemn and important fact prove. The eye of a fellow-creature—yea the eye of a child—would be sufficient to restrain some from many a sin, how much more the eye of God. The thief would never steal the goods while he saw the eyes of the owner upon him, but “his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings; there is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.” “Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.” We never committed a *secret sin* in our lives. “Thou hast set my secret sins in the light of thy countenance.” What a *check to insincerity* in all our religious concerns also would such a reflection prove. We may deceive our fellow-creatures, our fellow-Christians, our ministers, but “God is not mocked.”

“Nothing but truth before his throne  
 With honour can appear,  
 The painted hypocrite is known  
 Through the disguise he wears.”

And what an *excitement would this be to duty!* How does the eye of the commander-in-chief animate the soldier in action? How does the eye of the master stimulate the servant. We therefore read of “eye-service;” service performed while the servant knows the eye of the master is on him. The master cannot have his eye always upon his ser-

vant; but as to the God we serve, we are continually with him. The heathen philosopher recommended as a moral maxim to his pupils always to imagine, wherever they were, and whatever they were doing, that the eye of some distinguished individual was upon them. What was the eye of Cato compared with the eye of the Eternal God? God therefore said to Abraham, "Walk thou *before me* and be thou per-

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425

feet." See how you move; I have you under my eye; I can see if you turn back; if you turn aside; if you lie down; if you stand still; if you look back; if you even seem to come short. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." A Christian endeavours to realize this, and the thoughts of God are with him; not only frequently but pleasantly, and indeed they are frequent because they are pleasant. Therefore he can say with David, "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them. If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake I am still with thee."

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NOV. 10.—*And the door was shut.* Matt. xxv. 10.

THE period for closing the door of mercy is twofold. First, *At the end of the world as to the human race*, when time shall be no more. Then the reign of justice will follow the reign of mercy. Secondly, *At the end of life as it regards individuals*. Many things have been said of the day of grace, and of the termination of it before the day of death. The Scripture uses awful language: "They are joined to idols, let them alone." "Oh, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." "Oh, that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." There are seasons and opportunities peculiarly favourable, which may be closed before death: when the health of individuals has been in danger, and they have been as it were suspended over the grave;

when the thoughts of their heart have been broken off, and their earthly schemes laid desolate; when the beloved of their heart, or the desire of their eyes, has been removed from them by a stroke; when God has come to them in these dispensations, he has removed intervening objects that he might be seen, and he has commanded silence that his voice might be heard. What seasons and opportunities are those when conscience has been awakened! When impressed by the word, they have been melted into tears. Sometimes in their walks in the fields they have had sympathies with God, and seem to have been in communion

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426

with him. Then have they been able to make the surrender, and to say, "Lord, I am thine, save me." Such were *then* not far from the kingdom of God. This was to them the "day of salvation." Oh, that it had been the accepted time! Felix, when he heard Paul preach, trembled; but instead of cherishing the impression, he endeavoured to evade it, and said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee," which season however never came. He saw Paul frequently afterwards, who spake to him of the faith of Christ; but there was no more trembling: that was gone by for ever. He felt then as he never felt before nor afterwards. But in general, while there is life there is hope. It is related in history, that when Alexander was besieging a place, he hung up a lamp; while this continued burning terms were offered, but when it went out no quarter was allowed. So

"Life is the time to serve the Lord,  
The time to ensure the great reward,  
And while the lamp holds out to burn  
The vilest sinner may return!"

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NOV. 11.—*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

WHAT a proof is this comprehensiveness, and adaptedness of Scripture, *of the divinity of the Bible itself*. What other book of the same size could bear, from age to age, to have thousands of persons always examining it, always discussing it, and yet always finding something fresh and suitable, and never exhausted. Then we may observe the *diversity of the topics*, and the *comparative superiority and importance* of some truths over others. Every thing equally true is not equally important; there are essential truths, and there are circumstantial truths; and all these things are made plain in proportion as they are important. They are all available, and all "were written aforetime for our learning, that we, through faith and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope." As therefore nothing is useless, the separation or concealment, or neglect of any part of it must be to hinder a benefit and a blessing. Partial knowledge will

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427

sometimes be found to injure more than entire ignorance. Indeed, what in fact is all error but some truth pushed too far, or not far enough; some truth taken out of its place; or some truth taken alone, without other truths, which would qualify and explain it, and render it not only safe but useful. The Apostle therefore says to the Ephesians that the ministry of the word is intended for the "perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the son of God unto the perfect man" (that is in knowledge), "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." And then, as a consequence of it, he says, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine;" or, as he tells the Hebrews, "with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace;" that is, with the truths of the gospel. And as these partialities and preferences injure the gospel, so they mar its beauty. This arises from the connection and harmony of the whole. "As to cloth," says Lord Bacon, "a small pattern may enable us to judge

fairly and safely of the whole piece; but the Bible is like a fine arras tapestry, which, though a remnant, may assure us of the colours and the richness of the stuff; yet the hangings never appear to their true advantage but when displayed in their full dimensions, and seen together." So, however mysterious to our reason, however mortifying to the pride of our hearts, however it may reprove or censure us, we should open our bosoms to the admission of the admonitions, reproofs, and instructions of the Holy Scriptures. And so in hearing the word preached. We are not to hang down our heads, and go away dissatisfied, because we have not been comforted. Is comfort everything we want in the Divine life? We are not to say, I have had no new information. Is knowledge all we want? If the subject be not so adapted to our case, it may be the very subject another wants; if we are familiar with it, another in the assembly may never have heard it before. If we retain the truth, and repetition be irksome, we should remember there are others who are forgetful, and who need to have their minds stirred up by way of remembrance.

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428

And we should therefore, instead of wishing to limit the preacher, encourage him to go through the land of revelation in the length and breadth of it; encourage him not only to plant, but water; not only to lay the foundation, but to build.

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NOV. 12.—*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves dead indeed unto sin, out alive unto God THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.* Rom. vi. 11.

HERE the Apostle not only reminds us that Christians are "dead indeed unto sin," and "alive unto God," but that it is "*through Jesus Christ* our Lord." And these results will be found to be through him in four ways. First, Through him as their *Example*. In his principles, in his temper, in his practice, in his life, believers see all this fully embodied. "In him was no sin; in him there were no irregular appetites, no improper passions. He

never once in his life preferred his own gratification to the glory of God; he denied himself the refreshment of sleep to engage in the duties of devotion; and he denied himself the pleasures of solitude and retirement, in order that he might attend to the claims of those who often very unreasonably addressed him. "He pleased not himself." He always did the things that pleased the Father. He was our religion incarnate. Secondly, Through him as their *Teacher*. He has set before us those arguments and motives which have the greatest tendency to turn us away from sin, and to turn us towards the blessed God; so that we may be dead unto the one and alive unto the other. What threatenings, what promises, has he given! What addresses to our hopes and fears, to every passion in our bosom, and every principle in our nature! He has drawn back the veil that concealed the future, and has showed us a world inflames—a descending Judge—the judgment fixed—the wicked going away "into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." Thirdly, Through him as their *dying Friend*. We know that he "loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour;" and can I refuse to live according to his pleasure, who has laid me under such infinite obligation? "who loved me, and gave himself for

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429

me." Is it possible for me to love, is it possible for me to live in, that which crucified the Lord of Glory?

"No, my Redeemer, they shall die,  
 My heart has so decreed;  
 Nor will I spare the guilty things  
 That made my Saviour bleed."

Thus do we see in his cross the evil of sin; and thus, as the Apostle says, we become "dead" and thus "alive;" our "old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Fourthly, Through him as their *Mediator*. That is, that he not only died to atone for our sins, but he at the same time obtained for us that grace which we require

in every time of need, for the purpose of trial, of duty, and of conflict. The whole dispensation of the supplies of grace which we need is lodged in his possession; and that the administration of it to the end of the world is annexed to his office. Therefore it is so often called the "Spirit of Christ;" not only the Spirit he possessed, but the Spirit he procured for us, and which he communicates to us. It is thus we live; it is thus we walk; and it is thus we mortify the deeds of the body; as, says the Apostle, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." We therefore see the importance of the Lord Jesus; that he is the "daysman" between God and us, laying his hand upon both; that "he gave his life a ransom for us;" that "he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;" that he vanquished sin, death, and hell; that he is the "resurrection and the life;" and that he is made unto us wisdom, sanctification, and redemption: as it is written, "He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord," and thus may we "reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

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NOV. 13.—*Thou shalt guide one with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.* Ps. lxxiii. 24.

Do what we will, the future will be continually intruding upon our minds. The Christian feels that he need not fear; he knows that all is prepared and provided for; he

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430

knows that the future can bring nothing but what is providential, and what is also merciful and gracious. Futurity has a double aspect: there is a temporal futurity, and there is a more awful futurity still—an eternal futurity. Asaph looks at both, and says with regard to the *temporal futurity*, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel." I must advance in life, and how much depends upon every step I take. What, then, is my consolation? "Thou shalt guide me." How was it with the Jews? They had been delivered

from Egypt, were in expectation of possessing Canaan, but they were in an intermediate state. They had the wilderness to pass through; he led them about and instructed them. And what provision was made for them? There was the fiery cloudy pillar to go always before them, and this continued forty years, till they reached the verge of Jordan; then it was no more needed, and disappeared. And what is the language of the Church? "This God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death." He has said to us also, "I will lead thee, I will guide thee with mine eye." And what a guide! How patient to bear with us in our mistakes! how powerful to guard us from all our foes! how able to supply all our wants! how wise and unerring in all our difficulties! We know not the way that we are taking; "but," says Job, "he knoweth the way that I take;" and he has said, "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known." So all is provided us *for the journey*. Ah! but there is the journey's *end*. What is to become of me when I enter the valley of the shadow of death? David says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Secondly, Asaph looks at *an eternal futurity*, and says, "Afterward thou shalt receive me to glory." There is a state beyond this vale of tears, of which the land flowing with milk and honey was a very imperfect emblem. Sometimes it is called *rest*; sometimes *peace*; sometimes *the joy of the Lord*; but more frequently than any other it is called *glory*. Into this Christians will enter after being guided by God's counsel. God says, I will receive you; and just as a person hastens to receive a beloved friend, or a

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431

darling child, after a dangerous trying journey being over so, but with infinitely more affection, will he receive us into glory, that "where he is there we may be also." Here we see that a Christian man can attain the satisfaction of certainty as to the nature of his religion; certainty as to

the truth of Scripture; certainty as to the privileges on which his hope is placed; certainty as to his own possession of them. A firm unshaken foundation is laid for his confidence—a confidence that is full and extensive—a confidence that enables him to say, “The Lord is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

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NOV. 14.—*And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* Luke xvii. 12, 13.

OBSERVE, the name of the village into which our Saviour now entered is not mentioned, but we read that there met him ten men that were lepers. To them the meeting was perfectly accidental, but not to him. Nothing occurs by chance in his operations. He is master of events and circumstances; he foreknows them, ordains them, procures them, dispenses them, and he would teach us never to separate his agency from what is contingent on other things. “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is of the Lord.” Observe these *petitioners, and their miserable condition*. How instructive and edifying the spectacle. They were lepers. There are some who think very lightly of sin; but surely it has done enough to induce us to call it “exceeding sinful,” and to excite all our abhorrence of it. How many evils has it gendered? It has turned our earth into a vale of tears, and our world so far into a hospital. It has rendered the body mortal, and sown in it the seeds of disease, which ripening by external influences prove malignant, and bring forth fruit unto death. Observe their *diversity*. What a mixture is here. It is remarkable that we find among these ten lepers nine Jews, and one Samaritan. The

“Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans;” they could not endure the presence of each other; they were to each other objects of mutual envy and dislike, hatred and exclusion. But there is a force in affliction to soften prejudice and to remove alienation. We find Esau and Jacob, after all their quarrels, weeping together over the remains of their father Isaac. Observe their *position*. They “stood afar off.” The disorder was supposed to have been an immediate infliction of God, and to have been incurable by any human means. It was also considered to be infectious, and the sufferer became a kind of exile, being forbidden to approach either the camp or the congregation. But Jesus was passing by, and they were near enough, by a united utterance, to make themselves heard; and therefore observe their *prayer*. They lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” By “mercy” they intended a cure. This was all in all with them for the present. And what a mercy is health. These men must have known something of our Saviour, or they would not and could not have addressed him as they did. They had heard something of Jesus: his fame was spread abroad: it was made known especially by those who had been the subjects of his delivering mercy; for even when he enjoined silence on the recipients of his favour, the more abundantly, it is said, “they published abroad all that had been done.”

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NOV. 15.—Go *show thyself to the priest.*  
Mark i. 44.

OBSERVE the *order* these lepers received. Under the law the leper was to apply to the priest to examine his case, and to determine whether he was cured of the disease. The recovered patient, if the priest was satisfied of the reality of the recovery, performed the offices prescribed by the law in token of his gratitude, and then he was set at liberty; then he was certificated by the priest, and so could move abroad at large, and again, if he pleased, enter the camp or the congregation. The ceremonial law was not as yet

abolished, and our Saviour therefore said, "Go show yourselves unto the priests." There are also two other advan-

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433

tages which would arise from this order: the first of which is, that it was very likely to awaken the attention of these priests to inquire after One who was able at his pleasure to cure a distemper so cruel and desperate; the other is, that it was a trial of the faith of the patients themselves. Unless they had possessed some trust in the Saviour, they would not have moved a step, and they would have been ready to exclaim, "Alas! alas! to what purpose shall we go to the priests to be examined and judged of? We know and feel that we are lepers. We know and feel that we are not cured. We shall only render ourselves ridiculous. And is it to be expected that we shall pick up a cure upon the road as we go to them?" But it was not theirs to prescribe, but to acquiesce; not to reason, but to obey. And it is, or should be, the same with us. Those who expect a cure from him must take it in the way he prescribes; for though he will heal "without money and without price," he will have the entire management of the case and cure, or he will have nothing to do with it. We see, therefore, how likely Naaman, the Syrian leper, was to have missed a recovery. When the Man of God ordered him to go and wash seven times in the Jordan, "he was wroth." It was well his servants, who advised compliance therewith, were wiser than he, or he had retained his leprosy. What a different disposition did Paul display when he says, "If by any means, however perplexing they may be to my understanding, mortifying to my pride, disliked by my passions—however they may require the crucifixion of my lusts—Lord, prescribe and I submit, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead." The intimation, though our Saviour said nothing more, "Go show yourselves to the priests," was *encouraging*. They understood it as such. It is the same with regard to all God's addresses to us, and all his commands to us in the gospel. When he says "Repent;" when he says "Be-

lieve," "Be renewed in the spirit of your minds;" all these commands are so many promises to us: they are all intimations that the thing is possible; that there is a possibility of this—not in nature indeed, not in ourselves indeed, but in the Saviour, "in whom it hath pleased the Father that

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434

all fulness should dwell." "He shall," says God, "take hold of my strength and make peace with me."

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NOV. 16.—*This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it.* Ps. cxxxii. 14.

THUS we read that God dwelleth in Zion. There he was in the temple which he had chosen for his habitation, the place where his honour dwelt, where he was accessible, where his oracles were deposited, where his servants ministered unto him, where his worship was celebrated, where he "clothed his priests with salvation," and made his "saints shout aloud for joy," and "satisfied his poor with bread." Hence we read in the prophecies of Isaiah that the Jews were a people nigh unto him, while, on the other hand, the Gentiles are spoken of as being "far off," "strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." We have succeeded to the Jews as to these means of grace and privileges, and have them in a much higher degree. He says to us as he did to Israel, "In all places where I record my name there will I come unto you, and there will I bless you." And our Saviour says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." He is therefore with us in his word, with us in his ministers, with us in the assembly of the saints; and his saints still find him in his palaces for a refuge; and we may hear his voice and see his "power and his glory" in the sanctuary. There we may taste that he is gracious; there we may sit under "his shadow with great delight and find his fruit sweet unto our taste." "That his name is near," says David, "his wondrous works declare." The effect shows

agency, and agency evinces presence; and the effects which have taken place in the sanctuary and in the hearts of individuals show that God is there. The voice of a man could never reach the heart and turn the whole tide of the soul another way; but how often is this performed by God! A man enters the house of God prayerless, and begins to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." He enters carelessly, or from curiosity, or with a view perhaps of ridicule; but

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435

he is soon "known of all and judged of all," and the "secrets of his heart are made manifest;" and if he does not fall down on the ground, he inwardly exclaims, "God is in the midst of them of a truth."

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NOV. 17.—*The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.* Mark xvi. 20.

IT was by the preaching of the gospel that the heathen nations were to be turned from dumb idols to serve the living God. "When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed." Thus on the day of Pentecost three thousand were, by the preaching of the Apostles, "pricked in their hearts, and cried out, Men and brethren, what must we do?" When the Christians were scattered abroad upon the persecution of Stephen, they preached the Lord Jesus, and a "great number believed and turned unto the Lord." At the Reformation, what was it converted this country from Popery to Protestantism? It was the preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus; and we know what was done in Scotland by Knox and his companions, and since in this land by Whitefield and Wesley, and the band of men whose heart God had touched, and who flew like angels over the land, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that "dwell upon the earth;" and if the members of any Christian community should be examined as to their religious experience, how many will acknowledge they were Divinely impressed by the preaching of the word. How

often would be heard acknowledgments like these: I was a poor careless creature, without one serious thought about my poor soul, till I heard such a sermon, which like thunder accused my conscience, and induced me to ask "What must I do to be saved?" Another would say, I was a proud Pharisee, trusting in myself that I was righteous, and despising others till I heard such a sermon, which induced me to quit the hope I held before, to trust the merits of Christ, and to say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Another would say, My soul was clad with the blackness of despair, without one ray of hope, till by such a sermon there arose light in the darkness,

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436

and it was the light of life to me. It is thus the preaching of the Lord Jesus meets man in all his relations, in all his exigencies; it teaches and makes him "wise unto salvation:" is he weak? it makes him "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;" is he cast down? it comforts him, it possesses him with "a peace that passeth all understanding," it animates him with "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." But observe the *source of their success*: "The Lord working with them." This *honour* have all the faithful preachers of Christ's holy gospel; "they are workers together with him." And this is their *encouragement*, the Lord working with them; and this is their *conviction*, "without him they can do nothing." "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts:" and saith Paul, "The excellency of the power is not of us;" We are not sufficient to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Thus they went forth preaching, depending upon Divine co-operation; and the hand of the Lord was with them. "We then, as workers together with him," says the Apostle—we fellow-workers, who differ in our stations, our abilities, our modes of preaching, and on which account there are some who take advantage and create divisions, and form parties, saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas," and in so saying display much weakness and

carnality, and walk as men. Ministers, however they are endowed and employed, or wherever they are engaged, are workers together, and are workers together with God, and they say with these first preachers, "we beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

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NOV. 18.—*The gentleness of Christ.* 2 Cor. x. 1.

IT was predicted of the Saviour, that "a bruised reed he should not break, and the smoking flax he should not quench." And when his person and work were typified, the image under which he was set forth was a lamb, and the emblem of his Spirit "a dove;" and his whole mission consisted in "going about doing good," and in "giving his life a ransom for many." If we turn to his miracles there were displays of his grace and compassion, as there were also

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437

of his omnipotence. Who can read his history without feeling this? Here he has compassion upon the multitude because they had nothing to eat, and had come from afar and he made the hungry—men, women, and children, in a secluded scenery, on a fine summer evening—sit upon the grass, and miraculously fed them with five barley loaves and a few small fishes. Here a blind beggar sitting by the wayside, finding that he was passing by, cried, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me;" and "the multitude rebuked him, and told him to hold his peace; but Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be brought to him." The sun in nature once stood still to enable a great general to finish a great victory; here the Sun of Righteousness stands still while an act of kindness is performed, and he the performer too. "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" "Lord, that I might receive my sight." And Jesus said unto him, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." There is one thing worthy of special notice with regard to the character of our Saviour's miracles; it may be called the

tenderness and the delicacy of kindness they displayed. For example, the young man of Nain was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; had our Saviour, when he had compassion on her, ordered him to become his follower and attendant, and taken him away, she even then would be grateful. She might have said, "He would have been the greatest support on which I could have leaned as I walk down into the valley of years, and travel toward the tomb of my husband; but it is enough; he is alive." But what did Jesus? "He delivered him to his mother." When the demoniac was dispossessed he came to the Saviour, and besought him that he might be with him; and he would have been a monument of his power, a trophy of his mercy; but the poor man had been more than dead to all his friends and relations a long time, and they would be glad at heart to see him, and therefore Jesus says, "No; go home to thy house, and tell what great things the Lord hath done for thee; and how he hath had mercy on thee." We see the gentleness of Jesus Christ in his behaviour towards those who were his own disciples; though they often tried him and offended him, yet he bore with

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438

their miscarriages; hence it is said, "Having loved his own which were with him in the world, he loved them unto the end." When in the garden of Gethsemane he found them sleeping, he said, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." When Peter denied him, he turned and looked upon him with a look of love that melted him into contrition, for the look said to him, Peter, with all thy faults, I love thee still, and am going to die for thee; and Peter "went out and wept bitterly." Nor was this grace and goodness confined to his disciples; "He went about doing good." To the woman who was a sinner weeping over her sins, he said, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee; go in peace." When the Jews rejected him he wept over them. When they were driving the nails through his hands and feet, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;"

and when a malefactor, a thief, and probably a murderer, who was hanging by his side, prayed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," then he heard the gracious answer, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

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NOV. 19.—Truth came by Jesus Christ. John i. 17.

WHAT is truth? This is a question Pilate once asked, but did not wait for an answer. And it is a question which many still ask, and with regard to the result they betray equal carelessness. The shortest and easiest way of answering the question according to some would be for each religious party to exhibit its own creed, and censure and exclude the claimants of every other. But candour would lead a man to conclude that all parties have it partially, and that none have it wholly. Thus it is with philosophers with regard to nature; metaphysicians with regard to mind; and historians with regard to facts. The gospel is a system too vast for a finite mind to take in at once, and people have used it as children use a large mirror: unable to carry the whole, they break it in pieces, all of them going away with a fraction: one calls out, "I have the glass;" a second says, "I have the glass;" and a third says, "No, but I have the glass." The fact is, the glass consisted of all these parts. But let us now (though no one has a large portion) reunite

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439

all these, that we may possess the mirror undefiled and uninjured. And we need not feel any kind of embarrassment with regard to truth. It is not the creed of any party church, or council. It is what all who are Christians profess to receive. It is the gospel itself, and this truth came by Jesus Christ. Let us glance at four articles. First, There is *the truth of performance in distinction from engagement*. The promise made to the fathers is everywhere to be met with in the Old Testament. Yet there is a difference between the existence of the promise and its fulfilment. Therefore our Saviour, addressing his disciples, comparing

their state not with the heathen but with the Jews, says, "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; but blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear." Secondly, There is *the truth of reality in distinction from prefiguration*. This truth came by Jesus Christ. The Jews were children; God treated them as infants are treated who have pictures placed over their lessons in order to allure, to impress, and to explain. Their senses were addressed as well as their understanding. The Jews had various types and ceremonies, which the Apostle called "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things," not the reality. A shadow depends upon the body, derives its form from the body, but it has no power in itself, and is an obscure and imperfect representation of the substance. This was precisely the case with the law, its carnal ordinances and observances had no efficiency to save or to sanctify; the value of the services were derived entirely from their relation to the Messiah, but for whom they would never have been established, but for whom they would have had no use, therefore in themselves would have been unprofitable, and vain, and absurd. But by the aid of these, however, the spiritual among the Jews were enabled to hold communion with God, though in what degree it is impossible to decide. As to ourselves, they are full of pleasing and interesting instruction. Having the clue we can explain them; having the reference we can perceive the resemblance. We are in possession of the truth of all these, the truth of the paschal Lamb; "it is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" the truth of the manna

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440

is the true bread which came down from heaven; the truth of the rock that followed the Jews in the wilderness, for that rock was Christ;" the truth of the altar and mercy-seat of the Tabernacle and of the Temple, for "Christ is all and in all." Thirdly, There is *the truth of certainty in distinction from error and falsehood*. This came by Jesus Christ. What was heathenism? an assemblage of

falsehoods—false gods, false temples, false sacrifices, false hopes, and false fears. A great deal of them was indeed originally derived from revelation, but it was obscured so that the Apostle tells us it was “turning the truth of God into a lie.” Lastly, There is *the truth of importance in distinction from all other truths*. This truth came by Jesus Christ. If many things were as true as they are perfectly false they would be unworthy our principal earnestness, for what good have they done, or can they do, compared with “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ?” This is truth;—truth emphatically, as our Saviour says, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

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NOV. 20.—The world knoweth us not. 1 John iii. 1.

THE meaning here is not merely that Christians are not discerned by the men of the world, but that the world *does not approve of them*. The word “know” is often taken in this sense. Thus Paul says, “Know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord;” that is, acknowledge them, and conduct yourselves toward them in a manner becoming their calling. Now, how does the world regard Christians? As far as it discerns them, does it admire them? does it esteem them as regenerate and spiritual? For this is the question here. There is another sense in which they may like them, not because of their spiritual or heavenly-minded qualities, but notwithstanding these and in spite of these. They may have other claims, they may be relatives or friends, they may be as amiable, as gentle, as agreeable as others; and thus they may approve of them, not because they are born of God, not because they are renewed after his image. The people of the

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441

world must often come into contact with real Christians, but they do not make them their models, their chosen companions; they do not wish to be intimate with them. When most at home, when they are engaged in spiritual con-

cerns, they know them not, and they would be withdrawn from them. People of the world are under obligations to Christians. Christians are useful to all. For their sakes it is that the frame of nature continues, that judgments are withdrawn, that blessings are bestowed or continued. If unknown to their neighbours, yet they retire and pray, and their supplications for them ascend to heaven. Yet the ungrateful world knows them not. But more is implied here than is expressed. It means the world *actually dislikes Christians* proof were necessary, it would be easy to cite passages of Scripture. "Marvel not, my brethren," says John, "if the world hate you;" and says the Saviour, "Because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The Christian's principles and practices condemn the world. They that hate light and love darkness will be sure to hate the light that breaks in upon their sinful practices. Among us persecution is not legal; but there are instances of injustice and persecution which are beyond the reach of the law. "The carnal mind is enmity with God." "The tongue no man can tame." And the sacred writers tell us that evil-speaking will be the portion of the righteous in all ages and in all places. The world will always turn the Christian's excellencies into scandal; their zeal will be accounted enthusiasm, their faith will be esteemed folly, their hope delusion, their meekness meanness. They have always some convenient names, and misrepresentations, and slander by which to disparage and defame the friends and followers of the Saviour. If there is nothing blameable in their deportment, the world will impeach their motives. It is in vain, therefore, for Christians to expect real candour from the world. And those who will be followers of the Redeemer must still go forth bearing his reproach, for "the world knoweth us not." It does not discern us, it does not approve us, it actually dislikes us.

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NOV. 21.—And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. Luke xvii. 14–16.

OBSERVE their *recovery*. These men having received our Saviour's directions, concluding that the very order to show themselves unto the priests was an intimation that they should be healed, immediately went, and as soon as they began to move the cure commenced; and filled them with wonder and astonishment. "Oh," says one, "I feel better already." "So do I," says another. So say they all. They look upon each other and see their flesh has become like the flesh of a new-born child. They feel and they find the purification of their blood, and the renewal of their strength, and all those fine but indescribable emotions and energies which are enjoyed when a person recovers from disease and enjoys health and strength again. Observe what was their *conduct finally*. The conduct of one of them was very praiseworthy. "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God and fell down at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan." And what said the Saviour to him? "Arise, go thy way;" but he seemed glued to the very ground whereon our Saviour stood. He seemed to imagine that he might have been allowed to remain with him as a servant, to do his pleasure as a monument of his power, as a trophy of his goodness, and to accompany him on his journey. But no, the religion of the Saviour is a religion adapted to human nature. "No," said Jesus, "'go thy way; thy place is vacant,—it is asking for thee; thy family, thy friends, thy condition—they are all waiting for thee. Go and walk among them, and show forth the praises of thy Deliverer.'" Nor was this all, but he gave him a very important assurance: "Thy faith hath saved thee;" tending to encourage his future confidence in him; not meaning that his faith had done this efficiently, but that this was the medium through which he chose to convey to him a cure. And this is most

strikingly the case with regard to ourselves; we therefore read everywhere of the importance of faith; we read that

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443

by faith we walk, we live, we are justified, we are sanctified, "we are saved by grace through faith." Hence it is worthy of remark that the very same things in the Scriptures which are ascribed to Christ are also ascribed to faith; not in the same way, indeed; they are ascribed to him meritoriously, but they are equally ascribed to faith instrumentally. He is indeed a refuge; but a refuge is nothing unless it be entered, and it can only be entered by faith. He is the remedy; but the remedy is nothing unapplied, and it can only be applied by faith. He is the food of the soul; but however excellent in itself, this cannot nourish us unless it be eaten, and it is only to be eaten by faith. "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." But the conduct of the rest was, oh, how blameable! "Jesus answering, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

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NOV. 22.—And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Luke xvii. 17.

LET us view the narrative as a picture, and observe the various things in it, not as objects of curiosity, but as affording lessons "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." Behold the picture, and see, First, *that all our Saviour's miracles were not connected with salvation.* As his works on the bodies of men were designed to be typical of his operations on the soul, we sometimes find them blended together. But this was not always the case. Here we see ten lepers sharing equally his kindness, in their miraculous recovery, and yet nine of them remaining unchanged, morally and spiritually, the same as before. And there are many also now who, like the Jews of old and these lepers, have experienced temporal and signal deliverances, without expe-

riencing that spiritual salvation which they were designed and adapted to prefigure. What is bodily health if the soul is sick, and diseased, and dead? What are these nine lepers the better for their cure *now*? We may look again and see that *adversity and affliction are more friendly and favourable to our intercourse with the Saviour than pros-*

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444

*ferity and health.* These lepers, while they were suffering under their malady, cried to him with a loud voice; but, alas! as soon as they are recovered they go away and never think more of him. Thus many will “pour out a prayer unto God when his chastening is upon them,” and this circumstance will also serve to account for the afflictions of the righteous. There is a needs be for them. If we look again we shall see that *the generality of those who receive favours from God act as if they were insensible of their obligations.* Oh! the ingratitude of these men made them much more vile than their former disease did. This ingratitude is general, and extends even to the righteous. We may take the case of Hezekiah as an affecting illustration, and in how many instances do we see this, and find that we ourselves are not free from it. We may observe that however we forget our obligations *the Lord remembers them, and expects suitable returns for them.* He sees whether we are thankful with the one, or regardless with the nine, whether we come back to give God the glory with the Samaritan, or profanely depart with the Jews. He sees what blessings we receive from him, and how we receive them. He expects from us suitable improvement and returns. We may observe also that *we are not to avoid duty on the ground of singularity.* Here was only one man out of ten, but he dares to come back regardless of the rest. He stood alone. So did Noah. Here was a world ungodly, nevertheless Noah walked righteously with God. Observe that *the most unlikely sometimes excel the most promising.* Who would not have expected more from the Jews than from this Samaritan? How many, who have but few advantages, have made

greater improvement than others with more abundant privileges. But lastly, let us observe *the glory of the Lord Jesus, and think of his goodness*. See, how no sooner did these men cry than he heard them; and let us remember that he has now what he always had, an ear for the destitute and the miserable. Let us behold his all-sufficiency and self-sufficiency. Power does not always accompany benevolence; but we see "nothing is too hard for the Lord."

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445

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NOV. 23.—A door was opened in heaven. Rev. iv. 1.  
 OBSERVE for what purpose the opening in heaven was made. First, *For inspection and discovery*; accordingly John looked immediately in and he saw many things there to reward his investigation. And we can look in and see the same things now, and some of them more clearly than lie could see them. We can see who are the inhabitants there. There is Jesus, the Lord of life and glory. There are the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the noble army of martyrs are there. There are, too, our own beloved friends and relatives who have died in the faith of Jesus; they have done with sorrow and they have done with sin, and we can look in now and see how they are engaged, and in what they are employed. We can see them serving him, and seeing his face, and bearing his name on their foreheads. We can see that their service is all fervour, union, harmony, joy, and praise. Oh, that ours may resemble it! They are resting from their labours, they are "clothed with white robes," having "palms in their hands, and crowns of glory upon their heads;" and they have songs of praise in their mouths, even "salvation unto God and unto the Lamb." This is not all: it is, Secondly, Opened for *communication*; not only for us to look in, but to receive from. Ever since a door has been opened in heaven there has been a perpetual egression from thence. If de-

parted saints do not, and however pleasing the idea may seem, yet the Scriptures do not sanction it—yet if saints come not from thence, *angels* do, and whatever their rank may be, they are “all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation.” But we want to receive something from heaven above angels. The Holy Spirit comes from thence; our Saviour, therefore, said to his disciples, “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I depart I will send him unto you.” It is from above that we receive all our blessed influences and consolations. Does not the Apostle say, “My God shall supply all your needs from his *riches in glory* by Christ Jesus?” As the Jews received the cluster of grapes

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448

from Eschol, and thereby not only had something *from* Canaan, but also something *of* Canaan, so it is with Christians now. They receive the first-fruits of their inheritance, the earnest of their portion, and the foretastes of their eternal blessedness; and “whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord from heaven; and to them that look for him will he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Thirdly, It is opened for *admission*. This crowns the whole. It is well for us to look in and to look upon, but it is much better to *go* in. There are two entrances into heaven to which we may refer. The one is *a. present* entrance. This is *spiritual*. By faith, and in religious exercises, the believer, now draws near even to God. As Milton says—

—“Led by thee  
 Into the heaven of heavens, I have presumed  
 An earthly guest to draw my comforts hence.”

The believer now has “boldness of access with confidence, by the faith of him.” But there will be a *future* entrance; this will *be personal*. This will accomplish the Saviour’s prayer, “Bather, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” Whatever advantages they now enjoy they are

only, as the Apostle says, "strangers and pilgrims upon the earth;" they declare plainly that they seek a country, even a heavenly; nothing less will satisfy their minds; but they will not be always upon the road sending spies to Zion, and fetching in supplies from thence by faith and hope, but they will receive the end of their faith and hope—the salvation of their souls, and realize the language of David, who says, "With joy and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace."

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NOV. 24.—Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. Deut. xxxii. 31.

OTHERS besides the Lord's people have their rock; they make many things their rock; but, as Moses here says, "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." Do they ever recommend their rock

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447

in trouble? However fond people may be of the world they never speak well of the world. Not one of them in death recommends the world to those that visit them. Not one of them speaks well, of their own experience of what they have realized from their connection with it. But the wicked have been obliged to bear their testimony to "our Rock." Balaam exclaimed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." If this be the testimony of the wicked, of those who are enemies to God and to his people, what must be the testimony of those who are the friends of God? They can speak from experience, and this carries force with it. There is nothing like this to give effect to our addresses to others. When we speak from experience, we speak clearly and with confidence. We can say, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." Such are likely to speak with earnestness. It will come from the heart. They are the persons who know what a miserable condition it is to be absent from God; and they who have made trial of a reconciliation with God are the men to

speak of his faithfulness. Yes, they who have tasted that God is gracious can say to others: "O taste, and see how good the Lord is." We should, therefore, think well and speak well of his name, and recommend him to all around, taking care of this one thing, that while we recommend religion to others, we are examples of it ourselves. Some often speak in favour of it who would be doing much more service to it by being silent. Much more harm than good is done when the mouth says one thing, and the temper and conduct say another. What would be thought of an individual who would recommend a medicine to others, while yet they could see disease staring in his own face? Would not they say to such a person, "We don't believe one word of what you are saying. You have no confidence in the prescription yourself; try it upon yourself, and then you will be better able, from its influence, to recommend it to us?" Let us see to it, then, that our conduct is such as becomes the Gospel of Christ. Then we cannot say too much in praise of our Rock. And thus "a word spoken in season, how good is it!"

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 448

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NOV. 25.—Nevertheless I am continually with thee.

Ps. lxxiii. 23.

OBSERVE here the *source of the Psalmist's satisfaction*; as if he had said, "What have I been doing? I have been dwelling on my trials instead of considering my blessings. I have been among creatures and have not turned from them unto my God." But he now says, "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee." There are several ways in which this may be considered. First, He was with him by *a realizing sense of his presence*. God is continually with all his creatures, as their *Witness and Observer*; but they are not continually with him. Yea, they are never with him long. God is not in all their thoughts. Their concern is to get him out of their way and out of sight, saying unto God, "Depart from us; we desire not a knowledge of thy

ways." They say this by their vices, by their infidelity, and by their carelessness. But it is otherwise with a Christian; he does not live without God, but is continually with him in the world. Secondly, He was continually with God, as *he was in a state of friendship with him*. It is obvious Asaph mentions the thing here as a privilege, therefore it supposes reconciliation with God. We commonly infer the degree of friendship from the degree of visitation. This is really the case with regard to God and the Christian. Yes, God is his hiding-place, his resting-place, his dwelling-place. God is the home of his heart. The Apostle John says, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." And our Saviour says, "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." And not only does the Christian dwell *with* God but *in* God. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Thirdly, He was *so by his engagement in his service*. If any difficulty attended this, we could point out an explanation from the Book of Revelation, where it is said, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and *they that are with him* are called and chosen and faithful." And so our Saviour said, "He that is not with me is

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 449

against me." Mere neutrality here is inadmissible; we must be decided. There are only two parties—the world's party and God's party; and "he that will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God." "Who," says God, "will rise up for me against the evil-doers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? "I will," says David, "if there is no other individual to be found. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies." Is this motto the motto of our lives? "Whose I am and whom I serve." "I am continually with thee."

NOV. 26.—Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

1 John iii. 13.

THE Christian can do very well without the world's approval. The world has its influence, and there are many who are much influenced by it, but with regard to the world's dislike of Christians, we observe, First, That for their sakes *it is better it should be so*. For if we are re-deemed out of the world, if we are spiritual, we need not lament their distance from us. The more remote they are, the more safe shall we be from their influence. It is not easy to mingle with the heathen, and not learn their worship. Even Joseph, when in Egypt, learned to "swear by the life of Pharaoh." Secondly, *There is nothing peculiar in this*. Moses endured scorn and reproach rather than run into sin. David was ridiculed for reposing his all in God. Isaiah was sawn in sunder for his fidelity. The Apostles were considered the scum and the off-scouring of the earth, and not one of them died a natural death but John, and he in his old age was banished and worked as a slave in the Isle of Patmos; and when Paul was apprehended, on his way to Damascus, the Saviour said to Ananias, "I will show him how many things he is to suffer for my name's sake." And shall we refuse to drink of the cup that they drank of, and be baptized with the baptism which they were baptized with? What are our trials compared with those that have been endured by the many that have gone before? Thirdly, *It hated the*

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450

*Master*. "He was despised and rejected of men." When will his poor followers remember that his name was cast out as evil, and that "the servant is not above his Master, nor the disciple above his Lord?" "Ye know," says the Saviour, "it hated me before it hated you." And is not this enough? Can we refuse to suffer in such company? Fourthly, If the world knoweth us not, and hateth us, *it will hereafter know us*. "Wisdom will be justified of her children." The day of the "manifestation of the sons of God" is coming. Then every cloud will be dis-

persed, and "the righteous shall shine forth as stars in the firmament of heaven." "Then shall they return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." "I will bring them to thy feet," says God, "and they shall know that I have loved thee." But is not this anticipated by the world now? In their dying hours they begin to see things as they are. "I have always observed," remarks Mrs. Savage, the daughter of Philip Henry, "that the people of the world never speak well of it at parting." How often might we hear them say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Fifthly, If the world in its ignorance of Christians hateth us, God does not; and it is he on whose frowns or smiles depends our misery or our happiness. It is "a light thing to be judged of man's judgment; he that judgeth us is the Lord. In his favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life." This puts "joy into our hearts, more than when their corn and their oil and wine increases." Let them curse, but bless thou.

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NOV. 27.—And it came to pass, when Joshua was hi/ Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; hut as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for

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451

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the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. Josh. v. 13-15.

LET us glance at the circumstances here recorded. Joshua had now passed the river Jordan. He had just commenced the course of his warfare, and was now favoured with a supernatural appearance. Observe the *time* of the manifestation. It was when he had performed the rite of circumcision and the ordinance of the passover. None of our services can be meritorious; "but them that honour me," says God, "I will honour:" "draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to thee." Observe, also, the *place* of this manifestation. He was now under the walls of Jericho. What was he doing there? It is not possible for us absolutely to determine; he seems to have been alone, probably surveying the place, perhaps dejected at the difficulty of taking such a stronghold; perhaps he was praying, or perhaps, rather, musing in meditation, when, lifting up his eyes, he "looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand." There was something dreadful in the aspect, and a timid man would have fled; but Joshua was full of Divine confidence and courage, and therefore unruffled. Thus inspired, he approached his mysterious visitant, and inquired whether he is a friend, that he may entertain him, or whether he is an enemy, that he may engage with him. The armed messenger soon furnished him with an answer, assuring him not only that he was come as a friend, but that he was come to take the chief command. Joshua immediately pays him homage, asks of him orders, and is enjoined to render him the deepest reverence. Would any man, any mere creature, any created agent, have either required or have allowed this? Did Paul and Barnabas at Lystra? "When the people were disposed to sacrifice to them, they said, "Sirs, why do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you." Or would the angel of the Apocalypse have enjoined or allowed this, of whom John says, "I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things; and the angel said unto me, See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant?" We are therefore enabled to decide who this man was: the man who

wrestled with Jacob until the dawning of the day, and rested, and concerning whom Jacob said, "I have seen God

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452

face to face, and my life is preserved;" this is the man who, allied to our nature by engagement and anticipation, "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth before his incarnation, and his delights were with the sons of men;" he "whose goings forth were from everlasting."

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NOV. 28.—*The host of the Lord.* Josh. v. 14.

HAVING noticed the historical circumstances connected with the passage, let us now derive from it a subject which may be found profitable. It regards two things. First, "The *host* of the Lord;" and this will apply to the Israel of God now: they are so called because of their *number*. Now they *are* a multitude; and *hereafter* they will be found to be "a number which no man can number;" and because they are in a state of martial *discipline, arrangement, and order, and readiness for conflict*. Thus the Church is held forth by Solomon, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" The Book of the Lord reminds us that they are now in a state of *warfare*. And the Christian life is in a very peculiar sense a warfare; and there is no one image more frequently employed in Scripture in describing the partakers of Divine grace, than the image taken from the condition of a soldier. Paul therefore, speaking to his son Timothy, says, "Warring a good warfare," "fighting the good fight of faith;" and when he takes his final review of life, he not only says, "I have kept the faith, and I have finished my course, but I have fought a good fight." And in the addresses to the seven Churches of Asia there is a promise, a glorious promise, made to each of them; it is made in each instance to him that overcometh. There is an obvious truth and force in the metaphor; and the Christian finds that it corresponds with his experience.

He is called not only to work and to walk, but to *fight*; and he finds that he can neither walk nor work without fighting. The world is a foe to the Christian, not only by its persecutions; the friendship of the world is enmity with God; its smiles are much more dangerous than its frowns. And the world is only one of the enemies that the Christian has to contend with;

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453

for, says the Apostle, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities; against powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." "Our adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour:" and "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit;" there is the "evil heart of unbelief, that departeth from the living God," there is "the sin that dwelleth in us," enfeebling all our powers. It is not a trifling nor an easy conflict which every Christian is engaged in now; he must be constrained to say with the Apostle, "So fight I not as one that beateth the air;" that is, I am not like one vapouring away, while the enemy is at a distance, and brandishing my weapons in a feigned combat. I have to beat not the air but the adversary; we have closed upon each other; it is a dreadful struggle, and I must conquer or be conquered and undone for ever. There is much to be said of this warfare which cannot be said of any other. *This* will bear examination. This is a just and necessary war; the cause is truth and righteousness and peace; and the issue will be glorious.

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NOV. 29.—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Tim. i. 15.

HERE is an exhibition of grace and truth, of truth and grace, in connection. The gospel message is *truth*; and therefore we are to receive it with the firmness of conviction and assent; the more important the news, the

more evident assurances are necessary to establish it that it is true as to its object. It was thus regarded in the beginning; the original receivers of it felt their feet upon a rock; their goings were established: a new song was put into their mouths; they received this saying as it is in truth the word of God. Their confidence in it was equal to the reality; we are told that it is the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Yea, their works proved not only the reality, but the degree of their confidence in God to be such that they ventured their all upon it, all for time, and all for eternity. Do we thus receive it? Are we thus convinced? Can we say

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454

that we know that we are of the truth, and can assure our hearts before him." Then it is a *gracious* message. It brings us "glad tidings of great joy;" and therefore it is impossible to receive it properly unless we receive it also with cordiality, gratitude, and with joy. The first Christians thus received it. The people were not only taught the truth as it is in Jesus, but they were made blessed by it. The jailer at Philippi who, a few hours before, found his soul filled with horror and despair, "received the word with joy, believing with all his house;" and the Thessalonians "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." It was universally the case then; they believed, and believing "they rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;" they knew the truth, and the truth made them free—free from the burden of guilt—free from the torment of sin—free from worldly anxieties and future forebodings; they were "careful for nothing;" "the peace of God which passeth all understanding kept their hearts and minds by Christ Jesus." They were happy without the vanities and dissipations of the world; they were borne up under their trials; they gloried in tribulations also; they triumphed in the valley of the shadow of death. Do we thus regard the gospel? Do we thus receive it? Alas! there are thousands called by the Christian name who do not thus consider the gospel worthy

their acceptance; or that it is the truth and grace which hath come unto them by Jesus Christ. They neither seem to believe the one, nor feel the other. We can never too frequently nor too seriously reflect that the introduction of the gospel has placed us in a condition of the most solemn responsibility, for it may “become the savour of life unto life;” or it may become “the savour of death unto death.” If we have received the gospel, we are to *exemplify* it, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye with him;” and we are also to *extend and diffuse* it by our prayers, and by our practical devotedness to his cause. There is no Christian but may do something in his own sphere, and in his own circumstances, to make manifest the savour of these glad tidings.

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455

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NOV. 30.—The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree:  
he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Ps. xcii. 12.

HERE we may observe *how* the righteous shall flourish. The image by which this is set forth is sometimes taken from *human* life. We read in the family of God of little children, young men, and fathers. We read of our coming to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Sometimes it is taken from *animal* life; it is said that those “upon whom the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings shall go forth like calves of the stall.” Sometimes the image is taken from *vegetable* life. “They shall grow as the vine; they shall revive as the corn;” “they shall spring up as willows by the water-courses;” and as it is here, they “shall flourish like the palm-tree”; they shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.” It is unnecessary to inquire why the palm-tree and the cedar are selected. It is sufficient to know that these trees are beautiful in their growth and form, and very fruitful, and both of them are evergreens: the cedar gives strong and sweetly scented timber; and in addition to this the palm-tree yields an abundance of fruit (dates); sometimes as much as a hundred-weight is found

upon one tree. Let us just notice this in contrast with a preceding verse of the Psalm, "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." They flourish as "the grass which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the fire." But the righteous flourish as "cedars and palm-trees." We have the same contrast in another Psalm, and in reference to another image: "The man," says David, "whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in whose law he doth meditate day and night, is like a tree planted by rivers of water. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand." But the grand thing to be derived from this image is this, that there is *a real and active progressiveness in religion*; that though the Christian's principles and faculties at present are all imperfect, yet they are growing and shall advance to maturity. This progressiveness is to be considered as a Christian's duty, desire, and privilege. It is *his duty*; therefore it is often enjoined upon

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456

him, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, etc. It is his *desire*, therefore, "forgetting the things that are behind, he is reaching forth to the things that are before." Therefore his prayer, "Strengthen that which thou hast wrought for us;" "perfect the work which concerneth us;" "forsake not the work of thy hands." *It is his privilege*, and therefore it is provided for him. For "it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and from this fulness we have received, and grace for grace." Therefore it is said, "The righteous shall hold on his way." "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

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DEC. 1.—Those that he planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. Ps. xcii. 13.

THIS is a fine allusion. It intimates that the house of God is like a garden, or like a well of water, ministering to the life and fertility of the tree. And cannot we still say—

“Lord, how delightful ’tis to see  
A whole assembly worship thee?”

There it is we have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; there his ordinances are dispensed—the ordinances of life. There the word of everlasting truth is proclaimed; there “God hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” There he resides: “This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell;” and there, he says, “I will clothe my priests with righteousness, and make my saints shout for joy; yea, they shall be satisfied with the goodness of my house.” But in order to enjoy these advantages we must be “planted “there, as a tree is planted in the soil in order to be fruitful; that is, we must be fixed there: this is to be our dwelling-place; not literally, but spiritually. As Watts says—

“Here would I find a settled rest,  
While others go and come;  
No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home.”

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457

We frequently read of Christians dwelling in the house of God, and here we have the same idea. Their being planted means that they are fixed. There they dwell in two ways—one by *choice*, for “where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.” The other is *the frequency of our attendance*, availing ourselves of every opportunity the providence of God allows us to be found there; how often, is not determined even in the Scriptures. God honours his people by leaving it to their dispositions; for love is a generous principle, that always acts best when left free. How wonderful it is that those who know the value of the blessings realized in the sanctuary do not attend more frequently, especially on week-days. We need something in the week to keep our minds nearer to God. How many might, by rising earlier on those days, so manage their

concerns as to be able on a week evening to hear the word of life. Now this slack attendance of some is the effect of a cause; it is the effect of a low degree of zeal, and will become still lower to those who can neglect the means of grace when opportunity offers. Such can never expect to flourish or be in a prosperous condition. Sometimes persons are so fixed where they cannot attend by reason of sickness or accident. Now God in these cases will not leave them comfortless. But ordinarily this is the ground of our expectation: "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."

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DEC. 2.—We beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. 2 Cor. vi. 1.

TWO inquiries here are very necessary. First, *What are we to understand by the grace of God?* According to the common acceptance of the word, it cannot be received in vain; it always brings glory to God, and we, says the Apostle, "are confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun the good work in you will perform it." But here, by the grace of God is meant the gospel. This

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458

name is given to the gospel to remind us of *its source*. It originated in the grace of God only and entirely. Did we deserve it? Were we prepared to receive it? Did we even desire it? It has reached us from the mere goodness of God, and is *free* in every sense of the word. It is thus designated also to remind us of the *subject* of the gospel. Is it not a display of the grace of God in the free, full, and everlasting salvation of sinners? in the opening of the eyes of our understanding, the renewing of us in the spirit of our mind, making us "new creatures in Christ Jesus?" And is it not thus always in Scripture

called "grace," because of its *gracious influence or agency in us*? The gospel therefore springs from the grace of God, displays and produces this grace in the heart and life, and therefore very properly bears the name and is called "the grace of God." The second inquiry is, *What is it to receive the grace of God "in vain?"* This is a very important inquiry. The gospel is received in vain when it is received *partially*, if we receive it as a system of doctrine only, or as a system of duty only. The gospel reveals to a sinner the means of his justification and of his sanctification, and the absolute necessity of both. When these are not united, we always find either antinomian ignorance or pharisaical pride. They must therefore be blended together, as they are inseparable. Jesus came not by water nor by blood, but "by water and blood." These were not severed in their effusion from the cross, and they are not to be severed in their application to the soul. Man wants both equally in his misery and in his helpless condition. Unless his sins are subdued as well as pardoned, unless he is renewed as well as justified, it is impossible he can hold communion with God, or that God can receive any proper service from him. Where, therefore, persons separate privilege from duty, promise from precept, and the end from the use of the means, and "God's working in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure," from "our working out our own salvation with fear and trembling," such receive the gospel in vain. Secondly, when the gospel is received *speculatively*, and not experimentally and practically, it is not in accordance with the nature and design of it, and therefore it is received in vain. The gospel is not given to teach us to dispute, but

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459

to pray; not to exercise our ingenuity, but to change our hearts; not to amuse our curiosity, but to nourish us up unto eternal life. Our aim therefore in hearing or reading the gospel should be the same as God's end in giving it. And why has he provided, why has he revealed a Saviour? Not that we may behold, wonder, and perish; but that by believing we might have life, that we might flee unto this

only refuge, this grand restorer, this almighty Saviour, able and willing to save unto the uttermost, who has declared "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Thirdly, The gospel is received in vain when it is received *unperseveringly*. Peter speaks of our "receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." He only that "*endureth to the end* shall be saved." Many have been informed, but not illuminated; they have been reformed, but not regenerated. And our Saviour says, "If ye *continue* in my words, then (alone) are ye my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

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DEC. 3.—As the truth is in Jesus. Eph. iv. 21.

THINGS may be equally true and yet not equally valuable. We are commanded to buy the truth, but we would give much more for some truths than others, as we could turn them into much more account in the spiritual merchandise. If many of our modern notions were as true as they are erroneous, they would not deserve our most earnest attention. What are they in importance compared with the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," for the possession of which the Apostle would submit to the loss of all things? What truth can be of so much personal importance as "repentance toward God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." If we "abound in all knowledge and in all judgment, and approve of the things that are excellent," we shall discriminate and distinguish things that are diverse; not only between the true and the false, but between the true and the true. There is a great deal of truth in the world, of physical truth, of historical truth, of moral truth, but we may lay our hand upon the Bible, and say, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." This is *the* truth emphatically, the

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460

"truth as it is in Jesus," truth the most *honourable to God*, for it brings "glory to God in the highest," while

it proclaims "peace on earth and goodwill toward men;" truth the most *suited to man*, the most adapted to his state of existence. He is enslaved, and it brings him relief; he is guilty, and it brings him the righteousness of Christ; he is perishing for want, and it brings him the bread and water of life; he is poor, having nothing, and it brings him the unsearchable riches of Christ. Truth the most *influential*, reaching the heart as well as the ear; not only convincing and informing, but also sanctifying, dedicating the man entirely to the service of God by its influence. We know that the ancient philosophers, whatever celebrity they had acquired, could not bring over the inhabitants of a single village to live according to their maxims and rules. But at Corinth, at Philippi, at Thessalonica, and other places, after the fishermen of Galilee had been there, how many were there of whom the Apostle could say, but "ye are washed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God?" It is the same now, where the truth is received in the love of it. There we find the swearer learns to fear an oath, the Sabbath-breaker learns to call the Sabbath a delight, the careless become prayerful, the profligate is made moral, the proud humble, the avaricious liberal; they who minded earthly things have their conversation in heaven. Blessed be God, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. This truth is the most *excellent*, the most beneficent truth. Solomon says, "In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." But David says, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." If we possess this knowledge we shall be happy, happy in social intercourse, happy in solitude, happy in trouble, and happy even in death. It turns death into an everlasting gain, and enables us to rejoice in the prospect of eternal life. Here is truth that deserves the name, and we do not wonder the Apostle should prize it so as to say, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

DEC. 4.—They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.

Ps. xcii. 14.

NOT that all the people of God live to be old; this is not the meaning of it; sometimes they have been removed in early life, in the midst of their days, and these occurrences in Providence are very mysterious—that men who are likely to be useful should be so soon cut off, while a Voltaire is suffered to live, poisoning men's minds, to the age of ninety. But though they die young they fill up their days; they die old, for life is not measured by days. There was a Being once that lived in Judea who died at thirty-three, yet lived much longer than Methuselah, for every action, word, and feeling of that Being said, "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is called to-day." Under the former economy long life was reckoned a peculiar honour and blessing; it was made a matter of promise; and we find in the Scriptures that the "hoary head is spoken of as a crown of glory when found in the way of righteousness." Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Caleb, Joshua, David, Samuel, John, Peter and Simeon, and Mnason (an old disciple with whom the Apostles lodged, all were spared to a flue old age, and were gathered in like a shock of corn when it is ripe. But when it is said "they shall still bring forth fruit in old age," it is not to be taken as if they were not to bring forth fruit at any other time, but just to *show the permanency of their fruits and disposition*; that though others fail they will endure. That which comes from God will not fail to lead to God. It is thus a Christian is distinguished from all the works of nature.

"The plants of grace shall ever live,  
Nature decays, but grace must thrive;  
Time, that doth all things else impair,  
Still makes them flourish strong and fair."

Not that they escape the effects of old age, but, as the Apostle says, "when the outward man perisheth the in-

ward man is renewed day by day;" when the outward ear grows deaf, then the inward man hears the voice of God; when the eye grows dim, the mind is irradiated and enlightened; when the fleshly parts grow weak, "we are strength-

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462

ened with all might in our inner man." We look for this in the old Christian. The young Christian may be compared to a tree in spring covered with blossom; that is the loveliest period to see it. An old Christian is like a tree in autumn bending with fruit; it is not more beautiful, but more valuable. In them we look for *weanedness from the world*. It is one of the consequences of old age in Christians to look towards heaven; there he reckons upon meeting his relations and friends; he seems to have more communion with that world than this. We look for *meekness* in the aged. The young are giddy, fiery, and determined; the older are willing to give up for the sake of peace, unless it is a good conscience and truth. There we look for *maturity of judgment*: that he should be able to distinguish between things that differ; that his heart is established in righteousness. He has not only had faith but experience; the one is a help to the other. "I know," says Paul, "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The young have had few trials, and have seen but little of the power and providence of God; but the old Christian can endure longer and can better bear hardships; he has seen the interpositions of Providence and of grace, so that he does not despair, for "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."

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DEC. 5.—To show that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. Ps. xcii. 15.

OBSERVE the testimony here given concerning God; it is this, that the fruitfulness of Christians manifested in their fearing God—in attending upon and delighting in his ordi-

nances, and growing in grace, and bringing forth fruit in old age, not only show that they are upright, but are declarative of and designed to "show that the Lord is upright; and that there is no unrighteousness in him." And they do this in two ways. First, *As it evidences his faithfulness to his engagements.* "All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth;" not only mercy but "truth;" because they are in fulfilment of his promises. What is there pertaining to

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463

us, as Christians, that has not been provided for us in the covenant of grace, Is it our afflictions? Whatever else it may be, this is included; the rod was in the covenant from everlasting: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." And David says, "I know that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me." Faithfulness regards the accomplishment of the promise, God has engaged to afflict his people. Has he not been with us in trouble? He assured us of this. Has he not sustained our strength? have not our "shoes been as iron and brass" to defend us from the thorns and briars of the wilderness? "The Lord is upright." "He is faithful that hath promised." Secondly, *Because it shows that they are adhering to him with purpose of heart.* They have not turned back from him, and this shows that they have found him to be what they expected he would be. Had they been deceived by him, they would have given him up. "Under the law the servant that had his ear bored gave proof that he loved his master; and he would not have loved him if he had not behaved well to him. The attachment and the adherence of the servants of God proclaim his faithfulness, and show that they have not been disappointed in their expectations of him. Just like the venerable Polycarp, who, when commanded to deny his Saviour, said, "Eighty and four years he has been a good

Master to me, and has not forsaken me, and shall I now forsake him?" Thus the perseverance of the Christian shows not what *lie* is, but what God is; and says Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am;" "not me, but the grace of God which is in me." It shows "that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." And here we may also observe the *Testifier*. Who can bear his testimony to this truth? "I," says David, "he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." Every one can say this, and *will* say this, who has like David made God his rock for building upon; his rock of refuge from danger; his rock of refreshment, whose streams follow him all the wilderness through. And cannot we also bear

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464

this testimony and say, "He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him?"

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DEC. 6.—*Grace is poured into thy lips.* Ps. xlv. 2.

IN the Old Testament we find God commonly spoken of as "the Almighty," "the everlasting God," "the Lord of Hosts;" but in these last days, when he hath spoken to us by his Son, we find him represented as "the Father," the loving Father of the human race, dooming none of his offspring to endless misery but those who insist upon going there. The Saviour, when he prayed, said "Our Father:" he addressed him thus as the Father of all mercy, and the God of all grace. What views does he give us of him, for instance, in the parable of the Prodigal Son. There we see that he is not an arbitrary and implacable tyrant, but an affectionate Father, offended and grieved, but willing to receive the returning Prodigal: yea, seeing him afar off, running to meet him, and falling upon his neck, and kissing him; and not only clothing, but adorning him; not only ordering a feast, but killing the fatted calf; in an ecstasy of pleasure saying, "Because this my son was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." What, therefore, can be so delightful as to sit at the feet of this Teacher sent

from God, and hear him talk of the extent and vastness of the paternal care and kindness of God—that he clothes the grass, that he adorns the lily, that he hears the ravens cry, that the “sparrow falls not to the ground without our heavenly Father’s” notice, that the “very hairs of our head are all numbered?” It was thus the only-begotten Son who dwelt in the bosom of the Father declared him, and in this respect never man spake like this man. Grace was poured into his lips, and it was this grace that gave such a charm to his teaching, especially among the humbler and the afflicted ranks of mankind. “He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” His authority was not the authority of the hammer breaking the rock in pieces, but the authority of spring melting the rigour of winter, bending the severity of the frost, and bringing out all into life and loveliness. Therefore we are told that “the poor have the gospel preached unto them,” and the common people heard him gladly. They were now deli-

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465

vered from the dry, hard teaching of the Jewish doctors; they now found that grace had come down from heaven to earth, and after it they go. If he crosses the lake they go round by the land to meet him. If he passes the road they climb the tree; if they have knowledge that he is in the house, they enter it by the roof; if he preaches by the sea-side, he gets into a boat and they listen by the shore. Sow the poor are told of riches within their reach. He informs the vulgar and mean of a kingdom that they might inherit, and to those that were weary and crushed beneath the tradition of the elders, and with the oppressions of the worldly, and with the sorrows of life, and the burden of guilt, he said, with a soft and gentle voice, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

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DEC. 7.—*God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, out ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Rom. vi. 17.*

MACKNIGHT and other modern translators have rendered this passage, “Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which ye have been delivered.” The allusion is to melted metal. When this is poured into the mould it does not come out as it went in, but brings out the image of the model; and as it is employed by the Apostle it means that, under the agency of the Spirit, we are softened from our natural hardness to receive Divine impressions, and that we, who were by nature the servants of sin, are fashioned and changed into the very character of the gospel, so that we realize it, embody it, render it visible and palpable; so that we “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” Not by adding anything to it, but by showing what it is in itself. Yes, whatever the gospel be, we are required to copy it. If the gospel be light we are to be illuminated; if it be salt we are to be seasoned; if it be love we are to be loving and lovely; if it be holiness, how holy and happy ought we to be; if it be truth and grace we are to be truthful and gracious, for truth and grace are to be displayed by us; and our tempers, our speech, and our carriage are to be distinguished by it.

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466

There are some who have clear views and firm convictions, and who are sincere and open in their profession, who are the “children of the light and of the day;” that is, they are all truth; but then they are not kind, not tender, not forbearing, not forgiving; they do not restore a fallen brother in the spirit of meekness; they despise the day of small things; they are not all the gospel of the grace of God requires. The perfection of Christian character comes from the union, the harmony, and the proportion of these excellencies. Why in our zeal for orthodoxy should we renounce charity and candour? Is it not possible to combine these? Why cannot mercy and truth meet together? “Righteousness and peace kiss each other,” in ourselves

as well as in our creed. Are we not commanded to "seek the truth and peace;" to "speak the truth in love?" And did not the Apostle exclaim, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity?" Let us therefore seek to unite all the excellencies of the Christian character, and to display them in the world, in the church, in the family, in all the habitual intercourse of life, and be thus "manifestly the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men;" full of "grace and truth."

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DEC. 8.—*Thou hast holden one by my right hand.*  
Ps. lxxiii. 23.

THAT is, thou hast sustained me, and supported me when I was ready to fall, or ready to faint, or ready to sink. As Watts expresses it:

"Thine arm of mercy held me up,  
When sinking in despair."

This is the *promise*: "I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness;" and this is the Christian's *prayer*: "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." This is the *humiliating concession*: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;" and this is the *gracious intimation*: "The Lord upholdeth him with his hand." And here is the *grateful acknowledgment*: "When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." This is the *experience*: "My soul

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467

followeth hard after God, thy right hand upholdeth me." Where is the Christian that does not need this sustaining mercy? who does not "groan, being burdened" by cares, by fears, by toils, by disappointments, by afflictions (personal and relative), by a sense of guilt and unworthiness, and continual imperfection? And what is our own strength but perfect weakness? We know it, and are daily convinced of it. Therefore, not only from faith but experience we know the truth of the Saviour's words, "Without me ye can do nothing." We are as a branch

severed from the vine; but when we are weak then are we strong, because, distrusting ourselves, we trust in another, rely on another, and find that in the "Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;" that "the eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Were God to leave us, were God to let go our hand for a moment, we could no more stand than a new-born infant—we could no more stand than a staff when the hand is taken away. But though this is the truth, it is equally true, as Jude says, that "he is able to keep us from falling." Even with such hearts as ours, even in such a world as this, we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Asaph does not here say, "He has exempted me as I passed through life; the trials which have befallen others have passed by me." No; says he, "I have been tried, but he has not left nor forsaken me. I have been in trouble, but he has been ever with me." And we should learn, from the experience of this good man, to give God the glory for all he has done for us. We should say with Paul, "By the grace of God, I continue to this day;" and with Samuel, "Hitherto, the Lord hath helped us." It would be a poor business to look back upon life without connecting it with God; but nothing can be more pleasing and encouraging than to review life in connection with him, and his interpositions of Providence and grace in our behalf. The Christian can say, "The Lord helped me at that time. I remember well at another time, a snare was laid for my feet, but the snare was discovered, and I escaped. I did not think that, in this situation, I should have been helped; but at the moment I cried, thou answeredst me, and thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

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468

Therefore this conclusion now will be drawn, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

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DEC. 9.—*As Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.* Josh. v. 14.

To do justice to this image we must throw off the restricted meaning of the word "captain" as it is used now, and consider it as it was exemplified in the earlier ages, for to them the reference is. And we observe that here the "captain" means nothing less than the commander-in-chief. Let us make three inquiries. First, *How* did our Lord Jesus Christ become the Captain of the host of the Lord? He does so two ways. By the *appointment of God*: "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." I have laid help upon one that is Mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people. By the *suffrages of the army*. For their Captain is not forced upon them against their consciences or their consent. None of them are conscripts, they are all volunteers; all his people are "willing in the day of his power," willing that he should be to them all that God wills him to be; as God says, in Hosea, "They appoint themselves one head." Why, it is God appoints the Head of his Church. Yes; but they acquiesce in the appointment. They make it their own; the call is theirs, and this is the very essence of faith, to approve of God's appointment; to say "Amen" to all the testimonies of revelation concerning the Son of God. Observe, secondly, *what he does* as Captain of the host of the Lord. He *instructs them*. "He teaches their hands to war, and their fingers to fight." He gives a tone to and *animates* them by his presence and example; in the course of duty and suffering he goes before them. As Paul says, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." He *maintains discipline*. It is from obedience, subordination, and order that an army principally derives its power. "Order is heaven's first law," says Pope, and it obtains in the church: "Warn them," says Paul, "that are unruly," or, as it is in the Greek, those that are *insubordinate*. "Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called of God." It is he must

appoint the line in which we are to act offensively or defensively. All must be determined by him; he must assign the place and the post at which we are to fight and perhaps to fall. Moreover, he *furnishes them* with whatever is necessary. Are arms necessary? He provided the whole armour of God. Do they require rest or food? He has engaged to furnish all these; they do not go a warfare at their own charges. "As thy day so shall thy strength be." He *notices and rewards his soldiers*. Observe, thirdly, the *attributes* this Captain possesses. He has everything which can qualify him, and draw forth our confidence in him and our submission to him. What *tenderness!* It is said of Trajan that he tore his robe in order to bind up the wounds of a poor bleeding soldier whom he saw before him. But what was this to our Lord and Saviour? "By his stripes we are healed." Then what *wisdom and prudence*. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." No enemy can be concealed from him. "Hell is naked before his eyes, and destruction hath no covering," while with regard to his people, "his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in their behalf." What *power*, what *resources* has he. All creatures are under his control. Every being, from an insect upwards to an archangel, is ready to start forth at his nod to avenge him on his adversaries. What a wonderful character then is the Lord Jesus. We see how many images are made use of in the Scriptures in order to hold him forth! He fulfilled them all, yea, and surpassed them all in their combination. Here we see how it is that the poor Christian succeeds, though he is so weak in himself, and though his enemies have every quality which can render them formidable. Hence says the Apostle, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us."

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DEC. 10.—*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Rev. iii. 21.*

IN what a glorious manner does the "Captain of our salvation," who was "made perfect through sufferings that he might bring many sons unto glory," discharge the office he

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470

has assumed. Another commander must depend very much on report, he cannot see in the engagement all the combatants, but only a few of them; but as to our Captain, his eye is everywhere, and though much of the spiritual warfare is carried on in secret, and many a battle is fought and won in the house without the knowledge of any individual even there but the Christian himself, yet nothing ever escapes the eye of our Commander, and he will be sure not to forget it; he will remember it all for good. Now if the Duke of Wellington some years ago had taken a soldier and introduced him to the king, in the presence of all the peers of the realm, saying, I bear testimony to the good behaviour of this man in the camp and in the field, to his prowess and skill in the day of battle, and I implore of your majesty some token of the royal favour, can we imagine that he would be refused? Well, our Saviour says, "He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father and his holy angels. Here, says he, is one who was often "faint, yet pursuing;" here is one who had only a "little strength," but he did not deny my name; here is one who was not ashamed of my cross, but went forth without the camp, bearing my reproach, and saying, "I should be magnified in his body, whether it be by life or by death." And what is the reward he will bestow upon him? Is it money? Is it an estate? Is it an office? Speaking to his faithful disciples, when many had gone away, he said, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." A throne is incommunicable; a sovereign may dispose of part of his riches, or his power, or his glory, and even his authority, but the throne is solely his own. He may admit counsellors into his cabinet, and nobles to his table, and favourites to his friendship, but he will suffer none to sit with him on his throne.

And therefore when Pharaoh appointed Joseph viceroy over all Egypt, and said to him every man should bow, "Only," said he, "in the throne will I be greater than thou." But this is the language of the Captain of the host of the Lord: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

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471

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DEC. 11.—*He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

John xiv. 21.

WE may judge of the state of our Lord's disciples when, he announced his approaching departure from them. They were as wanderers without a guide, as sheep having no shepherd, as a family without a head. Sorrow, therefore, filled their hearts. But Jesus said unto them, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." This regards a peculiar manifestation of Jesus to his own disciples, and he did this in two ways. First, by *the exhibition of his* person after he was risen from the dead. He appeared to them, "showing himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." He appeared unto some of them alone, and to several of them when together. And it is said, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." It was not unto the world. No; he said, "The world seeth me no more." The last time the world saw him was on the cross, where they suspended him. But they were to see him no more till they see him on his great white

throne. But he showed himself to Peter though he did not to Pilate, to Thomas though not to Caiphas. He showed himself to his disciples, though not to his enemies. His disciples had their infirmities, but they were sincere, and were open to conviction; whereas his enemies could not see; they closed their eyes, and God was not obliged to force them open. The second way in which he manifested himself to them was by *the mission of his Spirit*. This he had promised; for, says he, "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Now, though the Spirit here promised as to his agency is in one view extraordinary and miraculous, it was not exclusively so.

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472

They wanted the Holy Spirit, not only to speak with new tongues, but also to enlighten their minds, to strengthen their faith and their hope, to purify their hearts more from the love of the world, and to enable them more entirely to dedicate themselves to his service and to his glory. Thus the manifestations of Christ by his Holy Spirit, instead of being confined to them, continue to the end of the world. Hence believers are said to have "an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." "And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

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DEC. 12.—*And I saw no temple therein.* Rev. xxi. 22.

THERE is no *party* temple in heaven. Now even the disciples of Christ cannot see eye to eye. Well, let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind. As population increases, these temples will be necessarily multiplied. These would indeed be a great blessing, provided those who are connected with them love each other, and co-operate as brethren in Christ. But, alas! we frequently find the bigotry of the attendants leading them to exclaim, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." Hence frequently those who worship God through the same Mediator, and by the influences of the same Spirit, live estranged from each other, as if they did not belong to the same community. Really

one would sometimes imagine that each denomination expected that hereafter there would be a party temple of their own, into which all would submissively enter. But these are mistaken; all their differences will then be done away, and we shall be surprised and, if grief could enter heaven, we should be grieved that we have attached ourselves so exclusively to our distinctions here. When the corn is carried home to the same garner, no inquiry is made whether it grew in this or that field before the harvest. Do we believe that the perfection of the future state is such that there will be no party temple there? Surely it is desirable for us now to approach as nearly to that state as possible. We shall not be saved as a member of a particular Church, but as a member of the Church universal. Secondly, There will be no *material* temple in heaven. The reason is because they will be unnecessary. They are *now* in the order of means,

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473

and then the end will be accomplished. Observe if the things in any order of means are continued, in any case their continuance implies their imperfection, or at least that they have not so far answered their purpose. For example, now, if the mediation of Christ continued after the day of judgment, it would be a proof that it had not previously fully accomplished all its purposes; but it will have fully accomplished all its purposes, and therefore the kingdom will be delivered up to God the Father, and "God will be all in all." The Jewish sacrifices were repeated from year to year; because, says the Apostle, they could not make the comers thereunto perfect, for otherwise they would cease to be offered. So it was with the Jewish types, they were abolished by the arrival of the reality, just as the dawn is abolished by the coming of the light of day. We may observe the same with regard to "the Lord's Supper;" he now says, "Do this in remembrance of me;" because he is absent we are liable to forget him, and it is of vast importance that he should live in our thoughts. But this will not be the case when we are present with him, and "for ever with the Lord." The order

of the means is now established for the work of the ministry; but when there is no sinner to be converted, no saint to be edified, the work itself will cease with the object. There will be no need for an army when the enemies which we see to-day we shall see no more for ever; no need of prayer when we are filled with all the fulness of God; no need of patience when we are no longer required to suffer on the way; no need of faith when we see; no need of hope when we enjoy. There will be no charity there, for there will be no penury; there will be no mercy there, for there will be no misery. ALL DURATION WILL BE ONE PERPETUAL SABBATH, AND ALL SPACE ONE TEMPLE.

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DEC. 13.—IN ME IS THINE HELP. Hos. xiii. 9.

THOUGH man's destruction is entirely of himself, his salvation is exclusively of the Lord. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," says God, "but in me is thine help." First, *Help the most gracious in its source*. From whence did this scheme arise? Deity could not be constrained to

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474

do it; and as to merit, alas! we are not worthy of the least of all his mercies; all our desert was on the other side. Nor has *desire* had any influence; help was provided before we had any being; and he who made the provision in all its extent has revealed it, and awakened attention to it, and now says, "Come, for all things are ready." Well, therefore, may the Apostle say, "According to his mercy he saved us," and "by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Secondly, *Help the most wonderful in its procurement*. Not only is the agency entirely the Lord's, but he accomplishes the thing in a way the most peculiar, and so as to induce the Church to exclaim, "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." Here is unfolded the manifold wisdom of God; here he has "abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." God does not save us by the mere volition of his

will or by the exertion of his power. But we see the "Word made flesh and dwelling among us;" we see the Lord of life and glory suffering for sin; we see him who knew no sin made a sin-offering for us, that we "who have no righteousness might be made the righteousness of God in him;" we see him in the manger, in the garden, on the cross, and we hear him exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Thirdly, *Help the most suitable in its supply*. Is light adapted to the eye? melody to the ear? food to the taste? so do the blessings of the gospel correspond with all our wants, and woes, and weaknesses. Here is wisdom for the ignorant, pardon for the offending, renovation for the depraved, strength for the weak, riches for the poor, a sun for our darkness, a shield in our danger. Fourthly, *Help the most efficient*. He who speaks in righteousness is mighty to save, able to save unto the uttermost. His blood cleanseth from all sin; his righteousness justifies the ungodly; his grace turns the heart of stone to flesh; his power upholds the believer and carries him through all his dangers triumphantly, so that he can say with the Apostle, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Lastly, *Help the most extensive and accessible*. In no place in the Scriptures are

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475

any excluded from participating in this help, unless they exclude themselves from it. Everywhere the language of Scripture is, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." "Let him take hold of my strength," says God; therefore Dr. Watts sings—

"No mortal has a just pretence  
To perish in despair."

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DEC. 14.—*The Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in.* Mai. iii. 1.

THESE words unquestionably refer to the Messiah, and here let us observe the character under which he is here

presented to our notice. He is described in three ways—First, By his *person*, “THE LORD.” Here the word used signifies authority and dominion, and how fully this applies to him. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He was to be “Ruler in Israel,” and the “King of saints,” and he was to be the “Governor among the nations.” And though all power is given to him as Mediator, yet if it be true that “all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made,” he must have had a previous claim to the dominion before he acquired this by obedience and suffering unto death. Secondly, He is described by his *office*, “the Messenger of the covenant.” This covenant means the covenant of grace, “ordered in all things and sure,” to which David fled for refuge and solace in the hour of his distress, and he found it all his salvation and all his desire. From his various relations to it, he is called the covenant itself. He is the “Mediator,” the “Surety,” and the “Messenger” of the covenant, because he was not only to procure and to possess its blessings, but to bestow them. And, in order to this, it was necessary that he should announce them and make them known. And he did, and made a full disclosure of all these treasures, and prefaced all his invitations with the announcement of his commission from the Father. “All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him.” “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will

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476

give you rest.” When he is spoken of as the “Messenger of the covenant,” this is his inferior title; but this, so far from detracting from his glory as “the Lord,” displays it, magnifies it, because it shows us his infinite condescension and grace. And his people will never suffer his glory to be injured in their esteem by his goodness. Thirdly, He is described *by the estimation in which he was holden*: “Whom ye delight in.” This will apply even to the carnal Jews. They were mistaken in him, they viewed him as a temporal

Messiah, and under this mistaken notion of him, they did "seek" him, and "delighted" in him. But it applies always, and in a much nobler sense, to the spiritual Jews. He was desired and delighted in by all the people of God, from the beginning. Thus the patriarchs embraced the promises concerning him. "Abraham desired to see his day; he saw it, and was glad." "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." The earlier Jews were alive to this; they were ever seeking after and looking for a better country, that is, an "heavenly." They were exclaiming, "Oh, that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" To seek him and to delight in him will always characterise the redeemed—those who believe in him; for "to them that believe he is precious." All that is desirable, all that is delightful to us we find in him. If in darkness, he is our "sun;" if in danger, he is our "shield;" if exposed, he is our "refuge;" if diseased, he is our "physician;" if naked, he is our "righteousness;" and if perishing for want, he is our "bread," and the "water of life," and he is "all and in all." Let the hearts of them rejoice, therefore, that seek the Lord.

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DEC. 15.—*Judas saith unto him (not Iscariot), Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?* John xiv. 22.

OBSERVE, first, *By whom* this inquiry was made. It was Judas, but not Iscariot. Not that base wretch who had sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver, and who did not wish for any manifestation of him; the very thought of meeting him again plunged him into despondency and perdition.

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477

But the inquirer was another Judas, the brother of James; Judas, called Jude, who wrote the last of the inspired epistles; a bold and severe writer, and who in his style much resembled Peter. A good name is sometimes of very great advantage; it may prove a stimulus. There are some

names that are odious; and there are other names that seem almost opinions. And it must have been very painful for Judas, the servant of the Lord, to have borne the name of this infamous traitor. It is worse than bearing the name of Nero or Robespierre. We may here also learn a moral admonition; namely, that in relating things we should not confound persons; for want of this distinction what is said of one is often applied to another, and so mistake and mischief ensue. There is great importance in circumstantial truth; and yet there are few who pay proper attention to it. Some are dull of hearing, and never hear anything accurately; and how can they state it so? Others have bad memories, and scarcely ever report a thing as they heard it; and others have a lively imagination, and are almost sure to add circumstances to dress up the fact, so differently as hardly to be known. Observe, secondly, The *principle* of the inquiry. It is not always easy to ascertain the source of an action. A late statesman was accustomed to say that no action ever proceeded from a single motive; and perhaps it was so as to this inquiry, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" What was it? Perhaps it was the *language of admiration* resulting from surprise and gratefulness. Why are we to be so distinguished and indulged? This is the temper of a real Christian. He admires and adores the free and sovereign grace of God, but he pities others and says—

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,  
 And enter while there's room,  
 While thousands make a wretched choice,  
 And rather starve than come?"

Or was it the language of *doubt*? He seems to question whether the Lord could appear to them without others seeing and knowing it too. A little consideration would have convinced Judas of the folly; but he spake in haste,

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478

and without thinking. How much need have we to pray, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of

my lips." We, alas! fail to distinguish between our Lord and others; and therefore we say, "How can these things be?" "But what is impossible with men, is possible with God." Was this question the result of *curiosity*? He not only wished to know the possibility of the thing, but also something of the mode and reality of the manner of it. Oh, how many good and great men too have indulged themselves in speculation and useless inquiries concerning the purposes of God, the fate of the heathen, the accordance of foreknowledge with free agency, and of the origin of moral evil,—none of which can ever be answered, but which have devoured much of their precious time, and often greatly injured their temper and drawn them away from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. Oh, let us guard against this disposition, which if not checked may seriously affect the whole character of the individual indulging it. Or it might be the language of *lawful desire*. The privilege was a very important one; and Judas with a very fair design might wish to know more about it. Therefore our Saviour does not blame him. Yea, he gave him an answer, and explained himself. Let us observe that, while we should check a doubtful and curious temper of mind, we would foster and cherish an humble and useful inquiry; "And if any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

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DEC. 16.—*The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.* Ps. cxlv. 18.

THIS is not said of the Divine omnipresence, but of the Lord's *special and gracious presence*. His presence in the ordinances of religion is in a way of dispensation. There he is always to be sought and found by those who are favoured with them. But there are many to whom these means are never available. There are many who have heard his word and have partaken of his own supper, to whom the Saviour will hereafter say, "Depart, I never knew you." And though they will reply, "We have eaten and drunk in thy

479

presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," he will immediately add, "I tell you I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." On the other hand, there are some who have the grace of the means without having the means of grace; for God is not confined to "temples made with hands," but as to his own people "he is nigh unto them." He is with them in the *agency of his holy and blessed Spirit*, in his inhabitation in them, in his influences upon them, "I will put," says he, "my Spirit within them, and cause them to know my statutes and do them." He is thus not only dwelling with them, but in them, to illuminate them, to sanctify them, to comfort, and to "seal them unto the day of redemption;" and he will never withdraw from them. Their fears will sometimes lead them to exclaim, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me;" but he will not, he cannot, for he has been pleased to bind himself. It is owing to this that we have continued to this day. If our feet have held his steps, if we have kept his way, and have not declined, to whom is the glory of this grace to be ascribed? Shall not we gratefully acknowledge that "having obtained help of the Lord, we continue to this day;" that with David we can look up and say, "By thee have I run through a troop, and with the help of my God have I leaped over a wall." It is upon this we found and may find our confidence for the future, that though we may be assailed by men and by Satan, and all the hosts of darkness, yet greater is he that is in us than all they that are in the world. "In all these things, we shall be more than conquerors through him that hath loved us." Whenever we think of moving in life, Moses' prayer becomes ours, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." But his promise to Moses becomes ours also, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest;" so that "as our day, our strength shall be." So he will say to us as we move on, whatever may be our trials or our difficulties, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy

God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee by the right hand of my righteousness.”

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480

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DEC. 17.—*The word of Christ.* Col. iii. 16.

THE Scriptures are a revelation of Christ. “These things,” says the Apostle John, “are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name;” and therefore they are called “the word of Christ,” not only because he is their *Author*, but because he is their theme; not only because it is a revelation from him, but also of him; he is the subject of the whole; and if we search the Scriptures we shall find this to be the fact; for “they testify of me,” says the Saviour. He here referred to the Old Testament Scriptures, of the treasures of which he is the key, by which alone we can open them, and make these stores of knowledge our own. This will appear if we take the *historical* parts, if we look through the Bible at all the eminently pious characters recorded there. In Adam we see him as the federal head and representative of his people. In Noah as the restorer of a new world. In Joseph we see him sold by his brethren, and then saving them, as being humbled and exalted. In Moses we see him as the Lawgiver. In Aaron as the High Priest of our profession. In Joshua as the Captain of our salvation, as Leader and Commander to the people. In Solomon as the Prince of peace. And if we take the *Levitical* part of Scripture, we shall find him all here. We shall see him in the manna, as the bread which came down from heaven; in the waters of the smitten rock, as the consolation of Israel, and the source of all those refreshing supplies that attend us in our wanderings through the wilderness. We see him in the table of shew-bread; and in the mercy-seat as the propitiation for our sins. In the passover as the lamb whose blood, sprinkled upon the conscience, secures us from the destroying angel; and in the bleeding lamb that was offered, the blood which

cleanseth from all sin. In all these, and in the tabernacle and the temple, we shall find that they were shadows of good things to come, of which the body was Christ. And then if we examine the *prophetical* Scriptures we shall find that he is all there too. To him gave all the prophets witness, some more partially, others more fully. Prophecy apart from him is nothing but the shell without the kernel;

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481

the casket without the jewel, for "the testimony of Jesus" is the Spirit of prophecy. And the *promissory* part of Scripture all centre in him; for the promises in all their amplitude and preciousness are declared to be "yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us." But more especially are the *New Testament Scriptures* a revelation of Jesus Christ. This is the record which God hath given of his Son. 'The record of the incarnation, birth, life, miracles, sayings, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God. And so is the *epistolary* portion of the New Testament the word of Christ, the writers of which all could exclaim, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And this it is that renders the Scriptures so interesting, and so delightful to trace:

"There my Redeemer's face I see,  
And read his love who died for me."

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DEC. 18.—*Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.* James i. 22.

TRUE religion does not consist in mere theory. It is more than a notion of things—something is known and felt. There is such a thing as real experience in divine things. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself," and this is what we are to seek after, to *taste* and see that the Lord is good. We are told that the publican went down to his house "justified," he carried away the blessing itself. How different is this from many who hear the gospel, who, after hearing a discourse, carry away the doctrine,

but are regardless of the practice; they are hearers of the word, and not doers of it. These are self-deceivers. But this is the grand thing, to partake of the blessing sent, to know that we are pardoned through the blood of the cross, and to receive the gospel, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. This is the proof that we have not received it in vain: if it teaches us to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world;” if it enables us to say, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” What

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482

opportunities of hearing the word have some enjoyed. But, alas! while they hear the gospel constantly, they walk according to the course of this world. Some attend the house of God and places of dissipation, endeavouring to serve God and mammon; wearing the form of godliness, but denying the power of it. In all ages, God’s servants have been compelled to exclaim, “Who hath believed our report?” Four kinds of soil received the same seed in the same season from the same hand, and what is the result? Only one of the four yields anything to the purpose, and if an appeal is made to the lives, and tempers, and conversation of those who hear the word, and who hear the word of the gospel too, what reason have we to hope that one in four of those who hear the gospel believe?—that one in four of the large numbers of hearers have received the grace of God to the salvation of their souls—are doers of the word and not hearers only? Alas, how awful the conclusion; they are “deceiving their own selves.”

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DEC. 19.—*Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life.* John vi. 40.

OBSERVE, first, The *nature of this manifestation.* We cannot suppose it to be a corporeal one. If so all that he addressed were saved. But he did not speak of the eye of the senses, he spoke of the eye of faith, and there-

fore “to them that believe he is precious.” For love enters by the eye, and faith is the eye of the soul. There is a *spiritual* discovery made of him to every believer—a perception of his excellencies. This manifestation of himself by his Spirit is distinguishable from all that knowledge which the world possesses, and also from a mere theoretical knowledge of religious truth. It is accompanied with a discernment not only of spiritual blessings, But of their excellency and glory. There is a great difference here: a man may believe there is such a thing as holiness, but this is not seeing the beauty of holiness and loving it. A man may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and the only way, the truth, and the life, and yet may feel no regard for him. But the knowledge which the Holy Ghost communicates descends from the head always into the heart, and then it gets out from the heart into the life, and

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483

walks abroad; and appears in all the relations, all the conditions, and in all the circumstances of human life. Observe, secondly, *What will be the consequences of this manifestation?* There will be a *high estimation of him*. “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not; lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” Hence to such he has no “form nor comeliness nor any beauty that they should desire him.” But when we do thus behold him we shall say,

“All over glorious is my Lord,  
Must be beloved and yet adored,  
His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Sure the whole earth would love him too.”

He is “altogether lovely.” “This is my Beloved; this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.” If “we have this manifestation of the Son then we shall *apply to him*, This is the very end of the manifestation. If we see him as the “Refuge” set before us, we shall flee to him. If we see him as the “Foundation laid in Zion,” we shall build upon him. If we see him as “the Lord, our righteousness,

and strength," we shall therefore *rejoice in him*. If we thus see the Son as the consequence of the manifestation, we shall *be sure to resemble* him and to "walk even as he also walked." Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." There are some who boast of knowing, and in a very superior way, while in their opinion others remain partially in the dark; but where do we discover in them the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and the mind that was in Christ Jesus? Where in them do we see a deadness to the world, and a living unto God with "their conversation in heaven?" If we thus see the Son, and he is thus manifested to us, *self will be annihilated*, at least it will be greatly subdued. Thus it was with Job. He said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." And what was the consequence? "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes:" and "Behold I am vile." And what an influence had it upon Isaiah also: "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I

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484

dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts." The *world also will lose its attractions*. The enjoyment of the greater weakens, more than anything else, our attachment to the less. Those who have tasted the grapes of Eschol will no longer sigh after the leeks, and onions, and garlick of Egypt.

"When I can say my God is mine,  
When I can feel his glories shine,  
I tread the world beneath my feet,  
And all that earth calls good or great."

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DEC. 20.—*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.* Mal. iii. 1.

WE know that John the Baptist is here intended. The language is metaphorical, and the allusion is to kings and princes, who are preceded by heralds and harbingers, to

make ready for their approach. When an eastern monarch travels, a forerunner gives notice of his coming, and the pioneers are employed to remove every obstruction to his advance. If we can depend upon their own history, some of them on these occasions effected extraordinary things. We read of their having filled up chasms and levelled eminences, and opened passages where otherwise the places would have been impassable. When Isaiah would illustrate great things by very little ones, he said, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." In other words, John was to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." And accordingly he aroused their attention, he removed their prejudices, he awakened their consciences, he announced the nearness of Messiah's approach, proclaimed the nature of his reign, convinced them of sin, and showed them that they stood in need of a much greater salvation than deliverance from the Roman yoke. His mission originated not with himself, neither was he employed by any

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485

governing power. "The word of the Lord," it is said, "came to him." "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." And here we are called upon to behold him as the *Lord's messenger*. When thirty years old he obeyed the heavenly vision. We may easily imagine the scenery. Behold him in raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, sitting under the shade of a rock or of a tree, eating his frugal repast of "locusts and wild honey;" and when he saw any person passing by, he arose, and approaching them, exclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." These soon expressed this to others, and those to more, and "then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about

Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." But when the sun arises, the morning star is concealed. We may look at the forerunner while he is alone, but when we have heard the exclamation, "The king! the king!" every eye will be naturally and unavoidably turned away from him. And John would acquiesce in this; he did acquiesce in this; he said to those who came to inform him that he whom he had baptized, and to whom he had borne witness when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," "The same baptizeth, and all men come unto him"—I am glad of it, says the messenger; "ye yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

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DEC. 21.—*The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.* Mal. iii. 1.

MANY had come before him, many illustrious characters, many prophets, priests, and kings, but they had all come in subordination to him, and in reference and subserviency to him. He had entered our world himself often before this, and especially in anticipation of his incarnation. But now he was to come incarnate, clothed in a body like our own.

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486

Now the word was to be made flesh, and to dwell among us, that we might behold his glory, and though there were no earthly grandeur which attached to his coming into our world, and though he was born in a stable and died upon a cross, yet his advent here was unspeakably the most important transaction ever recorded in the annals of history: and the angels, who are proverbial for their knowledge, testified of it, for they exclaimed in the song, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, goodwill towards men."

Two things are here mentioned with regard to his advent. The fact regards *the manner in which he was to come*. He shall *suddenly come*. Does this mean speedily? In Haggai we read, "Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and the Desire of all nations shall come." But how could it be said that it was "yet a little while only," when four hundred years were to elapse before he appeared? The purpose and the execution, the promise and the fulfilment, are the same with God. And so also they are in a sense with faith. Faith knows no distance; relying on the truth and faithfulness of God, it can view future things as present and as past. Why, though four hundred years were to intervene, was *soon* compared with the long waiting of those who lived in patriarchal and antediluvian ages. He was to come soon, but this is said in special reference to the ministration of his forerunner, John, who should prepare the way before him, and then he was immediately to follow. But it means that he would come *unawares*. Though he was foretold, and a general expectation was excited, yet many did not look for him, and as to many others, when he appeared he was unknown. They never dreamed of his appearing under such a character, and when John addressed them he said, "There is one standing here whom ye know not." "And his kingdom came not," as we are told, "by observation." And we are still warned of the approach of his coming. "Be ye also ready," says the Saviour, "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." But, secondly, We are reminded of the *place to which he was to come*. "He shall suddenly come to his temple." Accordingly we find him there when he was eight days old, presented by Mary and Joseph; at

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487

twelve years of age he was in the temple disputing among the doctors. There he wrought miracles, and there he taught the people. There are two remarks to be derived from these important statements; the first may be addressed with reference to the Jews. He must have come, according to

this, while the second temple was standing, for as he was to come to it, he could not come to it when it was demolished, and when it was no more; and therefore the time of his advent, according to their own Scriptures, and their explanation of it, must long ago have gone by. And the other *regards the enemies of his Deity*, those who love to consult to cast him down from his dignity. "He shall suddenly come to *his temple*." Why is it called HIS? Because it was dedicated to his service and to his glory. As a palace always reminds us of a king, so a temple always reminds us of a God. A temple always belongs to a God, and therefore when the prophet here announces that he should "suddenly come to his temple," it was as to say that he was the owner of it, and that he was to be adored there.

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DEC. 22.—*But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?* Mal. iii. 2.

THE reference here is unquestionably to the Saviour's manifestation in the flesh; and it would appear that there is something awful even with regard to this. We may exemplify this in three articles. First, In the *occasional emanations and displays of His majesty*. His birth produced anxiety and trouble. Herod "was troubled, and all Judea with him;" the poor dear babes in Bethlehem became martyrs to him, though he could easily and did recompense them for their sufferings. The devils cried out, "Art thou come to torment us before our time." Single and unarmed, unless with a whip of small cords, he rushed into the temple and drove from the place the money-changers, and the buyers and sellers, no one daring to resist him: and on the mount of transfiguration, and in the garden, and at his death, and in his resurrection there were displays of his Majesty. Secondly, It may be exemplified *in his detection of character*. All through his ministry his eyes were as a flame of fire, for

he saw through men. He silenced those who came to entrap him, and induced those who came to him to condemn themselves before they were aware of it. He knew what was in man, and needed not that any should testify of him. A young man came to him one day with fair professions, saying, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." He only said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Young man, are you willing to follow me now? and no more was heard of him. Many of the people could not bear his searching doctrine, and "they went back and walked no more with him." As to the Pharisees, how he exposed their hypocrisy. They were considered the most righteous persons on earth, and were regarded with a veneration almost approaching to idolatry; before the multitude he unmasked them, laid bare their real character, denounced them as being only painted sepulchres; and he opened the tombs, and showed the bones and rottenness within. He declared them to be only "wolves in sheep's clothing." He tore away the clothing, and showed the beast of prey that was underneath. Thirdly, It may be exemplified *in the calamities which were to follow the rejection of him*. They said, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children;" and it fell upon them, and is lying upon them now. Wrath came upon them to the uttermost; their sufferings were unspeakable, but only emblems of those more dreadful punishments to which they are exposed "who have trodden under foot the son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace." For there is another coming and appearance of the Son of God. The Lord prepare us for it. It will be a tremendous scene, and we should not have wondered if such language as we here find had been employed with regard to this. For then we are told that before his face the heaven and the earth flee away; and it is asked, "Behold, the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" David, in anticipation of this solemn period (all saint as he was), fell upon his knees and

cried, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight no flesh living can be justified." "If thou

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489

Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" None but those who are then found standing in a better righteousness than their own. Therefore, said Paul, "Oh, that I may win Christ, and may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness."

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DEC. 23.—*I have gone astray like a lost sheep.*

Ps. cxix. 176.

HERE the Psalmist refers to his moral infirmities or deviations from duty. And what is the whole course of a state of nature but a series of wanderings? wanderings from the truth, from righteousness, from God; from God as our sovereign, our portion, our centre, and our end. Even when we have been *brought* back to God, how sadly prone are we to depart from him again. Alas! even in his renewed state, the Christian has too frequently reason to adopt this confession, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; "though he may be able to add, "Seek thy servant, since I do not forget thy commandments; and with Dr. Watts to say:

"I need the influence of thy grace  
To speed me on my way,  
Lest I should loiter in my race,  
Or turn my feet astray."

"All we," says the Church, "like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way." In meditation how the mind is turned aside. In prayer what wanderings of thought—depriving the suppliant of pleasure in the exercise, and often filling them with fear as to the success of it. In hearing the precious word of God how often do we find our heart, like the fool's eye, in the ends of the earth. And these wanderings are known unto God, "to whom all hearts are open, and from whom nothing is hid." Hence David, in addressing God, says, "Thou tellest

my wanderings." Although he "knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust," yet he cannot approve of these wanderings; he sees sin in them, and he will correct his people for them. It will be well if we are able to say in reference to this as David did, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes:

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490

for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Affliction falls upon the Christian as the evening darkness falls, which at once hides the earth, and lays open the sky. Affliction is a call from these roving, or else a hindrance to check them. We may see this exemplified in God's dispensation towards the Jews in the time of Hosea. The Church was wandering after her lovers who had given her corn and wine and oil to induce her to go astray. "But," says God, "behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths; then shall she say, I will go and return unto my first husband, for then it was better with me than now." It is well if God sees that we feel these moral wanderings to be our afflictions as well as our infirmities; and well if his goodness, instead of casting us off for them, leads us to repentance, inducing us to sorrow after a godly sorrow, and to say—

"My soul hath gone too far astray,  
 My feet too often slip,  
 Yet since I've not forgot thy way,  
 Restore thy wandering sheep."

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DEC. 24.—Thou tellest my wanderings. Ps. lvi. 8.

OBSERVE, first, This may have reference to *local changes*. Abraham was a wanderer. When called to leave Ur of the Chaldees he went out, not knowing whither he went; and though he was without an earthly guide, all his satisfaction was derived from hence, and of his being able to say, "Thou knowest the way that I take." The patriarchs were all wanderers when they went from "one nation to another, from

one kingdom to another people." Take Israel; forty years they "wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." David was a great wanderer. Saul regarded him with envy and drove him from his presence, and to elude his apprehension he was perpetually compelled to shift his residence. He says, "he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains." But God knew all his wanderings, and preserved him in his going out and in his coming in. Persecution has often driven the people of God from city to city, from country to country. Some

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491

of the most eminent servants of God have "wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted tormented; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains' and in dens and caves of the earth." Pious servants have been dismissed from their places and workmen from their employment, and have wandered about to find situations and engagements, and all this for conscience sake. "But there is no man," says our Saviour, "that has left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting." How many, contrary to a disposition to enjoy a permanency, have had frequent removals from station to station. As soon as they had begun to feel attached and fixed, they heard a voice saying, "Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest." Yet very important purposes have often been answered by these changes, and the Lord has known them all. Of this, as we see here, David was fully persuaded. Observe, secondly, *The recognition and acknowledgment here made of God's omniscience and notice.* "Thou tellest my wanderings." The language must be figurative as applied to God; God needs no aid in any case; his understanding is infinite. But *we* reach numbers by counting and telling them, and so the effect is put for the cause. The sentiment here stands opposed to two things; the first is a kind of *philosophical notion*, namely, that God is supremely engaged in managing hundreds of worlds, and that he dis-

regards all individualities. But a general providence always comprehends a particular, as the greater includes the less, as the day includes the hour, and the hour includes the minutes. If we turn to the Scriptures we find a system of providence established there which extends to the minutest concerns of life. Yes; he is always a God at hand, not a God afar off; he is filling every vacuum, peopling every solitude, animating every scene; "in him we live and move, and have our being." Then, also, it is opposed to a *pious fear*, in which good men are tempted to indulge, supposing that they are overlooked or disregarded by God, for their unworthiness, their guilt, and their imperfections. Thus it was with Asaph, who said, "Will the Lord cast off for ever, will he be favourable no more?" So Zion said, "The

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492

Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me." And we know how tenderly and convincingly was the rebuke received. And Moses said to the Jews, "The Lord knoweth thy walkings through this great wilderness." I believe this, says David; I believe nothing befalls me by chance; I believe that it is all permitted, appointed, arranged, and administered by the care of my heavenly Father. So it should be with us; this thought should be with us a very influential and consolatory principle, keeping our minds in perfect peace, leading us to cast all our care upon him, knowing that "lie careth for us." Thus "in all our ways may we acknowledge him, and he will direct our paths."

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DEC. 25.—His name shall be called Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Matt. i. 23.

NAMES are designed to distinguish and characterise; but names do not always well express and indicate the attributes of the bearer. But where God gives a name we may be assured that the thing or person will correspond with it; and what was the name which was to be descriptive of him whose coming we this day commemorate? Oh, it is a name as wonderful as it is delightful: "His name shall

be called Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." And the more we examine the records God has given of his Son, the more we shall find him worthy of this appellation. The Saviour had often appeared in our world before his incarnation: "His goings forth were from of old, from everlasting, and he delighted in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delight was with the sons of men." What the body was which he assumed on these occasions it is impossible for us to determine. But in reference to these appearances of the Son of God, it can never be said that he *dwelt* with man in a bodily appearance, for he soon disappeared from the view of those to whom he manifested himself. But now in the incarnation of the Saviour, God is manifested in the *flesh*. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made; and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;"—in the very

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493

same world, in the same nature, exposed to the same wants and sufferings with ourselves, answering to his name. This is what Paul calls a "mystery," "a great mystery," "without controversy, a great mystery of godliness;" and there is no real godliness separate from it. It is in this that we are so deeply concerned; it is the very medium of salvation. As Paul says, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh," He was three and thirty years treading our earth, and going in and out before men. By the assumption of our nature he stood in a peculiar relation to us and became our near kinsman, with whom was the right of redemption. The very nature that sinned must suffer, and therefore, because "the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death"—through suffering death—"he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Thus he became our example, and goes

before us in flesh and blood in the way of obedience and suffering. Thus he gains our confidence; thus he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and is "able to succour them that are tempted;" thus he hath "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "My Father worketh hitherto," says he, "and I work; I and my Father are one;" "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." So that in this incarnation of the Saviour, "God in very deed dwells with man upon the earth." This day brings to us glad tidings that unto us "is born a Saviour," a great Saviour, a mighty Saviour, a willing Saviour, a present Saviour, "and his name is called Immanuel, God with us; and "his name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

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DEC. 26.—Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? 2 Chron. vi. 18.

GOD makes use of means for the accomplishment of his purposes; and could we see things as God sees them, we should always see that he employs suitable ones. While the weakness of his instruments shows his power, their adaptedness exhibits his wisdom. Solomon was the instru-

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494

ment here employed. Behold the whole Israel of God assembled together, and their king leading the devotions of the whole. An ordinary mind would have been struck on this occasion with that vastness of the multitude, with the magnitude of the building, with the costliness of the ornaments; but Solomon overlooks all these, and only marvels at God's noticing any of them, and therefore exclaims, "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" Pour things may be mentioned to show why it is so wonderful that God should dwell with men on the earth. First, *The mode of his intercourse*. For observe that this is not looking towards them merely, and this he does. Not coming to them as a wayfaring man approaches an inn, when he turns aside to "tarry for a night." Not visiting them as

a friend calls upon a friend. A visitor is not an inmate, but a dweller is a resident, and this is the case with God; he takes up his abode with his people. Secondly, Observe his *infinite dignity and grandeur*. This renders him matchless; here all examples fail, his greatness is unsearchable.

“And will the glorious Lord  
Unto me condescend,  
And will he write his name  
My Father and my Friend?”

“THUS saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,” whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, and that trembleth at my word,” “to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Such a Being is he. Thirdly, The *meanness and unworthiness of those who are, indulged*. This struck David as well as Solomon: “What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?” It was thus also with Job: “What is man that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him, and that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?” What indeed! what are they, making the best of them, with whom he “in very deed dwells upon the earth?” If we take them as *creatures*, they are of yesterday, and know nothing; their foundation is in the dust, they are crushed before the moth.

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495

If we take them as *sinner*s, then we shall find them guilty, polluted, blind, deaf, and all over diseased. We shall find them all rebels, all traitors against the Divine Majesty; and therefore not only undeserving, but ill-deserving and hell-deserving creatures. And it is alone of his “mercy that they are not consumed.” Will God dwell with such upon the earth? Fourthly, *Observe the humility which religion always inspires*. Man is naturally as proud as he is poor, but the day of conviction is a day of humiliation.

“The more thy glories strike mine eye  
The humbler I shall lie,

Thus while I sink my joys shall rise  
Immeasurably high."

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DEC. 27.—He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Mal. iii. 3.

HERE we have a figurative description of the operations of the Saviour's grace. It refers to fuller's soap and to the refiner's fire. The former is used to take stains out of cloth without destroying its texture, as well as giving to it a clearness and freshness of appearance; and the refiner's fire severs the dross from the ore, and instead of injuring it prepares it for circulation or use. Thus the Lord does with all the subjects of Divine grace, for with all their infirmities there are excellencies, and Divine excellencies, in them, and he will purify and sanctify them. Observe the *persons*, "the sons of Levi," we may consider them *literally*, for they had sadly degenerated; they had "departed out of the way," and had "caused many to stumble," and they had "corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts." Such were they generally when our Saviour made his appearance. Yet we find one of these sons of Levi purified, we find Zacariah righteous before God, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;" and there were others who were soon called by Divine grace, and sanctified by the spirit of our God; for we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that "the

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496

word of God increased and the numbers of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the *priests* were obedient to the faith." And so those who were called and employed under the evangelical dispensation are held forth by the same terms, "I will take them," says God, "for priests and for Levites." Such we may consider then the twelve Apostles, the seventy disciples, Paul,

Barnabas, and others, who were deemed faithful and were put into the ministry: and it is of great importance that those who are thus engaged should, like Isaiah, experience this moral purification. But we are to take it *spiritually* also, as intending all the people of God. They are called a “royal priesthood,” they are all said to be not only priests, but “kings unto God.” And here we see their *work*. They were “to offer an offering in righteousness,” To offer themselves, their prayers, their alms; all these were to be holy offerings, not in pretence but in sincerity; not carnal but spiritual offerings—“offerings in righteousness” presented by persons in a righteous state, and who were governed and influenced by righteous motives. So we see that the incarnation of our Saviour regards two classes of men. To the one it is consuming and to the other it is purifying. As to the one it is asked, “Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?” as to the other he will purify them by his grace, and they shall be dedicated to his service and to his glory.

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Dec. 28.—And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Rev. xxi. 4.

THIS sublime but mysterious book may be regarded in two ways. The first is, by studying the whole series of prophecies which it contains concerning the church to the end of the world; and the other is, to attend to particular passages. Some wise men and some men certainly not very wise have employed much time and attention upon it, and, we have reason to fear, to very little purpose. Some of them have survived their empty schemes, and have been ashamed of their confidence. But there are particular passages which,

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497

like the heavenly Jerusalem, shine the more brightly from the surrounding darkness. This is the case in the addresses to the seven churches, with the representations of the person

and glory of the Redeemer, and the descriptions of the heavenly world. To some countries we feel comparatively indifferent, because we have little connection with them; but if there was a country in which we had large possessions, many endearing relations, and where after a while we were to reside, not for a season but for life, we should be glad of a map, and be thankful for any particular instructions respecting it. Such is heaven to all the heirs of glory. It is here represented as glorious, and John, after surveying the gates and the wall, and the foundation and the extent, that is, having surveyed it externally, he looks within; but what he there remarks is rather of a negative kind, for according to our present state and experience, we know what heaven is much more by what it is not, than by what it is. Two things—two kinds of things, rather, he found wanting there, First, *evil things*. There was no night, no death, no sorrow, no pain, no tears. Here we have enough of these, and of the causes which produce them. All tears were wiped from their eyes, and all these former things are passed away. But, secondly, there were also *good things* wanting there, and things which now seem very desirable and necessary. "Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" but "the city had no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine upon it." Where is the believer who does not now say, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth?" But "I saw no temple therein," says John. What a world must that be where, as to nature, the sun can be dispensed with—where, as to grace, the temple can be dispensed with! How little of such a state are *we* capable of understanding now! How little can we know while we are here of a state where sabbaths will, instead of being observed, be abolished, and where temples will be no more!

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DEC. 29.—Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee. Deut. viii. 2.

HERE are two things to be observed: First, the call to remembrance, "Thou shalt remember." Memory, like

498

every other faculty, has been injured by the fall, and the injury appears not only in its weakness, but to those things in regard to which it is, in general, most unhappily conversant. It would be almost endless to adduce all the calls to remembrance afforded in the Scripture. One thing, however, is certain; that in all these instances, the remembrance is to be *experimental* and *practical*. The sacred writers never regard remembrance as an end, but an instrument; that is, they enjoin us to remember for some purpose; to call forth such feelings, and to produce such actions as will correspond with the things we are required to remember. When Moses calls upon the Jews to look back upon their history, we must suppose he intended they should be affected with encouragement or humiliation, or gratitude, and praise, according as the case demanded. In this spirit, and with this purpose in view, let us be influenced in all our retrospections. Observe, secondly, the *subject to be reviewed*. There are four things to be noticed, and they are all to be exemplified in the experience of Christians now, as of the Jews. Yea, much more abundantly. We have *the place* to be reviewed, "the wilderness." Such a place literally they were in after leaving Egypt; and we shall find many allusions to its dreariness, its solitariness, its privations, audits perils. And are not Christians in a similar condition? What is the world, comparatively at least, but a wilderness? Christians are summoned to arise and depart hence, because it is polluted, because its friendship is enmity with God, because it is unsuitable to their new nature, because they have found that good pay which shall never be taken away from them, because they look to that better country, even a heavenly, because they have not yet come to that rest and inheritance which the Lord their God shall give unto them, because their portion is beyond the world. They were to remember their *Conductor*: "The way which the Lord thy God led thee." Their safety, their joy, and happiness arose from being under his immediate care. He led them all the way by a fiery, cloudy pillar; it was a pillar of

cloud by day, serving to interpose between them and the rays of a vertical sun; and it was a pillar of fire by night, to absorb the unwholesome damps, to cheer the

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499

darkness and the gloom; and by this God showed them where they were to look, and where they were to go; and it never left them until it brought them to "a city of habitation." And so God is the conductor of his people now. He guides them with his eye, he leads them by his word' by his Spirit, and his providence. He is "a very present help to them in every time of trouble," and he will never leave them nor forsake them till they have entered the promised land; where, looking back to the desert, and to all his dealings with them in the vale of tears, they will sing songs of everlasting praise to him that "led them up through the wilderness, for his mercy endureth for ever."

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DEC. 30.—Thou shalt remember ALL THE WAY which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness. Deut. viii. 2.

OBSERVE the *passage they were to review*. They were to remember *all the way* which the Lord their God had led them through the wilderness. Not that everything in their journey was equally important and interesting; this could not be—but all had been under the appointment and discipline of God, and all would be rendered profitable. All their stations were distinctly known; they had memorials of them all. Some of them had been rendered very famous by new names imposed as significant of some instances of the Divine conduct, or of their miscarriage. It must have been affecting to them to look back upon some parts of their journey. Elim, where there were twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees—the waters of Mara, whose bitterness had been made sweet, the Red Sea, the mountains of Horeb and Sinai, and to recollect the marvellous and striking scenes which had been exhi-

bited to them. Now it is the same as to us. Some things in life are very eventful; they have had an amazing influence on our character, our reputation, our happiness, our usefulness; and in the review of our life, these are the things which we are peculiarly to dwell upon, and then, if we are wise, nothing will be found unimprovable. If, indeed, we lived in “a fatherless world” as Jeremy Taylor

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500

has expressed it, if we were under the empire of chance, if we were abandoned to ourselves, it would be a very little in life that would be worth our review. But since all is under the administration of our heavenly Father, since we know the very hairs of our head are all numbered, since we must be compelled to say—

“If light attends the course I run,  
       ’Tis he provides those rays,  
 And ’tis his hand that hides my sun,  
       If darkness cloud my days;”

and since he does all things well, he that is wise will, in the review of his life observe these things: he will see the hand of God directing with infinite wisdom and paternal goodness every circumstance in his lot, and thus will he be taught the loving-kindness of the Lord. Besides, those parts of our life that may seem to be the most insignificant, are often found to have had suspended upon them relations and consequences the most momentous. That a company of Ishmaelites, for example, should pass by a particular place, at a certain hour, trading down to Egypt, was no very remarkable thing, and yet Joseph, when he came to look back upon his life, would see all the mighty interests connected with his humiliation, and his advancement quivering upon that little point. And then the *period* to be reviewed. “Forty years.” This was a considerable period as to length, but, oh, what did it contain! oh, what displays of Deity! What proofs of his power, his holiness, his patience, his mercy, and his truth. And oh, what developments of their folly, their impatience, their unbelief and disobedience, and we should endeavour

to realize the progression of our time, so as to be impressed by its daily, weekly, monthly, and annual lapses. These periods are so many little breaks in the continual eddyings of the current of life, the murmurs of which conscience may chance to hear, and at the close of another year we are called upon to observe how gradually and insensibly it has passed away.

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501

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DEC. 31.—He that endureth to the end shall he saved.  
Matt. x. 22.

“LET not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that putteth it off,” said Ahab; and this was the wisest thing he ever said. And it is not enough to begin well. It is the end proves all, completes all, crowns all; while some “draw back unto perdition,” there are those “who believe to the saving of their soul.” Apostasy from the faith and practice of the gospel generally go together; sometimes the one takes the lead, and sometimes the other. “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God.” It is a very easy thing to destroy religious convictions. There are two ways of doing it. One is by *assassination*, and the other is by *starvation*. Making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience grieves the Holy Spirit, and in consequence of repeated provocations, God withdraws his restraints, and then the sinner brings upon himself swift destruction. For “it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” “The last state of that man is worse than the first.” But will not that which is Divine always endure? Assuredly; for that which comes from God will lead to God. The devotion of a real Christian will be like the fire upon the Jewish altar, which was kindled by the breath of heaven, and was never to go out. It will not resemble the summer-brook, but the perennial fountain. “The water that

I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It was upon this principle that Barnabas exhorted the Christians at Antioch, that with "purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." He believed in the terms of the "covenant ordered in all things and sure," and in the final perseverance of saints. Why, then, it may be asked, did he thus exhort them? Because he well knew how to apply his own principles; because he knew that admonition and warning were not needless for the people of God themselves, nor would be useless. Yea, he knew they were the only persons who derive advantage from warning and admonition, and he

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502

knew also the certainty of the end always included the intervention of the means, and that reaping always required sowing; and he knew that there would be no perseverance without persevering, and that they, and only they, would be saved who endured unto the end. And, says our Lord, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And the Apostle James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

503

**INDEX.**

	PAGE				
Gen. xxviii. 10, 11	47	„ xxiii. 1	205	„ cxxxix. 1-4	424
„ xxviii. 12, 13	48	„ xxiii. 3	197	„ cxlv. 18	478
„ xxviii. 16	62	„ xxiii. 4	201, 202	Prov. xix. 12	77
„ xxviii. 17	129, 393,	„ xxiii. 6	223, 224	„ xvi. 9	289
394		„ xxix. 2-5	150	„ xix. 6	304
„ xxviii. 19	391	„ xlii. 10	102	Eccl. vi. 12	246
Exo. iii. 1	284	Psal. ii. 15	285	Sol. Song v. 16	75
„ iii. 2	282	„ xiv. 8	39	Isa. v. 23	416
„ iii. 3, 5	382	„ xxiv. 3	419	„ viii. 17	203, 258
„ iii. 6	307, 317	„ xxxi. 19	227	„ xii. 1	26
„ xiv. 13	127	„ xxxii. 6	218	„ xix. 19	9
„ xxxii. 26	198	„ xxxiv. 8	38	„ xxxviii. 17	17, 125,
Lev. xxvi. 13	236	„ xlii. 6	60	132	
Num. xiii. 24	140	„ xxxvii. 23	266	„ xlv. 19	319
Deut. viii. 2	497, 499	„ xliii. 4	72	„ xlvi. 10	382
„ xxvii. 3	91	„ xlvii. 4	320	„ xlix. 14	299
„ xxxii. 31	446	„ lvi. 8	490	„ xlix. 15	301
„ xxxiii. 16	310			„ li. 3	288
Josh. v. 13-15	450			„ liv. 10	65
Ruth ii. 9	296			„ lv. 5	344
1 Sam. iii. 1	214, 215	Psal. lxxviii. 20	251	„ lv. 6	220
„ iii. 18	337	„ lxxiii. 16, 17	417	„ lv. 10	59
„ vii. 12	78	„ lxxiii. 23	418, 466	„ lv. 11	96
2 Sam. xxiii. 5	55, 57,	„ lxxiii. 24	429	„ lv. 10, 11	190
58, 71		„ lxxvii. 11	139	„ lv. 13	130
2 Kings i. 2	332	„ lxxxv. 8	204	„ lvii. 19	37, 69, 372
„ i. 6	334	„ xcii. 12	455	Jer. v. 3	194
„ viii. 13	243	„ xcii. 13	456	„ x. 23	261, 263
1 Chron. xvi. 11	240	„ xcii. 14	461	„ xxiii. 6	105, 107, 108
„ xxix. 15	147	„ xcii. 15	462	„ xxxi. 3	238
2 Chron. vi. 18	493	„ ciii. 2, 3, 4	98, 342		
Job i. 21	398	„ civ. 24	323		
„ xiv. 4	164	„ civ. 29	286		
		„ cxv. 11	19	Jer. xxxi. 34	167
		„ civ. 14	137	„ xlii. 11	363
		„ cxix. 50	225	Hos. xi. 4	207, 235
		„ cxix. 63	336	„ xiii. 9	473
		„ cxix. 176	489	Micah ii. 10	24, 25
		„ cxviii. 23	324	„ vi. 6	195
		„ cxxxviii. 2	233	„ vii. 7	276

INDEX

555

Nahum i. 7	31,40,51	„ xvii. 12, 13	431	„ iii. 22	329
Zeph. ii. 3	142	„ xvii. 14, 16	442	„ iii. 23	370
„ iii. 17	27	„ xvii. 17	443	„ iii. 24	376
Zech. i. 3	41,42	„ xix. 5	210	„ iv. 25	117
„ iii. 8	143	504		„ v. 12	170
„ viii. 13	89			„ vi. 11	407
„ viii. 23	353,355,			„ vi. 17	465
385, 386				„ xi. 33	34
Mai. i. 6	32	Luke xix. 6	211	„ xii. 6	12
„ iii. 1	475, 481, 485	„ xxiii. 47	110	1 Cor. i. 22,23	231
„ iii. 2	487	„ xxiii. 48	112		
„ iii. 3	495	„ xxiii. 49	113		
Mat. i. 23	492	John i. 14	43,67, 08		
„ vi. 6	11	„ i. 17	422, 438	1 Cor. i. 27	35
„ viii. 34	389	„ iv. 21	133	„ ii. 14,15	413
„ x. 20	501	„ v.6	82	„ iii. 6	128
„ xi. 28	158	„ vi. 40	482	„ Ti. 19	347
„ xii. 30	199	„ vi. 44	118	„ ix. 24	272
„ xiii. 23	131	„ viii. 36	13, 14	„ xii. 6	309
„ xx. 20, 21	348	„ xiii. 13	268	„ xiii. 9	29
„ xx. 27	364	„ xiii. 14	210	2 Cor. iv. 17	259
„ xx. 28	115,330,	„ xiv. 6	64	„ vi. 1	457
348, 357, 358, 364		„ xiv. 22	476	„ vi. 2	378
„ xxi. 5	174	„ xiv. 21	473	„ viii. 9	62, 63, 66,
„ xxv. 10	425	„ xv. 13	22	73, 75	
„ xxv. 34	16,17	„ xvi. 24	63, 54, 141	Gal. i. 16	182
Mark i. 44	432	„ xvi. 33	421	„ ii. 16	208
„ iv. 26, 27	320	Acts ii. 1,4	178	„ Ti. 10	136
„ iv. 28	124	„ ii. 8	180	Eph. i. 3	90
„ v. 12, 13	388	„ ii. 11	181	„ i. 7	346
„ v. 18, 19	396	„ ii. 12,13	182	„ ii. 17	373
„ v. 19, 20	397	„ ii. 36	273	„ ii. 18	33
„ x. 49	321	„ iv. 31	153,164	„ iii. 8	44, 88
„ xvi. 20	435	„ x. 38	305	„ iii. 12	45
Luke i. 17	150	„ xi. 22	244	„ iii. 20	46
„ v. 31	97	„ xi. 23	246, 410,	„ v. 18	193
„ vi. 35	164	411		„ vi. 11	327
„ ix. 55	278	„ xx. 27	383	„ vi. 12	380
„ x. 42	351	Rom. i. 18	247,249,321	„ vi. 21	459
		„ ii. 4	145	„ vi. 20	414

