

THE  
**CHRISTIAN'S DAILY COMPANION,**

PRESENTING AN

ENTIRE VIEW OF DIVINE TRUTH,

IN A

**SERIES OF MEDITATIONS**

FOR

EVERY MORNING AND EVENING THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

BY THIRTY-ONE CLERGYMEN

OF

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

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## PREFACE.

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In presenting this volume now complete, it is gratifying to state, as affording the hope of its usefulness, that its first design was suggested by many who were the devout readers of its predecessor—the “Family Worship.” That work, penned by upwards of 180 ministers of the Church of Scotland, is now well known to the Christian public, who have testified their sense of its value as a help to family devotion. And this, now offered as a fit associate and auxiliary to the former, has been accomplished by a more limited number of clergymen, whose names are given in connection with their several allotments; and who being distinguished for talents and learning, for piety and evangelical views of divine truths, as well as pains-taking and experience in applying the words of eternal life to every rank and condition of their flocks, must afford a sufficient guarantee for the worth and faithfulness of those instructions which they have been called in the providence of God thus to convey.

Whilst the former work has its place in ministering to the family altar, this is calculated to assist in the equally important duties of the closet. We say equally important; for certain it is, that the devotions of the household will dwindle to a cold formality, unless there be a serious and constant regard to those which are personal and secret, in the observance of which it is felt that the soul has singly to do with its Creator and Redeemer. With what livelier heart do the inmates come together, when, morning and evening before assembling, they have severally held communion with God by a prayerful meditation on his word! Or, on leaving the family altar, what nobler preparation for the duties of his calling will each one find, when he retires for a few moments to ask a blessing on the service past, and learn for himself a special lesson from the lips of that great Lord who came to be the light and life of the world.

And who can fail to own the necessity, or, when trial is made, to reap the fruit of secret communings with his own heart! “Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee.” This is no unwelcome task to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; who have sought a hiding-place in his pavilion, and have tasted of the hidden manna. And if there be any who have no relish of such heavenly communion, let them inquire how far they are prepared “to meet their God,” to go through the valley of death, or even to endure a night of solitary sickness. How should they be prepared for the great reckoning? if they have not learned to meditate alone and pray alone, while there is nothing external either to soothe or to distract; to call self to an account; to penetrate the recesses of the heart, and from the depth of its discovered iniquities to cry unto God. To the darkest of these depths, though there be a wall on every side, there is light above; a space of open sky and a memorial there, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.” “If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou shouldst be feared; with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.” And if this secret communing with the heart be so essential, we doubt not the brief doctrinal and this secret communing with the heart be so essential, we doubt not the brief doctrinal and practical discourses of the CHRISTIAN’S DAILY COMPANION will be found eminently conducive to that end; serving to improve and endear those retired hours, which, though taken from the world, will yet add to its stores, and enrich the soul by treasure laid up in heaven.

But accommodated as these meditations are to the studies of the closet, they are beyond all question equally appropriate to the family circle; and wherever circumstances may allow, it will be found that this work, as its title implies, will prove a fit companion to the "Family Worship." There is no duty of man; no relation in which he is placed; and no doctrine; no precept; no promise, unfolded in the divine Word, which this manual fails, however shortly, to handle; and much care has been taken that it might, by the divine blessing, be efficacious to the awakening of the conscience, and engaging the affections of parents and children, of masters and servants, with a view to strengthen every obligation and enhance every endearment of the family tie.

But whether perused in company or seclusion, it is calculated, by its Scriptural lessons for every morning and evening throughout the year, to afford a pleasant and profitable way of acquiring a comprehensive knowledge and inward application of revealed truth. It has often been recorded, as the experience of devout Christians, that besides searching the Scriptures daily, it is of excellent use to take a small portion of the Word as a theme of meditation for the day. By this method some momentous text of inspiration is more fixed in the memory, whilst being clearly remembered, it becomes by much thinking engraven on the heart; and the scenes which from morning to night are ever shifting before the eye; whether they be of inward emotions, or the ways of men, or the dealings of Providence; present the occasions on which the truth so kept in view cannot fail to be applied as heaven's own wisdom, and to be appreciated as heaven's best treasure. And if such method of using the sacred volume be found so highly beneficial, then obviously the work now furnished is not only in accordance with that method, but designed for its furtherance and fitted to secure its best results. It is indeed the Spirit of God who alone can make the word spirit and life, or cause anything of man's help to avail; but it is by such means as those now contemplated that the Spirit is pleased to operate; that He guides the believer into all truth, and brings all things to his remembrance whatsoever the Lord hath spoken. And, O if the reader would but reckon the mornings and evenings of a year, and the number of lessons for eternity which might thus be easily and successfully learned, he would be astonished on the one hand at the amount of good that might be gained by the diligence which keeps pace with time; and on the other at the loss insensibly incurred by taking no note of moments as they fly, and suffering so many seasons of grace to pass away unimproved.

To the reader it may not be uninteresting to know what is the scope of this work, and by what means it was provided that a diversity of writers might be led to act in concert, and avoid alike the tediousness of unnecessary repetition, and the injury of vital omissions. It was essential to the attainment of an end so desirable, that a previous plan and arrangement of the several parts should be laid and conducted by one hand; a department which it is hoped the reader will find to have been well entrusted to the Rev. Dr. PATERSON of Glasgow. And with regard to the scope of the work, it was judged necessary, and this is its chief characteristic, that the passages for meditation should not be merely select, but so selected as to embrace an entire view of Divine truth, in its doctrines, promises, and precepts, as well as practical application; and that not in the dryness of a system, but after the manner of the Word itself, now giving relief by variety, and now lending force by the union of precept and promise; of privilege and duty. It will be observed, however, on glancing at the "List of Subjects," that the exercises for each day have a special bearing on each other, and preserve for the most part a certain association whether of resemblance or of contrast; whilst the whole series has been so ordered as to unfold to the utmost that the limits would allow, all that counsel of God which is given to make wise unto salvation. And let the pious reader rest assured that he is followed by the prayers of all who have contributed to these pages. It is their earnest desire, that in all their labours, whether of the pulpit or the pen, they may have a single eye to the glory of God and the saving of souls; and their humble hope is, that this work may, by the Divine blessing, be of use to many, long after its writers are numbered with the dead; that it may prove a guide to the young, a staff to the aged, a consolation to the afflicted and the dying. Let every reader proceed with its perusal only in the spirit of prayer, and then as the Lord liveth, and is faithful and true, there will be a good hope through grace that this manual of devotion will be instrumental in winning souls to Christ, and increasing the faith which worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world.

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— William Wilson, Carmylie.....	— 30	Aug. 12.					

THE  
CHRISTIAN'S DAILY COMPANION.

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JANUARY.

FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,'* Gen. i. 1.

THE work of creation, implying the production of all things out of nothing, constitutes an amazing operation of the power of God. And as the universe arose at his command, its continued duration is absolutely dependent upon his will. Nothing in heaven or on earth is independent or self-existent; for this constitutes the incommunicable excellence of him who alone hath immortality, who dwelleth in light which is inaccessible to mortal eye, and full of glory. As to man he is of yesterday, and knows nothing. Tracing back the annals of time, we arrive at no very extended era at the foundation of the proudest monarchies, and the most venerated institutions. Within a circle, somewhat more enlarged, we embrace the origin of the globe itself, and of the surrounding heavens; when the sun began to roll his earliest circuit, and the moon to measure forth her appointed revolutions. Beyond this, and within a range, however, comparatively great, still finite, we reach the era when the angelic hosts were called into existence. But the years of the right hand of the Most High who can number? He inhabiteth eternity and its praises. Uncreated, unlimited, and independent, as there shall never arrive a period in the exhaustless flow of the cycles of futurity when he shall cease to be; neither was there ever a period, in all the remote tracts of past duration, when he began to exist.

'I am the First, and I the Last;  
Time centres all in me;  
Th' Almighty God, who was, and is,  
And evermore shall be.'

The doctrine of *creation*, in the proper sense of the term, depends upon the testimony of inspiration for its proof. Evidences of design so copiously exhibited throughout all the departments of the universe, unquestionably proclaim to every reflective mind the existence of God. But it was long a question, with some of the most eminent philosophers of antiquity, whether matter was not essentially eternal; and whether God ought not to be viewed rather as the contriver of the universe out of elements already existing, than in the strict and proper signification of the term, its Creator, or absolute Author. To the devout student of revelation there is no longer any darkness resting upon this subject; for 'through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.'

The design of this great work was to display the glory of its adorable Author; and how fully it was fitted to secure this end, we may even yet understand, notwithstanding the extent to which it has been marred by the influence of sin. The wisdom, the power, and the majesty of God, every where appear in the astonishing magnificence and sublimity of those vast and harmonious arrangements which constitute what have been called the laws of the material universe. His goodness, liberality, and benevolence, together with the all-comprehending and ceaseless assiduity of his providence, shine forth not less conspicuously in connection with the organization, the preservation, and the enjoyments common to the endless variety of the tribes of animate creatures which people the earth, the air, and the sea. It has been justly observed, that though pain and suffering are incident to the creation, it cannot

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be said, that there is to be found any where an arrangement, or an object, having no beneficial use, and whose sole and ultimate end is to produce misery. Whence then has evil been derived, wherefore has it been permitted to enter? This is a mystery which the scriptures explain in the most explicit manner. 'By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath come upon all men in that all have sinned.'

But the visible creation forms as it were only a platform for the exhibition of a still more glorious work, the work of redemption. In it the perfections of God as the Saviour, as well as the Creator of man, are revealed. The purest justice blends with the richest mercy; and the holiness of the lawgiver is seen in unison with the tender compassion of our Father in heaven. 'The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' At first man was made to be as it were the priest of the glorious temple of creation; and with rational soul, articulate speech, and spiritual service, the duty belonged to him of celebrating the worship and praise of the great Author and Governor of all things. But what, alas, has man become, and what does he continue to be, until washed from his sin in the blood of Jesus, and renewed in the spirit of his mind after the image of him who created him? He is an apostate from the kingdom of righteousness, an alien from God, a slave of sin and Satan, and the devoted victim of condemnation and death. And how wonderful the interposition of sovereign grace; whether we regard the state in which it finds us, or the rank and the honour to which it designs to raise us. The work of God, in reconciling a guilty world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses, stands forth to every reflective mind who devoutly regards it under an aspect as peculiarly divine, as the astonishing operation by which he formed all things out of nothing. To educe from a state of moral evil, such as this world presents, those glorious results which the gospel contemplates, to convert rebels into sons; to give them the victory over sin, and Satan, and death; to advance them to the enjoyment of a glorious immortality, and to set them at his own right hand in heavenly places, manifests an infinitude of love and mercy, of unparalleled grandeur, such as no created mind could have conceived, until it was actually revealed. When the heavens and the earth were made, the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted aloud for joy; but what higher and intenser acclamations of delight and praise shall distinguish that day, when all the glory of the work of redemption shall stand

displayed; when mortal shall put on immortality, and corruption incorruption, and death shall be swallowed up of victory; and the saints of God set free, shall rise and reign in the kingdom of the Father for ever and ever.

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FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'It is good for me to draw near to God,'* Ps. lxxiii. 28.

THE benefits of religion are incalculably great and precious. It constitutes the safety, the blessedness, and the ornament of our nature, to cherish its spirit, to taste of its joys, and to follow its counsels. Of all religious duties, 'to draw near to God' is the most sacred; and whenever it is rightly engaged in, it cannot fail to be accompanied with benefits which will enable the sincere worshipper to join in the auspicious acknowledgment of David, 'it is good for me to draw near to God.' It is eminently a spiritual duty; and consists in realizing with more than usual solemnity and awe the divine presence; in resting with vigorous faith and confidence in the divine word; in feeling and confessing our deep unworthiness and guilt before him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; in laying hold of the righteousness of Christ, and confiding in his all-prevailing intercession and infinite merits; in exercising the privilege of transacting with God in prayer, and praise, and other religious duties; and in drawing from his excellencies and perfections motives for love, for hope, and for joy in God.

When compared with any of the other prevailing employments of life, what an enhancement is conferred upon that which is here commended to our adoption, whether we consider its nature or effects. There is a social principle in human nature, and rightly exercised it may be productive of much good; but how often does man employ it to evil. What baneful lessons may be learned in the society which is most congenial to the ungodly mind; and how injurious are the effects produced by an indiscriminate mixture with the world. But wisdom, grace, and holiness, the blessing which addeth no sorrow, the joy unspeakable and full of glory, and which maketh not ashamed, form the portion of those who habituate themselves to wait upon God, and who seek his face in spirit and in truth. Like Moses on descending from the mount, who bore upon his countenance and his person the indication of that glorious presence in which he had stood, they will

carry with them unto the duties, the labours, and the trials of life, a sacred influence which will at once dignify their characters, and strengthen, and comfort their minds. For whether it be to temper the gaiety of youth with discretion, to abate the pride and presumption of a fleeting prosperity, to check the repining murmurs of a state of distress, to soothe the sorrows of bereavement and desolation, or to cheer the bed of affliction and of death ; how good is it to draw near to God.

But farther, as a sacred duty, how appropriate and just is the acknowledgment, here made, in regard to drawing near to God. There is a conscious enjoyment in following the dictates of truth and righteousness ; and in acting in unison with the principles of an enlightened conscience ; whilst, on the other hand, there is a sense of bitterness and self-reproach attendant on the neglect of known duties, and the violation of sacred and acknowledged obligations. We cannot, and we ought not, indeed, to draw near to God, to minister to a self-righteous and self-complacent spirit. We need forgiveness, even for our best duties ; and our devotional services, no less than our ordinary actions, can only find acceptance with an infinitely holy God through the merits of the Saviour. At the same time, 'to draw near to God' with a sincere and humble desire to serve him acceptably, through Jesus Christ, cannot fail to be accompanied with comfort and joy ; for it shows to the extent that we are enabled to do so, that our hearts are impressed by divine grace, that we are alive to a sense of our spiritual duty, and that we have become reconciled to God through the blood of the cross. A knowledge of this should dictate the earnest and habitual prayer that God would quicken us by the Holy Spirit to love and serve him ; that he would draw us, by the cords of love, into a state of closer and more spiritual communion, and that he would increase in us that faith without which it is impossible to please God.

It is good to draw near to God as your Creator ; to realize your dependence upon him, to reverence his high and glorious perfections, and to stir up your minds to gratitude, adoration, and thanksgiving, towards him, as the supreme source of all being, and of all blessing. How delightful to be able to 'see God in all his works, and to find incentives to praise him in the glory of the heavens, and in all the fullness of the world.' The inspired psalmist exhibits, in many interesting passages, how the pious mind may hold converse with God, through the medium of his works, and offer up the tribute of an intelligent praise in behalf of universal nature, to its Creator and its King.

It is also good to draw near to God, as your Preserver ; to celebrate his goodness every morning, and his faithfulness every night. He is the strength of our lives, and the length of our days ; he compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad, and the multitude of the isles rejoice.' What contentment, security, gratitude, and resignation, would it not inspire, to cast all our care upon God, and to acknowledge the righteousness, the faithfulness, and the mercy with which he governs all his creatures, and makes all things work together for his own glory and the best interests of those who love him.

It is good to draw near to God as your Redeemer ; to supplicate the aids of his grace, to treasure up the promises and consolations of his faithfulness and loving-kindness, to meditate upon all the excellence of his character, all the riches of his grace, and all the glory of his kingdom.

In fine, it is good to draw near to God as your Judge ; to examine yourselves by his holy word, to implore, in the spirit of unfeigned penitence, the forgiveness of sin, and an interest in his grace ; to beseech the sacred guidance of his wisdom and the powerful efficacy of his Spirit amidst the snares and temptations of life ; and to devote yourselves, both soul, and body, and spirit, to his holy and blessed service. 'Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.'

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SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God,' 2 Tim. iii. 16.

How endlessly diversified, and even opposite, have been the views and sentiments of those reputed the wisest men by the world, upon subjects of the highest and most sacred importance. What a labyrinth the history of the schools and sects which from time to time have risen, flourished, and then passed into oblivion. We need not wonder, although a mind perplexed and bewildered with the endless mass of incongruous tenets which have been promulgated, should almost sink into despair about the possibility of ever finding truth. But the gracious Author of our being, he who gave man understanding, has mercifully interposed to remedy this great and sore evil, and has placed

before us, in the sacred oracles, the knowledge which is necessary to make us wise unto salvation.

The subjects about which scripture is concerned, though the farthest from the reach of mere human investigation, are of the highest practical moment and of the most enduring personal interest to every member of our race. The being, the perfections, and the counsels of God; the nature, the authority, and the sanctions of the divine law; the demerit of sin; the method of restoration to the favour of God through a Redeemer; the regenerating and sanctifying agency of the Holy Spirit; the covenant relation in which God stands to his people; the unalterable love which he bears to them, and the ineffable blessedness to which he shall exalt them, constitute an outline of the grand themes presented to our knowledge in the divine testimonies. Every great and solemn question which we can desire to have solved in relation to our duty, our interests, and our prospects, as accountable beings, is satisfactorily settled in the scriptures, and it is no slight demonstration of their excellence that whilst they shed a copious light upon every subject truly interesting or important, in a religious and moral point of view, they utterly abstain from gratifying the idle inquiries of a mere fruitless curiosity. To derive benefit from the holy scriptures, we must read them with reverence, humility, faith, penitence, and an earnest and prayerful spirit, that we may find them to be to our souls a savour of life unto life. Relinquishing the proud spirit of self-sufficiency, which is so natural to the human mind in its unregenerate state, we should sit with the teachableness of little children at the feet of inspiration, and the sacred testimony, 'thus saith the Lord,' should be decisive upon every subject, and command the profoundest homage of our understandings and of our hearts. Whatever apparent difficulties we may find in any part of scripture, we should reflect, that it ought to be expected that 'the only wise God' should have discoveries to place before us beyond our capacity fully to conceive, and works to reveal past finding out. A consciousness of our spiritual blindness and liability to err on all subjects relative to salvation, should dictate a spirit of fervent and habitual supplication to the great Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. To how many does the power of indwelling corruption render the volume of inspiration a sealed book, because they neglect the duty to which they are called in this respect; 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.' The

loftiness of pride disdains to learn from the source of revelation, as something altogether abject and useless; the presumptuous complacency of a self-righteous spirit scorns to admit its humbling truths, and rejects it as a libel on the character of human nature; the boldness of impenitence and infidelity calls in question the justice and truth of its representations, concerning the guilt and penalty of sin, and affects to compliment the mercy of God at the expence of his truth; the love of the world spurns the sacred principles which it inculcates as visionary and enthusiastic, whilst the lawless violence of vice and licentiousness blasphemes its authority as a tyranny subversive of the natural liberty and happiness which are the prerogative of man.

The doctrine, that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, impresses a peculiar value upon every portion of the sacred volume, and should secure the conviction that a design, worthy of infinite wisdom and righteousness, pervades all it contains. Let us aspire to possess an eminently sanctifying and comforting experience of the majesty, the power, the purity, the wisdom, and the excellence which distinguish the sacred oracles. 'They are more precious than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey or the honey comb.' The main design of the Spirit of inspiration, in both the Old and the New Testament, is to reveal Christ; to make known his character, his offices, and his work as a Saviour; to invite sinners to come to him, and believe on him, that he may be made unto them of God, 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption.' How solemn are the warnings against despising the divine testimonies, and rejecting Christ. 'Whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind them to powder.'

'Within this awful volume lies  
The mystery of mysteries.  
Oh! happiest they of human race,  
To whom our God has given grace  
To hear, to read, to fear, to pray,  
To lift the latch, and force the way;  
But better had they ne'er been born,  
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.'

#### SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

'But the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things,' John xiv. 26.

It is the privilege of the redeemed to be exalted to the most distinguished rank, and to the most

glorious prospects. Not only are they delivered from a state of condemnation, but they are advanced to the dignity of the sons of God, and 'receive the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.' And although the world knows them not, as it knew not their divine Master, that renders not the communications with heaven, which they are privileged to enjoy, or the blessings from on high with which they are visited, the less real or the less precious. The Holy Ghost, the third person in the adorable Godhead, is equally concerned as the Father and the Son in promoting the work of human redemption; and it constitutes his special province to form the medium of communication through whom Christ and the blessings of salvation are sealed and applied to believers. A knowledge of his person, and of his work, accompanied with an earnest desire to enjoy the benefits which he conveys, is essential to salvation; and, accordingly, the Saviour concluded not his personal ministry, nor left the earth, until he had first instructed his disciples, that they were henceforth to look upon themselves as placed more immediately under the guidance, protection, and consolation of the divine Spirit, whom, at his intercession, the Father should send down upon them. The agency of the Spirit is distinguished by the most consummate wisdom and grace, and he adapts his communications and blessings with admirable suitability to the various circumstances of the church, to the diversified exigencies of believers, and to the peculiar openings of providence, and to the state of the world at different periods. On the day of pentecost, and during the age of miraculous interposition, he manifested his presence by affixing the seal of heaven, by signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds, to the doctrines which the apostles delivered. At all times his operation is necessary to render the ordinances of the gospel efficacious, that sinners may be convinced and converted; saints edified and comforted; and the church built up in faith and holiness to eternal life.

The necessity for divine teaching arises from the corruption and moral blindness, together with the alienation of heart from God, characteristic of human nature in its fallen state. It is not enough to have the objective knowledge of divine things set before the mind in the volume of inspiration, if the mind itself is incapable of rendering due attention to them, by an aversion which repels the subject altogether, or by sinful prejudices which warp its vision, and prevent the truth from being fairly and distinctly felt. We do not depreciate the value of the divine testimonies when we

assert that they are insufficient of themselves, exclusive of the power of the Holy Spirit, to make men wise unto salvation. They claim for themselves no higher honour than that of being the 'sword of the Spirit,' the instrument which he wields for penetrating and subduing the soul of the sinner. The divine Author of Christianity teaches us that it is the Spirit who quickeneth, the word profiteth little. And one of the greatest apostles and ministers of the New Testament has placed it upon record, 'that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' The constant misapprehension of our Saviour's own immediate disciples, it has been well observed, of which we read so much in the gospel, was certainly due as much to their being *blind*, as to their being *in the dark*; to their defect in the power of seeing, as to any defect in the visibility of what was actually set before them.

It is the province of the Holy Spirit to open the heart, as in the case of Lydia, to attend to the things that are revealed in the gospel, and spoken by the ministers of Christ; to impress convictions of sin, as took place on the day of pentecost, with the three thousand who were converted under the preaching of Peter; to impart faith, and to enable the sinner effectually to flee to Christ for salvation, as happened with the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian jailor, and others; and to produce a growing experience of the power and efficacy of divine grace upon the soul, and a persevering devotedness in the Christian life under all its duties, and under all its trials, as was exemplified by the faithful disciples of the apostolic and of every subsequent age. When Paul would express his confidence, that the Thessalonians had received the gospel, when it was first preached to them, in a saving manner, he does so by ascribing their reception of it to the agency of the Holy Spirit. 'For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.' All vital godliness, all genuine and permanent religious principles, must then be implanted in the soul by the Spirit in every instance; and his agency, and his blessing, must also continue to attend the work, throughout all its progress, onwards to its final consummation in glory. The gift of the Holy Spirit, and of his precious influences, was the purchase of the Redeemer's blood; and it was in virtue of the efficacy of his atoning sacrifice, that when he ascended up into heaven, he obtained his interposition to

guide, and comfort, and sanctify his disciples. To pray for the Spirit, to cherish his indwelling in their souls, and to walk in communion with him, constitutes the privilege and the duty of all who receive the gospel. But how much is this privilege undervalued, and how extensively is this duty neglected! The self-righteous tendencies of the heart are so strong, that we are habitually in danger of leaning to our own understandings, confiding in our own sufficiency, and resting satisfied with our actual state, however characterized by backsliding, lukewarmness and spiritual degeneracy. If we felt aright our sinfulness on the one hand, or if we knew the grace of God on the other, and understood what we would become by walking in the Spirit, and bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, how should we long and thirst for the influences of the Spirit as our chief good! O let the solemn impression of these words be felt by every individual. 'To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' Heaven is brought down to every soul in which the Spirit has his residence; and to the degree that his enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting operations are enjoyed, the joy of heaven is experienced, and its character and dispositions are formed. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come unto the waters and drink, and he that hath no money; yea, come buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore will ye give your money for that which is not bread? and your labours for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.'

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THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord,'  
Deut. vi. 4.

ALTHOUGH the Jews were not distinguished for scientific eminence, like many other ancient commonwealths, yet they infinitely excelled them all in the knowledge of a sublime and pure theology. While Egypt, Greece, Persia, and the whole ancient world, was spell-bound by idolatrous delusion, how remarkable the contrast among the posterity of Abraham; who had a law which not only prohibited the least approximation to the sin in question, but inculcated the

most elevated and spiritual conceptions with regard to the unity, perfection, and the majesty of Jehovah. And although this people were not distinguished for superiority in learning, or in science, but the reverse, yet has science, in the fullest manner, adopted and accredited their faith; and from the loftiest star to which she has winged her flight, or the deepest laboratory of nature into whose recesses she has ever penetrated, has she brought back accumulated demonstrations to the doctrine that there is but one God. Every where she finds herself within an empire which by the uniformity of its laws, the identity of its institutions, and the symmetry and consistency of its administration, proves this great truth. The same force which causes a stone to fall, or a stream to flow, at the earth's surface, is found to incline and bend to the sun the largest and the most remote planet in our system; and to guide the course of the erratic and far revolving comet, as it pursues its mysterious flight, crossing over worlds through the interminable fields of one unexplored immensity, unto the equally profound and inaccessible recesses of another. It is the same God who forms the dry land, and who holds the waters of the deep in the hollow of his hand; who weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; who kindles into brightness the host of heaven by the breath of his mouth; and who has filled the whole universe with the harmonious indications of his all-creative and adorable power.

The degradation connected with the idolatrous worship of the heathen world, constituted a decisive and melancholy evidence of the power of Satan over a fallen and blinded race. It was at once the effect and the punishment of that spirit of enmity and alienation which caused them that they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. 'Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.' If the religious feelings and dispositions of the human mind be not exercised on their proper objects, and consecrated to the worship and service of the true God, they will be perverted to the most injurious and degraded ends; and from being the glory become the disgrace, and the bane of human nature. Hence an undue love of the creature, an extravagant desire for the pleasures and possessions of the world, and the vain hope that a satisfying enjoyment can be obtained in the multiplication of those objects which please and flatter the natural feelings and sentiments of the mind. The scriptures

teach us to regard covetousness as idolatry, and upon a similar ground are we to consider every unhallowed affection, as of this nature, which would exalt any created thing to that place in our esteem and confidence which is due only to God.

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THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'From all your filthiness, and all your idols, will I cleanse you,' Ezek. xxxvi. 25.*

IDOLATRY and wickedness were invariably connected in the history of the people of Israel, and no sooner did they depart, in any case, from the true God, and adopt the creed of the surrounding heathen, than they became characterized for every thing flagitious, immoral, and abandoned in conduct. How untenable the sentiments of those who attribute little or no influence to the religious opinions which men may entertain, and who conceive that a high standard of virtue and moral purity may coexist with heretical, sceptical, or infidel principles. Before God would bring back the captivity of Israel, and reinstate them in the land from which they had been cast out for their sins, he showed them that he would effect a great spiritual change upon them, and cleanse them from all their filthiness, and from all their idols. And in like manner are we taught in the New Testament, that before any can be put in possession of the mercy of God in Christ, or of the inheritance which awaits the saints in life, they require to become the subjects of a change so great and decided, as to admit of being expressed by terms no less emphatic than those of being born again, and made new creatures. And hence the security provided in the economy of grace, that the mercy of God cannot be exercised in vain; or, as an eminent divine has strongly stated the subject, that the righteousness of Christ can never be made the covering of a dead soul. There is a necessary and inseparable connection between regeneration and justification, and it is only in that heart which has been renewed and purified by the power of the Holy Spirit, that Christ can dwell, and that the blessings of salvation can be effectually received and enjoyed.

To have restored Israel to the land of Canaan without, in the first place, renewing them to repentance, and cleansing them from their filthiness and their idols, would have been a course neither really beneficial to themselves, nor calculated to promote the glory of God. And how

surely then may we know that none of the children of men can ever be permitted to enter into that heavenly kingdom of which Canaan was only an emblem and a type, unless they are first washed from their sins in the blood of Christ, and renewed in the spirit of their minds by the Spirit of God. The society, the employment, and the blessedness of heaven, can only be congenial to those whom God has prepared for them; and it could constitute no real enjoyment to the wicked, and the unregenerate, to be advanced to those sacred seats, if they retained, and carried with them, minds alien from all the piety and all the purity for which their inhabitants are distinguished. Have you sought to be made meet for the inheritance which awaits the saints in life; and that the very God of peace would sanctify you wholly; and that your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? Have you turned to God in a spirit of deep penitence, mourning over past sins, and earnestly entreating that he would mercifully pardon and graciously receive you? Have you felt your obligation to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind? Has the love of Christ constrained you thus to judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him who loved them, and gave himself for him? Is it your daily care to keep yourselves from idols, and to become more and more dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness? 'Know you not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.' 'What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of these things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

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## FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

'God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,' John iv. 24.

THE particular truth which it was the design of our Lord to inculcate at this time, was that the disputes between the Jews and Samaritans, about the place where they ought to worship the Father, were on the eve of becoming altogether groundless and inept, inasmuch as every thing merely ceremonial in religion was in the act of being for ever abolished; and nothing but what was spiritual and moral, and therefore essentially immutable, was to be permitted to remain. The doctrine that God is not confined to temples built by the hands of men, but that he is every where present in the fullness of his perfections throughout the immense universe, was uniformly acknowledged, throughout all ages, by his enlightened and spiritual worshippers. Under the Mosaic dispensation, however, it pleased God, for wise and holy ends, to define and limit the mode of observing his worship, and to specify the times, and the seasons, and the localities, in which sacrifice, and some of its other more solemn duties, required to be performed. But as the use of the typical and ceremonial institutions of Judaism, so also their obligation terminated simultaneously with the death of Christ, and we find at that time the finger of God putting visible dishonour upon them, to show that they were for ever abolished. Thus the sacred vail which was only lifted up once ever year when the high priest entered into the holiest of all, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And a short while after, when the Romans besieged Jerusalem, under Titus, voices were heard in the temple, as an ancient historian mentions, saying, 'Arise, let us depart;' and the very next day the abomination of desolation was seen standing in the holy place, and the whole of that splendid fabric was so completely consumed with fire and overthrown, that not one stone was left standing upon another. And now, after the lapse of a long succession of centuries, the Mosaic ritual has been so completely set aside by providence, that notwithstanding all the zeal and pertinacity of the Jews to resist the divine counsels, they have no where, throughout the whole world, a sacrifice, a temple, or a priest.

The nature of the worship which God requires is described under two particulars, *spirit* and *truth*. To worship God in *spirit*, is to worship him with the soul, or thinking principle, in contradistinction to the mere body, or material part of

our frame; it is to worship him with the devout and holy affections which the divine Spirit imparts, and not with the cold and lifeless formality of a mere ceremonial observance; it is to prostrate our hearts before him in deep humility and self-abasement, and not to multiply idle genuflexions, or insincere and hypocritical confessions; it is to present the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving from a pure heart fervently, and not to burn the incense of odoriferous perfumes, or of costly oblations. Let us ever bear in mind, when we engage in the worship of God, that we appear in the presence of the great Searcher of hearts, and that it is impossible that any vail or covering can hide us from his inspection and knowledge. 'Keep thy feet when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil.' Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few.

To worship God in truth, includes two things: the one, that our worship have truth for its substance; the other, that it be true or sincere in its exercise; it must be founded upon, and consist with, the will of God as revealed in the holy scriptures, and it must also be engaged in with unfeigned reverence and heartfelt solemnity. As to the value and importance of truth, it is essential to every thing that has a claim to the consideration of intelligent beings. It is truth which confers on science its dignity, gives to experience its use, imparts to knowledge its worth, and invests religion with its authority and sacredness. It is the glory of God that he is a God of truth, and it is the excellence of his word, and of his works, and of all his operations and promises, that they are replete with truth, and free from any mixture of deceit or error. As there can be no subject more profoundly important and interesting than religion, we are not left to our doubtful speculations regarding its doctrines, but have received from heaven an inspired revelation, containing every thing which is necessary to make us wise unto salvation. And accordingly Christ announces himself to us, in reference to his threefold offices of a Priest, a Prophet, and a King, as the way, the truth, and the life. By his atoning sacrifice he has opened up a way of access and return to the Father. By his word and Spirit, he has set before us the truth, which should guide us in that way; and by his divine power he communicates spiritual life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and will raise up to eternal life all his redeemed peo-

ple on the morn of the resurrection. But we require to come to God with a true, that is, with a sincere and unfeigned worship, avoiding and hating the sin of drawing near to him with the service of the lips, or of presenting a faithless and hypocritical homage. In every action sincerity is essential to the validity and worth of the duty performed. No Father would esteem the professions of a child who expressed an affection he did not feel, or promised an obedience he did not render; and can you suppose that God will be mocked by such proceedings? He saith to the wicked, What hast thou to do to declare my covenant, or to take my name into your mouths? Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Sincerity must be founded on faith, or a cordial and unfeigned reliance upon the merits and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only when we come to God in his name, that we can find acceptance for our persons, and for our services. It is a blind sincerity which acts or feels differently, the sincerity of presumption, and self-righteousness, and impenitence; and therefore it cannot be but hateful in the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Let us never engage in any act of worship or devotion without first seeking the preparation of the heart which cometh from the Lord; and that he would give us grace whereby we may serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead,' Rom. i. 20.*

It is the glory of man's intellectual being, that he can look from nature up to nature's God. He is necessarily led to conclude, that every effect must have a cause, and thus from the existence of the visible universe, and the innumerable indications of wisdom and design which it presents, is he compelled to conclude, that it is the work of a Being of Almighty power, of eternal existence, and of supreme and absolute sovereignty. Accordingly, the belief of the existence of a great first cause has prevailed among all nations, and the most degraded tribes have entertained it, no less than the most refined and learned states. In describing the creation of Adam, our great Poet has represented with much truth the first effort of his intelligence, as called forth and directed to

an inquiry after a knowledge of the Creator from whose hands he had proceeded.

*'To speak I tried, and forthwith spake,  
My tongue obey'd, and readily could name  
Whate'er I saw; thou sun, said I, fair light,  
And thou enlighten'd earth, so fresh and gay;  
Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains;  
And ye that live and move, fair creatures tell,  
Tell if ye saw how came I thus? how here?  
Not of myself. By some great Maker then  
In goodness and in pow'r pre-eminent!  
Tell me, how may I know him, how adore,  
From whom I have that thus I move and live,  
And feel that I am happier than I know.'*

When we endeavour to realize the existence of God, in its eternity, immutability, and independence; when we think of him as existing in all the glory and majesty of his perfections throughout all the infinitude of past duration, and that there never was a period when he was not; how are we absorbed in adoration and amazement. And when we farther reflect that all the excellence which we discover in creation is the result of his creative wisdom and power; and that what we behold is but a single ray in comparison with the stupendous and glorious whole; and that the magnificence of the universe, in all its united splendour, may form only a partial display of the inexhaustible resources of his infinite nature, how are we overwhelmed with the contemplation of his unbounded and unsearchable perfections and attributes! He alone possesses all-sufficiency and absolute independence; needing nothing, and forming the source and support of all else that either now or ever can exist. Creation was his sovereign act, the result of his absolute good pleasure, but in no degree necessary to enhance his felicity, or in any way promote the perfection of his existence. All the goodness and mercy which so abundantly distinguish the universe, is the effect of the purest and most disinterested benevolence; for no return can be made by any of his creatures to the Creator but out of that which they themselves have received; for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,' Prov. xv. 3.*

THE consciousness of being an object of observation is usually felt by men to be powerfully repressive of evil, and an exciting stimulus to the practice of what is great and good. And accord-

ingly it is considered a circumstance of the utmost moment to give a free and extensive circulation to opinion, and to make the acts, at least of public men, the subject of a keen and penetrating observation, by bringing them under the attention of the community, and obtaining upon them a verdict of praise or censure. But the man who is solely guided in his conduct by a regard to human opinion, and who forgets or cares not that the eye of God continually rests upon him, is blind to a truth, of all others the most solemn and momentous, and which ought to have the chief place in the regulation and government, not only of his external actions, but of his inmost feelings and thoughts. Beneficial as the influence of human opinion may sometimes be, it is necessarily a fallible criterion, and they who would follow it implicitly are guilty of dishonouring the will and authority of God, and are exposing themselves to the danger of being led into many sins. It was the chief cause of blinding the minds of the Pharisees to the incomparable evidences which our Lord gave of his character as the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world, for they received praise one of another; in other words they countenanced and encouraged each in their contempt and rejection of his person and of his doctrines; and they cared not by repenting and believing the truth, to receive the praise which cometh from God only. It was also the inducement which prevailed upon Pilate to deliver Jesus to be crucified, contrary to his own avowed convictions of his innocence; for he was more afraid of being denounced by the malignant Jews to Tiberias the emperor as an enemy to Cesar, than to fall under the holy displeasure and condemnation of heaven.

Let the consideration, that the eye of God has rested upon you throughout the whole period of your history, and has been intimately acquainted with your every thought, and feeling, and pursuit, and action, be improved as a motive to deep and heartfelt repentance and self-abasement. It has often been remarked, that no one could even disclose to the knowledge of his most intimate friend, without shame and humiliation, his innumerable errors and sins; but how much more awful is the thought that all things are naked and open to God, and that you have never been able for a single moment to elude his inspection, or to hide yourselves from his presence. After Peter had denied his Lord, he read in his look that he had a full knowledge of all his guilt, and of all its aggravating circumstances, and the subdued disciple at once went out and wept bitterly; and O could you realize in a similar manner, by any intima-

tion, the view entertained by the divine mind of your proceedings and character, how would it overwhelm you with self-abhorrence and grief of the profoundest nature.

Let the thought that you have to do with an infinitely holy God, whose inspection and whose law are spiritual, and extends to every feeling as well as every action of your lives, convince you of your need of a purer and more perfect righteousness than your own. How can you, without this, appear before him in judgment. Shall you be justified by your works. Which of them is without sin, which of them needs not to receive forgiveness. The individual who cultivates the external proprieties of conduct, has still within him a heart which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who could vindicate before God the purity of all his motives, desires, principles, and designs. If we should say we are without sin, our own hearts would condemn us, and this would prove us to be perverse.

How graciously suitable to our polluted and sinful state, are the blessings provided for us through the mediation of Christ Jesus. He presents us with a righteousness of perfect purity; becomes our Advocate and Intercessor; reconciles us unto God; imparts the spirit of adoption whereby we say, Abba, Father; and draws us to a holy and habitual engagement in the service of God by the chords of a fervent gratitude and adoring love.

Be careful to cultivate in your hearts an abiding sense of the presence of an all-seeing God, and allow it to exercise a sanctifying influence over the whole tenor of your thoughts and actions. Confiding in his mercy, seek that you may also be found glorifying him in your bodies and spirits which are his, and thereby show that you are not subject to the charge which shall be brought against false and hypocritical professors, on the great day, of receiving the grace of God in vain. Instead of evincing that spirit of enmity which actuates the unregenerate, and in consequence of which they desire not to retain the knowledge of God in all their thoughts—cultivate a holy trust and confidence in God as the Father of mercy, and the God of all grace and consolation; and rejoice that he reigneth over all, and that the whole of your interests and concerns are under his wise and holy disposal. By daily and fervent supplication at a throne of grace, entreat that the love of God may be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, and that you may be enabled to walk before him as becometh dear children. 'O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear

the Lord ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit,' Ps. xxxiv. 8, 9, 15—18.

FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out,' Rom. xi. 33.*

ONE of the principal sources of the depravity and corruption of men, it has been remarked, arises from their not entertaining sufficiently pure and exalted views of the nature and attributes of God. In some cases they consider him to be altogether like unto themselves; actuated only by those views which they are pleased to impart to him, and consulting only those ends which seem to them to be consistent with the purposes of his government. Hence pride, impenitence, and unbelief are fostered in their minds; for how expect that they should submit to be taught of God, who have already anticipated, in their own conceptions, both what he is, and what he must do; and who are prepared to declare every doctrine absurd and false which transcends their thoughts, or contradicts their self-formed imaginations.

It might appear that the knowledge of God conveyed even by the first impressions of the light of nature, was fitted to fill every mind with a profound conviction of his infinite majesty and unutterable glory, and to warn the most arrogant against presuming to fathom his counsels, or penetrate his designs. How undeniably just and reasonable, as well as pious and reverential, is the acknowledgment drawn from Zophar, in regard to the transcendent and incomprehensible nature of Jehovah. 'Canst thou, by searching, find out God; canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? it is deep as hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.'

The more an individual becomes conversant with the nature, the perfections, the counsels, and the works of God, his decrees of providence, his wonders of grace, his mighty judgments, and

his sovereign counsels, he has reason to say, at every step by which he advances in this sublime knowledge, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' More especially is this the feeling of wonder and of praise with which we should contemplate the character of God in connection with the work of redemption. That he should have selected the inhabitants of this sinful world to be the objects of his mercy, whilst fallen angels are left to endure the eternal punishment of their revolt, constitutes an act of distinguishing grace which we cannot sufficiently admire and adore. And how infinitely mysterious was the vindication of his holy law which God required before he could extend mercy to us, and which he actually provided when he ordained his Son to undertake with all its humiliation, sufferings, and woes, the work of our deliverance. The method by which he secured our redemption, and the overthrow of the kingdom of Satan, was one which, though infinitely glorious in itself, and worthy of all his perfections, would never have entered into any finite mind to conceive. What but infinite mercy could have supplied the sacrifice? and could any thing but infinite holiness have rendered it necessary that it should be presented? Most just the sentiment of the poet in reference to the infinite sublimity of God, and of all his works:

*'The more of wonderful  
Is heard in him, the more we should assent.  
Could we conceive him, God he could not be;  
Or he not God, or we could not be men,  
A God alone can comprehend a God.'*

SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy,' Rev. xv. 4.*

THIS forms a portion of the praises of the redeemed in heaven. Taking a retrospect of the administration of God, viewing in its completeness the whole of that comprehensive plan of which at present we can see only a small part, its every aspect, all its events, and all their bearings, serve to impress them with a profound and universal feeling of the infinite unutterable holiness of God. At present clouds and darkness surround the throne of God, and the devout inquirer is often painfully perplexed, in attempting to reconcile the ways of providence with the acknowledged excellencies and perfections of the Supreme Judge and Ruler of all. To understand, for instance, why sin was permitted to enter, and to spread its fatal effects through so extensive a portion of the dominions

of God; to account for the enduring domination which idolatry and wickedness have been permitted to hold, for so many ages, over the great majority of our race, whilst truth and its attendant blessings have been enjoyed by comparatively a few; to know the cause why so many possess the advantage of the external call of the gospel, without being made the subjects of its converting and saving influence,—are questions which exceed the fullest investigation of man with his present limited and defective views adequately to resolve. But in the light of eternity, how shall all the darkness which now seems to lie over the divine administration pass away! and from the infinite wisdom, justice, and truth, which shall be seen to distinguish the whole, and every portion of the ways of God, the saints shall say with the feelings of ecstatic admiration and awe, 'Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.'

In God holiness is an essential and immutable perfection, or rather it constitutes the absolute and necessary glory and excellence of his nature; for in the same manner as it is elsewhere said of him that he only has immortality, implying that existence, as belonging to him, is alienable and eternal, so also here when it is asserted that he only is holy, it represents not only that he is possessed of holiness to an extent infinitely beyond all other beings, but that holiness, which in them is derived and contingent, is in him necessary, everlasting, and essential. He dwelleth in light which is inaccessible to mortal eye, and full of glory; yea, he is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Holiness in God is less a distinct and separate attribute than the combination of all those perfections which unite to constitute supreme and absolute moral excellence; it is the bright aggregate of spotless purity, unsullied truth, stainless rectitude, unalloyed mercy, and inflexible justice. In short, it is the brightness, not of a single perfection, but of the harmonious and united assemblage of all those perfections that constitute the peculiar glory of the divine nature.

The transcendent holiness of God claims, on his behalf, the adoration and reverence even of the most exalted of the angelic host; and O how should it engage towards him the deepest awe and the lowliest homage of fallen men. Consider how the prophet felt when a revelation was made to him in vision of the majesty and glory of God; when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple; and the seraphim stood having their faces covered with their wings, crying one to another, and say-

ing, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.' Let us endeavour to realize the same deep emotions of conscious guilt and utter unworthiness which filled his mind, and which led him to say, 'Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' Similar were the impressions produced upon the mind of Job, when he arrived at a saving discovery of the infinite purity and holiness which distinguish Jehovah. '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.'

Improve to this end every trace and indication which you every where witness of the transcendent holiness of God, whether in the operations of providence, in the visible judgments with which he often pursues and visits sin, to the astonishment even of the wicked themselves; in the purity, spirituality, and perfection of his revealed law; or yet more particularly in the sufferings and death of Christ, where you have the highest and most impressive evidence of the holiness of God which you can ever receive. When you take your station at the foot of the cross, and contemplate the infinite anguish of that mysterious occasion, when the Son of God cried out in overwhelming grief, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' O how much does it reveal of the infinite holiness of God; of the awful indignation with which he looks upon sin; and of the endless separation from glory and blessedness which must overtake those who seek not to have their sins expiated by the blood of atonement, but are willing to bear all their guilt upon their own souls. 'Who shall not fear thee, O God? for thou only art holy.' They who will not allow themselves to reflect upon the nature of God, as a holy God, and to be led to repentance and to a saving interest in Christ from a knowledge of his character as it is revealed to them in his own blessed word, to make them wise unto salvation, shall hereafter be overwhelmed with terror, and shall call upon the mountains and the hills to cover them from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall manifest himself as a consuming fire to destroy the workers of iniquity, and shall pursue them with his unmitigated vengeance to the abode of eternal woe.

But that very holiness which the impenitent and wicked shall feel to be infinitely terrible, shall constitute the theme of eternal joy and praise to the redeemed servants of Christ. They will delight to trace how God has, in all things, acted

worthy of his own divine perfections, and they will acknowledge the praises of his justice, even whilst they celebrate the triumphs of his mercy. 'Great and manifold are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.'

SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'  
Gen. xviii. 25.

In religion, as in science, there are certain axiomatic truths which only require to be enunciated, to appear self-evident to every rational and unprejudiced mind. And if there be one truth which bears this character more decidedly than another, it is undoubtedly that which is interrogatively expressed in these words of the patriarch. That God is a God of equity and truth; that he can lie under no conceivable inducement, even though it were possible for him to be impelled by any motive to depart, in any case, from the exercise of his own infinite rectitude so to do, but that he must decide and act, invariably, according to the principles of unerring wisdom and absolute justice, must appear intuitively certain to every individual who is capable of forming any conception of the nature and character of God.

Happy were it if this momentous truth engaged the confidence of the heart as firmly as it secures the conviction of the judgment; and if men rested in it with hope and patience under all the trials of faith with which they are conversant in the pilgrimage of life. With what holy acquiescence would they not submit to all the decrees of providence, if they felt that they proceeded from one who exercised his sovereignty for the highest and most glorious ends, and in accordance with the purest and most perfect designs! that nothing was fortuitous, or the effect of chance; that nothing was done capriciously, ignorantly, or malignantly, but that all was ordained with unerring wisdom and infinite faithfulness; that the very hairs of their head were numbered; and that not a sparrow could fall to the ground without the permission of God.

And how would it quell many a dark and disquieting thought in regard to the eternal destiny of our race, and the manner in which God shall deal with the heathen on the day of judgment, and those whose advantages have been few to entertain the firm conviction that the Judge of all the

earth cannot but do right. Let us adore all his procedure, and reverently acknowledge whatever he decrees or ordains, that it is the result of infinite and unimpeachable rectitude, and that to murmur or repine at his dispensations is to manifest a presumptuous, a blind, and an impious disposition.

As God cannot do, neither can he say, but that which is right. Let us, therefore, reverence the whole doctrines and truths of revelation; and however painful it may be to human pride, let us acknowledge, in particular, the solemn truth of all those testimonies advanced by the oracles of God concerning our utter sinfulness and depravity. 'What things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.' The impenitent and the self-righteous, and all who reject the views inculcated by the word of God concerning their sinful state, the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of their hearts, and their innate aversion to what is holy and good, are in effect making God a liar, and the truth is not in them.

Let us be more especially convinced that the method of salvation provided for a lost world, through Jesus, is altogether right, and worthy of God to establish; and that there can, consequently, be no other way by which the guilty can receive forgiveness. 'It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' There required to be offered an infinite sacrifice to take away sin, and that this might be provided God spared not his own Son, but gave him up freely to the death for us all. 'How then shall they escape who neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will.'

Above all, prepare to meet God as the righteous Judge of the whole earth, before whose awful tribunal an assembled universe shall stand, and from whose mouth irreversable decisions shall go forth to seal the eternal doom of all the various members of the human race. Seeing that you have no merit, and no righteousness of your own, to entitle you to acceptance with a God of infinite purity, seek that you may be found in Christ, clothed with the robe of his perfect righteousness and sustained by the advocacy of his all-prevailing intercession. Rejoice that the Redeemer can say, in behalf of as many as come to the

Father through him, 'all mine are thine, and thine are mine.' 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth; 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.'

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SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face,'* Psal. lxxxix. 14.

IN God all perfections harmonize; he is just when he exercises his mercy, and whenever he takes his seat upon the throne of judgment, 'mercy and truth go before his face.' Amongst sinful and imperfect creatures we may witness the rigour of a relentless vengeance exercised, or the partiality of a weak and unscrupulous leniency; but these things be far from God; he cannot compromise his holiness; he cannot deny himself; but must always act in such a manner as accords with the glory of his manifold and infinite perfections.

What copious and interesting illustration of this truth do we not derive from the method of salvation provided in the gospel. The sufferings and death of Christ reveal the justice of God in a light the most solemn and awful; the design of those sufferings, and of that death, manifest no less conspicuously his boundless love to sinners, and his delight in the exercise of mercy. Indeed, unless for the view set before us, in the cross of Christ, of the plan devised for our salvation, it would have been utterly impossible to conceive in what manner God could have delivered us from destruction without compromising the justice of his character, and the honour of his law. It is necessary, in order to sustain justice in its full and perfect exercise, that the law which it has ordained be upheld with unyielding faithfulness, and that every transgression be followed with the threatened punishment. Now this takes away from the lawgiver the power of dispensing with the appointed penalties. Having been right to be ordained, they are equally right to be executed. Nay truth, after they have been promulgated, adds to the obligation arising from their intrinsic rectitude to their being enforced. Strictly speaking, therefore, perfect justice is incompatible with the exercise of mercy, at least in the execution of a law, however mercy may preside over its formation, and regulate its nature and

operation. The mercy of God, then, after his law was given to men, had no more any power to interfere, either to set aside its authority altogether, or in any degree whatever to modify its requirements, or mitigate its penalties. The law was under the sacred guardianship of justice, and the voice of justice alone could be heard in applying its provisions and appointing its awards.

But in the sufferings and death of Christ justice found a full satisfaction for the sins of all for whom he died; and now are they 'justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, 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.'

How precious is the salvation of the gospel viewed as the gift of an infinitely holy God, whose throne is the eternal dwelling-place of justice and judgment. He was under no obligation to interpose to save us—he could not even have purposed to do so without, at the same time, resolving to give up his Son to the death for us all—and O how amazing was that love, how boundless that mercy, which consented by paying a ransom so great, to open up a way by which it might extend itself towards us, and provide for our redemption.

Let us seek to have our hearts more deeply impressed with a knowledge of the infinite value of the riches of divine grace; and let the love of Christ constrain us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who loved them, and who gave himself for them. Whilst we rejoice in mercy, let us reverence justice; whilst we cherish salvation, let us acknowledge that God would have only glorified his justice in leaving us utterly and for ever to perish.

As the nature of God is infinitely holy, and his throne a throne of righteousness, there can evidently be no communion between him and those who continue in the love and practice of sin; and, therefore, in vain do they profess to rely upon offered mercy who are hardened in impenitence, or engrossed by the love of sinful pleasure, or unconvinced of the necessity of becoming dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness; or unwilling to exercise the self-denial and the perseverance requisite for insuring their progressive sanctification. Supplicate the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, and give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, seeking to be holy as he who hath called you is holy.

Under the rod of chastisement, and when ex-

perceiving the correction of God for sin, faint not when you are rebuked of him ; remember that whilst justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, mercy and truth go before his face ; and return to him with confession and supplication, and he will receive you ; for there is mercy with God that he may be feared, and plenteous redemption that he may be sought after.

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SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,'* Psal. xc. 2.

In every case where we ascend from the consideration of the creature to the contemplation of the Creator, we are conscious of passing over an infinite range of separation, which necessarily divides whatever is limited and dependent in its nature from Him who is self-existent, eternal, and immutable in his being, and in all his perfections. We feel that there can be no comparison between the finite and the infinite, and that the highest and most glorious of created intelligences, with all they possess, sink into absolute insignificance in the surpassing splendour of that glory which emanates from the presence of the supreme and eternal Godhead. And there is no circumstance by which the infinite disparity between God and his creatures admits of being more impressively realized, than by the absolute immutability which distinguishes his nature, contrasted with the precarious and limited character of the being conferred upon them.

But there are circumstances in the brief and mortal span of human existence, not to be overlooked, which render the lesson of humility and self-abasement arising from this subject, more strikingly and solemnly impressive. If the most permanent of all created things, if the stars of the firmament, and the mountains which they have shone upon for so many generations, are but as yesterday, compared with the years of the right hand of the Most High ; if even the highest and first rank of heaven's hierarchies veil their diminished heads before the eternity which belongs exclusively to God, how should man feel his infinite nothingness before the Almighty, and shut up, in the humility which the thought impresses, prostrate himself in holy adoration before the majesty and glory which belong to the infinite and uncreated source of all being.

We venerate whatever possesses the character of antiquity and that has come down through a long lapse of ages, preserving something of unchangeableness amidst the vicissitudes and fluctuations which are incident to all earthly things. The everlasting hills, the perpetual firmament, the unchanging sun, the ever-twinkling stars, all nature's more permanent features impress the thoughtful mind with a sentiment of awe, when he reflects upon their enduring nature ; when he thinks that they are the same now as when looked upon by the men of other days, whose names, if known at all, are only known from history ; and when he farther considers how they shall remain unchanged, and be the objects of veneration to other minds, it may be thousands of years after he and the generation to which he belongs shall have passed into everlasting forgetfulness. But what are these compared unto God ? The most stable works of nature are not, in the absolute sense of the term, unchangeable, but only more abiding, only less fleeting than the frail and perishing creatures who successively inhabit a world of change and death. There is a period appointed in the counsels of the Eternal when the framework of the material universe shall be utterly dissolved ; when the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; and when the earth, and all things in it, shall be turned up. But the throne of God is established for ever, and of his dominion there shall be no end. 'A thousand years are with him as one day, and one day as a thousand years.' He is from everlasting to everlasting—from eternity to eternity—beholding and ordaining whatever comes to pass ; he dwells in a sphere too exalted to be reached by change. Nature fades, but he partakes not of the decay. Worlds are annihilated, but the convulsion affects not his throne. As he owes his existence to none, he holds it in dependence upon none, but Jehovah, I am, is his peculiar name, his high and incommunicable glory. How devoutly should we acknowledge God as our Creator and Preserver, the Author of our existence, the source of our every blessing, and the cause upon whom we are necessarily and for ever dependent for all the good we enjoy, or ever can receive. It is his power which upholds, his goodness which enriches, and his quickening energy which vivifies all who live. Whatever of permanence or stability exists, results from the sovereign good pleasure of God, who ruleth over all. Did an erring, weak, capricious being preside over creation, what anarchy, misrule, and tribulation would instantly follow. But the great and unchangeable Jehovah reigneth ; and hence the consistency of plan, the regularity

of operation, and the uniformity of system which the universe presents. What cause to rejoice have angels and men because God reigneth, for he alone causeth us to dwell in safety; he is the strength of our lives, and the length of our days.

But in a particular manner, what joy and hope ought we not to find in the truth that the great, the unchangeable Jehovah, is a covenant God, the God of salvation, who has given us, in his word, exceeding great and precious promises, and who is calling us to the enjoyment of glory, honour, and immortality, at his own right hand in the heavens. The strength of Israel cannot depart; the Rock of ages shall never be shaken. Building upon him your confidence, and obeying his will, you shall never be put to shame, but he will justify all your hopes, and vindicate your fullest expectation. Wherever else you place your trust, uncertainty must be characteristic more or less of your hope. The princes of the earth die, and their favour ceases. Change is the characteristic of all sublunary things. But they that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. He is a sure portion, and an exceeding great reward; and though the hills may depart, and the mountains be removed, yet will his loving-kindness never depart from those who fear him, nor will his mercy be abolished.

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#### EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' John i. 1.*

The doctrine of the supreme divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ constitutes the grand central truth of Christianity, and confers infinite authority and glory upon the whole system of revealed religion. 'He who in former times spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they.'

The opponents of this sacred and momentous doctrine, aware how impossible it is to assail it successfully by denying that it stands supported

by a vast amount of scripture evidence, have had recourse to other modes to lessen or destroy its credibility and value in the estimation of the ignorant and inconsiderate. Of these one of their most usual expedients is to denounce it as mysterious and incomprehensible—and since they assume it as a general principle, that no man is bound to believe mysteries, they draw the sweeping conclusion, that the doctrine in question forms no part of divine revelation properly understood, and that any support which it receives, is more seeming than real, and is the result of misinterpreting or misunderstanding the language of scripture. True it is that no man can be required to believe a proposition that is *contrary* to reason, but that is a very different case from the present, where the mysteriousness of the doctrine manifestly arises solely from its being *above* reason; or in other words, such as our imperfect and limited reason cannot allow us fully to comprehend. Mysteries of this description are found in nature and providence as well as in religion; but no one can justly refuse to believe them or deny that the belief of them is most important and in some cases essential, not only to our well-being, but even to our very existence. The process by which the body of man is nourished, and his life prolonged, for instance, involves principles of the most mysterious nature, in so far as we call that mysterious which has hitherto and probably will always exceed the discovery of human research; but who refuses to comply with the rules of experience, and the instincts of nature, until he has first resolved and ascertained the reasons for which they should be acknowledged and followed, in regard to the nourishment and well-being of human life. So far from being necessary, it would in reality form a serious objection to a revelation professing to come from God, that it included nothing mysterious, or in other words, nothing but what the human mind could learn and understand for itself. The province of reason, in religion, is limited, to ascertain the fact whether the scriptures are from God, and also by the application of a sound and judicious criticism, to discover what they teach; but beyond this, it cannot and ought not to presume to go. Having ascertained that God has spoken to us through the medium of his word, and having determined what that word really says, we are bound to render implicit submission to the truth and authority of all it reveals, in order to escape the impiety and guilt involved in the sin of making God a liar.

The portion of scripture under consideration has always, and with the greatest truth, been considered as affording a most cogent and irre-

sistible testimony to the supreme divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible for language to be more explicit in expressing any doctrine. As if for the very purpose of cutting off all ground of cavil, not only are the attributes, perfections, and operations, peculiar to Deity, ascribed to Jesus; but it is expressly stated, 'the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' There are instances in other places of scripture, where, in a secondary and inferior sense, angels and potentates are designated God; but the more distinctly and forcibly to show that the name was not so to be understood in this place, it is first applied with an undoubted reference to the eternal Jehovah, and then it is immediately applied in the very same manner to Christ. But whilst the present passage will and ought to be decisive, with every candid and unprejudiced reader of the scriptures, as a proof of Christ's supreme divinity, it is far from being the only one which bears upon this momentous subject. How explicit and sublime is the testimony, for example, which Isaiah bears to the same truth, chap. ix. 6. 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.' Hence the apostle calls believers 'the church of God;' and to indicate the more explicitly that he employed the designation in reference to the divinity of Christ, he adds, 'which he hath purchased with his own blood,' Acts xx. 28. In the epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is described as higher than the angels, and as receiving their worship, which is only consistent with his being God. 'And again when he bringeth the first begotten into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.'

But it would be to repeat a great portion of the scripture, were we to enter upon this subject at length, or as its importance deserves. It is necessary, however, to notice that the works ascribed to Christ in his pre-existent state of creating the worlds, and that of judging the quick and the dead, and others in which he is at present or will hereafter be engaged, afford a decisive evidence to the same effect. The view which the accomplish-

ment of these mighty operations gives of his attributes and perfections is only consistent with the doctrine of his supreme divinity; and thus this infinitely momentous doctrine has its truth based not only on the written testimony of scripture, but on the broad and enduring foundation of his works from the beginning of the world.

The doctrine in question, though itself mysterious, and past finding out, is at the same time fraught with the most valuable and precious practical lessons of faith and holiness to every believer. How does it proclaim, for example, the unutterable depth of our ruin, that an interposition so transcendantly great and glorious was necessary to bring us salvation. What infinite cause to love and confide in God, is presented by the consideration, that God so loved us as to give not a finite or created being, but his only begotten Son, to be a propitiation for our sins, and to accomplish our redemption from eternal misery. What profound impressions of the infinite holiness and rectitude of the divine government, and of the unspeakable guilt and danger of sin, flow from realizing the necessity for that great work which Christ came to our world to accomplish. And when you view the sacrifice of Christ in connection with his exalted nature, what an infinite value must it not be felt to possess; and how is it fitted to bring peace and consolation to the most distressed and troubled mind! And in fine, what comfort and hope must it not supply to know that your Redeemer is God; that his love is from everlasting to everlasting; that his wisdom, his power, his grace, are all boundless, and that he has engaged to exercise all his divine and glorious perfections, for advancing the best interests, and securing the eternal salvation of his people. 'Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death,' Rev. i. 17, 18.

#### EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh,'* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

THE scriptures not only admit, but glory in the admission, that the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, or in other words, of the manifestation of God in the flesh, is a mystery; 'yea, even the very greatest of mysteries.' They have no controversy with any upon that point; but when the truth or reality of the mystery becomes the sub-

ject of question, they bear a decided testimony against the opinion of the unbeliever. The unbeliever denies that the truth of the mystery can be established—the scriptures declare the contrary, and supply the grounds upon which they demand our faith to it; for not only is it said that God was manifest in the flesh, but it is also added that he was ‘justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.’

Whether we understand by the Spirit, in this place, Christ's divine nature to be referred to, or more particularly the Holy Ghost, in either case, how fully can it be established that he was justified or confirmed to be God by the Spirit! What beams of divinity broke forth, and brightly shone in his darkest hours of humiliation and of suffering! ‘He did not display his royalty by a splendid equipage, sumptuous entertainments, or by advancing his followers to worldly honours; but he displayed it more gloriously by giving, what no earthly prince could give, health to the diseased, life to the dead, virtue to the profligate, and pardon to the guilty. Though a poor and mean woman was his mother, he was conceived and born of a virgin, the Holy Ghost coming upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her. Though born in a stable, and laid in a manger, the wise men of the east, taught by a star, discover deity amidst this debasement; nay an innumerable multitude of the heavenly host join together in solemnizing his seemingly ignoble birth. He spoke and acted not as man only, but as God. When he discovered the signs of human infirmity, he also discovered the attributes of divine glory and power. He was tempted of the devil, but the devil could not enter into the most despicable animal, without his permission. As a man he hungers, and is maintained by the kindness of pious women who minister to him of their substance; but as God he miraculously fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes. He is baptized by John, but at his baptism the Father proclaims, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ One moment weary with labour he falls asleep; a great storm arises; the waves beat, and the ship where he sleeps seems ready to sink; but in that dangerous crisis he rebukes the winds, says to the sea, ‘Peace, be still,’ and lo the storm is turned into a calm at his command and will. Did the character and circumstances of his disciples obscure his glory? He determines them with a word to forsake all, and follow him—showed that even the hearts of men are in his hand, and that he turneth them which way soever he will. The foolishness of God appears

wiser than man, and the weakness of God stronger than man, when he bestows on his despised followers miraculous powers, and a mouth and wisdom which their enemies cannot gainsay or resist. As a partaker of flesh and blood, he hath compassion on the wretched. As God he relieves them, healing the blind and the lame, curing the lepers, and even raising the dead. When apprehended as a malefactor, he demonstrates that no man could have taken his life from him, if he had not of himself been willing to lay it down. For he asks them sent to apprehend him, ‘Whom seek ye?’ and instantly they go backward, and fall to the ground. If men insult his sufferings, the sun is darkened, the earth trembles, and all nature is convulsed when the Lord of nature suffers. When pouring out his soul unto death, he divides a portion with the great, and divides the spoil with the strong.

He saves others, when his enemies scornfully say that himself he cannot save. When brought to the dust of death, and seemingly overcome, invisibly he conquers, and by death destroys death, and him that hath the power of death, that is the devil.\*

Angels were witnesses of the great mystery of God's manifestation in the flesh; and however the transaction may be doubted or disbelieved on earth, there is no diversity of sentiment, but one united feeling of profoundest admiration, regarding the fact entertained among the hosts and hierarchies in heaven. An embassy of angels announced his nativity to the shepherds who kept their flocks on the plains of Bethlehem; and it was from the lips of an angel that the joyful tidings of his resurrection from the dead were first communicated to the women who went to the sepulchre, early on the morning of the first day of the week; by them conveyed to the disciples at large. Some expositors render the word angels, in this place, by the synonymous term messengers, and explain it of the apostles; and certainly the testimony of the apostles, sustained as it was in the face of the most formidable sufferings and deaths, constitutes a sublime evidence to the truth of Christianity in general, and to the divinity of Christ in particular. ‘We have not followed cunningly devised fables,’ did they all in effect declare to the world, ‘when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he 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.’

\* Dr Erskine's Discourses, Discourse xii.

The diffusion and progress of Christianity destined at length to fill the whole earth, forms an additional evidence of the truth of the gospel, and of the divinity of its great Author. Ancient prophecy had announced, that in Christ all nations of the earth should be blessed; that of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end; and that all the ends of the earth should be given to him for an inheritance. He himself says, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' It proves that he is Lord of all, and has all the treasures of wisdom and grace at his disposal, that from the day of Pentecost to the present time, numerous as have been the enemies to his cause, and strenuous their efforts to destroy it, it has prevailed over all opposition, and is still going forward, conquering and to conquer. In accomplishing all the good pleasure of his will, as the great Head of the church, and the Author of spiritual blessings, meditate upon the infinite perfections which he must of necessity exercise. The empire of providence is swayed by the same hand which rules over the kingdom of grace, for much of the work of conversion and sanctification depends upon the concurrence of events, and the discipline which they impart; and much of the effect which attends counsel or instruction, depends upon the season when it is given. 'Ye are God's building, ye are God's husbandry,' says the apostle, in writing to the Corinthians; and no truth certainly can be more consolatory than that all our interests and concerns, for time and eternity, are under the direction and care of a divine Redeemer.

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#### NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God,'* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

THE gospel, in contradistinction to the law, has been beautifully and expressively designated by an apostle the administration of the Spirit. That divine Person of the adorable Godhead, who is known in scripture by the appellation of the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit, employs the gospel as the means by which he peculiarly acts upon the heart and conscience, enlightening, convincing, subduing and converting sinners; applying to believers the benefits of Christ's purchase for their justification, comfort, and sanctification; and in short, advancing in them, in all its various parts, that work of grace which is preparatory to their exaltation to a state of glory at God's right hand.

The personality of the Holy Spirit is clearly manifest from scripture, and the many passages in which he is spoken off, where it is undeniable that he is represented as a distinct person, utterly overthrow the tenet of those who would account for the name as only another appellation or expression for God. Thus, when our Lord was about to leave his disciples, he consoles them under the prospect of his departure by saying, 'when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.' It is manifest that this most precious promise would be deprived of all meaning, and would become utterly inexplicable and unintelligible, upon the theory of those who represent the Holy Spirit as only a name, and not a distinct person.

In the primitive church, the Holy Spirit conferred many miraculous gifts upon the apostles and early teachers of Christianity, and among these, nor the least important and valuable, was the gift of inspiration. By the possession of this they not only enjoyed for themselves an accurate, comprehensive, and glorious view of the dispensation of grace, and of all its constituent doctrines and principles, but they were enabled to communicate to others the mind of God upon any subject connected with salvation, in the most full and perfect manner. To the work of the Holy Spirit, in this important respect, our Lord directed the attention of the apostles, when he said, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come.'

The personality of the Holy Spirit is very decidedly marked in the passage before us, when he is described as searching the deep things of God. To *search*, in scripture language, does not signify a superficial or imperfect view of a subject, but a thorough knowledge of it to its utmost extent. Thus in the prophecies of Jeremiah it is written, 'I, the Lord, search the hearts; I try the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.' Accurate and minute knowledge of any subject is, among men, the result of searching for it, that is, of diligent and extended investigation; and the term searching, when applied to God the Father, in the latter passage, or to the Holy Spirit in the one before us, is a figurative expression, denoting the exact and thorough knowledge of the subjects which are described

as being made the theme of divine investigation. That the Spirit can search, or in other words, fully penetrate and understand all the deep things of God, is an evidence of divine perfection, which denotes that in this, as in all other attributes, the Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son. And accordingly we find, in the various acts of worship commanded to believers, that the Spirit is conjoined with the Father and the Son, as the object of adoration and praise. You are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The apostle beseeches his fellow-disciples, in Rom. xv. 30, 'for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit,' to strive together with him in their prayers to God on his behalf. You are admonished against grieving the Spirit, and against quenching the Spirit; and you are called to know that ye are temples of the Holy Spirit, 'which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own.'

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#### NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father,' Gal. iv. 6.*

THERE is a close and mutual connection among the various parts of the economy of grace, so that the believing reception of one doctrine prepares for the admission of the others in due succession, and ultimately conducts to a full and cordial understanding and acceptance of all the glorious truths connected with the scheme of divine mercy. Let a deep impression of guilt, for instance, be riveted upon the conscience, and a conviction of the utter inadequacy of mere human merit to procure acceptance with God for the sinner, and how does this prepare for receiving the great truth, that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin. And when a knowledge of the way of salvation through the Redeemer has been obtained, how easy does it become to pass on to a full knowledge of the blessings and privileges which belong to those for whom the Saviour died! He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things. And more particularly, how prepared is the believer's mind for receiving the doctrine of the Spirit after embracing the doctrine of justification by faith alone; and how necessary the transition by which you are led from concluding that you are brought by the death of Christ into a state of sonship, or

filial relation to God, to receive the doctrine, that, together with this rank, God will send forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying, Abba, Father.

In scripture the Holy Spirit is in some passages called the Spirit of God, and in others the Spirit of Christ, indiscriminately, according as the design of the inspired writer renders either the one application or the other more appropriate and expressive. This shows that he proceeds equally from both; and that he is not a mere attribute or name, as some have attempted to establish who have denied his personality. In Rom. viii. 9. we find both modes of appellation employed, the one in the first, and the other in the second clause of the verse. 'But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.' In the present passage the Holy Spirit appears to be called the Spirit of the Son, that is, of Christ, both because he is imparted to believers through Christ, or in virtue of their union with him, and also because he produces in them the same mind which was in Christ generally; and particularly the same confidence and love towards their heavenly Father.

During his humiliation, how did Christ manifest, on every occasion, an infinite love and complacency in the Father, a profound acquiescence in his will, together with a deep reliance upon his divine aid, in his deepest afflictions! 'Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.' Now the same love and the same faith which distinguished Christ the Elder Brother, are also formed in his followers, the Holy Spirit being given them for this end, that they also may be able to draw near with confidence to a throne of grace, as children to a father who is able and willing to help them. In all the doctrines, and in all the ordinances of the gospel, there is a manifestation more or less explicit of that filial relation to God, into which it is the grand design of the dispensation of mercy to introduce all who believe. At a communion table we are instructed to sit down as sons, and not to stand afar off as aliens, or to look on as menials or servants. In prayer we are encouraged to confide in God as most willing to receive us, and to supply all our wants according to his riches in glory through Jesus Christ. And it is only in so far as you have attained to a holy love and

confidence in God, through the merits of the Saviour, that you have come to the enjoyment of that spirit of sonship which it is the design of the gospel to form in the souls of men. By nature we are all filled with a spirit of enmity, or in other words, of rebellion and distrust towards God; and it is not until Christ is received, and the promises of the gospel, that this spirit is destroyed, and that the spirit of reconciliation and adoption is obtained.

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TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen,' 2 Cor. xiii. 14.*

Nor only do we find in scripture the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, severally manifested, in relation to the particular connection in which they stand to the plan of redemption; the Father representing the Godhead, and sustaining the office of securing the authority and honour of the divine law; the Son humbling himself, by becoming subject to the law in order to fulfil it; and the Holy Spirit applying Christ and the benefits of redemption to the souls of believers; but we find also passages, such as the present, where the *economic* distinctions referred to are scarcely seen to exist at all, and in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are represented in their unity as one God, the Author of all mercy and blessing. As it has been the work of redemption which has more peculiarly called forth the manifestation of the distinct personality of the three persons in the adorable Trinity, the scriptures appear to teach us, that one great end for this manifestation was to lead us to understand distinctly, and to feel with deep impression our infinite obligations to redeeming love; and thus we ought to be careful to maintain in our minds a realizing apprehension of the absolute oneness which subsists, not only in essence, but in counsel, and in operation, between the three persons of the eternal Godhead. Undoubtedly Christ shall continue for ever to exist as Emmanuel, God-Man; and the redeemed shall continue to behold in him the Mediator who, by assuming our nature, and becoming bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, satisfied the law, and delivered them from hell; at the same time it is to be kept in view, that Christ has lifted up our nature to the throne of heaven, and that he there possesses all that glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

It is evident that unless it had been the object

of inspiration to teach us the absolute equality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, it would not have presented instances of prayers, doxologies, and addresses in which they are conjoined and contemplated as the object of our worship, the supreme source of blessing, and the adorable Author of all glory and excellence. Upon the hypothesis, that two mere created and dependent beings were advanced to this honour, would there not manifestly be an impropriety, or rather an impiety, in such a conjunction, utterly inconsistent with the spirit of pure and reverential worship which the scriptures uniformly inculcate, and exclusively authorise. In order to manifest more fully the perfect equality subsisting between the Father and the other persons of the blessed Trinity, the order is not followed in this place, which the *economic* relation constituted among them would prescribe; but the blessing first supplicated, is 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,' and then in succession, 'the love of God,' and 'the communion of the Holy Ghost.'

At the same time, so much of the *economic* relation may here be perceived, as shows in a very beautiful and interesting manner the way in which, as sinners, we become partakers of that great salvation, which is comprehensive of the blessings specified in this prayer, and of all others either implied in them, or that flow from them. We must then, in the first instance, receive the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; in other words, his favour, including an interest in his righteousness, and in his advocacy or intercession; thereupon we become what otherwise in justice we never could be, objects of complacency or love to God the Father; and in consequence of this, again, we are, in the last place, privileged to enjoy that blessed communion of the Spirit which is co-extensive with the society of the redeemed in earth, and in heaven.

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TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' 1 Cor. iii. 16.*

IN the previous context, the apostle insists largely upon the nature and design of the church of Christ; shows that it has one only foundation upon which it rests, viz., Christ himself; that apostles and ministers are merely artificers employed for the erection of this spiritual edifice, and that believers, as component parts of the building, require to be eminently distinguished

for their personal holiness, and for the good works which flow from their faith. 'If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward; if any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.' To urge yet more strongly upon believers the obligation to holiness, the apostle farther advances the solemn consideration which he thus states, 'know ye not that ye are the temple of the living God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?'

Every one must be familiarly acquainted with the general idea suggested by a temple. It is a place peculiarly consecrated to the worship of God, in which accordingly he claims a special property, and where his presence and favour may be found by those who worship with reverence and with godly fear. Under the Mosaic dispensation, there was one place where God was pleased to manifest his presence in the holy of holies, where the shechinah, or visible glory, shone forth between the cherubim from above the mercy-seat. Thither, however, the high priest alone was permitted to come once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and also for the sins of the people. The typical vail which excluded from this sacred spot, and which it would be fatal to attempt to pass, indicated that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest; that a controversy still subsisted between the Most High and a rebellious race; and that a more excellent sacrifice than that of bulls and of goats was necessary to satisfy offended justice, and to reconcile us to God.

Now when the apostle describes the Corinthians as temples of the living God, he points out, in a striking manner, the privileges and blessings enjoyed under the gospel, and the intimate union and favour with God to which believers are admitted, as contrasted with the alienation, distrust, and terror, with which the law inspired those who were under its institutions. We are called to know that God is in Christ Jesus reconciling a guilty world unto himself, and not imputing to men their trespasses; and all men, whatever be their condition, are now invited to cast away the arms of rebellion, to submit to mercy, and to become partakers of the most intimate union and favour with God. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock, and if any man open I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.' Now the middle wall of partition is destroyed—God is besieging the hearts of his children, and will have them to open to him, that he may come in and dwell with them, and walk in them, and be a father to them for ever.

When man was originally created, he was endowed with a rational and immortal soul, and was rendered capable of serving and glorifying God in a more perfect manner than any of the rest of the creatures connected with this lower world. He was in reality an animated temple, holy and pure, from the altar of whose heart there ascended the incense of a ceaseless adoration, gratitude, and praise; and all whose faculties were ministering servants, consciously engaged in a higher service than that of the creature, contemplating in whatever they did, as their high ultimate end, the glory of the Creator. But sin dissolved the sacred relation, and laid in the dust man's spiritual glory; and spoiled of innocence, and forsaken of God, his heart became the dwelling-place of every unclean and evil thing; and his condition would have been one of hopeless and irretrievable ruin, had not God, in his sovereign mercy, seen meet to signalize his glory by accomplishing our redemption, rather than consigning us to merited destruction and everlasting death.

It is the blessed object of God, under the gospel, to receive man back into favour, to cleanse him from all his idols, and all his abominations, to establish his throne in his heart, to fit him for enjoying communion with him, and serving him; and in fine, to exalt him to dwell with him, and to glorify him throughout eternal ages in the kingdom of heaven.

Are ye the temple of God, and what purity of character, what devotion of spirit, what entire consecration of all your powers and talents to the honour and service of God, should distinguish you from a world that lieth in wickedness! To profane a temple, by introducing into it any thing unsuitable to the sacred use for which it has been erected, is an act of aggravated impiety; and to resign yourselves to any sin, to follow any idol, after being enlightened and sanctified by the Spirit of God, involves an amount of guilt of peculiar magnitude, and cannot fail, unless speedily repented of, to incur the heaviest judgments. To this our Lord seems to refer in Matt. xii. 43. 'When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.'

What need of vigilance, self-denial, and prayer, earnest and persevering prayer, that you may be kept pure from idols, as become the temples of

God. How true the testimony of scripture, that it is not in man who walketh to direct his steps aright. What a lamentable tendency to spiritual backsliding and deterioration is characteristic of our nature. How soon does the flame of piety begin to burn dimly upon the altar of the heart, and how constantly does it need to be revived and purified. The service of the house of Aaron, in waiting on the ancient temple, was unceasing; and they were exempted from all other labours to devote themselves exclusively to its appointed duties. And what an interesting lesson do they, in this respect, present to you, of the careful and assiduous zeal with which you should watch over the interests of your soul, and be always found living to the glory of God. O let the worship of God be attended to with punctual and persevering care. Every morning and evening offer up your sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. Quench not the Holy Spirit. Lead a life of faith, and spirituality, and holiness. 'What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty;' 2 Cor. vi. 16—18.

ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations,'* Psal. xxxiii. 11.

THE immutability of God's counsels is a necessary conclusion from the unchangeableness of his being and perfections. 'He is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent.' His unerring wisdom, infinite holiness, and absolute truth, preclude the possibility of his ever being under a necessity of deviating from the determination which he has formed, or of failing to fulfil the engagements to which his faithfulness stands pledged. Known unto him are all things to the end of the world, and no unforeseen difficulties, no unexpected circumstances, can ever require him to modify his purposes to meet the altered aspect which the state of the universe may at any time present. Even the actions of free and intelligent agents can occasion no uncertainty, and induce no change in the

eternal counsels of God, but fall in with the most perfect accordance with his foreknowledge and foreordained purpose. And thus it is that the fulfilment of prophecy has never in a single instance failed, when the appointed time has arrived for its accomplishment; and although rebel spirits and wicked men, in many instances, had nothing less in view than to establish the counsels of God, and to vindicate his truth, their agency has, in innumerable and very important cases, been overruled to that end. How, for instance, was the crucifixion of Christ the effect of the blind rage and wickedness of his enemies, and yet in every point how were they controlled and overruled, that in such minute particulars as casting lots for his raiment, and abstaining from breaking one of his bones, they gave prophecy cause to triumph in the complete fulfilment of her every announcement.

To reconcile the decrees of God, or even his foreknowledge, with the freedom of the human will, is a subject of too profound a nature to be competent for the limited powers of man, at least in the present state of existence; and it should be sufficient for us to know that the fact is so without being curiously inquisitive into its grounds. In no sense can the actions of wicked men be so traced to God, or connected with the necessity of fulfilling his counsels, as to charge him, in the most remote manner, with being the author of sin. On this subject the scriptures are most explicit. 'Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.'

Neither ought we so to think of the immutability of the divine counsels, as to imagine that the necessity for exertion or prayer is superseded, by the consideration that whatever has been ordained cannot but come to pass, whether we labour and pray for it or not. God who ordains the end, ordains likewise the means, and without the employment of the one we have no ground to look forward and expect the other. The duty of prayer has been appointed by God, and his blessing is promised in answer to it, and if any neglect the duty, they are justly excluded from the reception of the benefits which otherwise they might have received.

Let this subject be improved, as a reason for being steadfast and consistent in the Christian life. God is unchangeably the same for ever, and our allegiance to him ought to be no less devout than permanent and enduring. The same obligation which exists now will always exist, to entitle

God to your highest love, your holiest confidence, and your most reverential obedience. His glory shall never depart, his throne is established throughout all generations; his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. 'Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid; have I not told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God; I know not any,' Isa. xlv. 6—9.

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ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,' Rom. ix. 15, 16.*

THE sovereignty of God especially appears in the exercise of his grace; and to make it the more to be known that he is solely determined by his sovereign good pleasure in exercising forgiveness and mercy, how often does he proceed in a way wholly opposite to that which our ideas of fitness and propriety would dictate. 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.'

What a remarkable illustration of this truth was given, in selecting fallen men in preference to fallen angels, to become the objects of redeeming love. The whole tenor of the divine dispensations, in connection with the development of the plan of mercy, is demonstrative of the same thing. The people of the Jews were chosen to be God's peculiar heritage, not because they excelled the rest of the nations; they were inferior in almost all the elements of grandeur which constitute the magnificence of empires. When God would set up a king over Israel, he took not the first born of Jesse, but the youth who had not yet reached manhood, and who, apparently unequal to the toils of war, was employed in the peace-

ful labours of the shepherd in the distant solitudes of the land. In the family of Isaac, the blessing descends, not to the first born, as the patriarch himself intended and desired, but according to the sovereign purpose of God, to Jacob, the younger of the two brothers. And the same infinite sovereignty is visible in the adjustment of all the details of the plan of salvation. What, for instance, could be more powerfully demonstrative of this than the selection of the humble virgin to be the Saviour's mother; Bethlehem-Ephrath, little among the thousands of Judah, to be the place of his nativity; and the fishermen of Galilee to be his chosen disciples and ambassadors to the nations?

There is no doctrine more offensive to the innate pride of the human heart, than that which teaches us to acknowledge the sovereign and unmerited grace of God as the source from which we must look for salvation, and all its constituent blessings; and the entire absence of all room for boasting, in connection with the dispensation of mercy to the guilty and the lost. There is a powerful disposition in the sinful creature to magnify self; and to deem that it must be by some means honourable to our own strength and wisdom, rather than glorious to the grace and goodness of God, that salvation must be obtained. Hence the multitudes who, in the spirit of blinded Israel, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. They despise, as too humiliating and too deeply abasing, the doctrine of the cross; that salvation is the free gift of God, unmerited by any, and equally free to the most vile and guilty of sinners as to themselves; that God is sovereign in his mercy, and that publicans and sinners may enter into the kingdom of heaven, whilst they and others of similar pretensions to a higher worth are kept out, is what they cannot submit to believe. They trust to establish a claim, founded upon their virtues, to salvation, and by their defective and sustained obedience do they blindly and impiously arrogate a right to the clemency and favour of God. Let it be deeply impressed, however, that if salvation come by the law at all, it must be exclusively by the law; or if by grace, it must be wholly by grace.

## TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou, even thou, art God alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou pre-servest them all,'* Neh. ix. 6.

THE knowledge of God is communicated both through the medium of his works, and of his word. It may be read in the fields of nature, and in the pages of revelation; it shines in the starry firmament with its innumerable host of revolving worlds; and beams with pure and intense splendour in the sacred records of the inspired testimony. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night succeeding night teacheth knowledge. But how should we stand reprov'd and self-condemned from considering how little accordance in general there is between the demonstrations of God, which are daily and unceasingly pouring in around us, and the ordinary tenor and habitude of our minds. What folly, what inconsideration, what enmity against God, characterize the heart and the thoughts of man! The whole scene of nature and providence is fitted to arrest and to fix our attention upon him who ruleth over all, and who is every where present, beholding the evil and the good. The morning proclaims his loving-kindness, and the evening his faithfulness. The varied seasons of the rolling year all speak of him. Whether it be the howling blasts of winter, or the gentle opening of the budding spring, the gay luxuriance of blooming summer, or the abundant riches of gathered autumn, that draw our attention to God, all direct us to lift the hymn of gratitude to him whose tender mercies are over all his works. The universe is replete with the evidences of his presence, the traces and manifestations of his divine perfections. When you look to the heavens you behold the magnificence of his creative and constructive power, in those vast systems receding into endless space, which perform in unmeasurable fields their majestic and ceaseless revolutions. When you walk abroad through nature's landscapes, each scene of loveliness that meets your eye, each object of interest that fixes your attention, all the organization and beauty that you admire, whether in things animate or inanimate, the very flowers of the earth, the grass of the field, or the insect that almost eludes your observation as it fulfils its ephemeral destiny,—all proclaim to you the being and the perfections of him who is the universal parent of all; and whose every work reveals him to be excellent in working and wonderful in counsel. But instead of tell-

ing you where you may find God, let us rather ask, where is he not? Can you flee from his Spirit, or leave behind you the proof of his existence, or escape beyond the limits of his authority and of his laws? The creation, throughout all its departments, is a witness of God, and an impressive demonstration of the duty of according with his will. It responds to every impulse of his power, and fulfils every dictate of his mind. How pointedly does the sun, from day to day, keep his track, and know his time of rising, and of going down. With what regularity do the waters of the great deep ebb and flow, and all the processes of nature observe their appointed courses. And is it that the human heart is the only place where God is not adored and his will complied with? O what a miracle of wickedness is every ungodly impenitent man! He appears as a dark blot on the face of creation, that absorbs without reflecting or manifesting the image of its divine Author; a jarring chord that mars the sacred symphony of that mighty harp whose every string tells, in sweetest music, that the hand which framed and which touches it is divine. Let every irreligious man consider the host of witnesses around him, and above him, which declare the power and glory of God. Let him meditate upon the infinite excellence and divine majesty of the adorable Jehovah. Let him ponder his title to receive from his rational creatures all praise, and honour, and blessing, and thanksgiving. 'The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom extendeth over all. Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominions. Bless the Lord, O my soul,' Psal. ciii. 19—22.

The withholding from God the glory due to his great name as the supreme Creator, Governor, and Benefactor of all things, is a sin which has often been visited with the effects of his most signal displeasure. When David numbered the host with a feeling of unholy confidence in an arm of flesh, and withdrew his trust and dependence from the Rock of Israel, he not only subjected himself to the remorse of his own conscience, but entailed a pestilence upon the people, which in those days cut down seventy thousand men. When Nebuchadnezzar, in a spirit of sinful self-elation, arrogated to himself the praise of having exalted Babylon to that height of grandeur and magnificence which rendered her the mistress of cities, saying, as he walked in his

palace, and surveyed her extent and her splendour, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.'

The adoption of second causes in the economy of the divine administration is an arrangement highly beneficial in its use, and eminently worthy of him to appoint, who ordains all things in infinite and unerring wisdom. It forms a mode of administering events more adapted to the nature and faculties of human beings, constituted as they at present are, than any other that could be substituted in its stead. In consequence of the invariable sequency which connect causes with their effects, we adjust our conduct, regulate our expectations, and exercise our powers in the most sure and satisfactory manner. Upon the institution of second causes, in short, depends all the advantage of observation, experience, and science, without which the active powers of man could not be exercised to any purpose, and would have been possessed in vain. But is it on account of an excellence, in his mode of administration, which contributes so essentially to the harmony of nature, and to the preservation and happiness of every living thing, that we are to overlook God, who has given to all things, not only their existence, but their several properties and qualities, so that for any power or efficacy they may possess they are wholly dependent upon him whose they are and for whose glory they are created. 'Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith, or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood,' Isa. x. 15.

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TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them,'* Eccl. xii. 1.

THERE is scarcely any object of greater interest, or that should engage in a stronger degree, the

attention of the Christian philanthropist, than the sound moral and religious education of the young. View the youth of a nation or community individually, and they may appear of little comparative importance; but view them in the aggregate, take them in the whole, and they constitute the hope of society, the elements of its future fabric with whom it must depend whether the cause of moral, intellectual, and religious improvement shall decline or advance. The young form the silent but sure invaders of the country of their birth, who in a few short years shall occupy every seat, and fill every department of social life from the highest to the lowest, and impart an aspect and character of their own to the movements and operations of the great social system. And a duty, the importance of which the dictates of mere natural policy so powerfully enforces, has yet a higher and more sacred sanction from the word of God; which by precept and example shows how important it is to lead the young to an early and decided pursuit of piety and virtue, as the source of their true happiness both here and hereafter.

In the exhortation before us, the royal preacher does not deem it unworthy of his elevated office and important duties to condescend to present himself as the counsellor of the young; and the counsel which he gives is one deserving of all the honour which it could receive, by coming from the lips of the wisest and most illustrious king of Israel. How precious is the season of youth for laying the foundation of all true excellence and worth; and what a lamentable fact is it that its advantages are often defeated by the indiscretion, the folly, and the inconsideration so frequently characteristic of the youthful mind. It may be most appropriately called the spring time of human life; for not only does the corporeal frame then disclose its advancing powers with peculiar loveliness, but the expanding mind, in the freshness of its early impressions, in the vividness of its affection, in the constant flow and energy of its spirits, in the quickness and versatility of its powers of observation and memory, and in the untiring activity of all its faculties, presents a most invaluable opportunity for making progress in every department of knowledge and excellence. An eminent philosopher has justly remarked, that were the amount of human acquirements divided into two parts; the one comprehending what is acquired in the season of youth, and the other that which is laid up in after years; the former would decidedly preponderate in extent and value. But above all is the season of youth favourable for acquiring and cultivating religious

principles and impressions, and for forming the character to a conformity to the holy commandments of God. And accordingly, they who begin to seek God early have the special promise given to them that they shall find him, Prov. viii. 17. How beautiful and interesting is piety in youth, how hateful and awfully inauspicious profaneness and vice. Bring as a grateful tribute to your Creator the first-fruits of your lives; bestow your earliest and chief attention upon his blessed word; employ your activity and strength in his holy service, and direct your prayers to the end that he would ever guide and sanctify and preserve you in his fear. By commencing early the Christian life, you will not only make greater progress in it, but you will do so with more ease and pleasantness than those who delay and who familiarize themselves with courses far from being favourable to their future well being. When the young are seen uniting with the loveliness of youth, the still more pure and lasting charms of religion and holiness, tempering the sprightliness of their prime with the seriousness and humility of true wisdom, blending with the recreations and pursuits of their age preparation for eternity, what parent will not rejoice, what Christian friend will not approve and commend. 'A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.'

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and a good understanding have all they who keep his commandments. Let religion guide you, and your course shall be in the end triumphant. When we behold the stately vessel gay with its streamers, and bright in its ornaments, bounding into the ocean, its future element, we cannot help thinking of the varied destiny which lies before it; what storms it may encounter, what unseen and unknown dangers it may have to brave; and if the benevolent mind must breathe the fond wish that it may long speed a prosperous course, and be preserved by a kind providence through all the perils of the deep, until laid aside, no more to be fraught with human interests and concerns, O how much more is the destiny of young immortals in the prime of life; and with the longer voyage of the world before them, fitted to awaken a yet deeper and more intense solicitude. And when we think of the many dangers of their probationary existence, the temptations, afflictions, and trials which lie before them, who does not pray that they may be kept from all evil, and be brought at last unto the heavenly kingdom? Commend yourselves to God by heartfelt and persevering supplication; take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye

may stand; having done all, to stand. 'Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.'

THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works,'* Ps. cxlv. 17.

A profound reliance upon the righteousness of God, amidst the vicissitudes and under the trials of life, forms the source of genuine resignation, and affords a principal motive for desiring to improve to a proper end the painful dispensations of providence. We may rest assured that no trouble would be ordained unless it were merited, and that when sent it is designed and fitted to evince the evil of sin; and by humbling us to lead us to turn unto God, seeking mercy, and resolved to live for the future in accordance with the requirements of his holy will. What ample illustration does the whole course of providence present, when received in connection with the doctrines of the gospel, that God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. The end which he seeks to accomplish in all his dealings is the sanctification of his people; and his every measure is pursued in perfect and unerring righteousness. Even the love which he cherishes towards them is subordinated to the still higher love which he bears to righteousness; and instead of allowing sin to remain in them he uses often the painful discipline of the rod, and the sharp heat of the furnace, to cleanse them from their idols, and to purify them from their dross.

The righteousness of God was remarkably demonstrated in the ejection of our first parents from paradise; and in laying them under the curse which entailed sorrow and death upon them, and upon all their posterity, in consequence of the violation of the divine law. Even though he had so loved them, that he admitted them to the closest and most confidential intercourse and communion, yet could he not allow their sins to pass unpunished, nor depart from the execution of the law which he had given them to obey. In the case of Moses, too, highly distinguished as he was in many respects, even above other prophets and holy men, how strikingly was the righteousness of God manifested, when, for speaking unadvisedly with his lips at the waters of Meribah, he and Aaron were deprived of the privilege of being allowed to lead the people of Israel into the promised land. In some respects,

sin in the servants of God is more heinous than in others, and particularly when their mercies and blessings have been great, and therefore they may incur a heavier rebuke and more painful chastisement. But their sufferings and pains are limited to the present life; and therefore they may the more patiently endure. For God will not cast off for ever his servants, nor will he utterly consume them in his anger; but he will chastise them in measure, and afterwards will he rejoice over them, to bless them and to do them good. 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. For 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,' Is. liv. 8—10.

The whole history of the church and of its several branches, affords still farther demonstration of the truth, that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. How did he reprove the seven churches in Asia for all their backslidings and transgressions, and call them to repent, lest he should come quickly and remove their candlestick out of its place. When mercies are misimproved, how surely are they followed by judgments, and when privileges are despised or are held in unrighteousness, how irrevocably are they at last forfeited and lost. And on the other hand, how true is it, that blessings abound to those who are steadfast in their integrity, and who have suffered for righteousness' sake, and who have trusted in the divine faithfulness and goodness in days of degeneracy and trial. The apostle presents encouragement to the believing Hebrews, despised no doubt, and persecuted by their unbelieving fellow-countrymen, from this consideration—'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister; and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.'

The righteousness of God will yet be more fully and gloriously manifested by the transactions and decisions of the great day of judgment, when he shall render to all men according to the

deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. They who have believed with the heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have truly died to sin and lived to righteousness, shall then be acknowledged and accepted; an everlasting separation shall be made between the precious and the vile, between them who feared God and them who feared him not. 'But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for 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, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness,' Mal. iii. 2, 3.

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee,' Deut. viii. 2.*

PECULIARLY impressive and interesting were the claims which the deliverances God had wrought out for them, and the mercies he had imparted to them, during their journey to the land of promise, had upon the remembrance of the Israelites to the latest generations. They were under a state of discipline and preparation, at that period, which it was salutary and instructive for them ever afterwards to refer to, as fitted to show them the danger of falling again into those sins which they had previously been guilty of; and the necessity of being warned and admonished by the judgments which had then been incurred. 'The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no: and he humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy Father know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old, neither did thy foot swell these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.'

The condition of the Israelites in the wilderness was typical of the pilgrimage of faith, to which you are called as the followers of Jesus; and O how often, like theirs, does our unbelief require to be rebuked, our pride to be corrected, our murmuring and rebellion to be visited with the

rod of painful chastisement, and our many wanderings from duty and from God to be repressed with a holy severity. What improvement and advantage might we not reap, if we habituated ourselves to reflect more carefully upon all the way that the Lord our God has led us; what cause for humiliation would we not find in our manifold sins; and what motives for gratitude that we were not permitted utterly to perish, in being given over to our hearts' lusts.

The habit of devoutly reviewing God's dealings with them has always been characteristic of his genuine people, and has eminently tended to advance their best interests; deepening their sense of his manifold mercies, showing them the duty of continuing to trust in him, and supplying them with a source of wisdom and experience of a peculiarly important and valuable nature amidst the temptations and trials of life. An instance of this we have in the history of David, who when Saul would have dissuaded him from encountering Goliath, as not able to fight with him in battle, called to mind the merciful preservation vouchsafed to him on previous occasions of peril by the favour of God, and said, 'The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.' In the case of the great apostle of the Gentiles, how frequent and solemn are the references which he makes to his former unconverted state, when he was a persecutor and injurious, and how profound is the admiration and gratitude which he expresses that he should have been counted worthy to receive mercy, and to be made a preacher of that gospel which he went about to destroy. 'Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.'

How infinitely unmerited must the mercies of God, which they have so richly enjoyed, appear to those who habituate themselves to a careful consideration of all the way in which he has led them. 'To us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets,' Dan. ix. 8—10.

What motives to repentance and to new obedience arise from a saving consideration of the long-suffering and forbearance of God. 'It

is now high time to awake out of sleep.' How vile and unprofitable does the service of sin appear to them who look back upon it; 'what profit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed, for the end of those things is death?'

How should the remembrance of past mercies be treasured up as an incentive to bless God for his goodness, and as a reason for patiently submitting to his will on the day of trouble. 'Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?' 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

It is valuable to form a connected view of God's dealings; to see them in their principle and in their end, as all designed to advance his own glory and to work together for good to them who love him. How many erroneous impressions and false views would it not correct, concerning what is truly good for man, thus to consider the ways of the most High. 'We call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up.' But a juster estimate would teach us to esteem the lowly, the afflicted, the poor and contrite in spirit; those whose trials, though numerous, have all been sanctified, as the alone blessed and truly happy. Better is it to choose with Moses, to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy all the riches and honours of Egypt. In the end, how shall the redeemed, on taking a retrospect of all the way in which God has led them, approve of the wisdom and faithfulness of every dispensation which he allotted in the journey of life. 'They shall sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints.'

FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'In him we live, and move, and have our being,'*  
Acts xvii. 28.

THE reason at the present day, and with the many religious advantages we enjoy, why any do not glorify God as God, neither are thankful, is not that they are ignorant of his nature and perfections, as the omnipotent God, and the supreme Benefactor, but that they do not desire to retain the knowledge of God in all their thoughts. The age of idolatry has for ever passed away; but still is there reason for the expostulation and remon-

strance which was originally addressed to the house of Israel, being applied to us, in all its original force and severity: 'Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider.' How inadequately do we realize our dependence upon God, the intimacy of his continued presence, the operation of his sustaining hand, the ceaseless communications of goodness which flow to us from his boundless liberality. Although he is the strength of our lives, the health of our countenance, and the length of our days, may not weeks, and months, and even years pass away without our rendering to him any homage, or expressing any gratitude, or testifying the least consciousness of his Almighty power and unwearied care. And when this is considered, how can any pretend to deny the depravity of human nature, or that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God?'

The doctrine of our entire and constant dependence upon God, obviously lays us under a variety of very solemn and important duties to our supreme Benefactor. Of these, gratitude evidently holds the first rank, together with all those devout acknowledgments by which it ought to be expressed. It is meet that we celebrate the loving-kindness of God every morning, and show forth his faithfulness every evening. Submission is another important duty, implying resignation to the divine will, and contentment with our lot, and with all the events and circumstances by which it may be marked. A cheerful alacrity in duty is farther required; that we live as seeing him who is invisible, and that we walk worthy of all the mercy and goodness which we are daily receiving from his hand.

Elevating views of the perfections and character of God are peculiarly adapted to sustain our zeal in his service, and to engage our habitual homage and reverence towards his holy name. How honourable, how blessed, to be the worshippers and servants of him who filleth heaven and earth with his presence, who is the supreme Proprietor of countless worlds, and the beneficent Author of all being, and all excellence. Under what an infinitely important light is religion and all its duties seen, when viewed in connection with the glory and majesty of him who is the supreme and only potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. That he should allow us to know him, that he should admit us to confide in him, and hold communion with him, and serve him, what a distinction is it, what an unspeakable

honour. He is the sovereign source of all riches, and wisdom, and power, and excellence; the Author of life, and of its every enjoyment. His presence forms the light and glory of heaven; his frown sheds darkness and desolation on every region on which it falls. With what reason should we acknowledge, with emotions of the liveliest gratitude and wonder, the infinite mercy and goodness of God. 'He that is mighty hath done great things for us, holy is his name. His mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, and he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever,' Luke i. 49—56.

Little as the puny and short lived actors on the scene of time may think of that eternal and Almighty Being who, in the infinitude of his power, wisdom, and goodness, created and upholds this vast and glorious universe, with every thing it contains, he is no distant or unconcerned spectator of its interests or movements; he sits not retired in viewless majesty, leaving the works of his hands to be the sport of accident: he surrenders not the sceptre of his kingdom to any delegated power, as if he could be weary, or needed to find relief by dividing, with any other, the care and anxieties of empire; neither does the perfection of his government, nor the incommunicable attributes of his nature, admit of such a severance between the Creator and his works; he alone is exclusively and essentially self-existent, and independent; and other beings, from the very necessity of their nature, can only live, and move, and act through him; as a ray of light lives in its connection with the centre of illumination whence it emanates; as the stream exists and flows only whilst it continues connected with the fountain from which it has its birth, in like manner all things exist in their dependence upon God, who sustains them in being and in the possession of their every property, so that the moment he withdraws from any of them his sustaining hand, or intercepts the communication of his gracious blessing, they instantaneously and unavoidably perish.

Let the consideration of this great truth be deeply and permanently impressed upon the heart; thus will the ever-varying scene of human life, with all its ceaseless changes, lead forth your thoughts to God, and constitute a daily renewed source of piety and praise; thus will you be taught to cherish a lowly estimate of yourselves,

and of your various resources, faculties, and blessings, for the continuance of which every moment you are dependent upon the divine will; and thus will you feel the duty of engaging in all your labours and enterprises in a spirit of prayerful reliance upon the help and favour of God, and with the sincere desire and intention, that whatever you do may prove acceptable in his sight, and conducive to his glory. 'Go to now, ye that say, To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that,' James iv. 13—15.

#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps,'* Prov. xvi. 9.

ENDOWED with powers of reason and reflection, it is not only allowed, but required, that we should devise our way; yet should it always be in accordance with the dictates of God's revealed word, and in submission to his most holy and blessed will. The sin consists in man 'leaning to his own understanding,' doing what seemeth good in his own eyes, and fixing his plans and his purposes without reference to the sovereign purpose or mind of God. 'Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil.'

It forms an important and interesting part of practical religion to refer all things to God; to trace his hand guiding and directing whatever comes to pass, and to acknowledge, with habitual reverence and submission, the wisdom of all his ways, and the righteousness of all his dispensations. In those examples of piety which the scriptures have transmitted for our instruction, nothing is more distinguishable than the habitual and devout recognition of God in all things which has been usual with his people. Their brighter and their darker experience alike embodies the

acknowledgment, that he ordains, in righteousness and faithfulness, whatever comes to pass. Many seem to live as if God only interposed on great occasions, and in connection with afflictive dispensations; and that the ordinary tenor of providence was a current which flowed smoothly of its own accord, and which required no immediate acknowledgment of the hand of God to be made. They cherish no practical impression of the doctrine of a particular providence, or of the influence which it should constantly exercise upon their minds. It is, indeed, the inestimable privilege of the afflicted to know that God is a refuge to the distressed, and a very present help in the time of trouble; but beware of quenching the grateful emotions which his goodness should awaken, or of forgetting, in the day of ease and prosperity, that all your well-springs are in God. It is one and the same Almighty Ruler who holds all our destinies in his hand; who both killeth and maketh alive, who maketh poor and who maketh rich, who bringeth low and who lifteth up.'

The doctrine, that God rules over all, and that there is nothing too great to dispense with his care, and nothing too little to be beneath his notice, is accordant with the testimony of scripture, and all the most enlightened and exalted views which reason, as well as revelation, can form of his nature. We see, within the limits of our contemplation, no inconsiderable portion of that vast progression of being which seems to retire to an infinitude beneath, which cannot be followed for its minuteness, and to rise to another infinitude above, which cannot be comprehended or contemplated for its vastness and sublimity. But is there any point, within this range, where an indication is presented that the care of God ceases, or that his creative and governing power and wisdom ceases? Are the discoveries of the telescope replete with a beauty, and order, and magnificence, which evidently proclaim the glory of God; but are the secrets of the microscope the development of a confusion and chaos which indicates that there lies in the humbler regions of existence a province to which the presence and the power of God has manifestly been denied? The opposite has most unequivocally and brilliantly been demonstrated to be the case. The limb of the most ephemeral insect is formed as curiously and skilfully, and is as admirably adapted for the ends of its existence, as the arms and members of a man. The eye of the invisible animalcule has its fluids, and lenses, and nerves as appropriately adjusted and placed for the purposes of vision, as that of the horse or the elephant. And not to overlook the illustration of Christ—the hair of our head,

simple and inartificial as it seems, with its tubular form, with its longitudinal and transverse fibres, and all the organs by which it lives and grows, constitutes in its mechanism a production no less admirable than the lofty cedar, or the stately oak, the ornament of nature, and the pride of earth's grandest landscapes.

But in reality the whole framework of nature, and the whole system of providence hangs so closely together, and is so mutually dependent in all its parts, that it is impossible to say whether the wisdom and care of God are more necessary for superintending the great or the minute events which occur. How often may events, upon which the destinies of the world hinge, depend upon causes seemingly the most trivial and contemptible. In the history of the Old Testament, for instance, do we not find God inflicting his most signal vengeance upon his proud and vain-glorious enemies, by employing, not the higher but the humbler order of causes; sending the fly, the locust, and the caterpillar as the ministers of famine, disease, and death. The distinction which some pretend to establish between a general and particular providence, as if God concerned himself with the one but not with the other, is founded upon an evident misconception of the nature of things. The truth is, things great and small are so closely and inseparably linked together, that the hand which shall guide the one must govern the other; and the mind which dictates the decrees that regulate worlds, must also appoint and adjust the course of the minutest events. Be assured then, that nothing connected with your condition can be the effect of chance, or the result of blind fatality, but is the effect of the wise, and just, and holy determination of your heavenly Father. Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

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#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'It is good to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,'*  
Psal. xcii. 2.

GRATEFULNESS and praise are, at all times, due to God; yet are there some periods that give a peculiar call to this holy exercise. The Psalmist here specifies two—the *morning* and the *evening*, and assigns to each its most suitable subject. 'It is good to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every

night.' What then is the loving-kindness of God? 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life;' and 'God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' The general goodness of God is daily seen in a thousand forms, in the preservation of man and beast, and in the opening of his hand to supply every thing that lives; but that special love of God to a sinner, that pities his miseries, heals his diseased soul, washes away his guilt, restores him to his Father, enrobes him in righteousness, and makes him an heir of glory—all this is only to be found and seen in the promise, incarnation, working, suffering, atonement, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yea, in this, and in this alone, 'was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God had sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.' 'Do we not then inquire—how may we best show forth this love? The answer is easy. 'The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him that died for them and rose again.'

Might we not then expect to hear every professing Christian exclaim—'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword; nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, 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.' But alas! of how many may it be said—and O, mine own heart, beware lest it be also said of thee—'The ass knoweth his owner and the ox his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.'

But whatever calls to consideration we may have hitherto slighted, whatever opportunities we have hitherto neglected, once again the morning invites us, by its peculiar arguments, to show forth the loving-kindness of the Lord. He has watched over us while we slept; he has spared us to another day; he has caused his sun again to arise—the emblem of 'the Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings,'—he sets duty before us, both for ourselves and for others; and

shall the Giver of all good be forgotten, his love unfelt, his name unpraised ?

'O! thou my soul, bless God the Lord,  
And all that in me is  
Be stirred up, his holy name  
To magnify and bless.  
Bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God,  
And not forgetful be  
Of all his gracious benefits  
He hath bestowed on thee.  
All thine iniquities who doth  
Most graciously forgive,  
Who thy diseases all, and pains,  
Doth heal, and thee relieve.  
Who doth redeem thy life that thou  
To death may'st not go down ;  
Who thee with loving-kindness doth,  
And tender mercies crown.'

But while the morning thus calls to the showing forth of love, the evening calls for our testimony to God's faithfulness. The evening first suggests God's faithfulness to his promise of mercy, after the endurance of the deepest provocation, and after the infliction of the most terrible judgment. To Noah he promised, 'while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.' The return of the night is therefore a new attestation to the truth of him who hath said, 'my covenant I will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David—that is, the true David, the beloved, as the name David signifies—'his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me; it shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.'

This 'faithfulness' of God, this 'immutability of his counsel, confirmed by an oath,' is indeed the 'strong consolation' of sinners 'who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them.' But, as 'it is impossible for God to lie,' so to believers there is no just cause of doubt, nor to the 'chief of sinners' any ground for despair. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'

How then may we best exhibit the *goodness* of this holy exercise?

1. It is *good* for our own souls, as the most cheering and comforting of all subjects. The mind must more or less partake of the character of the objects upon which it most constantly dwells. 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' 'Now if God himself be blessed,' the

man who is likest him, must be most blessed; and he is likest God who knows most of his love in sending his Son, and his faithfulness in keeping covenant.

2. It is *good* for others that, by our morning and evening sacrifice, we bear witness to their consciences of their obligations to God, and if God will thereby convince their judgments, move their affections, decide their waverings, and confirm their purposes, that 'seeing our good works, they may glorify our Father who is in heaven.' There is not merely a chain of moral dependency between God and man, but also a similar chain between man and man; and did we reflect how much the eternal salvation of our neighbours may be connected with our example, we would see a new form of *goodness* in every holy duty, and feel a new obligation to its private and public observance.

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord,' Prov. xvi. 33.

WHEN events proceed with great regularity, we are disposed to refer them to some law, or to some known or unknown agent, by whose influence they are produced. Thus the regular succession of day and night, the exactly measured changes of the moon, the varying yet certain positions of the planets, and even the departures and the returns of the comets, are all attributed to the operation of one common law of gravity, pervading both earth and heaven. But when events occur without any apparent order, and without any assignable agent, men are disposed to attribute them to fortune, to chance—words that mean nothing but the exclusion of a law, and even of God, from any part or management in the plan or production of these events.

Now, with the first of these views the word of God most exactly agrees. And when the believer, taught by his word and Spirit, 'considers the heavens,' the scripture tells him they are 'the works of God's fingers;' and when he views 'the moon and the stars,' he is told that 'God has ordained them.' But the word of God goes farther; and when it conducts the believer to consider those events in which all appears disorderly and fortuitous; where he sees no direct agent, and can discover no abiding law; even there he is assured the same God rules, a similar law pervades, a similar plan is arranged; and that with equal regularity—though the principle be un-

discovered—and that with equal certainty—though the event be not anticipated—will ‘all things work together for good to them that love God.’ Nay, the scriptures cast their light even beyond this region of obscurity, and discover that even those events that arise from the sins of men—sins which God hates, which his law denounces, and which his justice will punish—sins of which God is not, and cannot be the author—are yet under the control of his government, advance his designs, fulfil his purposes, and illustrate his perfections, as much as those events that arose from obedience to his commands and devotedness to his glory. Thus Joseph informs his brethren who had sold him unto Egypt, ‘Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.’ In which words, Joseph does not mean to say, ‘Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves for the sins of envy and covetousness, which induced you to sell me hither; but be not grieved nor angry for the mere act of selling me, which event God has overruled to our common preservation.’ Indeed, in an evil world, such as this world confessedly is, if God were deprived of the means of over-ruling and directing those events that originate from the sins of men; if while ‘the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,’ the wrath of man did not accomplish the plans of God; and if ‘the wrath of man did not praise him;’ and if ‘the remainder of the wrath he did not restrain,’ little would remain of this world as the field of God’s management; and he would be virtually excluded as its moral and efficient governor.

But God is not, and cannot be excluded from governing any department of his works, or from directing any class of events. His wisdom plans, his power accomplishes all things.

How blind is man when he will not see this! how perverse when he will not acknowledge it! We praise an architect for the beauty, grandeur, stability, and convenience of a dwelling. We praise a mechanist for the ingenuity of his invention, and its perfect adaptation to effect his purposes; and if in the dwelling we perceive some apartments of which we cannot discover the intention, or in the machine some wheels or springs of which we cannot discover the use—surely we do not conclude the apartment formed no part of the original plan, or that the wheel and the spring arose without and beyond the intention of the mechanist. And so, comparing earthly with heavenly things—so is it with God. We glorify him, not for a world totally without a design; not for a world in which, though some few parts

have been planned, the remainder is fortuitous; but we glorify him for a world where the great and the little are alike objects of his care; where he who ‘counts the stars,’ likewise ‘numbers the hairs of our heads;’ where he who ‘raises up’ Pharaoh, ‘or hews down’ Nebuchadnezzar, suffers not even ‘a sparrow to fall to the ground’ without his knowledge and consent.

But the glory of the divine plan can never be fully understood or appreciated, so long as it is confined to the mere formation and government of the world. Its true character is not discovered till we view it as providing for the salvation of sinners. It is when we see how God ‘hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him; in whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,’—it is then, and not till then, that we discover the glory of a plan which originating in the depths of eternity, is developed in the fullness of time, and which runs through eternity, displaying at once the glory of God, and dispensing salvation and happiness to redeemed sinners.

This view of the divine plan, purposes, and government, is calculated to suggest many practical considerations.

1. From how many unnecessary, useless, and tormenting personal fears, anxieties, and cares—should it set the believer free! ‘Give no thought for your life,’ said our Lord, ‘what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life (which God still continues,) more than meat, and the body (which he still upholds) more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of

all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.'

2. What a strong excitement does this doctrine afford to the religious education of children, and what encouraging hope does it inspire for their future progress and welfare! The believer knows 'he is worse than an infidel, and one who has denied the faith, who provides not for his own family.' But he sees in this provision for children, as in provision for himself, not merely meat and drink and clothing, but 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation,' and the righteousness of God 'that insures acceptance,' in the Beloved.' While therefore he 'trains up his child in the way he should go,' relying upon the promise that 'when he is old he will not depart from it,' he is free from all undue care about things temporal, and his heart and his prayers are mainly directed to the salvation of their immortal souls. Their future progress to riches or poverty, to honour or obscurity, he knows to be in the purposes of heaven; and while he neglects no means that may contribute to their success, he confides in no agency, and calculates upon no results, beyond the wisdom, the mercy, the grace, and the providence of God.

3. What a remedy does this doctrine afford to the believer in sickness and pain, what consolation under bereavement of friends, or children, and what support under worldly loss, disappointments, and troubles! 'No affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous.' Yet in every affliction 'God speaketh to us as unto children, saying, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' When sickness, weakness, and pains distress, and death threatens, the believer finds his most reviving cordial in 'looking to Jesus;' and feeling that his 'affliction ariseth not from the dust, nor his sorrows from the ground,' and in knowing that it is sent, either to correct some error of heart or life, or to sow some good seed of truth, or ripen some fruit of experience, or afford some example to others of the peace and composure 'with which a Christian can die.' When bereaved of dearest relatives that were as the apple of the eye, or stripped naked, as was Job, by the losses of worldly possessions, the believer is able to say, 'It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.' 'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord!' 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and seen the end of the Lord, that he is

very pitiful.' Yet that patience is as nought, when compared to the patience of the Lord Jesus, when 'he bore the cross and despised the shame;' and which patience and endurance he has 'left us as an example that we should follow his steps.' And that pity which Job experienced is no less now than of old. 'For as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,' 'for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust. Paul could say that for Jesus he 'had suffered the loss of all things;' he could say believers 'took joyfully the spoiling of their goods;' yet these trials came visibly from the hands of wicked men. How much more then should believers submit with patience; yea, count their trials joy, when they can ascribe them directly to the purpose and the hand of God!

SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand,'* Prov. xix. 21.

'Your ways are not my ways, nor your thoughts my thoughts, 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.' And this word God addresses to every unconverted sinner for discovery and reproof of his thoughts, while to every renewed and self-examining heart, they come as a word of warning to watchfulness and prayer. But not only are God's thoughts higher than men's thoughts—that is, higher in their holy origin, their holy nature, and their glorious object—but they are higher still in the sufficiency of their means, and the certainty of their accomplishment. 'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither'—that is, without effecting the end for which they were sent—'but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that there may be seed to the sower, and bread for the eater; so shall my word be that proceeded out of my mouth; it shall not return to me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.'

Let us then, in the light of God's revealing word, proceed to examine man's heart, and contrast its manifold and abortive devices with the abiding counsel of the Lord.

1. When we examine the heart of man, we find it teeming with thoughts and devices. One chief thought and device generally ruling over

all the rest, but surrounded by multitudes of inferior thoughts, plans, and designs, of which there seems no end. Multitudinous as the waves of the sea, man's thoughts are rolling on; and as wave succeeds wave with voice and motion unexhausted, so thought succeeds thought not only undiminished but increasing still.

2. But the thoughts of man's heart are characterized by Solomon as 'devices,' when contrasted with the 'counsel' of the Lord. Now a device is either some plan by which inventive ingenuity supplies a deficiency, overcomes an obstruction, or accomplishes an unexpected end; or it implies some subterfuge in which cunning, hypocrisy, or dishonesty, secretly meditate or attempt what openly they dare not avow. And, in this last sense it is, that the heart of man—is man unrenewed in the spirit of his mind—is charged 'with many devices.' How many are the devices by which profession labours to pass for principle! How many the 'devices' by which hypocrisy labours to deceive others, and often succeeds, for a time, in deceiving itself! How many the 'devices' by which infidelity seeks to evade the evidence of God's word and the warnings of conscience! How many the 'devices' by which worldliness excuses its love of forbidden pleasure, and covetousness its love of unhallowed gain! How many the 'devices' of lukewarm hearts which 'have forgotten their first love,' to account for, or excuse, or rest satisfied with, their spiritual declensions! How many the 'devices' of the prayerless, whether in the closet, the family, or the congregation, to evade that 'fellowship' with God, and that acquaintance with their own hearts, which prayer absolutely requires! And how many the 'devices' of dying and accountable beings, to banish the thoughts of that death which is at the door, and of that 'wrath to come' in the judgment that follows! And yet, these are but a few of the most common and superficial of the 'devices' of man's heart. Beyond all these, there is an endless, a nameless, and undistinguishable multitude of 'vexing thoughts,' or vain imaginations, or forms of deep 'deceitfulness,' or 'errors,' which the heart they inhabit cannot fully understand, and of 'secret faults' from which even the believer requires daily to be 'cleansed.' 'Our Father who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,' is alike the language of self-knowledge, experience, humility, and faith.

3. The 'devices' of man's heart are generally, for a time at least, secret from the world; and, as we have discovered by the word of God, are sometimes hidden from the heart where they

dwell. 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,' was addressed, by our Lord, to believers in the days of his flesh, and are certainly as truly applicable in the days of his absence in glory.

4. The 'devices' of man's natural heart are, when thoroughly examined, deliberate plans against God. 'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us.' Yea, though they be the 'cords of love,' tender and attractive, though they be the 'bands of a man,' rational in evidence, and binding in conscience, yet 'hand joins in hand,' with combined and borrowed might, to break them violently asunder, and cast them contemptuously away.

In these 'devices' against God, however, not God, but man, generally appears the object of antipathy. Of this fact, Balak and Balaam are two of the most notable examples. So far from professing to devise anything against him, Balak sought his object, professedly, by worshipping God. Balaam was God's professed prophet and priest; and both Balak and Balaam acknowledged God's power and, in their own perverted senses, both sought his favour and blessing. But while the ostensible object of their 'devices' was the ruin of Israel, the real object of each was the frustration or reversal of an acknowledged 'counsel' of God.

In their 'devices' against God, it is farther to be observed, that while God himself, so far from being the declared object of opposition, may be the object of professed respect, still the opposition is really against himself, because it is against his law, or ordinances. Thus a human legislature repeals, in part at least, the law of the sabbath—a partial repeal that includes, in principle, the repeal of the whole; and not a few professed followers of the Lamb do all in their power to repeal, by their neglect, the ordinance of the Lord's supper, though enforced by the highest of all authorities, and the most touching of all appeals, the dying request and injunction of the Redeemer.

5. The last characteristic we shall notice in the 'devices' of man is, their invariable disappointment. Man's 'devices,' like his righteousness, are 'as the morning cloud and the early dew.' Like Jonah's gourd they expand in a night, bloom in the morning, and promise a permanent shade through the day; but the worm of sin is gnawing at the root unseen, and when he most needs a 'hiding place from the wind,' and

'a shadow in the heat,' man's head is left defenceless—and disappointed in his hopes, dissatisfied with himself, disgusted with the world, if grace prevent not, he is found loudly murmuring and vainly contending against his Maker.

But 'God's ways are not man's ways.' His 'counsels' embracing empires and churches, and descending to families and individuals, surveying the whole circle of birth, and life, and death, ruling in all the variations of joys and sorrows, of gains and losses, successes or disappointments; in all these his 'counsels' shall stand. They cannot fail of their accomplishment, for they are planned in unerring wisdom; they cannot fail of a blessing to them that love the Lord Jesus, for they are based on eternal love. Neither is he a man that he should change, nor the Son of man that he should repent, but while all other things are uncertain and unstable, the 'counsel of the Lord that shall stand.'

But let not the believer be impatient, or disappointed, if the 'devices' of man appear for a time too wise or too strong for the 'counsel' of the Lord. Hear, O humble believer, hear thou the word of the Lord. 'Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way; because of the man that bringeth wicked devices to pass. For they shall soon be cut down as the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself in God, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light'—even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that do believe—'and thy judgment as the noon day'—even the judgment of grace, Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

And whilst 'sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed,' neither let the wicked presume, nor the believer doubt. The 'counsel' of the Lord must be an emanation of his nature, and pattern of his character; and as God is 'long-suffering' his judgment must wait upon mercy. 'But yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs, they shall con-

sume into smoke; they shall consume away. But the steps of the good man—the man made good by the renewing of the Holy Ghost—the steps of the good man are ordered by the Lord. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him in his hand. The law of his God is in his heart'—written there by the love of the Lord Jesus—'and none of his steps shall slide.'

#### SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.'* Rom. viii. 28.

AMONG the marks of a true believer, knowledge holds a conspicuous place. A believer in Jesus knows what no other knows. 'No man knoweth the Son but the Father, and none knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.' The believer 'knows that his Redeemer liveth.' The believer 'knows that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, he has a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' And, amidst all the darkness, difficulties, and contradictions of a 'present evil world' he knows 'that all things work together for good.'

1. The wisdom and knowledge of God work together with our ignorance and folly for good. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! To the wisdom of God we are indebted for the whole plan of redemption. The wisdom of God devised the means for rendering the plan effectual. The wisdom of God has counteracted the malice, the cunning, and the power of all enemies. The wisdom of God has 'destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom'—its own favourite but vain philosophy—'knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching,' rather by the preaching of foolishness—'to save them that believe.'

2. The Almighty power of God works together with our weakness, 'the weakness of God is stronger than men.' His power sustains us in weakness, and upholds our goings, so that our footsteps do not slide. His power subdues our wills, brings our every thought into the captivity of Jesus; works in us mightily both to will and to do of his good pleasure, so that we who of

ourselves are unable to do any thing, 'can effectually do all things through Christ strengthening us.'

3. The judgments and chastisements of the Lord work together with mercy for good. 'Behold the goodness and severity of God,' how harmoniously they combine to awake us from 'the sleep of death,' then to 'show us the path of life and of joy;' how violently they detach us from sin, and how tenderly they draw us to the Lord! Like the unsparing plough, the one 'breaks up our fallow ground;' like the gentle dew from heaven, the other descends upon the seed of the word. God's judgments, in the forms of personal and family afflictions, were Job's real friends. They led him at once to a clearer sight of God, and a deeper knowledge of himself. They led him from the giddy and destructive precipice of self-justification to 'the depths' of humiliation from which he cried to God, 'I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' 'Before I was afflicted,' saith the Psalmist, 'I went astray; but now I have kept thy law. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. I know, Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' And Paul, who had the deepest experience of the heaviest trials, yet pronounces these all to be 'light afflictions,' commissioned to 'work out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.' And so they do work, not as effecting an atonement for our sins—for 'the blood of Jesus Christ' alone 'cleanseth us from all sins,'—but by effecting, 'through the Spirit,' the mortification of our sins. By working 'through the Spirit' new graces in our souls—and more especially the grace of patience, by which we are in measure assimilated to the Lord Jesus Christ, and prepared for the enjoyment of his kingdom. But God, in the midst of judgment, remembers mercy, and 'sets the one over against the other' not as antagonists in providence and grace, counteracting one another, but as fellow-labourers in the same field, where the weed that is plucked by the hand of judgment gives room for the growth of the seed that is sown by the hand of mercy,

4. The promises of God work together with our doubts and fears for good. Since the beginning of the world God has made himself known to his people in a promise. 'The seed of the woman' was promised to 'bruise the head' of the serpent. 'The seed of Abraham' was promised to bless all nations. When Jesus ascended

up on high, and received gifts for men, the promise of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, was the endowment of his church; and the promise of his own coming, is still the manna upon which she feeds, and the rock at which she drinks. Now behold how effectually the promises work in company with our doubts and fears. 'I remembered,' saith the Psalmist, 'I remembered God and was troubled; I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed. I communed with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone? Doth his promises fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, this is mine infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old.' Thus doubts and fears, conducting to deeper examination, do but clear the foundations of faith, and consolidate the building of God which they only seemed calculated to demolish.

5. The strivings of the Spirit and the temptation of Satan, yea, the power of holiness and the guilt of sin, all work together for good. The temptations of Satan afforded to our Lord his first recorded opportunity of testing, as it were, the efficacy of scripture. The assaults of infidelity have served both to draw and to sharpen the 'sword of the Spirit.' Satan's subtlest temptation but discovers to the believer more and more of the deceitfulness of his heart; and compels him to pray more fervently for the daily 'renewing of the Holy Ghost.' It is the pain of disease that makes us prize the physician. It was when 'the law came,' that 'sin revived' and Paul 'died.' It was then he discovered he was 'a wretched man;' it was then he cried, 'Who shall deliver me?' and it was then he was filled with thankfulness for deliverance 'through Jesus Christ his Lord.'

But do all these things work together for good to all? No. There are those to whom 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God' is 'the savour of death unto death.' Two marks distinguish those for whom 'all things work together for good;' they love God, they are the called according to his purpose.

What, then, are the distinguishing marks of those who love God?

1. They are drawn to God by a grateful sense of sins pardoned, graces conferred, and glory promised and secured. 'We love him because he first loved us.'

2. They render a cheerful submission to his authority. 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.' A blessed doctrine which, so far from begetting a pharisaic confidence in our own righteousness, is a light of God essential and efficacious to discover our many shortcomings and to lead us to him 'in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.'

3. They earnestly desire his countenance, companionship, and possession. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come, and appear before him?'

4. They ardently delight in him. 'Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.' 'I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart.'

5. The believer is sold, devoted, sacrificed to the God whom he loves. He is not 'his own,' he is 'bought with a price.' 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' saith his heart. Believers 'have given their own selves to the Lord;' and drawn 'by the mercies of God,' present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, their reasonable service.'

Believers are farther characterized by being 'called according to God's purpose,' which calling is thus admirably expounded: 'Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to us in the gospel.' Now, when there is a work in us, either to 'will or to do of God's good pleasure,' that 'willing and doing must be either of ourselves or of God. Of ourselves it cannot originally be; for the 'carnal mind,' which is the original mind of every man, is 'enmity against God.' It must therefore be 'of God that showeth mercy.' 'For who, O believer, maketh thee to differ? or what hast thou that thou hast not received?' Or 'who hath first given to God, and it shall be recompensed to him again?' It is God, wise in counselling, merciful in pardoning, just in determining, gracious in bestowing, and sovereign in ruling, to whom the 'called' sinner is indebted for the voice that reaches him, the power that awakens, the argument that convinces, and the love that draws him.

1. Let us then admire that providence which embraces the universe in its widest range, yet attends to the creatures in their minutest details.

2. Let us adore that 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' whose providence and grace run so happily and so unitedly in the same channel.

3. And whatever our worldly or spiritual lot may be, let us never forget that all things come to God's children from the same loving heart, and all things are directed by the same unerring and Almighty hand.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'The Lord God omnipotent reigneth,' Rev. xix. 6.

To acknowledge the being of God is one thing, to see his government is another. 'Rabbi,' said Nicodemus, 'we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' We can thus understand and account for the various views of men as to the government of God, who yet all agree in admitting, and maintaining, and illustrating his being and perfections. One fancies and endows a mysterious power called nature, as the ruler in elements and events. Another, that God, at creation, impressed certain general laws upon his works, and that these proceed to carry forward the world without any necessity of farther interference upon the part of God. Others, can discover no government in the world but that of chance, blind, irregular, unintelligent, powerless; while others boldly and blasphemously deny his right to rule over them, saying in the pride and rebellion of their hearts, 'our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?'

There is still another class from whose eyes, the government of God almost disappears. The believer under withdrawings of God's countenance, and harassed by sore trials, is sometimes tempted to say, 'These are the wicked that prosper in the world; verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence,' and 'what profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?'

Now to all these it is equally announced 'The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' What a glorious revelation! What a magnificence of title! what an enlightening—what a consoling

truth! God, the covenant God, our God, reigneth. The omnipotent reigneth! And because omnipotent, he reigneth over every thing that possesses any portion of derivative power. 'Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things.' Over things inanimate he reigns. The stars, the clouds, the winds, the waves, the fire—the winter's cold, the summer's heat, are all the subjects of his kingdom. 'Sing, therefore, unto the Lord with thanksgiving, who covereth the heavens with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth. He giveth snow like wool, he scattereth hoar frost like ashes, he casteth forth ice like morsels, who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word and melteth them; he causeth his wind to blow, and the water to flow.' Over the plants of the earth he reigns. He 'clothes the grass of the field.' '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.' Over the beasts of the field he reigns. 'He giveth the beast his food, and the young ravens which cry.' 'Lord, thou preservest man and beast; how excellent is thy loving-kindness! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.' And over man he specially reigns. Man's birth is within his government, 'his substance was not hid from him; his eyes did see his substance yet being imperfect; and in his book all his members were written.' Of his life the whole progress is under the guidance of the Lord. 'He knoweth our downsitting and our uprising, and is thoroughly acquainted with all our ways. His hand has often 'led us in a way we did not know;' constantly cherished us with a kindness we did not deserve, sometimes corrected us, but with a father's pity, and always protected us with the power of a mighty King. 'O that men would give to the Lord praise for his goodness, and for his works of wonder to the children of men!'

The Lord God omnipotent reigns likewise in the kingdoms of this world. They have risen, they have advanced, they have declined, and they have fallen, but the Lord God directed and controlled their mightiest movements. 'To the intent that the living might know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.' And in a manner not more powerful, yet more special, does the Lord God omnipotent reign in his church. This speciality lies in the eternal love wherewith he loved it, in the gracious sovereignty wherewith he chose it, in the power wherewith he redeemed it, in the mercy wherewith he pardoned it, in the riches of

grace wherewith he endowed it, in the righteousness wherewith he clothed it, and the glory to which he exalted it. God reigned with a special distinctness in the Jewish church—but this distinctness arose not because he was really more visible in the Jewish than in the Christian church, but because the eyes of men were more open to see him. The word of God to Joshua, 'I will never fail thee, I will not forsake thee,' is not one whit richer in promise than the word of Christ to his disciples, 'Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.' He that was once with the church in the wilderness, is the same that is now with the church in glory; and on earth he is still 'head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.'

But let us never forget, when we contemplate the government of God, that he necessarily reigns, not by the single attribute of power, but in the full combination and energy of all his attributes. In the government of God we must therefore expect apparent contradictions. Weak man cannot contemplate the full tide of mercy, and love and long-suffering, flowing onward, and full fraught with blessings, without apprehending a counter current in justice, severity, and wrath. But these are not contrary the one to the other; each is an exhibition of the same all-perfect Jehovah dealing; 'To them who by a patient continuing in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them who are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, tribulation, and anguish, indignation, and wrath.' When therefore he is slow to answer prayer, let us not foolishly conclude he has forgotten to be gracious; but is calling us to that waiting spirit and dependent attitude that best becomes a weak creature and an unprofitable servant. And when we see the prosperity of the wicked, and witness the afflictions of the children of God, let us not rashly conclude that God has forgotten either; that sinners may yet be led to repentance; if he persevere in sin, his judgment will awake and not tarry; and that afflicted saint is ripening his fruit for a richer harvest, and polishing his graces for brighter glory.

'O Lord, thou art my God and King,  
Thee will I magnify and praise;  
I will thee bless, and gladly sing  
Unto thy holy name always.  
Each day I rise, I will thee bless,  
And praise thy name time without end.  
Much to be praised, and great God is:  
His greatness none can comprehend.'

1. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth! What

a solid foundation for confidence and hope, in times when the darkest clouds hang over the kingdoms of this world of which we are subjects, or over the church of the living God of which we are members! The atmosphere of kingdoms and churches is never long untroubled; but no kingdom will fall but by sin, and 'righteousness exalteth a nation;' and no church will be cast away, if she have not first cast off her first love; and no matter how mighty be the powers by which truth and godliness are threatened, 'no weapon formed against Zion will ever prosper.'

2. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Let us draw nigh to the well of consolation and let our thirsty soul drink freely in the days of our personal or family troubles! 'Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.' From these troubles God's children have no exemption. And where Jesus himself was 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' it were shame if the servant were better than his Lord. He for the joy set before him endured the cross; the believer endures as 'seeing him that is unseen.' It is written, 'The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble.' And again, 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.' For though 'clouds and darkness are round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.' That throne of grace is now the believer's refuge, as that throne of glory will hereafter be his home. For 'unto him that overcometh,' saith the Lord, 'will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne.'

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SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?'* Jer. xxxiii. 27.

EVERY man, even in his best estate, is contending with some difficulty that he finds 'too hard for him.' Many things are 'too hard' for his understanding, and when he has wearied the flesh with 'much study' of the spirit, he feels he is 'of yesterday and knows nothing.' And how many things he finds 'too hard' for his hand, even when he attempts them 'with all his might,' his sorrows, his disappointments, and his losses, are continually testifying.

Now, it is good for men to have made this discovery of the practical difficulties, the impossibilities, that hedge them in; but it is most dangerous to suspect God of being subject to similar

limitations. Yet this very suspicion, seemingly heightened to conviction, is one of the chief sources of the sin and the misery of men. The impenitent sinner either suspects or believes the infliction of his threatened judgments, 'too hard' for God when he defies him; the professing Christian suspects the fulfilment of his promise to be 'too hard' for God when he doubts him. It was to rebuke this defiance, and to dispel this doubt, that 'the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, Behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?' Let us endeavour to dig down to this root of atheism in the impenitent, and this tormenting remnant of unbelief in the children of God. Now it is a fact that the sin of the impenitent and the error of the believer generally arise from investing God with some attribute esteemed as the highest perfection. The impenitent invests a God of his own creation with such mercy as blinds the eyes and ties up the hand of justice; and therefore he concludes judgment to be 'too hard' for him; while the weak believer invests the true God with a holiness that so abhors sin that he doubts or almost despairs of the exercise of covenant mercy.

Now while the prophet is commissioned to rebuke the impenitent, his main object is to dispel the doubts and confirm the faith of God's people. To this end he employs principally the following conclusive arguments—and may the Lord, for whom nothing is 'too hard,' make them effectual to the conviction of our judgments and the comforting of our hearts.

1. The Lord, speaking by the prophet, asserts his own independent sovereignty—'I am the Lord,' the owner of all worlds, and as the owner doing whatever he will with his own. 'I am the God of all flesh,' therefore entitled to the unlimited worship of all men; and acknowledged, in that act of worship, as able to give or to withhold, according to the counsel of his own will.

2. The prophet asserts God's power in the details of the world, upon the ground that he is the Creator of the whole. 'Ah, Lord God! behold thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.'

3. Unlimited mercies being to God's children the most attractive, and judgment to sinners the most alarming, evidences of unlimited power, the prophet proceeds as by an arithmetical calculation of his goodness and judgment to give evidence of these attributes. 'Thou showest loving-kindness to thousands; and recompencest the iniquity of the fathers unto the bosom of their

children after them. For thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.'

4. Miracles of judgment, either beyond, or above, or contrary to the course of creation, are next marshalled in evidence that nothing can be 'too hard' for God; and especially his 'signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and in Israel, and amongst other men,' miracles wrought 'with a strong hand, and an out-stretched arm, and with great terror,' till he gave Israel 'the land which he swore unto their fathers.'

And now, if we desire an evidence that nothing is 'too hard' for God, and surpassing all that have yet been adduced, we find that evidence concentrated in Christ Jesus. There can be nothing 'too hard' for his love, seeing the Father 'spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up to the death for us all;' and we conclude, therefore, with a certainty that cannot be shaken, he will 'with him also freely give us all things.' There can be nothing too hard for his condescension, for 'though our Lord was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.' And surely there can be nothing too hard for his power in the weakness of our flesh, since he conquered sin in the flesh, because of triumphant holiness; and through death destroyed death, and 'him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, that he might redeem them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'

What sweet consolation may the believer derive from contemplating the Almighty power of God!

He finds within himself much darkness, much weakness, much guilt; he finds around him many temptations, a world sometimes attractive, sometimes tormenting, always evil. He has tried watchfulness, and it has slept on its post; he has fled to prayer, but, like those of Moses, his hands have hung down; he has tried fasting, but the flesh still is weak; he has tried resolutions, but, for binding nature, they have no more availed than the withs and the flax bands on the arms of Samson. Within are fightings, without are fears, behind is sin, and before is judgment. In one question spiritually put, and spiritually answered, lies his only refuge,—'is there any thing too hard for God?' No. He can penetrate that heart were it hard as the nether millstone. He can wash away those stains though red like crimson. He can strengthen that spirit though unstable as water. He can restore that soul from the depths of disease, and crown that slave of sin

and satan with the loving-kindness and tender mercies of the Lord.

What efficient direction may the believer hence derive for the moral government of his own spirits. When he enjoys many blessings in health, in family, in friends, in worldly business, his God 'has done all things well.' Yes, God's power has done all, and gratitude must follow when the doer and the giver is seen. But the believer may be in adversity. Sickness may be wasting him, pain tormenting him, a thousand griefs, worse than all these, may arise from family or friends, while riches may be denied him, or make to themselves wings, and flee away, as an eagle toward heaven; still there is nothing 'too hard' for the Lord; he can sustain him with the patience of Job, and can teach him to drink, with resignation, the cup of bitterness with his Lord.

What confidence can this doctrine infuse in all the threatening or most hopeless aspects of public affairs! Indeed to the believer no darkness can be hopeless. He trusts neither in princes nor in men's sons; his hope is in the Lord. He sees a world of dark and idolatrous heathenism, or fierce and indomitable Mahometanism; he sees scarce a point of light to penetrate the clouds that cover it; and he would despair of ever seeing those innumerable millions converted, enlightened, or civilized, did he not rest upon one principle,—there is nothing 'too hard' for God. He sees the church, the professing, baptized church, grievously infested with false doctrine, poisoned by heresy, rent by schism, deceived by self-righteousness, or deformed with hypocrisies. He sees her beset with infidelity upon the one hand, and by apostate Christianity upon the other; and he exclaims, in the very bitterness of his heart, 'Can these dry bones live?' And the oracle of the living God replies, 'Is there any thing too hard for God?' He was with his church in Egypt, and brought it out with a mighty hand. He was with his church in the wilderness, and he led it as a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. He was with his church in ten heathen persecutions, and he plucked her as a brand out of the burning. He was with the remnant of his saints who, retired within the mountain recesses of the Alps and Appenines, preserved the light of the gospel in ages of grossest darkness. He was with his church in the dawn and struggles of the blessed Reformation. He forsook her not in her 'faithful contendings' for the truth 'once delivered to the saints;' and he has promised to be with her alway, even to the end of the world, and will assuredly perfect 'his strength' in his people's 'weakness.'

EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Give us this day our daily bread,' Matt. vi. 11.

'TRUST in the Lord,' saith the psalmist, 'and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.' Accordingly we come before our Father saying, 'Give us this day our daily bread;' and in these words we humbly acknowledge,

1. That, notwithstanding all our personal abilities, means, and efforts, we are utterly unable to supply, even for a single day, the wants we now feel, and of which we anticipate the daily return.

2. We acknowledge that for the supply we so much need, we have nothing to offer to God.

3. We testify our confidence in the prayer-hearing, and the prayer-answering God, and in that wakeful and all-sufficient providence which watches over us, and for us, and 'supplies the wants of every thing that lives.'

4. By uniting with this daily petition a prayer for daily pardon, we acknowledge that we daily forfeit, by our sins, those blessings that we daily require.

5. By these words, our Saviour teaches that temporal things constitute the lawful subjects of prayer.

Let us then examine what are those temporal things for which we are authorised to pray.

1. We are taught to ask for bread, so far as necessary for our sustenance and health. By necessary food, and the vigour it imparts, we may glorify God in the duties of our several callings, and whatever we can employ to the glory of God, that we are privileged to ask and expect. But in asking of God to give us bread, we imply and include all those ordinary means whereby bread is supplied. We consequently implore the blessings of the covenant with Noah, in which 'summer, and winter, and heat, and cold, and seed-time, and harvest,' are ensured, 'while the earth remaineth.' We ask his blessing upon the skill of the husbandman, and 'the labour of the ox' in the field. We pray for the continuance of that protection and safety in our own land whereby industry is encouraged and rewarded. We pray for that peace amongst the nations during which the interchanges of commerce commingle the various productions of art and of agriculture, till the north and the south become as one climate, and the people of all lands as one common family.

By confining our temporal petitions to bread, our Lord intended to preserve us from covetous

longings after deceitful riches, and ambitious aspirings after fading honours. It was thus he tested the amiable, moral, and rich young man who came anxiously inquiring, 'What good thing shall I do to have eternal life?' and who answered to the catalogue of commanded duties, 'all these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?' 'Then Jesus answered and said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me.' There was the touchstone for detecting the alloy of the character; for 'when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.' Nor did there lie any sin in his having or his holding these 'great possessions' in his hand; the sin and the sorrow lay in having them in his heart. For 'if any man love the world, or the things of it, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' Yet, be not deceived; not all that is *in* the world, but all that is *of* the world, is cursed. And all that is in the world, being of the world, is the 'lust of the flesh,'—licentiousness—'and the lust of the eye,'—covetousness—'and the pride of life,'—the ambitious aiming at 'high things for ourselves;' and all these must we, for Christ's sake, not merely 'sell,' but, through the Spirit, utterly 'mortify' and cast out, ere we can truly and fully adopt and utter that single petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread.'

2. This bread, with all its included blessings, is called ours. It is so called in virtue of the original gift to Adam, and its subsequent continuance and extension to Noah. We inherit our derivative portion of both these grants. But like feudal lieges renewing their homage, and thereby confirming their titles, we are ever renewing our petitions, and pleading our investiture with the gracious promise, 'bread shall be given, and water shall be sure.' But at the same time we are confining ourselves to the limits of our own property. 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's,'—is not merely a commandment for morals, but a guide to piety. There are two forms of covetousness. The one, an unsatisfied view of what we have, with an undefined and unlimited desire of more; the other, not merely dissatisfaction with the amount of our own lot, but the envying of another, with a specific longing for what is his. Now both these forms of covetousness this petition utterly condemns. Before God it confines our hearts not merely to bread, but to our own bread. Let me neither 'envy nor grudge' at the good and prosperity of my neighbour—yea, rather let

my soul rejoice with him because of the kindness of the Lord.

3. 'Our bread' we ask only for 'this day.' 'We know not what to-day may bring forth,' therefore we 'give no thought for to-morrow?' By the constitution he has given, God makes us sensible of present wants, and teaches us by his word and Spirit to ask of him present supplies. But of future wants God has not made us sensible. Nay, he has shown us by many examples around us, and by many warnings of his word, that the future wants anticipated, may never come or never be felt. They may never come, because Providence may increase its kindness—they may never be felt, for we may soon be beyond their reach in the grave.

Now while we daily need and daily pray for the 'meat that perisheth,' how much more earnest should we be to obtain 'that meat which endureth unto everlasting life—the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and never die!' The soul has spiritual appetites corresponding to those of the body. 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' 'And, I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you.' For 'what man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things—even the Holy Spirit with all his comfort and all his fruit—to them that ask him!'

And let us remember that, though our bodily appetite can be satisfied until it desires no more, that appetite will soon return and require to be again supplied. The body lives by daily bread. Even so, while God 'satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness,' it is by daily supplies of righteousness that we are satisfied, and by daily aid of the Spirit that we are supported.

But how may we discern true spiritual appetite? What is its daily bread? The spiritual appetite is characterised by a deep feeling of the unsatisfying nature of all worldly things. 'My flesh,' saith the Psalmist, 'longeth in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.' But chiefly is it characterized by seeking, not merely ordinances, but God himself in the ordinances. 'O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee.' 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee,

O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' God, the living God, in a living Christ, is the only bread and water of life to satisfy a living soul. Lord, give us ever this bread; so shall our soul live, and sing praises to thy name.

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EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,'*  
Matt. iv. 4.

WHEN satan tempted our first parents in paradise, to eat of the forbidden fruit, so soon as 'the woman saw that the tree was good for food, she took of the food thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat.' Thus 'by one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' From that hour satan reigned 'as the god of this world,' and by 'the power of death' which he attained, and 'the fear of death' which he infused, he held his victims and his slaves 'all their lifetime subject to bondage.' But to dethrone this usurper, and to deliver his wretched slaves, 'the seed of the woman' was promised. But while promised with a power 'to bruise the serpent's head,' it was foretold that the serpent should 'bruise his heel.' And now 'the fullness of the time' being come, 'God sends forth his Son,' and announces him from heaven beloved of the Father, and as therefore worthy of all audience and acceptance of men. But the malignity of the enemy is unabated, and remembering, it may be, how, through the appetite for food, he had succeeded in paradise, he now, in the wilderness, makes, through the appetite, his first attempt against 'the Son of God.' The state of our Lord, and the place of his temporary residence, conspired to favour the temptation. He had now fasted forty days and forty nights, and 'was an hungered;' and the wilderness to which the Spirit led him had afforded no food. Therefore 'when the tempter came to him he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

Upon two accounts, these words claim our special attention. 1. Because of the important truth they contain. 2. Because of the efficient answer they furnish to satan's most subtle and malignant temptations.

1. They contain an important truth which God has continuously illustrated in his providence. Noah and his family, when all beside perished, lived in the ark, not by bread alone, but by that word of warning which God gave, and they in faith received. Moses and Israel, during forty years in the wilderness, lived not even by the manna from heaven alone, but by the word of God that promised, and in faithfulness and mercy prolonged, the miracle. Nor is this power of the word of God confined to times of old, or to acts of miracle; but till this hour, and before our own eyes, men live not by bread alone, but by the mercy of God, which by an invisible providence, but a visible instrumentality, converts into scenes of light the 'dark places of the earth,' and into homes of love 'the habitations of horrid cruelty.'

2. These words are still farther important, because they furnished our Lord with a triumphant answer to satan's first temptation. The word of God, while it anxiously warns believers against 'the wiles of the devil,' reminds them that are tempted how 'they are not ignorant of his devices,' and encourages them by the joint word of command and promise, 'resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' The first and chief 'device' of the enemy is evidently to suit his temptations to our state of mind and body, and to the circumstances or the places in which we are found. Now the mind of our Lord must have been intensely occupied by the testimony from heaven; satan, therefore, by insinuating a doubt, seeks to generate ambitious pride in its demonstration. Our Lord was an hungered; satan therefore tempts him into a distrust of providence. There is no help at hand; satan therefore urges him to self-dependence. To all these 'cunning devices' our Lord opposes one simple reply—'it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' Now the mouth of God had just said, 'This is my beloved Son,' and on that bosom of love the Son rests with confidence, that whatever is needful for him his Father 'will provide.' But this was not written merely to record or magnify the wisdom or the victory of our Lord; it was written for our learning, direction, consolation, and encouragement; and chiefly to show that he who was in 'all points tempted as we are,' is 'able to succour them that are tempted.'

These two views of the words of our Lord suggest the following practical reflections.

1. Life, and the means of life and health, are the most valuable of all earthly blessings. Life never loses its value, even under pain, so

long as there is hope of relief. 'All that a man hath will he give for his life.' What endless toil of body and of mind do men willingly and cheerfully undergo, to provide the means of life! To what advice will they not have recourse? To what regimen will they not submit, what medicine will they not employ, in order to prolong their days! Nor are men to be condemned for all this care of the body. They are only to be condemned, when, for the sake of the perishing body, they neglect the immortal soul. O! that men were but as careful, while they provide the meat that perisheth, to provide that meat which endureth to everlasting life! While every improvement of tillage is applied to the earth; while every manure is sought that may render it more fruitful; while every seed is imported that may increase the harvest; O! that men were as diligent to break up the fallow ground in their own souls; to dig around and manure the barren and endangered fig trees there; to sow the seed of the word in the furrows of broken and contrite hearts; and to prepare a harvest of faith, and love, and zeal, and holiness, for the coming of the Lord of the harvest!

2. Now there is no harvest of the earth but by the seed—there is no life of the soul but by the word. But many seeds of the earth are unproductive; the produce of many is worthless, of others deleterious or destructive. How different the seed of the word! Man shall 'live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' How careful should we therefore be to 'search the scriptures!' Every study is for immortality! Every word is a principle of eternal life!

3. Yet whatever be the soil, whatever the culture, and whatever the seed—there is no harvest but by the rain, the dew, the wind, and the sun. So is it with the soul. Paul may plant, and Apollos water—God giveth the increase. What humble, watchful, prayerful dependence, should we therefore exercise on the power and the teaching of the Spirit of God. He alone can 'teach us all things.' He alone 'bring all things to our remembrance.' He alone 'take the things of Christ, and show them to us;' and he alone produce that blessed 'fruit of the Spirit,' which assumes the beautiful forms of 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against which there is no law.'

4. And should we not remember that as the body in health demands daily bread, and as health and strength depend upon the necessary supply, so the soul, in health, demands the bread of life, and is preserved in spiritual vigour according to the

regularity and abundance with which its hunger is satisfied.

NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Go to now, ye that say, To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow,'* James iv. 13, 14.

JAMES wrote his epistle 'to the twelve tribes scattered abroad,' and who being thus deprived of the possession of their lands, were necessarily driven to commerce for subsistence. He wrote also with an eye to their migratory dispositions and habits, which seldom permitted them to settle down permanently in one place, but carried them with their wares from city to city in search of purchasers and profit. But while he addresses himself immediately to the Jews, his admonitions are applicable to all men in similar employments. Nay, to all men in every employment, for scarcely is there any man endowed with ordinary understanding and feelings who is not more or less engaged in contemplating the 'gain' which is sooner or later to be derived from his labours. Still the apostle must be understood as addressing himself particularly to those who are busied in commercial pursuits; wherefore, that we may point out his meaning, we should reflect for a little on some commercial peculiarities that render the admonition so necessary.

1. Commerce necessarily forces its votaries to be, in a great degree, 'citizens of the world.' Their minds must expatiate more or less widely through all its geography, and the peculiar commercial advantages of countries and cities must be the frequent subject of their meditations. Hence in choosing their place, and their society, they are under constant temptation to overlook religious dangers, or disadvantages, and tie down their thoughts to the simple question of the prospect of profit, or the danger of loss.

2. The fluctuations of commerce are always so frequent, generally so unexpected, often so unaccountable, that there is great danger that the providence of God, though admitted as a doctrine, may yet be neglected as a principle of action, and object of constant regard.

3. Whereas from the sudden fluctuations of commerce there are occasions of great individual or national loss, yet these same fluctuations as frequently are the cause of sudden and extensive gain; hence a continuous tendency to 'hastening

to be rich,' to impatience and murmuring if the boon be denied, and a forgetfulness of the giver, if the desire be gratified.

Now it is to be observed that the apostle, so far from discouraging or condemning the commercial spirit, implies its encouragement by offering his best instructions for its regulation, 'Go to now, ye that say, To-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and buy, and sell, and get gain.' This worldly and presumptuous spirit he utterly condemns, and the remedy presented is simply this: never say what ye will,—'For that ye ought to say; If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that. Therefore that every one engaged in worldly business, and calculating upon its gains, may perceive, and, by the grace of God, be led to feel the force of the apostle's argument, let him attend to the statement of facts by which it is enforced.

It is important therefore to observe that the resolutions and calculations he condemns, are suspended by a chain of such mere presumptions as is utterly incapable of sustaining their weight. There are four principal links described by the apostle.

1. The resolution and calculation condemned presume, not merely upon to-day, but on to-morrow, whereas 'we know not what a day may bring forth.' 2. They presume not merely upon to-morrow, but a whole year's residence in one place, whereas, at the best, 'here we have no continuing city.' 3. They presume that we are above the fluctuations and uncertainties of the world, and that by our skill, diligence, or what the world calls 'good fortune,' we are sure to 'get gain.' 4. All doubt of success removed, presumption strengthens into certainty—and we not only anticipate times that are not our own, count gains we have not realized, but like thoughtless minors we hasten to spend our future income, and 'rejoice in our boasting,' though 'all such boasting is evil.'

Now that on these presumptions thousands rest, and that in these boastings thousands indulge, are matters that are best proved by an appeal to every man's own heart. Yet surely the folly of them cannot be denied! Does not all experience prove the madness of any calculation founded on the presumed certainty of human life? Does it not equally testify to the fleeting tenure of all earthly riches? and the unsatisfying nature of all earthly joy? Does not the Saviour warn us against any trust in riches? Does he not entreat us to transfer our commerce and our treasure to a higher and safer world? And does he not admonish us that we are not profited should we

'gain the whole world,' if we, by any negligence, 'lose our own souls?'

1. If then to-morrow be so uncertain, how precious is to-day! We know not when we draw one breath, if ever we shall draw another. We know not, when we awake, whether ever we shall sleep, but in the grave; and we know not, when we sleep, whether ever we shall awake again till our doom is sealed for eternity. Let us see then that we 'walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.'

2. Time, eternity—death, judgment—heaven and hell—are awful realities. Yet by men whom the world calls wise, they are often dealt with as the toys of thoughtless children. Time is wasted, eternity forgot; death is unthought of, judgment disregarded; heaven not longed for; hell not shunned. Yes, hell not shunned! For where Satan's lies are received, and God's truth rejected; where his devices are followed, and God's love despised; where his service is rendered, and God's law rejected; there Satan's companionship being chosen, participation in his doom cannot be avoided.

3. Let no man vainly try to join whom Christ has dissevered. 'We cannot serve God and Mammon!' Nor is it necessary, even for worldly purposes, to make the vain attempt. True godliness never yet stood in the way of success; and in case of disappointment, which may come to any, godliness can ensure what riches alone can never obtain—that rest to the soul which Jesus promises, and that abiding contentment which is great gain.'

NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that,' James iv. 15.*

'Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.' Therefore, if without any implied or expressed reference to the will of God, we habitually say, We will go to such a place, and do this or that, it is evident 'the abundance of the heart' is 'self'—self in counsel, self in determination, self in agency, and self in honour. This mode of speech the apostle utterly condemns, not because he would give a lesson on the mere proprieties of expression, but because, by correcting the expression, he would correct the heart.

The words of the apostle present to us three things: 1. The will of God. 2. Our dependence upon it for continuance of life, and every power

of acting. 3. The heartfelt, habitual, and invariable use of such forms of speech as should both remind ourselves of these things, and bear witness of them to others.

1. The will—in man the power of weighing, choosing, and determining upon his actions; but still in the whole process liable, because of sin, to be influenced by ignorance, error, prejudice, or evil inclination. The will—in God, his most wise perception in himself of what is good, and his most holy disposition and purpose to carry it into effect for his own glory as the end, and the well-being of his creatures as the means. And thus accordingly sings the church on earth, as the Spirit giveth her utterance, 'Our God is in heaven; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased;' and thus sings the church in heaven, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and they were created.'

2. If for the pleasure of the Lord all things were created, it is evident that only at the pleasure of the Lord can any thing continue. Yet is it one thing to admit the truth of this statement, and another and very different thing to feel and to act under its power. Indeed there is such a tendency in the human heart to forget God himself—his presence, his watchfulness, his power, his holiness, and his judgment—that it can never surprise us, if those who can thus forget their God, should also, and at the same time, forget themselves. To this forgetfulness three causes mainly contribute. First, We possess, in a high degree, the useful, but much abused power, of banishing from the mind disagreeable objects and thoughts, and of calling up others more congenial and agreeable. Now of all subjects, God, and holiness, and sin, and death, and judgment, must to the unrenewed heart be far the most disagreeable; they are accordingly dismissed, and in their room a host of unhallowed thoughts are conjured up, that leave, in their revelling, neither time nor inclination to think seriously, either of ourselves or of God. Secondly, We become so immersed in business and care, that when compelled, by some pressing necessity, to think seriously, for a little, of God and our souls, we are speedily re-absorbed by the whirlpool of worldly engagements, which all assuming the forms of important and imperative duties, not only carry us away altogether to temporal shadows, but furnish us with an excuse for neglecting eternal realities. Thirdly, Life and success are seen to depend upon so many worldly supports, that the invisible Supporter of all is overlooked in the light of his own

gifts. Thus life is seen to depend so much on original strength of constitution, so much on food, raiment, climate, medicine, and care; while success is seen to depend so much upon industry, frugality, acuteness, and honesty; that to these we learn to look as idolatrously and stupidly as Israel to the golden calf when they sung before the works of their own hands, and said, 'These be thy gods, O Israel, that have brought thee out of the land of Egypt.'

Now that we are entirely dependent for the power of either attempting or doing any thing, is evident from the fact, that upon God's will alone we depend for 'life, and breath, and all things.' 'He made us, and not we ourselves; we are his flock, and the sheep of his pasture.'

3. Such being our condition, of humble dependence, how just that our lips should speak the language of our condition! Instead of proudly saying, 'we will go, and we will do,' how necessary to premise, 'if the Lord will.' The propriety and necessity of this mode of speech is evident upon two accounts. First, For our own sake, that we may be kept 'mindful of our latter end,' and so busy 'counting our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.' Philip, king of Macedon, is said to have had a servant whose duty it was to awake him to business, each morning, with these words, 'Remember, Philip, that you are a man!' And such a memento is constantly furnished to our ears and our hearts, when we habitually refer both life and success entirely to the will of our heavenly Father. Secondly, A continued and habitual reference to the 'will' of the Lord, is equally necessary for the sake of others. We see a world around us hurrying on, not only to death, but to ruin; and as coffin after coffin goes by, we merely hear men inquire, Who is dead? And then so instantly and so earnestly resuming their employment, or their pleasures, that it is evident they do not think how soon they may, or must, follow.

Now, as 'none of us liveth to himself.' we are bound to watch over and warn one another; to have 'our speech always with grace, seasoned with salt,' that is, with such preservative truth, as may resist, to the utmost of our opportunity and power, the corrupting conversation of a 'world that lieth in wickedness.' We are bound, as we shall answer for 'every idle word,' to 'let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, but that which is good, to the edification of the hearers,' and there is not a truth in the bible, which the world more needs to hear, or by which, under grace, it is more likely to profit, than by the con-

stant reference of godly men to the gracious and sovereign will of God, by which he 'gives or takes away' as seemeth to him good, and which will infallibly be done 'on earth as it is in heaven.'

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TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,'* Jam. i. 17.

'Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?' are questions which nature and grace unite in addressing to every man. The body is God's gift, the life is his gift, the spirit is his gift—every thing that distinguishes the body, its health, and its vigour—every thing that distinguishes the life, its sustenance and endurance—every thing that distinguishes the spirit, the understanding, and the affections—all are the gifts of God. So nature testifies, not of man's right and possessions, but of God's liberal endowments. To the same effect is the testimony of grace, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,' thereby teaching the redeemed to sing 'thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.' The Holy Spirit is his gift. 'I will pray the Father,' says our Lord, 'and he will give you another Comforter.' The everlasting righteousness which Christ brought in, and which, amongst 'the things of Christ,' the Spirit shows to us, is a gift. 'For if by one man's disobedience death reigned by one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.' And even that promised life itself, is not our natural inheritance, but 'the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Nay, the whole work of salvation, and the faith whereby it is apprehended, are God's gifts; for so it is written, 'by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'

Now of the gifts that come by nature, this is remarkable, that though they are many, though they are great, though they are highly prized, yet not one of them is really good, not one of them is perfect. They are not good; for though all combined, they can neither certainly relieve pain, nor communicate happiness; and they are so far from perfect, that most bodily gifts, after a few years of use, become daily worse, until they are utterly extinguished; and the endowments of the spirit, weak at the best,

either gradually decay with the bodily powers, or speedily sink into second and hopeless childhood.

Still this is not the fault of original nature; coming from God's hand, all was very good; and very good only because every gift was perfect. But now since sin has entered into the world, there is evil and imperfection in all nature's choicest gifts, and to remedy this evil, and supply the imperfection, is the great end and glory of 'the gospel of the grace of God.'

Now the gifts of grace are all good, because every one supplies our wants, or relieves our pains. 'Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.' 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, who healeth all thy diseases.' The gifts of grace are good, because every one of them communicates joy. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have access, through faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' The gifts of grace are likewise all perfect. The whole gifts of grace are indeed summed up, and included, as jewels in a casket, in the person of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our 'all, and our in all,' and having him, we have the Father; and having the Father, and the Son, we can want nothing. For thus prays our Lord for 'all that should believe in him through the disciples' word: 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they may be one in us; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.'

But besides this gift whereby the church of believers is made 'perfect in one,' and found 'complete in him' all the personal gifts whereby believers are endowed, are in detail, perfect gifts. The gift of the Spirit is perfect, for he 'abides' with the church 'for ever.' The gift of regeneration is perfect, for the believer is 'born not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever. The gift of righteousness is perfect, for it is 'the righteousness of God.' Nay even those 'gifts' in which there is growth and increase, are perfect,—faith, hope, charity, and every form of grace and fruit of the Spirit, all are perfect. They are perfect as 'gifts,' being secured by the oath of God. They are perfect in kind, being brought from above, from the Father of lights; and they are perfect in working—for 'he that hath begun a good work,' in his people's heart, 'will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.' For 'the path of the just,'—the man justified by faith,—the path of the just is as the shining

light that shineth more and more until the perfect day.'

But this perfection of the 'gifts' depends altogether on the perfection of the Giver. They all come from 'the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' But this can be said of no other light. The fairest orbs of heaven vary. Some by change of position, as they run in their courses; some by increase or decrease of splendour; the very sun himself is overshadowed, and the moon is darkened by the eclipse; and an hour is coming when the heavens 'shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture the Lord shall change them, and they shall be changed; but he is the same, and his years shall have no end.' Jesus the Son of God is that true light by which the nature and glory of God are made manifest. A portion of his light he communicates to prophets and apostles, and in degrees, varying according to his will, to every believer. Thus our Lord says of John, 'He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing, for a season, to rejoice in his light.' And thus says the apostle of believers, 'ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.' 'Do all things without murmuring or disputing, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.'

Let us remember then whence all our light is derived. It is only in God's light we can see light. Let us never trust to the light of our own understandings; but in all our inquiries and resolutions, ever pray to the Father of light, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.'

Let us always live under the salutary remembrance of the unsteadiness as well as insufficiency of our own light. How variable is the light we enjoy in our own heart,—how beclouded the light we exhibit to others. He who at first caused the light to shine into our dark hearts, can alone preserve it in steadiness and brightness. O that we had grace so to shine before men, that, seeing our good works, they might glorify our Father who is in heaven!

Let us always live endeavouring to recount the gifts of God to ourselves and others. The task is endless, but sanctifying and delightful. 'Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works, and thy thoughts of mercy to usward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.'

Let us, for all his gifts, endeavour to give God

the glory. Bodily, mental, and spiritual gifts—let all be employed to set forth his praise. With the imperfect gifts of nature, let us glorify him; for he perfects his strength in our weakness; and with the perfect gifts of grace, let us praise him, for we can do all things through Christ strengthening us.

And if at any time we feel the want of either temporal or spiritual gifts—let this be the light of our darkness, and the foundation of our hope and trust—'If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?'

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TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?'* Matt. vi. 26.

FROM every object in nature around him, from every employment in which men were engaged, and from every circumstance in which he was placed, our Lord was accustomed to draw his instruction. As man he gives evidence of the most attentive observation, and trains his disciples to similar habits. 'Behold,' says he, 'the lilies how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these; wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?' And turning from the flowers with which he has beautified the earth, 'Behold,' he adds, 'the fowls' with which he has peopled the air! How innumerable where they congregate in the forest, or scatter on the heath; where they surround the cultivated field, or penetrate the crowded city; where they give life to the solitary sea rock, or find their home upon the deep waters; as they migrate from climate to climate, and become citizens of every land! By what toil of sowing, or reaping, or by what foresight of gathering into barns, can all their hosts be fed? The bee, under a regular government of power and affection, selects her delicious deposit from every flower of summer, and lives through the winter on her reserved capital. The ant, 'having no guide, overseer, or ruler, gathereth her food in the harvest,' and exhibits, as in a school of instructive industry, the fittest lesson for the sluggard; but the bird neither sows nor reaps with any toil, nor gathers into barns by any industry or foresight,—yet by a

bountiful provision, whereby he 'supplies the wants of every thing that lives,' in a manner suited to its own nature, our heavenly Father feedeth them.

Yes, our heavenly Father 'supplies the wants of every thing that lives,' but each in a way suited to its own nature; each in a manner suited to display the endless and lovely variety of instincts and propensities with which he has endowed his creatures, and the inexhaustible stores by which he can supply their wants.

And if every creature is supplied in a manner suited to its own nature—that is, in a way suited to its own capacities and free and unbiassed inclinations—then, as the bee and the ant are supported by the incessant labours of an industry for which they are fitted, while the bird is equally supplied without either toil or foresight—then is man to derive his support from that foresight with which, beyond all other creatures, he is endowed, by an industry which, above all other creatures, he is competent to vary and pursue, and from which, when rationally followed, he derives both his pleasure and his health. Were man not capable of being taught 'more than the beasts of the field;' were he not by nature and acquirement 'wiser than the fowls of heaven;' then should he live by their law, and be provided for after their manner.

But being differently constituted both by capacity and inclination—an inclination to industry, universal and invariable, and only prevented by evil education or sinful indulgence—man is bound, by the law of his nature and his God, 'to provide things honest in the sight of all men;' to avoid being 'slothful in business;' and to remember that it is 'the hand of the diligent that maketh rich.' From the argument of our Saviour drawn from the providential feeding of the fowls of the air, no man can derive any argument against the employment of means for his support. For whether the means within his power be mental acquirement or bodily strength, they are those divine endowments which, by the very fact of their possession, he is bound to exert. The bee and the ant put forth the utmost power with which God has endowed them; the very improvident bird labours incessantly for its young; and, when food is exhausted, or climate annoys, it fearlessly and laboriously wings its way over oceans and continents in search of a new home and a new store. Man can therefore plead neither the example of nature, nor the authority of grace, for any wilful idleness, any improvident neglect, any prodigal squandering of any means that God bestows.

But while the appeal of our Saviour is not directed against means, it is directed against all unbelieving fears for the present or the future ; against all doubt and distrust of power, or mercy, or goodness ; and against all those engrossing anxieties and cares about worldly provision, which so often haunt and torment the minds of men both in their waking and sleeping hours. And especially are they intended and calculated, both by example of providence and precept of our Lord, to sustain the minds of men under the pressure of difficulties, disappointments, sickness, pains, and sorrows. For as it is not merely in the plenty and warmth of summer, but in the dearth and storms of winter, that the bird is fed ; so it is not merely in the bright sunshine of prosperity, but under the darkest clouds of misfortune, that we are warranted to put our trust in Him who is faithful to the letter in every promise and engagement.

Observe a speciality in our Saviour's argument, 'Your heavenly Father feedeth them: are ye not much better than they?' Are we not much better, being in God's own image? Are we not much better, being bought with so great a price? Are we not much better, being endowed with such precious promises? Shall we not therefore follow faith farther than they pursue their instincts? and depend as implicitly on the grace of God, as they on the bounties of nature?

Observe how the birds, while they are bountifully fed, are yet required to seek their food ; so let us learn to seek, and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all other things shall be added unto us. What contempt of God not to seek that righteousness and kingdom which he sent his own Son to bring in and to establish ; or to neglect that great salvation which he hath purchased with his own blood!

How blessed, when cares intrude and annoy, to recall that description of the afflicted believer, 'casting all his care upon God, because he careth for him!' How consoling and strengthening the exhortation, 'Cast thou thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee ; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved !'

How freely and confidently may we ask all that we need for our souls ! God 'feeds the ravens of the desert when they cry unto him : ' he will not then neglect the cry of his dear children. 'As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' 'And if men, being evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him !'

#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

'God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,' Gen. i. 26.

THE inspired history of creation presents a beautiful example of progressive excellence. First, the material world, but 'without form and void ;' then light ; then the firmament of heaven ; then dry land, and plants of every form ; then lights in heaven to rule the day and night ; then the fish of the sea, and fowls of the air ; then all the beasts of the field—and, all being thus prepared, 'God said, Let us make man,' last and noblest of his works, 'in our own image, after our own likeness.' At the formation of every other thing, God said, 'let it be,' and it was so. But, at the formation of man, there is a divine council, and an image impressed representing, as far as a creature may, the infinite attributes of the Creator. All this imports that man was a creature superior to all that had hitherto been made. Let us examine the import of the record.

In all ages of the Christian church, this divine consultation has been understood of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Barnabas, the fellow labourer of Paul, observes, 'For the Lord was contented to suffer for our souls, though he be the Lord of the world ; to whom God said, the day before the completion of the world, "Let us make man after our image, and similitude."'

Hermas, the cotemporary of Paul, adds, 'He was present in council with the Father in forming the creatures.'

Theophilus of Antioch, about the year 180, observes, 'He directed these words, "Let us make man," to none other than his own Word.'

Irenæus, about the year 187, speaks thus, 'His word and wisdom, his Son and Spirit are always present with him, to whom he spake, saying, "Let us make man."'

Origen, born in 185, likewise declares, 'To him also spake he, the Father, "Let us make man after our image"'

Augustine, born in 354, more extensively commenting on the words, and combating the perverse interpretations of them, has these words, 'Had God said no more than "Let us make man," it might, with some colour, be understood as spoken to the angels, whom the Jews pretend he employed in framing the body of man and other creatures ; but seeing it is immediately added, "after our image," it is highly profane to believe that man was made after the similitude of angels, and that the similitude of God and angels is one and the same thing.'

These form but a small portion of the chain of evidence that history furnishes; but they may suffice as a valuable specimen of the early and continuous assertion of the truth; and may be usefully summed up in the words of the learned Kennicot: 'God,' he observes, 'being about to create man, is introduced saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" in consequence of which the historian tells us, "so God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him." It is evident then that God created man in his own image. This is mentioned thrice, by way of emphasis, and to prevent, if possible, all possibility of misconstruction. Now what God did, was certainly what God proposed to do. God created man in his own image, that is, in the image of the Godhead, and therefore God proposed to create man in the image of the Godhead. But if God proposed to create him in the image of the Godhead, the proposal must have been made to the Godhead, because the words are, "Let us make man in our image." And if the proposal here made, be by God to the Godhead, it is absurd to suppose it made to the same person that makes it; and consequently reasonable to think it made to the other two persons in the unity of the Godhead.'

What a glorious revelation, what an ennobling truth! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, engaged in the designing and effecting of the first creation, as in the purpose and completion of the second! Yes, the second creation! For 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,'—a new creation—'old things'—the wreck and remnant of the fall—'are passed away. Behold all things are become new.'

How benevolent the design of the Godhead, to make the rational creatures happy, by making them good; and in making them good, to raise them to the highest possible standard, even the image and likeness of the uncreated God.

This image of God in man consists in the impress not of one, or of any select portion of his attributes, but of such measure as the creature may receive of them all. Man is an image of God's eternity; for, though, as a creature, he is but of yesterday, as immortal 'he endureth for ever.'

Man is an image of God's omnipotence; for though weak and powerless in himself, he 'can do all things, through Christ strengthening him.' Man is an image of God's omnipresence; for though in body confined as to a prison house, in spirit he 'sitteth, even now, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' But it is mainly in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over

the creatures, that the image of God is discovered in man. In bodily strength, long life, and acuteness of sense, many creatures vie with man, or decidedly surpass him; but in the knowledge, and resulting fear, love, and service, of God, the weakest believer stands on an elevation, literally infinite, above all the inferior tribes. Of these principles the product is 'righteousness,' the complete fulfilment of all that is commanded. This righteousness stood on the basis of creation in the first Adam, and by sin was cast down; it stands upon the basis of the Creator in the second Adam,—'God manifest in the flesh,'—and so is incapable of injury. This knowledge and righteousness are manifested in 'true holiness'—of a creature still in the world, the utter separation from the world; of a creature still immersed in the duties, cares, and sorrows of the world, yet altogether dedicated to God, and living above the world; wearing out time, but living in eternity; a prisoner in a house of earth, but a spiritual dweller in God.

And as such, man is seen a true image of God, in the dominion which he holds over the works of God. Even in the hands of unrenewed sinners, there appears a remnant of original dominion. But every province is in a state of rebellion, and none more obstinate than the sinner's own heart. But Christ Jesus we see 'crowned with glory and honour,' and acknowledged 'Lord of all;' and every believer we see restored in him to a co-partnership in that throne which he gained by overcoming the world, and in which he sits till death, the last of his and our enemies, shall be utterly and eternally destroyed.

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#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen,'*  
Rom. xi. 36.

'ALL things,' visible and invisible, all things in heaven above, and in the earth below, were created by 'the word of the Lord,' and by his continued energy they are all sustained; through him, as the channel of administration and beneficence, every needful supply is furnished, whether of light, and rain, and dew from heaven, or of plants on the earth, or of good and perfect gifts to the souls of men; and to him, as to a centre of universal attraction, all things tend in their progress, bearing witness to his infinite perfections, and thereby exhibiting his glory to all his intelligent creatures.

Three questions here naturally present themselves. What is the glory of God? How can we glorify him? What are our inducements and obligations to render him glory?

What is the glory of the Lord? It is, first, that visible splendour in which God has been pleased to make his presence manifest to men's bodily senses. Thus it is said in Exodus that 'Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel.' But that this was not the sole, but merely one visible exhibition of his glory, is manifest from the fact, that after this Moses says to the Lord, 'I beseech thee, show me thy glory;' and the Lord graciously answers, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft 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—or that which I shall hereafter be—but my face shall not be seen.' Agreeably to this account of the visible glory, John describes it as exhibited in the Son of God. 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Now since 'man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever,' it becomes a subject of the most solemn inquiry, How shall we glorify him?

We cannot cause any visible glory to appear to ourselves or others. It might be highly presumptuous, nay, impious, to desire it. But we glorify God when we diligently study, spiritually discover, and humbly and fervently acknowledge his perfections. That this should be our chief end on earth is evident, because it is the chief work of the church in heaven: for, 'they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when the living creatures give glory, and honour, and thanks, to him that sat on the throne, that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power.'

We glorify God when we acknowledge all the blessings we enjoy, and all the gifts with which we are endowed, to have come down from him as

their source, and to be employed for him as their sovereign. Even as David saith: 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all.'

We glorify God when we humble ourselves beneath his mighty power, when we confess and lament our sins before him, when we bow to his chastisements, and deprecate and flee from his deserved anger. Thus speaks the prophet to Israel; 'Hear ye and give ear; be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains.

We glorify God when patiently, cheerfully, and joyfully, we are contented to suffer for truth and righteousness. Thus Peter admonishes the church—'If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.'

We glorify God when we employ our hearts, and our voices in his praise, and so fulfil his own declaration, 'who offereth praise, glorifies me.'

Our obligations to glorify God result immediately from the various means whereby he may be glorified. We have had his brightest perfections shining upon us in the beams of 'the Sun of righteousness.' The very opening of our eyes therefore compels us to tell of what we see. He has enriched us with his spiritual treasures, and we are bound to acknowledge our obligation. We have sinned against his law, and come short of his glory in our disobedience; we are bound, therefore, to glorify the mercy by which we are brought to salvation. If tried in the furnace of affliction, we are bound to glorify him; for he only refines us from the dross of worldliness, that the brightness and the value of the gold may appear. He has given us eyes to see, hearts to feel, and voices to praise: we are bound, therefore, to employ our gifts to the honour and glory of the donor.

But beyond the obligations to the duty, there lies this paramount inducement, which we select out of many. Our eternal enjoyment of God—our possession of him as our own—as our Father, our Saviour, our Sanctifier—with all our delight in his perfections and gifts—all lie in the very act of glorifying God, and cannot be separated from it. To glorify God, is to enjoy God; an enjoyment that increases as our knowledge, our faith, our love, our hope, our confidence, our submission, our sensibility, and our utterance increase—an enjoyment, now imperfect, because

we but see as through a glass darkly; but it shall be perfected for ever when we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known.

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 TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul,'*  
 Gen. ii. 7.

THE appearance of material objects, independent of observation and experience, affords no intimation of what they may become. The man who looks upon a little seed, could, from that sight alone, form no anticipation that, by man's ingenuity, it would be converted into cloth; and the man who looks upon the cloth, it may be coarse in texture, and discoloured in appearance, could never, from that sight alone, foretell that, by a subsequent transformation, it would become the paper from which he reads. Now if such be the changes upon material things produced by man's art and device, how much greater changes may we reasonably expect when the work is from the hand of God! Here is dust of the ground. Dried in the sunbeams, it is scattered by every wind. Wetted by the rain, it again becomes adhesive, and easily formed by the plastic hand of the potter. Burned in the fire, it becomes a vessel of use or of ornament; but the power of man is now exhausted, and further than mere commixture of materials, and change of form, he is utterly unable to proceed.

Of such mean materials, can anything higher be made? Yes; 'the Lord formed man out' of this very 'dust of the ground,' intending, no doubt, by this record of his origin, to demonstrate, first, the wondrous wisdom and power of his Maker; and, secondly, to inculcate a perpetual lesson of the deepest humility upon a creature, the root of whose genealogy arises from the 'dust of the ground.'

But how much deeper still sinks the lesson of humility, when 'through faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.' In other words, that, not of an eternal, or self-existent material, did God make the worlds—but that he made all things of nothing, by the word of his power, by the forthputting of his omnipotence. Those glorious stars of light were formed of nothing—not higher was the origin of the light; and of worthless dust—of that dust so originated, was

our body formed; so that, not merely are we of dust, and to dust returning, but we are of nothing; called into being at the will of the Almighty, and sustained in that being by the same continued will.

The lesson of humility sinks deeper still, when we reflect that though man was originally formed of the dust, it was, in common with all created things, pronounced 'very good;' whereas the dust of which we now are formed, lies under God's wrath and curse. 'Cursed,' said the Lord God, 'is the ground for thy sake;' and 'because of these things,' that is, sin—saith the apostle—'the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.'

But while the lesson of humility is thus derived from our origin, the lesson of admiration, not of ourselves, but of our Maker, is derived from our structure. 'God formed man,' and every portion of his frame attests the divinity of the workmanship. When we contemplate a time-piece, a telescope, a steam engine, or any other curious piece of machinery, we never hesitate, indeed we cannot hesitate, to ascribe design, and skill, and power, to the mechanist. Nor does our ignorance of the principles of the machine, or of the formation of its several parts, detract one jot or tittle from our admiration of the structure itself, or of the genius of him by whom it was designed and completed. And surely, when we contemplate the human body, the mysterious means by which it is nourished, the wonderful contrivances by which its organs are fitted for their several uses—the adaptation and subserviency of one part to another—and the concurrence of so many contradictory powers and forms to one harmonious result—while we exclaim, with the psalmist, 'we are fearfully and wonderfully made,' we must acknowledge with the philosopher, that the contemplation of one single organ is sufficient to rebuke and to silence atheism, and to demonstrate the being and the perfections of God our Creator.

And if the body be sufficient to call forth our admiration of itself, and of him who formed it, how much more should the soul? We have a soul, a power, a mode of being, for which matter and motion, organ and function, can never give the shadow of account. The soul is the breath of God in man. 'The breath of the Almighty,' says Job, 'hath given me life.' It is not dust, it returneth not to the dust, because it is not of the dust. 'The dust shall return to the earth as it was, but the spirit, the breath of the Lord, shall return to God who gave it.' God is the former of our bodies, but he is the Father of our

spirits. And while the body of Adam was not formed without reference to the body of Christ, it is in the soul that the image of God in man is chiefly to be traced. Like him it is spiritual, not formed of the dust; like him it is immortal, and to him it returns for judgment; like him, though it have not unlimited knowledge, it hath unlimited capacities; like him, it hath everlasting righteousness, the gift of God through faith of Jesus; like him, it is made perfect in holiness, being renewed by the Holy Spirit; it is the temple in which God is acceptably worshipped, the habitation in which he delights to dwell!

Alas! that our spirit, so nobly born, so gloriously endowed, so highly destined, should ever cleave to the dust! Alas! that it should be proud of dust, and careless of heavenly breathings! Proud of a strength that is crushed beneath the worm; proud of features that fade as the flowers, and wither as the grass; proud of raiment, the memorial of sin; proud of titles of which 'sinner' is the chief, and proud of habitations which must soon be exchanged for the grave! What melancholy proof of a nature fallen far from original righteousness, when men make so much of dust, so little of spirit; so much of time, so little of eternity!

But while death smites and corruption destroys the body which God has formed, how reviving and glorious is the doctrine of the resurrection. 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. And when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass that saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

And while the dust, in the mean time, 'returns to the earth as it was,' let us remember 'the spirit must return to God who gave it, and so 'every man shall give an account of himself to God;' 'seeing then that all these things,' which now court our affections, or excite our cares, 'shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God.' Wherefore, seeing that we look for such things, 'let us be diligent that we may be found in him in peace,' because justified; 'without spot,' because washed; and 'blameless,' because clothed upon with 'the righteousness of God.'

#### TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them,' Gen. i. 27.*

WHEN a heathen philosopher was asked by a Sicilian king, 'what is God?' he requested three days to think of it. Being asked again, he requested three days more—and, at the end of that time, he candidly confessed, that the more he inquired, the more he was bewildered; that the more he thought of it, the less he seemed to know. And this has ever been the case where the light of scripture has been neglected, refused, or unknown. But where that light shines, the question is easily answered. We ask what is God? The scriptures answer, 'God is a spirit.' He is not matter, but the Creator of it. We ask again, 'what is God?' and the scriptures answer, 'God is light.' The light of the sun, moon, and stars, so fair, so glorious, is the visible emblem of his invisible glory; and that visible light which the eye beholds, is but the emblem again of that intellectual light by which the mind sees. He is unclouded, unobstructed, unbounded, intellectual light, for 'his understanding is infinite.' We ask again, 'what is God?'—and we are compelled to ask again, for all this description will not entitle God to our affections; and we seek for a God to whom we can dedicate the heart—and the scriptures answer us, 'God is love,' and 'he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.'

Now such was the original in the image of which God created man. He created him spiritual, intimately connected with matter, being the intended heir and invested lord of a material world; yet, at the same time, so totally independent of matter, that his mental powers could strengthen as his bodily powers decayed, and 'though the outward man perish, yet the inward be renewed, day by day.' He created him intellectual, with a mind full of light—full of the light and knowledge of God, and of duty—full of the light and knowledge of nature—capable of converse with God, not on terms of equality, but in communion of knowledge, possession, and interest. He created him capable of love, the love of gratitude to a bountiful Benefactor, the love of attachment to the Supreme Good.

Thus 'God created man in his own image.' To mark the certainty of it as by a second witness, it is added, 'in the image of God created he him;' and it is subjoined as an exposition, to mark the extension of it, 'male and female created he them.'

The scriptures never speak a word in vain. Even in those places where the things spoken seem most superfluous, the Spirit speaks from a deep perception of all that is in man, or in prophetic anticipation of the false opinions and evil practices that may afterwards arise, and which it may be important to correct, or contradict. In this manner do we account for the varied repetition about the image of God in man, and for the seemingly unnecessary appendage to that repetition, 'male and female created he them.'

For it is well known that in all ages and countries, where Christianity has not prevailed, woman has either been secluded as a prisoner, or degraded into a slave, and that Christianity alone has acknowledged her dignity, asserted her freedom, and conceded and secured her legitimate privileges.

And yet in providing for this blessed domestic revolution in the history of woman, it is instructive to remark, how the Bible never condescends to argue the question, against man's usurpations, or in favour of woman's equality and freedom. And why this oversight, or neglect? Because the scriptures attain the end by a different and more effectual process; that is, by historic narrative, representative parable, or implied consequence. By historic narrative; as when it is shown that woman is the equal copartner with man in the endowment of the image of God; by the converse of angels with women as readily and familiarly as with men, as with Sarah and the wife of Manoah; by the high achievements they were privileged to effect, and the divine qualifications with which they were endowed; as were Deborah and Anna; the familiar converse which our Lord held with the woman of Samaria, and plain revelation to her of his divine commission; by the parable in which a woman, engaged in her domestic duties, is employed as an emblem of the kingdom of heaven; by the employment of a woman with her child in the book of Revelation, to set forth the persecutions and preservation of the church; and by the frequent exhortations addressed to godly women, by which their value, in the sight of God, is more clearly evinced, than by any more direct assertion, or more formal argument.

And yet these form but a few specimens of the mode in which the scriptures assert the legitimate rank of woman, and in which, while denying to man the privileges of a tyrant, they remove from him those annoyances that must constantly arise from the struggles of a slave.

True it is, that in some countries, and in some states of society, woman has been, or still is, rather treated as an idol to be worshipped, than as an

helpmate, and partner, in the labours and journey of life—as a being to be won, and kept, and served by flattery, rather than as one to be enlightened by education, convinced by reason, or elevated by religion. And yet, after all, what is this idolatry but the denial of equality, and the disguised establishment of tyranny? The idolater has, no doubt, made his idol a god, yet has he never treated that idol on terms of equality; but changed, discarded, or degraded it, according to the caprice of the moment.

How much happier they who have sought, like those of Cana, to have Christ at their marriage feast! How much happier they, who in ruling their household, have learned to rule it but as Christ rules the church! How much happier they who having learned, from the scriptures, the difference between equality and selfishness, have learned such submission as the church renders to Christ! How much happier they who, instead of living together as the servants and devotees of worldly principles, practices, fashions, and habits, have learned to live 'as being heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered.' And how much happier they who, judging of time only in the light of eternity, have learned to view every relation, and every duty of this life, as it bears upon their prospects in the life that is to come. The time is coming when 'there is neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus, and if Christ's, then Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' And the time is nigh when these shall neither 'marry, nor be given in marriage, but be as the angels of God in heaven.' Yet, in that heaven, every union of grace shall survive, indestructible as the Spirit by which it was wrought on earth.

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it,' Gen. ii. 15.*

In what place God made man, the scriptures do not inform us. That it was not in Eden, is evident from the narrative of the creation. For when God had formed man's body of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, he took the man, and did not leave him in the garden, but put him into the garden; and this removal was effected for the purpose of reminding the man, that not only being, but every means of well-being, was derived entirely

from God, was held at his good pleasure, and as easily resumed, as it was freely and generously bestowed. It was needful even in Eden, that man should feel he had no inherent right; for a sense of God's goodness, and of the creature's absolute dependence, is as essential to preservation in a state of holiness, as in a state of restoration from sin.

When God created man, he blessed him. But no gift can render any one blessed, unless in so far as God is seen to be the giver. The happiness of Eden lay not in the majestic rivers by which it was watered; in the pleasant and fruitful trees with which it was planted; in the salubrious sky that shone above the head; nor in the fertile soil that lay beneath the feet; it lay not in the loveliness of the flowers that bloomed in nature's earliest spring, nor in the sweet voice of the birds that sung amongst the branches. It lay not even in the communion of human spirits, though maintained and cemented by innocence. It lay in the fact, that every gift was traced immediately to God as its fountain, and thence deriving its every power of contributing to the creature's enjoyment.

But it is moreover worthy of special remark, that when God placed man in Eden, in a state of holiness and happiness, he did not intend him to be idle. He put him into the garden, 'to dress it, and to keep it.' He gave him the whole earth, but with a commission to 'subdue it.' But this commission to 'subdue' did not imply any stubbornness or rebellion, but the suppression of that superabundant luxuriance with which the vegetable world was invested, and the converting to his purposes of the various powers with which nature, in all her kingdoms, was so bountifully endowed. This order was exactly suited to man's capacities and condition. Enabled to think, one part of his employment must consist in thinking; but enabled to act, another part must necessarily consist in acting; and in the connection of these two capacities, thinking and acting, must the third element of his nature be called forth—that is, his capacity of enjoyment. Without these capacities of thinking and acting, and of thence deriving his enjoyment, man would have been no image of his great Creator. The eternal mind, the Spirit of God, is not a quiescent entity, immovably absorbed in its own contemplations. He acts eternally in purpose, having his 'delights with the sons of men,' and endowing them with his choicest gifts 'in Christ Jesus, before the world was.' In the beginning he puts forth the Almighty energies of creation, and in the progress of time is ever acting, not by mere im-

pressed or delegated laws, but by the untiring hand which 'upholds all things' according to 'the word of his power.' And if the 'delights' of the eternal love thus lay in the mighty purpose and works of creation, and the beneficent design and accomplishment of redemption, man, to be an exact created image of the uncreated Godhead, must not only be invested with the attributes of thought, but with purposes and capacities of activity, by which he may exercise, not a creative, but a formative power—the image of creation; and by which he may calculate, and anticipate, and prepare for futurity—the image of providence; and from which, in subordination to the will of God, he may derive his 'chiefest joys,' and be conformed to the image of Him, who, 'for the joy set before him, endured the cross, and is now set down on the right hand of God.'

Idleness, in a state of sin, affords not only an opportunity, but an incentive to more sin; and 'the sweat of the brow,' and the sorrow of the heart, in which man is doomed to eat bread, might be supposed a punishment inflicted upon a criminal, rather than a merciful regimen for the healing of a perishing invalid. Yet, while the infliction of labour as a curse, is neither to be forgotten, nor denied, it is an infliction of punishment only in so far as the bitterness of sin is infused into the original cup of enjoyment. Man's first enjoyment originally lay in perfect communion with God; his second in communion with whatever, as partaking of the same image, enjoyed the same communion; and his third in the active duties of that universal dominion with which God had invested him as his delegated representative. Idleness was therefore inconsistent with man's original nature and office, and must be as inconsistent still, though his nature has become infected, and the dignity of his office forfeited by sin.

When we return to contemplate the first man in the state of innocence, we cannot fail to acknowledge and admire the dignity of his birth. There is a dignity in birth. The son of parents, wise, good, and thus truly great, cannot be disrobed of a portion of the parent's praise. But how transcendent the dignity of Adam's ancestry! He traced his genealogy immediately to Almighty God! And he claims a derivative right to every region of the earth! Yet, thus dignified in descent, thus endowed with dominion, he is immediately appointed to work!

Are we, then, to be surprised, if that labour which was required as a duty, and which was necessary to enjoyment, in a state of holiness, should continue to be required as a duty, and be

necessary to our correction and reformation when we have sunk into a state of sin? Mere animal enjoyment may come without labour; the birds neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. But where mental enjoyments are required, they can only be attained when they have roused and directed the bodily powers into active obedience to the will of God. And this is the will of God, 'if any man will not work, neither should he eat.' The idle man, therefore, is condemned to die; and should he continue to live, he lives but as the robber lives, by literally stealing what is not his own, and incurring the righteous condemnation both of God and man.

But how can we enjoy the contemplation and communion of God, when actively and laboriously engaged in the business of a busy world? Can a weary body co-operate with an active mind? Can a heavenly spirit consist with an earthly hand? Yes, these are different, but not contrary. The spirit may be willing, while the flesh is weak, and the weakness of the one will not be charged against the willingness of the other. On the contrary, this weakness is the very test of willingness; while it keeps willingness humble, from the consciousness of the weak or, perhaps, reluctant, companion with which it is conjoined.

Indeed worldly employments are no hindrances to communion with God. Paul the tent maker was surely as near to God as Paul the apostle. Neither are temptations any real hindrances. Our Lord in the wilderness, under Satan's most subtle devices, was only drawn the nearer to his Father, by the efforts of the tempter to drive him away.

Let us bless God for active powers, and continuous employments. And if Eden required a dresser and a keeper, how much more may we look for incessant cares and labours in a world of sin? Let us, nevertheless, plant in the vacant field, and water in the dry; and in due time God will give the increase, and we shall reap, if we faint not.

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him,'* Gen. ii. 18.

BECAUSE God alone is supremely wise and good, he is therefore the only proper Judge of what is good for any of his creatures. Of man, he pronounces—It is not good he should be alone; and to remedy the defect, he resolves to make an

help meet for him. At this time, it seems highly probable, the holy angels were in being; for, when God 'laid the foundations of the earth;' when he 'laid the measures thereof' and 'stretched the line upon it'—then the 'morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' And certain it is that, at this time, all the lower animals had been created. How then is man said to be alone? Just as a cottage may be alone in the midst of a forest. It has no kindred with the trees: it is alone of its kind. So was man. He was alone of his kind: and the beneficent Creator determines to make an help meet for him; an image of himself, as he was an image of God; capable of mental communion with him, as he was with God; capable of doubling his happiness, by partaking it; and should any disaster deprive him of that happiness, capable of alleviating his sorrows by copartnership in his burden.

Man was therefore not made for solitude. Solitude is, no doubt, often to the mind what medicine is to the body. Medicine is salutary, as it interrupts some unhealthy process, invigorates some weakened organ, or corrects some deranged function. But just as to live on medicine would be inconsistent with health, so, to live in solitude would be inconsistent with happiness. Even in a state of holiness, solitude is inconsistent with happiness; for, were there no advice to be asked, no comfort needed, no wants to be supplied, still, in solitude, there would be no object for the affections, and thus, not only one department of our constitution totally unoccupied, but the chief source of our enjoyment totally dried up.

But when God created man, and formed an help meet for him, he did not contemplate the mere span of his obedience, but embraced in his beneficent and merciful purposes the whole period of his future history. And if, in Eden and in innocence, it was not good to leave him alone, much less could it be good for him when, as a guilty exile, he was driven forth to till the ground, now cursed for his sake, with no title but sin, no entail but sorrow, no home, no rest but the grave! And when, to counterbalance these severe, but yet merciful inflictions, God gave him the promise of 'the seed of the woman,' not till then appeared the full wisdom and the goodness of the provided companionship. His help meet then stood beside him not merely the partner in his guilt, and exile, and curse, and 'toil,' and sorrow, but the depository of his highest trust, the reflector of his brightest hopes, the partaker, and, by partaking, the increaser of his liveliest joys, the counsellor in his deepest perplexities, the par-

tipicator of his cares, the soother of his griefs, the healer of his wounded spirit, and the commissioned trustee of a lost world's redemption.

To replenish—that is—not, as some imagine, to fill again, but to fill completely—the earth with inhabitants was one great part of the gracious purpose of the Creator; and to this end a portion of his original blessing was specially directed. And if this gracious purpose has never yet been fully realized, the fault lies not in any deficiency in the blessing, but in the folly and wickedness of men, by which the human race has been continually drained away in 'wars and fightings,' arising from the lusts that 'war in the members;' while the progress of population has been still farther impeded by the barbarism arising from the cruelties and devastations of war, and from the pestilences and famines that have invariably followed on its track.

But the mere multiplication of inhabitants was not God's full purpose. His purpose included the multiplication of men to know him as God, to remember him as Creator, to love him as Redeemer, to fear him as Judge, to be like him as Sanctifier, and to obey him as Lawgiver and Father. And here it is that the helpmeet's qualifications, and worth, and excellency, are to be chiefly discovered. In training up a vigorous youth to bodily activities or to mental acquirements, a father may effect much; but in training the child to teachableness, to self-denial, to gentleness, almost every thing depends upon a mother. A father may raise and finish a noble superstructure; a mother must previously have laid the unseen foundation. It is thus father and mother should combine and be mutually helpful to each other in training up their offspring in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But not as if a father's work begins only where a mother's ends. To ensure the ends of a good education, they must be concurrent instructors, and proceed upon one uniform system, and with one great object—not the mere accomplishments, but the salvation of their children. What a beautiful, what a glorious sight! a pious family on earth—a redeemed family in heaven!

That the impediments to parental education are great and many, cannot be denied. Some are impeded by sickness, some chilled by poverty, others distracted by cares and troubles, some overwhelmed in business; but the great, and indeed the only insuperable impediment, is the neglect of salvation as the only worthy aim of instruction. When the value of a child is estimated by its soul—when the destiny of the child is felt to be heaven or hell—and when the parents feel

that they may be the guilty and unhappy agents of eternal destruction to their own offspring, or the honoured and blessed instruments of their eternal salvation and glory—then every impediment will give way under the irresistible pressure of these sovereign motives, and the work of a godly education will advance, blessing the lowly cottages of the poor, and the lordly dwelling of the rich on earth, and swelling the train of those that follow the Lamb, and celebrate his praises in heaven.

Let it then be never forgotten, that, in every such union of earthly interests, eternal interests are inseparably involved. And let it be farther considered that these are the eternal interests not merely of the parties forming this union, but it may be the interests of many generations. How needful then to seek the divine guidance and blessing, remembering that, while 'house and riches are the inheritance of fathers, a prudent wife is from the Lord.' And that while 'favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; a woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised.'

#### TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,'*  
Gen. ii. 16, 17.

EVERY created thing must be subject to some law; and every law must prescribe or enforce some limit beyond which the subject may not pass. This fact is manifest in God's works of creation. The planets in their heavenly courses are subject to the laws of motion and attraction from which they never depart. The plants in their earthly beds are subject to the laws of heat and moisture, and to which they are ever obedient in bud, and flower, and fruit. The beasts of the field, the fishes of the water, the fowls of the air, all follow the instinct, that is, the law of their respective natures. Shall man be found an exception to this general rule of creation? Certainly not. He must be the subject of some law, because he is a creature; and he must be subject to a moral law, because he is intelligent and accountable.

We find, accordingly, that the law given to Adam is neither the mechanical law that governs the heavenly bodies, nor the vegetable law that produces the plants, nor the instinctive law that

rules the lower tribes,—all which laws originate and terminate in the constitution or qualities of the things themselves—but is a law originating in the will of Almighty God himself, and addressed to a creature possessing a will the image of the will of God, not impressing necessities on a mere body, but presenting reasons to an intelligent spirit.

In contemplating this law, we cannot fail to acknowledge, in the very first place, its great liberality; 'Of every tree of the garden,' saith the sovereign Ruler, 'thou mayest freely eat.' And here it is specially to be observed, that while man continued in obedience, the tree of life was not excepted from the generous grant. It was the emblem, the pledge, the visible security of life; that is, of immortal life; for life, where death has not yet intruded, and where, by the conditions of the covenant, it cannot intrude, is immortal life.

But to remind our first parents that this liberality is not a right, but a gift—God is pleased to except from the grant a single tree, to which he gives the ominous name of 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' And here it is to be carefully noted that, in creation, all was pronounced 'good,' yea, very 'good;' and that now when 'evil' is superadded, as a possibility, the description of that evil is, 'thou shalt surely die.'

Whether we contemplate God or man, this was a most appropriate ordinance. It was fit that God, as the Sovereign of the world, should still retain some royalty, as it were, in his own possession, to remind man of his dependence and his allegiance. It was suited also to the condition of man. Adam was not now the victim of the 'carnal mind' to which sin has enslaved his posterity. He was free from all tendency or desire to moral wrong. Had God, therefore, given him a mere moral law, such as is addressed to sinners, regarding a moral good to be done, or a moral evil to be avoided, there would have been no suitableness of the law to the creature. God, therefore, gives him a law suited to his condition of innocence; that is, a positive injunction, not a moral precept; yet a positive injunction involving all moral consequences in its breach or observance.

The divine injunction was intended to impress upon man that the reason of obedience is to be referred implicitly to the divine will; and that because the divine will is simply an expression of the divine nature, that is, of the divine wisdom, sovereignty, goodness, and mercy.

Thoughtless, ignorant, and foolish men, have raised various objections against this narrative. They have objected against the appointment of

a tree as a sacramental test of human obedience. But have they forgot that man was now confined to vegetable food? Have they forgot that man had now no inclination to sin, while he had the same inclination then that he now has for food? Have they overlooked the fact, that to subordinate inclinations to the will of God is the only real morality? Surely they cannot overlook, they cannot forget these facts. Now God placed his precept in the way of the only inclination that man could have to disobey; and, consequently in the only way where temptation could test obedience.

But farther, it has been objected, that so small a sin as the eating of a fruit, could not have provoked the divine displeasure as Adam's sin is represented to have provoked it. Here it is not important to question or discuss what men mean by small sins. Were that needful, it might be easily shown that there are few of the more heinous immoralities that were not in the sin of our first parents—such as unbelief in God, the fruitful parent of all sin, ingratitude, covetousness, pride, robbery, atheism. But to demonstrate this is not our present object, we are only concerned to examine how far the test was suited to the state of man, and worthy of the divine Legislator.

That it was suitable to the state of man, we have seen, because it stood in the only path where temptation could test allegiance. That it was suited to the dignity of God must be admitted, as dignity consists not in soaring infinitely above his creatures, but in condescending to their low estate, an estate that must always be low, just because God is high; and that can never be elevated, but in proportion as God 'humbleth himself to see the things in the earth.' Now the test was worthy of the God of wisdom, because it could be, and was most clearly stated, and because it was most perfectly understood, and because, in breach or observance, it formed a perfect witness between the parties to the original covenant.

The institution of the tree of knowledge was farther worthy of God, because it exemplified his goodness, secured the multitude of his other favours, and prescribed a law of the most easy and simple observance.

The narrative, independently of the character, miracles, and prophecies of Moses, carries in its bosom its own evidence. Man never could have invented a narrative so simple, a plan so efficient, so worthy of God, or so suitable to man.

It details the legislation of innocence, one simple injunction, one implied promise, one awful sanction. How easy the study, how easy the obedience of the law. Hasten, Lord, the time

when still greater simplicity of law, and still greater ease—yea, delight—of obedience shall be established! When Christ shall be the King—paradise the kingdom—saints the subjects, and love the only law!

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 TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat,'*  
 Gen. iii. 6.

WE are truly informed that 'evil communications corrupt good manners,' and we are solemnly warned to 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' And if inattention to these lessons brought ruin upon a state of innocence, how needful for our recovery from a state of sin!

That we may justly estimate their value, let us trace the progress of the first sin arising from the neglect of them; for in that sin we have not only the fountain, but the similitude of all other sins.

In examining the sin we must first observe what leads to its commission—the woman holding converse with the serpent. In this she contravened no positive law, but seemed to be guided by the general principles of sociality. Nay more, she was called on to converse of God, and his gifts and prohibitions, and to communicate information to an apparently anxious inquirer. Now in all this she sinned not. Perhaps we may not even call her prudence in question, as, for aught that appears, she may have been totally ignorant of the character of her inquirer. But the moment the serpent commences to contradict God's word, and to brave his threatenings, or to insinuate against him a charge of insincerity, stinginess, or jealousy—and the moment she lends a willing ear to this contradiction and charge, then commences that sin by which our first parents fell, and death was entailed on themselves and their posterity.

And so ordinarily commences every subsequent sin, especially the sin of infidelity. The infidel assumes the form of a modest inquirer after the things of God; starts first some difficulties we are requested to solve; insinuates some doubts we are entreated to weigh; and when the equilibrium of the mind is disturbed, puts forth some bolder contradiction of a divine truth; suggests some argument in favour of greater liberty than the word of God permits; and thus, so well suits

temptations to tendencies, that, before we are aware, the seeds of infidelity and of immorality—infidelity's inseparable offspring—are deeply sown in the heart, and advancing to maturity before we are aware of their existence.

In another remarkable particular do the temptations of infidelity resemble that of the serpent. He represented the tree as desirable 'to make one wise,' thus sophistically confounding knowledge and wisdom. That the woman would know more when she had sinned, was a literal truth—that she would be wiser, was an absolute falsehood. Even so does infidelity ever affect to ally itself with philosophy, and by 'great swelling words of vanity' to deceive the minds of the simple. Nay, even sound philosophy, legitimately inquiring into the truths of nature, often produces the same injurious effect, by leading away the mind from the 'invisible things of God,' and riveting the attention altogether to visible and perishing objects.

The next view of this sin presents it as arising from agreeableness to the appetite and the eye. And these still continue to be the most vulnerable quarters upon which satan makes his assaults, and where he gains his victories. The moment our attention is fixed upon 'what we shall eat, and what we shall drink,' farewell communion with a holy Father and a crucified Saviour; and the moment the mere beauties of nature and art take full possession of our imaginations, 'the beauty of holiness' loses all its attractiveness, and we become idolaters of the creature, while we forget the Creator, and are betrayed to worship the works of men's hands, whilst we think we are but admiring them as mere objects of curiosity or taste.

Another point demanding our most serious attention is, the instant activity and zeal that sin inspires for its farther propagation. The moment the woman had taken, she gave—and what is specially lamentable, she gave to him who was bone of her bone, and copartner in her destiny, and thus misled and ruined her nearest and dearest friend. And so would every sinner have others to sin with him:—

*'Depravity's own work is to deprave.'*

There is an apostolic zeal in the cause of evil that presents a bold similarity to the most ardent zeal in the cause of good,—a zeal that will often 'compass sea and land to make one proselyte,' and seeks and finds its reward in making him 'a child of hell.' But alas! how much is sin aggravated when it is communicated through the channels of kindred and family; when husbands and wives encourage one another to forget God; when parents train up their children in the way that

they should not go; and the table of friendship is turned into a snare.

When, moved by the importunity of his wife, Adam took of the fruit and did eat, he knew he was commanded to replenish the earth; therefore must have known that he represented all his posterity, and that they would be involved in his sin and misery. Accordingly the scriptures inform us that 'by the disobedience of one many were made sinners,' and 'as by one man's disobedience, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'

Can that sin be small which disbelieved God, and gave full credence to the devil? Can that sin be small that renounced allegiance to the Creator, and knowingly inflicted ruin upon all his posterity?

Yet of this sinful parent, are we the sinful children! How humbling are such views of human nature. Weak it was in innocence, how much weaker when fallen! How wonderful the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'who though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich!' That to the tree of knowledge we might really be admitted, even to that tree of the knowledge of good unmixed with evil! To that tree of life which is in the paradise of God, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations!

And let it be seriously observed, that all good to the descendants of Adam must come in the form of healing. 'Lord, heal my soul,' must each of us say, 'for I have offended thee.' And they that be whole need not the physician, but 'they that are sick.' Christ came not 'to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' What gratitude do we not owe to the second Adam? Who from the fallen earth raises to a throne in heaven; who from slavery conducts to freedom, from ruin to restoration, from darkness to day, from death to life, from degradation to glory!

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 TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat,' Gen. iii. 13.*

AN unconverted sinner is never found without some ready excuse for his sin; and every excuse has one of three objects. The first object is to satisfy the sinner's own conscience, or, at all events, to silence its accusations; the second, is to satisfy the reason, or to silence the rebukes of others; and the third, is to palliate or justify sin in the

sight of God himself. It is impossible to enumerate all the sources from which those excuses are drawn; but it may be useful to instance a few of the most common, not to suggest them for the use of sinners, but, by the mere mention of their names, to demonstrate their futility. Not a few, for example, seek their excuse in admitting their sin, but pleading, in palliation, that it is a little one. Others, again, will not plead the littleness of their sin, but urge the infrequency of its commission. Others will plead their ignorance of the evil of their sin, and urge that whatever has been wrong in their conduct, they did not intend. Others charge their sin to mere want of thought, or assert that the temptation took them suddenly and unawares. Others will plead the imperfection of their natural temper, and affect to deplore that it is weak or ungovernable; while others produce, as a full satisfaction for all that is past, their purpose or determination to amend for the future. But of all excuses the chief is that which shifts the sin from the sinner's own shoulders, and lays the burden of the guilt upon another. This was the first excuse, and urged in reply to the questioning of God himself; and, since that hour, it has constituted the great model upon which most excuses for sin have been formed.

Before we can fully comprehend the futility of the excuse, we must examine the circumstances that led to it as a final effort to escape from the accusations of conscience, or the cognisance and judgment of God.

Our first parents, while in innocence, had freely conversed with God. But the moment they had sinned, being smitten by their conscience, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. Whence we discover that the object of every excuse is, in some manner, to hide our sin. 'And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave unto me, and I did eat.' Now in this reply it is to be remarked, that it is not obvious whether Adam charges his sin more to the woman than to God himself; for while he relates that the woman 'gave to him,' he tells the Lord, it was the woman whom he had given to be with him. So that it would appear he traces the evil back to God, and charges to his gift, the shame and the guilt in which he now stands before his Judge.

To this excuse, so frivolous and ungrateful, God does not pause to reply, but immediately said unto the woman, 'What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.'

The chief thing remarkable in this excuse is, great ignorance of God. To the trees of the garden our first parents had foolishly fled as a hiding-place from the eyes of omniscience; and now to any but the true account they have recourse, hoping to evade his searching yet merciful examination. They do not confess to God that, in the midst of his bountiful profusion, they had coveted the only gift he had withheld; they do not tell him that a little food had tempted them to disregard his authority; they do not tell him they had felt discontented with their state of blissful innocence and happy communion with God; they do not tell him that, moved by ambition, they had sought to escape from the rank of subjects, and claim an equality with their Creator—but, concealing these things in their own bosom, they answer as under the impression that God can discover no more than they are pleased to reveal.

But ignorance of God's omniscience is not the only thing remarkable; there appears an equal ignorance of his mercy and his grace. To fly, to hide, to evade, to deceive, are the objects of every act and answer; but not a word of sorrow, not a prayer for pardon, is heard from the lips of the sinners.

How wonderful that one simple act of sin, and within a period so obviously brief, could have produced a transformation of character so sad and so degrading!

But at this we need not wonder; the natural world around us can sufficiently illustrate the process. One single cloud can obscure the sun; one single injury to the bodily eye can render his glories invisible—so one single sin interposing between God and the soul becomes as a cloud impenetrable to the light of his countenance, and totally deprives us of that purity of heart without which no man can see the Lord.

Let us learn then the utter vanity of every excuse for sin. The ingenuity of our first parents was unsuccessful. Most probably they were unsuccessful in satisfying themselves; it is certain they were unsuccessful in satisfying God.

Let us learn also the danger of abiding in the way of temptation—of standing in the way of sinners, of walking in the counsel of the ungodly, or sitting in the seat of the scorner.

Let us beware of the shallow selfishness that would lay down our guilt at the door of our

neighbour. That we may be tempted by others is most certain. And theirs is the guilt of the temptation, and for that they must account to God; ours, the guilt of compliance; and for this we must account likewise.

Instead, then, of excusing our sins, let us confess our sins, and flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. For though we have sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus the righteous: and if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us in his blood from all unrighteousness.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,' Matt. xxvi. 41.

AFTER our Lord and his disciples had ended the observance of his last supper, they sung an hymn, and went forth unto the mount of Olives. There he warned them of his own approaching trials, and of their defections from him. So little, however, did the disciples know their own hearts, that instead of being cast down with the prospect of their weakness, or unfaithfulness, or led to pray that the dark hour or the bitter cup might pass from them, they boldly conclude against the possibility of their defection, and promise and aver, with one consent, that though they should die with him, yet would they never deny him.

Thus solemnly conversing they arrive at Gethsemane, a small garden situated at the foot of the mount; and here leaving the rest of his disciples, as when formerly taking witnesses of his glory, he now takes with him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, to be witnesses of his agony; and going with them to a short distance from the others, 'he began to be sorrowful, and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh to his disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.'

Four chief uses of watching seem to be recorded in scripture.

First, Watching the mere progress of time, as saith the prophet Isaiah, 'He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watch-

man, what of the night? The watchman said, 'The morning cometh, and also the night.' By this use of watching, we are constantly reminded of the necessity of counting our days, so that they may not pass unobserved, or unimproved. Secondly, Watching is applied to the looking out for coming events of any kind. This is likewise exemplified by Isaiah in these words; 'Thus saith the Lord, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth—and he hearkened diligently with much heed.' This watching includes the great duty of observing the ways of providence, and the signs of the times in which God has cast our lot. Thirdly, Watching is applied to the guardianship of property, as when our Lord declares, 'if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.' Fourthly, Watching is applied to guarding a place against enemies. Thus Nehemiah, when endangered, 'prayed to God, and set a watch against them,' and thus the Lord says, by Isaiah, to his lately desolate and forsaken, but now restored and protected church, 'I have set a watch on thy walls, O Jerusalem.'

From these, which are the chief views of watching, we are forcibly reminded of the following circumstances.

1. Of our constant liability either actually to forget, or live as if we did forget, the progress of time, the decay of youth, the advance of age, the nearness of death, and the certainty of judgment. How few feel that they are growing old, even when gray hairs appear! How frequently does even sickness fail to arouse to a sense of mortality! How needful, therefore, to watch our days, as we watch a time-keeper, to recollect how many are gone, and think of how few are to come.

2. By our Lord's call to watching, we are reminded of our constant danger of becoming absorbed in the affairs of time, to the sad neglect of eternity.

3. By the call to watching, we are reminded of the invaluable treasure of which God has appointed us stewards, and of the awful terms of responsibility upon which our trust is held. This treasure is not merely our own souls, but frequently the souls of others, for whom we watch, as they who must give account.

4. We are, finally, reminded that we watch in a state of warfare, surrounded by enemies.—The world with its pomps, vanities, and allurements; the flesh with all its weaknesses; the devil with all his wiles—so that not even one moment's relaxation can be permitted from our vigilance;

'seeing our adversary goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.'

But, while watchfulness suggests a wakeful sense of accountability—the call to prayer reminds us of our constant dependence. Prayer without watchfulness, is to ask of God what we judge not worth the keeping; watchfulness without prayer is to attempt to keep the treasure we have never actually received. For 'ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,' are the precious promises upon which alone we can rely for preserving what we possess, or obtaining what yet we require. Whatever is the object of watchfulness should, therefore, immediately become the subject of prayer.

Prayer is the heart making report of its watchfulness to God, and offering therein all its desires for things agreeable to his will. But the main object, both of watchfulness and prayer, is to escape entering into temptation. To this preservation watchfulness and prayer contribute in two ways. First, as the means of obtaining, through grace, the counsel, protection, guidance, or deliverance of God; and, secondly, as the instrumental means of keeping us from evil. The man who is watching against sin, is, by the very temper of watchfulness, rendered unacceptable to sinners, so that they entice him not; while the man who prays without ceasing, is, by that very prayerfulness, so occupied with higher things as to be habitually rendered insensible to the lower things of the earth.

If we then be risen with Christ, let us seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Let us set our affection on things above, not on things upon the earth; for what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what would a man give in exchange for his soul?

How strange that Christ should be in an agony in the garden, while his disciples have ceased to watch; how much stranger, if he be interceding in heaven, and his disciples have ceased to pray. Let us watch without sleeping; let us pray without ceasing.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

'So he drove out the man,' Gen. iii. 24.

WHEN the earth arose from the hand of God in all the freshness and beauty of creation, he chose out a special residence for man, and 'planted a

garden eastward in Eden, and out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'

Thus amply endowed with all that was good for use, and fair to look upon—thus strictly commanded, and thus solemnly warned,—man stood without any excuse, when he coveted the sole royalty that God had reserved, and violated the sole command to which obedience was enjoined. Hitherto God had appeared to man merely as a gracious Benefactor, now he appears as an offended Judge. Hitherto he had spoken in the sweetness of blessing, now he speaks in the bitterness of the curse. The innocent creature he had 'put into the garden,' the guilty creature he now drives out.

'Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God. On them who fell, severity.' But in a God of mercy, why this severity? Because the God of mercy is also a God of truth. God had given a reasonable command, enforced by a reasonable penalty, and the truth of God must be kept. 'Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar.' Were one jot or tittle of God's word to fail, God would cease to be a competent or righteous Judge. He would cease to be competent—for if he gave a law that required not to be enforced, the enactment of such a law proved his unfitness to legislate. He would also cease to be righteous—for if he enforced not his law, he violated his word—and thus ceasing to be a righteous law to himself, must thereby cease to be a righteous Judge for others. The word of the Lord, therefore, cannot be broken; but sin must be followed by a correspondent punishment.

The punishment inflicted upon our first parents implies deep displeasure against sin. The Lord God did not simply 'send' them away.—He 'drove' them out from the garden. Had he merely commanded them to go, there had been no reasonable expectation of obedience—for they who had disobeyed when innocent, would much more disobey when guilty. Had he merely commanded them to go—they who had so readily invented excuses for one sin, would no less readily have defended another. They would still have lingered around their earliest home, and hid

themselves again beneath the trees of the garden. And had God permitted this, they would soon have concluded him to be such an one as themselves—indeed, had he permitted this, he would have been such as themselves. They had believed a lie—God would have told an untruth. They had practised sin—God had not punished it—and between the culprit who sins, and the judge who neglects to punish, the sole difference lies in rank; there is none in disposition or character. The one is a culprit, because he breaks a law—the other, because he does not enforce it. The act of God in 'driving' out our first parents, is, therefore, a practical revelation of that 'indignation and wrath' with which he regards every sin—a revelation, not merely necessary for the exhibition of his own character, but equally necessary for man, who must see, before he can fly from, the terrors of 'the wrath to come.'

Our first parents did not attempt to deny their sin—they merely attempted to excuse it; the woman charged her guilt upon the serpent, the man referred his to the woman—both pleading temptation, not merely as the cause, but also as the defence of their rebellion.

And so do sinners still continue to plead, not with, but against God. Some sinners allege, in their excuse or defence, the peculiarity of their natural temper. On this ground, for example, some either palliate or deny the guilt of sudden anger with all its unseemly accompaniments and lamentable consequences. Others allege the power of natural appetite, or of acquired habit; while habit is again traced to the society and circumstances by which they were surrounded, inveigled, or betrayed. In a word, any plea, but that of 'guilty,' will the sinner put in before God; or, if forced to this at last, even still some allegation of the littleness of the sin, and of the greatness of the temptation, will be found on the lip or in the heart, in order to diminish the guilt, or to mitigate the sentence. Now, because, in reality, all this is but to transfer the sin back to God—and, in some way or other, to lay it at his door, it became absolutely necessary that God should not only exhibit the full detail of the curse, but that he should deprive the sinner of the scene of blessedness with which he had been originally endowed; that sin and misery thus meeting together, in the memory of past joys, and the pressure of present sorrows, might become as medicines in the hand of the great Physician, for working out, in mercy, the sinner's final cure; that the miserable exile might desire a better country; the unhappy outcast a father's home.

But is not this 'driving' out of the man from

Eden, the sad and terrible emblem of the final sentence against impenitent souls, to whom the Judge, on the throne of his glory, shall say, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire?' Here sin and misery are in temporal, there in eternal union! But miserable sinners though we be, while here our state is never hopeless. Here the cherub guard is not only withdrawn from the tree of life, but Jesus says, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved.' And because we were under the curse, he himself became a curse for us; and because we were in sin, he himself 'bare our sins in his own body on the tree;' and because we were in misery, 'he bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows;' and because we were exiles and outcasts without rest from our profitless toils, Jesus therefore said, and says, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

Let us then flee to the refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us! Once were we, in Adam, expelled from Eden; now are we, in Jesus, invited, entreated to return. Let us linger no more—let us doubt no more. He who was and is just to punish—was and is also mighty and merciful to save. He who righteously 'drove out the man,' is the same who, in grace, restores him to glory.

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,'* Mat. xi. 28.

SOME parts of scripture seem specially intended either for particular characters, or special circumstances. Thus the 'twenty-third' has been called 'the child's psalm'—and certainly from the lips, as it were, of 'babes and sucklings,' it has been more frequently heard than any other. Thus the 'hundred and third' has also been denominated, 'the sick man's psalm,'—and how often, 'in the valley of the shadow of death,' it has been a lamp to his feet, and a light to his paths, every one can tell, whom office, duty, or sympathy, has called to visit the bed of affliction, or the house of mourning. But, perhaps, even beyond all these and similar blessed portions, the words upon which our meditation turns, have been employed to give light in darkness, comfort in sorrow, strength in weakness, and even hope in despair. What surpassing beauty, what attractive emphasis in every word! 'Come!' O! why is it not 'Go?' Why not 'depart' from me? 'Come unto me!' To Jesus! The incarnate God, the mighty, the

merciful Saviour! 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.' Toil-worn with your work, down-borne by your burden, 'Come unto me'—but not that I may task you more heavily, as Pharaoh did Israel when he sought for liberty—but 'come unto me, and I will give you rest.' And 'learn of me,' it is added, 'for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.'

Let us then contemplate, first, the characters invited—'all that labour and are heavy laden.' Since sin entered into the world, labour has been the lot of man. 'And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it—cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee—and in the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread.' The earth, cursed in one place with obstinate barrenness, in another with perverse productiveness, yields only to labour; nor does winter in its cold, or summer in its warmth, afford any interval of relaxation from continuous toil. And 'all this labour of man is for the mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.' But how greatly is this labour increased, when we contemplate the various arts that man must cultivate, the complicated manufactures in which he must engage, in order to provide the necessaries, conveniences, or comforts of his short and weary life! And how much greater still becomes human labour, when the body almost comes to rest, and the mind, either from choice, habit, or compulsion of circumstances, becomes the labourer in the field of thought. The contemplative investigator of truth alone can tell how true are the words of Solomon when he said—'Much study is a weariness to the flesh.'

But how often is this mental and bodily labour most grievously increased by disastrous disappointments in all our studies, purposes, and plans! How much heavier grows our burden still when we consider those sad bereavements of dear and beloved ones whom we expected to aid in our toils, to share in our successes, to divide our sorrows, or to double our joys! And how grievous becomes our labour, how intolerable our burden, when debilitated by sickness, or tormented with pain!—when 'wearisome nights are appointed to us, and tossings to and fro to the dawn of the day'—when in the 'morning we say, Would God it were even! and at even, Would God it were morning!'

But the most grievous labour and burden of

our state ever arise from the power of temptation, and the consciousness of sin. 'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?' This wound of the spirit sin alone can inflict, the conscience alone can feel. This burden alone is intolerable, for every other may be shaken off, or borne up—but sin unre-moved must sink the soul into eternal misery.

Now through the din of all this toil, the vexation of all these disappointments, the tears of all those bereavements, the sufferings of all this sickness, and the darkness and guiltiness of all this sin—there comes a sweet voice of invitation and promise—'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

This blessed rest has its commencement in the heart. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and mind.' In that peace, on earth—the peace of a 'conscience sprinkled from dead works'—the soul reposes as Lazarus, in glory, upon the bosom of Abraham. This peace, this rest in the conscience—the real seat of all human joy or woe—immediately pervades and subdues the affections, while it sets them 'upon things above'—removes them from 'things upon the earth,' and diffuses over them the sunshine and the calm of the upper world, of which the renewing Spirit of God is the specimen and the earnest. Then flee away all the terrors of the fiery law, and the rest of victory succeeds to the toils of the conflict. 'For the wages of sin is death, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Then is subdued and laid prostrate all the power of sin. For when the law—sin's strength—is deprived of its terrors—when we pass from under the ban of the law, and come under the protection of grace—then cannot sin any more 'reign in our mortal bodies that we should obey it in the lusts thereof;' but grace reigns 'through righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' And then enter we into our temporal rest—temporal as to its duration, spiritual as to its nature—and then receive we 'the earnest of the inheritance, even of 'the rest that remaineth for the people of God.'

Come, then, all ye that labour and are heavy laden. You feel your burden—you deplore the galling yoke of the world and of sin—you purpose, one day, to come to Jesus, because you can elsewhere find no rest. O! come!—come!—come now. 'Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him, while he is near; let the wicked for-

sake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.'

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 TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,' Rom. v. 12.*

THAT sin is in the world no one can deny, unless those self-blinded souls who altogether deny its existence. That some men, however, should thus deny the existence of sin, by denying any real and essential distinction between good and evil is nothing more than a proof of what is often found—even that mental aberration upon one point may, in many cases, be accompanied with great powers of discernment and reasoning upon every other. That those who deny the existence of sin are in reality subject to mental alienation, can be easily proved; for let their feelings be outraged, and their influence undermined; let their name be calumniated, or their property abstracted—and then see whether they do not discover the difference between right and wrong, when it ceases to be a point of mere verbal disquisition, and is felt as a matter 'coming home to their lives and bosoms.' In a word, it is vain to deny that there is sin in the world. Idolatry, impiety, contempt of ordinances, disobedience to parents, oppression, cruelty, murder, licentiousness, fraud, cunning, deceit, robbery, lying, and covetousness, are every day assuming a thousand forms both in public and in private life; and though some of these forms some men may excuse, yet others of them every man is daily found to condemn.

Thus into a world created by a God holy, beneficent, just, and omnipotent—we find, beyond all controversy, that sin has obtained an entrance. But how? The scriptures cut short all farther inquiry as utterly unnecessary to the purposes of man, and plainly declare, that 'by one man sin entered into the world,' and that 'by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.'

We say, that to inquire deeper into the origin of sin is unnecessary for the purposes of man, that is, for his renewing and salvation. To the eye of curious research, a deeper investigation may appear desirable—but to him whose chief object is to learn 'what he must do to be saved,' there is neither need, nor time, nor desire, for farther inquiry. The physician who finds a disease the seat and nature of which he does not understand,

may find it important or necessary to investigate its origin, in order to its cure; but if he find the patient in extreme danger, and sees not a moment to be lost, he will postpone his researches into the origin of the disease, and employ all his energies to palliate or remove the urgent and most dangerous symptoms.

And so is it with sin in ourselves and others. Sin appears in all. The symptoms are apparent and dangerous; every one an emblem and a fore-runner of death. Till the most urgent symptoms are removed, we have no time for inquiring into their deeper origin; and when they are removed, we are contented to learn what the scriptures discover, that 'by one man sin entered into the world.'

That Adam stood not as an individual, but as a federal head, is obvious; for as he received the blessing of multiplying, and the command of obedience, and the threatening of disobedience, at one and the same time, his obedience or disobedience applied, therefore, to all his posterity. And this fact we see every day illustrated in the occurrences of this life. If a father have an estate, his improvements and his additions descend to his heirs. If he squander or lose his estate, the effects of his folly, or his misfortunes, in like manner descend. Besides, since 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,' we perceive, by simply reversing the order, that where there is death, there must have been previous sin. But we see death in children, therefore there must be sin in children. But, in cases of children dying in early infancy, it cannot have been actual transgression; it must, therefore, be that sin of the whole race which we inherit as the bitter fruit of Adam's first offence.

Now that all men naturally inherit sinful dispositions, is obvious to the eye of every man that examines the world around him. The proof lies in the fact, that in all men, without exception, as soon as action begins, sin begins. But this disposition could not have been the original condition of man. This is proved by reason as well as asserted in scripture. Reason absolutely proves it thus. We find men prone to sinful actions. We find them so prone from youth, from the very dawn of reason. But proneness to sinful actions, cannot arise from any other than sinful dispositions; in point of fact, such proneness is sinful dispositions. Now that God could not have created man so, is obvious—for if he create a being with sinful dispositions, he, as the author of these dispositions, is the author of sin, which is absurd and blasphemous. Man must, therefore, have been created holy; and man must have fal-

len from his original righteousness. The history, the mode, and the manner of that fall, the scriptures alone supply.

Of the evil of sin, the only natural expositors are disease, pain, and death. What they are to the body, sin is to the soul. They destroy its comfort, they disfigure its symmetry, they waste its beauty, they undermine its strength, they torment it with pain, and they deliver it over as a hopeless prisoner to corruption and to worms. There is this only difference—the death of the body is complete—the death of the soul is with the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.

'Help, Lord, else we perish!'

#### TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,' 1 Cor. xv. 22.*

THERE are two Adams mentioned in scripture—the first and the second. 'The first man (or Adam) is of the earth, earthy; the second man (or Adam) is the Lord from heaven. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly.'

Now, the first Adam was the federal head of all his posterity, and in him all his posterity die. The second Adam was also the federal head of all his posterity, and in him all his posterity live.

Our great concern is, therefore, to ascertain what the scriptures mean by 'being in Christ,' for upon that 'being in him,' depends our spiritual resurrection and eternal life. Our Saviour, in the fifteenth chapter of John, explains what is meant by 'being in Christ,' by the union between a vine and its branches. 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' Paul expounds the same union by a variety of emblems, but by none more specially than by that of the body and members. Hence he says of Christ and believers, 'Ye are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.'

Now, is this dwelling of believers 'in Christ,

this union with him, merely figurative, or is it real? We answer—the union is real. This union is real, because, as Paul declares, that believers have access to God the Father ‘by one Spirit,’ they having the same Spirit that Christ possessed.—Christ and believers are one, by that one spirit. Father, Christ and believers are one, by one ‘life.’ ‘In him was life.’ He is ‘that eternal life that was with the Father, and was manifested to us.’ Yea, he is our life; for ‘when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.’ By one spirit, therefore, and one life, believers are in Christ; and so are they made alive in him.

Therefore as all who are in Adam die, because they are in him, so all who are in Christ live, just because they are in him. The words of Paul do not signify—that so sure as all men die in Adam, so sure shall all men be made alive in Christ. No. But they mean—that so sure as all who are in the first Adam die, so sure shall all who, by the one spirit, by the one life, from the one Father, are in Christ, be made spiritually and eternally alive.

Are we, then, spiritually alive? Paul furnishes the answer: ‘The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.’ Now, what is it to live by faith? ‘Faith is the ground of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ Therefore, to ‘live by faith,’ is to live under the power of the hope of glory: and to live amidst the scenery of this world, but entirely by the principles of a world unseen. Now, these principles of the unseen world are three—First, ‘Christ crucified,’ by whom ‘the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world,’ and by faith of whom we die unto sin, even as he died for it. Secondly, Christ interceding—for it is ‘because he ever liveth to make intercession for us,’ that we rely upon him, knowing that thereby ‘he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.’ Thirdly, Christ coming unexpectedly, suddenly to judgment, deliverance, resurrection, and glory. This the believer dreads not, but earnestly prays for, saying, ‘Lord Jesus, come quickly,’ and longs for, and hastes unto, laying aside every weight, and every burden, and pressing onward ‘to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ.’ Such are the symptoms of true spiritual life in the flesh—an eye ever looking to Christ crucified—a confident reliance upon his continual intercession—with that earnest desire that waits and watches for his promised return, and which, in the midst of all worldly allurements and attractions, never requires more than to arise and trim the lamp, and go in with the Lord to his glorious espousals.

That all such shall be made alive in the resurrection, is evidenced by the fact that they are alive already. Every principle of the spiritual life is the emblem of eternal life. It is more—it is not merely an emblem, it is an earnest, in the putting off of the old man, and the putting on of the new—it is not merely a preparation for the journey to Canaan; it is an actual entrance into ‘the inheritance of the saints in light.’

This inheritance the believer now has in glory, as Abraham possessed the inheritance in Canaan. He received it not in fulfilment, but remained a stranger in the land—but he received it in a promise of the future; and being strong in faith, staggered not at the improbability of its fulfilment. He believed God, and it was counted unto him to righteousness. Now there is nothing in this world so improbable as that a dead body should live. Accordingly when Paul preached at Athens, concerning the resurrection, the philosophers replied in scorn, ‘What does this babbler mean?’ But from the heart of the believer all improbability and uncertainty are cast out. For by faith he beholds ‘Christ already risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.’ He sees that ‘as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead. But every man in his order; Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming,’ ‘when shall come to pass that saying, Death is swallowed up in victory; when the believer shall join in that eternal song of triumph, ‘O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ‘O the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of the love of God!’ ‘For his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath he quickened us together with Christ.’

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TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

‘And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden,’ Gen. iii. 8.

EVERY object around us has its own peculiar voice. ‘The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof;’ and this voice is heard whether in the gentle breeze that scarce shakes the flowers, or in the terrible hurricane that prostrates the forest. The sea has a voice, whether in the rippling wave of the calm and

lovely summer day, or in the maniac fierceness of the winter storm. The river has its voice, whether it roll its infant waters amidst the willows and pebbles of some obscure and untrudged glen, or have collected the tributaries of a continent to descend in the thunders of the cataract. Each beast, and bird, and insect, has its voice by which, according to its nature, it inspires either terror or delight. Above all—man has a voice, the oracle of his reason, the vehicle of his will, and the light of his affections. And since God has thus given to the animate and inanimate, to the rational and irrational—to each his peculiar voice, shall God alone, who bestowed these several gifts, be held voiceless and incapable of speaking in words to his creatures? ‘He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth knowledge, shall he not know?’ And he that giveth voice to his creatures, shall he not speak? And yet there are those who altogether either deny this capacity to God, or else deny that he has ever employed it—and this is infidelity. That is—to admit that every creature around us has a voice whereby either its nature or will is made known; but either that the Creator of all has no voice, or never spoke with it for the instruction of his rational and accountable offspring. Were a father never to speak to his ignorant children to instruct them, nor to his suffering children to comfort them, we must pronounce him either dumb or unnatural—and surely were God so to act to his intelligent creatures, we could form no other judgment of him! But God has, ‘at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoken in time past to the fathers by the prophets; and in these last days has spoken unto us by his Son.’

Why, then, is there infidelity in the world? Just because there is sin in the world. A guilty conscience soon produces a darkened understanding. ‘And men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil,’ and then flee away to every vain imagination and ‘refuge of lies,’ to escape alike from themselves and from God.

All this is wondrously exemplified in the conduct of our first parents when they ‘heard the voice of the Lord God.’ Once had that voice been sweet to the ear of listening innocence; now it sounds terrible in the ear of trembling guilt. Accordingly, when they heard his voice, ‘they hid themselves among the trees of the garden,’ as if the eye of God could not see and discover as far as his voice could sound. This unbalancing, as it were, of the attributes of God, still continues to be one of the chief refuges of every form of infi-

delity. Our first parents admitted that God could speak, and they did not attempt to escape from his voice—but they forgot, because they desired to forget, that God’s eye could see wherever his voice could reach; that is, that his attributes were all perfect, and therefore, all equal. And so, infidelity, if it admit at all the being of a God, readily asserts and takes refuge in his mercies, while it utterly denies and repudiates the existence and exercise of his retributive justice.

But this melancholy change in the perceptions and feelings of our first parents, indicated no corresponding change in the nature or rights of God. And though the infidel models his God to suit his fancy, or patronise his sins, yet God continues ‘the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;’ ‘a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right in all his ways;’ ‘forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty.’

The conduct of our first parents strongly exemplifies, not only that ‘fear of God which hath torment,’ and the most ignorant attempt to escape from him—but that alienation from God, as an object of love, which soon eventuates in enmity against him as an object of fixed aversion. Alienation from God appears in banishing the thoughts of him from the heart; as it is written of the sensualists—‘God is not in all their thoughts.’ It farther appears in neglect of, or aversion to, his word, so that the sinner thinks of it, and speaks of it as Ahab did of the prophet when he said, ‘I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.’ This alienation farther appears in neglect, or forsaking, of God’s holy ordinances. His sabbaths become a weariness, unless they may be profaned, the word of truth becomes distasteful, unless to be criticised and rejected, while prayer becomes either a lifeless formality, in which the body bends in the sanctuary, while the heart, with the fool’s eyes, wanders to the ends of the earth. But this alienation, we have said, soon eventuates in enmity; even so, saith the apostle, ‘the carnal mind is enmity against God.’ Now this is what men are little willing to acknowledge or believe. Like Hazeel to the prophet, each of them is ever ready to reply to the charge, ‘is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?’ And yet, notwithstanding all this denial, nothing can be more evident, for when ‘God was manifest in the flesh,’ both Jew and Gentile hated him with a ‘perfect hatred;’ and now that he is received up into glory, the name of Jesus is blasphemed, not only among infidels, but he is ‘daily crucified afresh,’ even ‘in the house of his friends.’

From the conduct of our first parents—let sin-

nara, finally, learn two things never to be forgotten. The alienated sinner has no peace; the impenitent sinner has no escape. Peace must come from 'the blood of the cross;' escape from him who said—'if ye seek me, let these go their way.' Lord, we will no more foolishly attempt to hide us from thine eye; but will humbly confess our sins, for 'thou art faithful and just to forgive, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

'And, in the shadow of thy wings  
Our refuge we will place,  
Until these sad calamities  
Do wholly overpass.'

— TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? Psalm cxxxix. 7.*

The doctrine of the Trinity is the sun of the scriptures, the doctrine of the Spirit, the perfection of the Trinity. The knowledge of 'the Father' conveys us to God in heaven; even as it is written—'Our Father who art in heaven.' The knowledge of 'the Son' leads to God on earth; even as it is written, 'The Word was God; the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory,' or it leads us to a fixed locality in unseen glory where Jesus, in human nature, 'sitteth on the right hand of God,' and whence he shall come again into the world, and 'sit on the throne of his glory.' But the doctrine of 'the Spirit' bears us at once into the immensity—we gaze around, above, below—the earth, the sea, we traverse in our thought—to heaven's utmost assignable height we ascend—thence into the lowest hell we penetrate—but wheresoever we go, still the Spirit of God is there. He is there, never separate from the Father and the Son, but ever in triune and co-equal Godhead subsisting; but, in each varied locality of the universe, we find the all-pervading Spirit still leading to 'the Father' in heaven above, to the Son on the earth beneath, or the throne of waiting or of judgment hereafter, to himself everywhere.

How deep, how mysterious, is the scriptural doctrine of the Godhead! yet how important and glorious, as revealing the economy of salvation! But its depth and mystery derogate in nothing from its evidence, or truth, or value. For all powers within us, and all nature around us, are full of mystery. We know not how our own body grows, lives, or dies. We know not how

our spirit thinks, or remembers, or anticipates. We know not how a blade of grass grows, or an ear of corn ripens. We know, from evidence, that these things are so, but 'how' they are so, we cannot tell. Even so is it with the mystery of Godhead. We know, from scripture testimony, that, in Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit, the Godhead eternally and unchangeably subsists; we see how gloriously the doctrine solves the great problem of a sinner's salvation; and we see how it converts desire into certainty, and builds upon a rock that cannot be shaken; more, for satisfaction of reason, we need not know, and it may be that, in this imperfect state, more of God we cannot know.

The words upon which our meditation rests lead us chiefly to consider the Spirit of God as omnipresent; the other parts of the psalm to view him as omniscient. For if the Spirit of God be everywhere present as God is, then must he know every thing where he is, as God knows; but the understanding of God is infinite—therefore is the Spirit of God omniscient. The knowledge of God, however, with which we are concerned above all others, is his intimate knowledge of ourselves. And of this the Psalmist testifies, 'Lord, thou hast searched me.' How emphatic the word! 'thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off; thou compassedst my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo! O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and thou hast laid thine hand upon me. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell—the state of the dead—' behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.'

Alas! how unlike is this glorious doctrine to the debasing doctrine of our first parents when they 'heard the voice of the Lord, and hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden!' They did not, for they could not, wait for the shades of night, but they seek a covering from the eyes of God beneath the green leaves of the trees! And so, in some

degree or manner, thinks every unconverted sinner. Nay, sometimes so do God's own children think and act—as Peter, when, through the fear of man, he forgot both his own promise and his Lord's presence, and sought first in denial and then by oaths, not only to escape from the danger by which he was pressed, but also to escape from his conscience and his God. But the moment 'the Lord turned and looked upon Peter,'—the moment eye met eye—that moment the omnipresent, heart-searching Spirit of the Lord, was acknowledged, and 'Peter went out and wept bitterly.'

What a near, what an Almighty foe to sin and sinners is the Holy Spirit of the living God—what a confidence must he inspire into the hearts of believers. When they know not what to ask, he 'will help their infirmities and teach them what to pray for as they ought.' He can and he will 'teach them all things,' 'guide them into all truth,' and 'glorify Jesus' in their conversion and sanctification.

While, then, it is every day the design and labour of sinners to escape from God, let it be ours to seek after him more and more, and ever to draw nearer and nearer to his immediate presence.

But if God be everywhere, how can we approach nearer to him? Yes, God, our Creator, is every where, but God as new Creator, is only in Christ Jesus. For 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature'—a new creation—'old things are passed away; behold! all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.' For 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,' having 'made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

'All mine iniquities blot out,  
Thy face hide from my sin:  
Create a clean heart, Lord, renew  
A right spirit me within.

'Cast me not from thy sight, nor take  
Thy Holy Spirit away;  
Restore me thy salvation's joy:  
With thy free Spirit me stay.'

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TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,' Rom. v. 14.

DEATH reigned, says the apostle. 'Art thou a king then?' it may be asked. He is a king—he is

the king of terrors. Death's dominion over this fallen world, as it is legitimate in its origin, absolute in its exercise, and resistless in its effects, so is it wide as the world's extent, and lasting as the world's duration.

The reign of death is legitimate. His is no usurped authority. He is a king by right, and by divine right too. Men have, of late years, disputed much about the legitimacy of earthly dynasties; some recognising no source of kingly power but the capricious voice and fickle will of the people, while others, reviving the exploded ideas of non-resistance and passive obedience, seem almost to maintain in seriousness what has been ascribed to them in satire, 'the right divine of kings to govern wrong.' But be the true principle of the legitimate power of earthly monarchs what it may,—the rule of death over sinners is legitimate beyond all controversy. A time indeed there was—alas! how short!—when death was not our natural or rightful sovereign—when he was unknown on the earth except by name—when, to use the language of an ancient Jewish writer, 'the generations of the world were healthful, and there was no poison of destruction in them, neither was the kingdom of death upon the earth; for righteousness is immortal.' But no sooner did unrighteousness enter, than by it, and with it, entered death. Look at man in paradise, and you see there the reign of life—life dispensing to obedient man happiness in every form—perfect health in his body, perfect peace in his soul, and perfect enjoyment from their continued union without the fear of dissolution. But sin reigned unto death; and now, upon man's expulsion from Eden, you see life lying dethroned and dishonoured in the dust; and upon the ruins of the broken law the Law-giver erects and establishes a throne, which death ascends, that he may thence wield his ruthless sceptre over mortal man. Be it never forgotten then, that if death reigns over us, it is by an authority which, though delegated, is divine, even the authority of him 'by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice.'

The sway of death over mortals is absolute and irresistible. 'Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto him, "what dost thou?"' The wrath of an eastern despot is said to be as 'the messengers of death,' insuring swift and sudden destruction. Yet the mightiest tyrants may be resisted, and often have been resisted with success; but who of mortals can resist death? Who hath striven with him and conquered? If he once issue the summons: 'Arise and depart'—it matters not where, nor when, nor how—that sum-

mons must be obeyed. He can no more be overcome by violence, than subdued by intreaty; promises do not allure, threatenings do not awe, tears do not melt him. No human skill nor human strength can blunt his dart, nor could the wealth of worlds purchase one moment's exemption from his stroke. The king on his bed of state is as open to his assaults as the beggar on his bed of straw; and with the same ease that he enters the meanest hovel, he enters the kingly palace with its turreted battlements, and making his way through bolts, and bars, and hosts of armed guards, he reigns over royalty. Sinner! you may spurn every other yoke, you may throw off every other control, you may conquer every other enemy, but know that you are already death's doomed victim, and the yawning grave's assured prey.

Death's empire over sinful men is universal. There have been many extensive dominions, but his is the only really universal monarchy that has ever been on the earth. No country, no character, no condition of life, no age, and no circumstances, can withdraw us from his domination, or save us from his power. And it is specially noted by the apostle here, that he has reigned, as we know he continues to reign, over infants—over those who do not live to commit actual sin like Adam, but who, by reason of their connection with and descent from him, carry within them the seeds of moral depravity, and consequently of bodily corruption; for whenever you see a human body dead, be it only the body of a new born infant, that 'body is dead because of sin.' There is perhaps nothing we are called to witness so mournfully and mysteriously affecting as the agonising sufferings which infants sometimes endure, and the death in which these sufferings often terminate—so often, indeed, that it is a well known law of mortality that a great proportion of the human race die in infancy. The eye of the babe opens to heaven's light, and is then sealed in darkness; or if he is spared a few months to complete his span, it is only till his little tongue can lisp a parent's name, and then be silent in the grave. Ye Jacobs and Rachels! bereaved fathers and mothers, who have seen a darling child pining away with a sickness that was too plainly unto death, or convulsed with paroxysms of suffering, which harrowed up your souls, and were rendered doubly terrible by the inability of the poor babe to tell its distress but by the most piercing cries; ye who have had to hang over an infant's agony so intense and protracted, as to make you, who gave it birth, willing, anxious, thankful, to hear the last sound which pro-

claims release from pain and life together; say, as you were compelled to witness a scene like that, which rent your heart's core with an anguish that could only find relief in the assurance that the beloved of your soul lay in your arms a shattered and lifeless corpse,—O say what that accursed thing must be, which, under the government of an All-merciful and Almighty God, can entail such evils.

The empire of death, as it has been co-extensive with human existence since the fall, so it will end only with the world's dissolution. Adam, the first man, 'lived nine hundred and thirty years,' but—'he died,' and so did his more immediate descendants, each in his turn. Enoch, indeed, the seventh from Adam, on account of his signal piety, was translated, that he should not see death; and the extreme longevity of his son Methuselah might excite the expectation that the power of death was, in some measure, to be broken; but he also, when within thirty years of completing his tenth century, fell before the destroyer. Think of the countless generations over whom 'death reigned from Adam to Moses.' What proofs of his power did not the flood exhibit! 'Tis the carnival of death; 'tis the vintage of the grave!'—a whole world of victims, among whom, as in Nineveh, there would be many who, from their tender age, 'could not discern between their right hand and their left.' In the overthrow, by fire, of the cities of the plain; in the engulfing of Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea; in the strewing of the wilderness with carcases in heaps by the sword, the pestilence, and the fiery flying serpent, what do we see but death reigning from Adam unto Moses? Nor since that period has he for a moment ceased to reign. There have been long-lived kings, and long-enduring kingdoms, but the only perpetual dynasty is that of death; and he is immortal on this earth until the day when it shall be burnt up. We every where see how he tramples to dust plants and animals, man and man's works; and even those Egyptian pyramids that appear to defy his destroying rage, are but the trophies of his might; for are they not the sepulchres of kings? monuments at once of man's frailty, and of death's conquest.

We too are the subjects of death. And what are we but the copies, so to speak, of long-vanished human beings, our prototypes in body and mind? and after us others will be born, who will again look, and feel, and think, and act, and suffer exactly as we do, and over whom death will again reign.

Yet is there hope in Israel concerning this

thing; and if the view of sin and its deadly consequences humbles and grieves us, we shall be the better prepared to welcome and embrace the message which proclaims the 'reign of life by one, Jesus Christ.'

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 TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ,' Rom. v. 17.*

WE have seen the reign of death by Adam; let us now contemplate the reign of life by Christ. If misery follows naturally in the one case, much more will happiness follow in the other. If pollution has been communicated, much more will purity; if wrath has been transmitted, much more will love; if the condemnation of many has been the result of one offence, much more will the justification of many be the result of one atonement; if by one man's disobedience we became sinners, much more by the obedience of another shall we be made righteous; if death reigned by the sin of man, much more shall life reign by the grace of God.

Mark the grand source whence this life emanates:—it is the free gift of the grace of God. That is a point which seems to require little proof. For if we are all sinners against God, and lie under his deadly curse, how can life ever come to us but as a favour gratuitously bestowed, because wholly undeserved? Where is the merit to purchase it? Where is our atonement for past guilt—where our security for future obedience? Where is the willingness to save ourselves from sin if we could—where the ability to save ourselves if we would? 'By grace are ye saved!' is a principle which lies at the very basis of the Christian scheme. It is involved in every scriptural account of man's natural condition; it is revealed in every proclamation of the glorious gospel; it accords with the uniform experience of every humble Christian; it is the implied sentiment of every devout prayer, and the sweet burden of every spiritual song; it is that which animates the praises of the sanctuary below, and will form the exhaustless theme of rejoicing in the temple above, where as the foundation has been laid, so the head-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, 'Grace, grace unto it.'

But in order to that glorious consummation, think what a large measure of grace must have

been previously imparted! It is the reception of 'abundance of grace' which entitles to and prepares for the 'exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' The God who is rich in mercy, and abundant in goodness and truth, gives to his people to enjoy all spiritual blessings in rich abundance, and overflowing fullness. Does he pardon sin? He 'abundantly pardons.' Does he bestow the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost? He 'sheds it down abundantly.' Does he bless Zion's provision? He blesses it 'abundantly.' Did his Son come that believers might have life? It was 'that they might have it more abundantly,' when to all of them an entrance shall have been 'ministered abundantly into his everlasting kingdom.' And oh! what a scene of grateful rejoicing shall then be witnessed, when this mystery of God's grace shall be finished in God's glory. Think of the myriads who shall shine in brightness and beauty before the throne. Reckon up, if you can, the amount of real good that shall have been bestowed upon each through grace; and estimate also the imaginary good, but real evil, that through the same grace shall have been withheld. Endeavour to conceive of all the means and appliances in providence and redemption that shall have been successfully put in operation for their benefit. And say, is not the grace that shall in ways so mysterious have effected a result so blessed, well termed 'abundant grace?' And when the many who have received, who are receiving, and who shall yet receive this grace shall meet, and mingle, and rejoice together, will not that be a noble anthem that shall rise from all heaven's borders, when 'this abundant grace shall, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.'

The apostle, however, specifies one particular gift of grace, which, of all others, may be described as the one thing needful, inasmuch as it constitutes at once the title to heaven, and the meetness for heaven's enjoyment. It is 'the gift of righteousness.' Now what is righteousness, but just that conformity to God's law, which He, as the Lawgiver, Governor, and Judge of the moral universe, can never fail to require? Even a human magistrate, if he allows a delinquent to escape with impunity, is held to be virtually conniving at the crime, and to be in spirit a partaker with the criminal. And shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Shall not He visit for sin? Or shall it be proclaimed through all the worlds of his wide dominion, that allegiance and rebellion, obedience and disobedience, virtue and vice, are regarded by him with equal indifference? Is there

unrighteousness with God? God forbid! Then might the Deity as well cease to reign, as promulgate a law guarded by no penalties, enforced by no sanctions. But blessed be his name! in his dealings with us sinners, he announces a method by which his justice and mercy, his holiness and love, are made to harmonise gloriously, and in which he exhibits himself as a just God, yet a Saviour; as just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. In the finished work, the obedience unto death of his incarnate Son, we discover how he made him who knew no sin to be a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Hence that gift of righteousness which is given unto and put upon all them that believe—even the righteousness which is called 'the righteousness of God,' because by him devised, provided, accepted,—his law being thereby fulfilled, his justice satisfied, his government vindicated, and the high honours of his throne maintained.

But while this is the only righteousness that can furnish a title to eternal life, there is another righteousness, the gift of the same grace, which is no less indispensable as a qualification for heaven's bliss. The one is that righteousness which having been wrought out and brought in by another, is imputed and received by faith; the other is that personal righteousness, that inherent holiness which is wrought in every believer by the Spirit of promise, who is a Spirit of purity, and without which 'no man shall see the Lord.' Did the gospel indeed assure a man that grace will abound to him though he continue in sin; did it profess to save him in his sins, and not from them; had it nothing to do with the heart, the will, the life,—then you might conceive of a sinner delivered from the fire of hell, and yet as much resembling as ever, in spirit and temper, the devil and his angels. But this holy word of life knows no such characters. In providing for our peace, it secures our purity; in redeeming the soul from death, it renews the heart unto a new life; in justifying the person, it sanctifies the character; in changing the condition, it transforms the man; in exhibiting Jesus as a substitute in order to righteousness imputed, it also reveals him as a purifier in order to holiness implanted. And out of the fullness of grace which it hath pleased the Father should dwell in him, his people receive, even grace for grace; wisdom, peace, love, joy, strength, patience, grace in time of need, grace sufficient, yea 'abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness.'

Come we now to the glorious issue of all in another world. 'Shall reign in life.' There is roy-

alty, and there is immortality. Immortal royalty! that is the gift by grace which shall so abound unto many, in order that where sin abounded grace may much more abound. As sin had reigned unto death, and death had reigned over the sinner, so now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, that the sinner, deemed righteous and made righteous, may reign in glory. Under no figure is the happiness of heaven more frequently set forth, than under the idea of a kingdom, to denote the high degree of perfection and power to which Christians shall with their forerunner Christ be exalted. This reign is the subject of assured promise. 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father hath appointed unto me.' It is the object of believing expectation. 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.' It is the theme of grateful praise. 'Unto him that hath made us kings to God!' Hence the crown of righteousness laid up by the righteous Judge; hence the crown of glory to be bestowed by the chief Shepherd; hence the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. And that may indeed be termed the crown of crowns, which is incorruptible, unfading, eternal. 'Doth the crown,' asks Solomon, 'endure to every generation?' Earthly sovereigns, though enjoying the most vigorous health, and the most prosperous reign, may nevertheless be said to reign in death. Never are they secure from the attempts of open violence, or the inroads of insidious disease; and one or other of these things will one day terminate their life and their reign together. But the reign of saints in glory will emphatically be 'the reign of life,' the conscious reign of life; and it will doubtless form one of the sweetest and purest ingredients in their cup of enjoyment to know that nothing can possibly happen to interrupt or disturb it from without or from within, no sickness, no sorrow, no separation, no death. Theirs will be the life worth the living for, consisting of an immortality, not of being only, but of bliss,—higher than the delights of Eden, equal to the joys of angels.

THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters!'* Isaiah i. 4.

Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of a nation of idolatrous heathens? No, but of God's chosen Israel, whom he had sought out as a peo-

ple for himself, to be to him a name and a praise. How deep were their obligations! how distinguished their advantages! Them he had brought forth with a high hand from the house of bondage. He had led them safe through the depths of the sea and the dangers of the wilderness. He had subdued their enemies before them, and given them secure and peaceful possession of the delightful land—had fenced them about with covenant-privileges, and blessed them abundantly with covenant-blessings. Theirs was the only country where Jehovah, the one God, living and true, fixed his gracious residence, vouchsafed his special presence, recorded his great name, revealed his holy will, established his pure worship, and manifested his excelling glory. Yet see how unsuitable and ungrateful were their returns! Instead of seeking to fulfil their high destiny,—‘of the Rock that begat them they are unmindful,’ and they have forgotten the God who had chosen them to receive such peculiar and exclusive honours. While the surrounding nations pertinaciously adhere to their respective delusions, each one walking in the name of their god, the only people who enjoyed the light of revealed truth, constantly endeavour to extinguish or obscure it, and change their God and glory for lying vanities. And so darkened and degraded do they at length become, that their indulgent, but incensed, Father must here make to heaven and earth the touching appeal, ‘I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.’ He then charges them with their accumulated guilt as a nation. They were not merely ‘sinful,’ but ‘laden with iniquity;’ not merely ‘evil-doers,’ as to the outward act, but polluted in their hearts; deceivers and being deceived—corrupted themselves, and the ‘corrupters’ of others.

Here then is a melancholy proof of the innate depravity and desperate wickedness of the human heart, in that a whole nation persisted with one accord in departing from the living God, though they enjoyed every advantage for seeking his favour, and securing his blessing. This is the very inference which the prophet himself drew from the mournful fact of his country’s apostacy. If they had ‘forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, and gone away backward,’ or as the margin reads, ‘had become alienated,’ the cause of all this was to be sought for in the mental and moral disease of which they were the victims. ‘The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole

of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness.’ Sin is the plague-spot of creation; it perverts all our faculties, and paralyses all our powers; it is the corrupt tree yielding corrupt fruit; it affects and influences, yea, it moulds at the root all our principles, aims, motives; our feelings, affections, and desires; our temper, conversation, and conduct. And O let us never forget, that it was nothing but this leaven of depravity, spreading wider and deeper through the Jewish nation, and pervading the whole mass, that led them, at last, to fill up the measure of national guilt and national punishment, by the rejection and crucifixion of the promised and expected Messiah. In the history of God’s chosen people we see exemplified this eternal truth, that as with righteous men, and righteous bodies of men, it shall be well, so with unrighteous men, and unrighteous bodies of men, it shall be ill; and as their corporate capacity ceases with this life, so it is in this life that the Judge of all deals with them. The deed of the Jewish rulers, confirmed as it was by the cries of the infuriated populace, and the continued unbelief of the great bulk of the nation, drew down upon them, as a people, the fearful judgments which had been denounced. God took away both their place and nation; their beloved house was left unto them desolate; they were scattered throughout all lands, without a country or a home; and to this day they remain an astonishment, and a bye-word, and a hissing, and a reproach—testifying to the remotest corners of the globe at once the depravity and the degradation of ‘the people laden with iniquity.’

But are we, as a nation, verily better than they? Are not all men, Gentiles as well as Jews, under sin? We call ourselves a Christian people, but is the grand fundamental truth of religion, namely, the supremacy of God, generally admitted, and practically acted upon in our national affairs? Is God in all or in any of our national thoughts, feelings, aims? Is he duly acknowledged in our national counsels, or our national acts? Is he gratefully owned in public mercies? Is he humbly adored under public calamities? Is there a distinct and devout recognition of the Supreme Being, either by the governors or the governed? On the contrary, have not too many of our national deeds shown contempt of his high authority, and disregard of his holy law? And when the majority of a country manifestly acquiesce in the iniquitous acts of its rulers, then, in the sight of other nations, and in the sight of the King of nations, the guilt contracted becomes that of the country at large.

But in endeavouring to estimate the degree of our national depravity, we are bound to mark, not only the deeds of our rulers, and the grosser vices that abound among the people, but to conceive, as we best can, of the aggregate amount of sin committed by the entire community. Let each man isolate himself from the mass; let him search his own heart, and try his own ways; and if he engage in the scrutiny in a faithful and honest spirit, he will discover not only that he is a sinner, but that, considering all his advantages in this highly favoured country, he is a sinner before God exceedingly. Now if the sum of individual trespass be so great, what must be the amount of national transgression? Is it not manifest, that to us, no less than to Israel, does the description apply, that we are 'a sinful nation, a seed of evil doers.'

The sins of others we cannot, indeed, repent of, but we may well be filled with shame and confusion of face on account of the humbling proof they afford of the depravity of our common nature; and we ought also to feel deep contrition, that we have not used all the endeavours we might have done to arrest the progress of abounding iniquity. But if our own personal sins have greatly swelled the amount of national trespass, of them we may repent—of them we ought to repent. Let reformation begin at home. Let every man study the secret plagues of his own heart, and the besetting sins of his own character, and be found mourning apart as in dust and ashes. The same God who here spake to Israel, now speaks to us, saying, 'Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil; learn to do well. Seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not,'* Eccl. vii. 20.

This is a clear and authoritative declaration of the sinful character of all men, and of the imperfect obedience of the best. It does not deny that there are, on the earth, those who, in contradistinction to the great mass of mankind, may be described as comparatively 'just,' pious, holy. It admits that these do good, much good, but it likewise inti-

mates that they do evil, much evil, and that continually; yea, that in all the good they do, there wanteth not sin. It thus explodes the absurd idea of moral perfection being found to exist here below; it even precludes the supposition of its ever being attained in this life. 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good,' and even in the good that he doeth, 'sinneth not.' There is not a just man upon earth, who, along with the good that he doeth, doeth not much evil also.

Nor does this assertion stand alone in the bible; it is confirmed by other passages no less explicit. 'There is none righteous, (i. e. absolutely or perfectly just;) no not one. There is none that doeth good, (without sin) no not one. There is no man that liveth, and sinneth not. In many things we offend all; in all things we fail and come short of the glory of God.'

This testimony of scripture is confirmed by universal observation; for where, with the exception of one who was more than man, was there ever seen in our world a perfectly spotless life, a completely sinless character? Had such a man appeared, he could not fail to have attracted the admiring wonder of his cotemporaries, who would have transmitted with honour to posterity the memory of so rare a prodigy. But though the earth has existed for several thousand years, and during that period millions of men have been born, yet in no age and no country has there been found among those born in Adam's likeness, a single example of one 'who did no sin.'

And from universal observation let us pass to universal experience. Every man is, in a greater or less degree, conscious of guilt; is persuaded that he has left undone those things which he ought to have done, and that he has done those things which he ought not to have done. Every man is, on account of this conviction of present guilt, at some time or other apprehensive of future punishment. Every man who makes the attempt to abstain from all evil in thought, word, and deed, and to do his whole duty perfectly, finds the endeavour accompanied with great and insurmountable difficulties. Yea, who dare pronounce any one good work of man absolutely perfect, and without sin? Who will be bold enough to maintain, that his obedience, in any one instance, meets and answers the demands of that law which is spiritual, and reacheth unto the thoughts and intents of the heart? Who will presume to affirm, that in his best service there is no admixture of infirmity and imperfection? Who is there among the sons of men, who, in the review of any single transaction of his life, can lay his hand upon his heart

and declare, that not only was the outward deed blameless, but that all the motives and feelings connected with it, both as to the matter and manner of the performance, were blameless too, and were such as would, in every respect, be regarded as perfect, not only in the superficial estimate of his erring fellow-creatures, but in the sight of the holy and heart-searching Judge, with whom we have to do?

But in farther confirmation of the truth here stated, we appeal to the universal confession of sin, (for by all it is acknowledged in words,) and to the peculiar emphasis and deep feeling with which it has always been confessed by the truly pious of every age. The more enlarged the acquaintance they have obtained with the extent and spirituality of the divine law, and the more they have studied in contrast with this, their individual dispositions and character, the more clearly have they perceived, and the more bitterly have they lamented their many short-comings and transgressions. Go back to the Old Testament saints, and witness holy Jacob. 'Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life.' Witness Job: 'If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me. If I say I am perfect, it also shall prove me perverse. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Witness Moses: 'Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.' Witness David: 'Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.' Witness Isaiah: 'Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips.' Witness Jeremiah: 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways.' Witness Daniel: 'O Lord, righteousnesses belong unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, because we have sinned against thee.' Witness Nehemiah, in a prayer, too, uttered in reference to his good deeds: 'Remember me, O my God, concerning this also; and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.'

Turn we to New Testament saints, and we find the same humble and ingenuous acknowledgment. Simon Peter, overawed by the presence and power of the holy Jesus, exclaimed: 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' The beloved disciple John testifies: 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Even Paul, when distinguished by the highest measure of spiritual attainment by mortal ever possessed, is nevertheless heard groaning out the complaint: 'I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

Yea, it is worthy of remark, that as if to place the fact of man's sinfulness beyond all doubt and controversy, the word of God, in recording the errors and faults of the saints of old, exhibits them as at times failing most in the exercise of that particular grace or virtue by which, in general, they were most eminently characterised. Abraham, the father of believers, gave way once and again to unbelieving fears. The man Moses was 'very meek above all the men upon the face of the earth,' yet even he was overtaken by sinful anger, and spoke unadvisedly with his lips. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, but it was Job who cursed the day of his birth. Solomon was wiser than all men, yet how egregiously did he play the fool! No disciple more tender and loving than John, yet it was he who joined with his brother in proposing to call down fire from heaven to consume an entire village of Samaritans. No disciple so bold and undaunted as Peter, yet Peter alone denied his Master. Lord, what is man!

Do not all these considerations lead to the conclusion, that if corruption and depravity were merely of occasional and accidental occurrence, there would surely be some exceptions; but as no exceptions have ever appeared within the knowledge or the memory of man, we must infer, that the corruption is corruption of nature, that the depravity is depravity of heart. Seeing then, that the perfect law of a perfect God demands a sinless righteousness, which is not to be found in sinful man, let us renounce all dependence on our own doings, in whole, or in part. Like a humble Christian of former times, let us 'lay all our good works and all our bad works in a heap together, and let us flee from it to Christ the Saviour, that in him we may find sweet peace.' And let us rejoice in knowing that these imperfections of the 'just man' are found only 'upon earth!' In heaven the spirits of the just are 'made perfect.' There the people are all righteous. 'The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity.'

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#### THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?'* Jer. xvii. 9.

THAT is not the language of figure, but of fact. It is not a hasty complaint uttered by some sullen misanthropist, nor a charge brought against

any one individual, because deemed pre-eminent in wickedness. For the credit of our common nature we might wish it were possible to soften down the terms in consistency with truth; but that may not be, for no expressions can be less liable to misconstruction, than those which are here employed, by the great Searcher of hearts, to describe the lamentable condition to which our hearts have been reduced through sin. What that condition is we can only hope to know aright by divine teaching.

Men are represented in the bible, as 'deceivers, and being deceived,' hypocrites in regard to others, deluded in regard to themselves. From every quarter are we exposed to the influence of deception. We live in a deceitful world, where we tread on enchanted ground, and are in danger, every moment, of sinking into quicksands. Riches are deceitful; they promise happiness, but yield only anxiety. 'Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain;' the notice of the great, and the friendship of the good, are alike unsatisfying and uncertain, and so is all honour, save that which cometh from God. Yet these things are but passive instruments of deception, from which the heart takes occasion to deceive itself; for it is in its own nature 'deceitful above all things.' Were it not, indeed, for the deceitfulness of our own weak and wicked hearts, neither a deceitful world nor a deceitful tempter would prevail so much against us.

'Who knoweth the mind of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?' And yet it is precisely that, by which alone we can truly know ourselves, which may most mislead us in the study. The hearts of others we know not at all, and of our own the little knowledge we possess, or can attain to, is limited, and very confused. In watching the suggestions of the mind, in analysing its feelings and motives, and in reviewing its operations, we may be said to resemble him who 'saw men as trees walking,' so indistinct and erroneous are our perceptions. Yea, not only is the heart in itself deceitful, it is full of deceivers. By him who alone knows it, it is declared to be 'corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.' Our every vicious principle, our every unhallowed propensity, our every depraved habit, is a deceiver, and leads us into captivity as much by art as by violence. Sin, indeed, generally, is represented as a deceiver; it dares seldom appeal to the understanding, but insinuates itself into the affections, first intoxicating the soul, and then polluting it; and no wonder then that the deceitful heart should become so 'desperately wicked.'

There is scarcely an object within the range of human thought or feeling respecting which man is not prone to err, and be mistaken? But most of all are we in danger of being deceived in judging of ourselves. The generation that existed in Solomon's days has never become extinct—the generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness.' We are apt to imagine that we excel in moral beauty, and are rich in spiritual attainments, while, in God's sight, we are 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' We approach the throne of mercy, not with the prayer, 'God! be merciful;' but with the self-gratulatory acknowledgment, 'God I thank thee that I am not as other men;' and 'thinking ourselves to be something when we are nothing, we deceive ourselves.'

How frequently do men's hearts deceive them with regard to the nature of their religion! A fierce persecutor will persuade himself that he is doing God service, when killing his people. A degraded idolater will give his first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. 'He feedeth upon ashes;' a deceived heart hath turned him aside, so that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, 'Is there not a lie in my right hand?'

How deceitful is the wicked heart as to the fearful progress of indulged sin! Who upon his first entering upon a vicious course, ever duly contemplated whither it would lead him? A prophet looked earnestly in the face of Hazeal, and burst into tears. In fancy's eye he saw him mount the throne of Syria over the murdered body of his sovereign. Hazeal shuddered at the thought of a crime so repugnant to his present feelings, and exclaimed, 'What! is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?' And yet he was not slow in fulfilling his predicted destiny.

How deceitful is the heart in blinding us to our danger when we expose ourselves to the contagion of vice! Young persons, especially, imagine they may 'stand in the way of sinners,' and yet be secure from sin. But 'be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners.' 'Can a man take fire into his bosom, and yet his clothes be not burned? Can a man go upon hot coals, and yet his feet not be burned?' Did we rightly know the weakness and treachery of our own hearts, instead of going to the full length of what is lawful, we would hate the very garments spotted by the flesh, and abstain not only from the practice, but from the bare 'appearance of evil.'

How deceitful is the heart in filling us with an

overweening conceit of our own wisdom, and a presumptuous confidence in our own strength, whether for duty or trial, for service or suffering! 'He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool;' so said the wisest of men, Solomon, and he lived to exemplify the truth of the maxim in his own person. 'Though all men,' said Peter to his Lord, 'be offended in thee, yet will I never be offended. I will go with thee to prison and to death.' Alas! in a few hours he denied, with oaths and curses, that he had ever known him.

How deceitful is the heart in concealing or palliating the baneful effects of sin in this world, and its dreadful consequences in the next! The sinner, in following his own heart's lusts, dreams of nothing but pleasure; he is tempted with the bait while the hook is kept out of sight. And even when, by a sense of sin's present bitterness, the conscience is awakened to a sense of future danger, how ingenious is the deceitful heart in devising the means of lulling it asleep into a false and fatal security. It suggests that the evil is not so very great after all; that there are many as bad, if not worse, than we are; and that it will be time enough to think of preparing for judgment when we receive warning to die. But 'be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'

Well might the prophet ask, 'who can know it?' Even a heathen has told us that 'know thyself' came down from heaven. None can fathom the heart's depths, or explore its windings, but the omniscient God, whose pure but mysterious workmanship it originally was. 'I, Jehovah, search the heart, I try the reins.'

'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.'

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#### THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh,'* Ezekiel xxxvi. 26.

How aptly and beautifully do God's promises and man's prayers illustrate and respond to each other! He gives the command; 'Make you a new heart!' The command excites the prayer, 'Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me.' The prayer draws forth the promise; 'A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.'

What is the grand characteristic of the old heart, so deceitful and desperately wicked? It is a 'stony heart.' Take up a pebble, and feel it. How cold! how hard! how utterly destitute of sensation and life! If you try to bend it, it will break sooner than yield. If you strike it, it will resist, and seem almost to return the blow. If you lay upon it a burden, it will be sensible of no weight. If you apply to it a seal, it will take no impression. You may break it, or grind it to powder, still it has all the qualities of a stone, a lump of insensible matter, without vital warmth, vital energy, or vital motion.

Such-like, according to the testimony of God, is the heart of every unrenewed sinner. It is as hard as the nether mill-stone—cold, obdurate, senseless, unsusceptible as the rocky adamant. And hence when it is brought into contact with any of the great spiritual truths of the bible, there are no corresponding vibrations, no suitable emotions; every thing about it betrays the torpor of insensibility and the chillness of death.

Now in the illustration that is here presented, of the vital change effected in regeneration by the Holy Ghost, we may trace a striking analogy between man's animal and mental economy. That organ in the human frame which we call the heart, our Maker has constructed of a soft, elastic, fleshy substance, and it is necessary it should be so formed, in order that it may carry on with regularity its important functions. Were it to lose any part of its flexible fleshy texture, the circulation of the blood would be greatly impeded, if not altogether stopped; and, as is well-known, this is what really happens in the fatal disease called the ossification of the heart. That disorder consists in some parts of the heart becoming indurated or changed into a hard, bony substance, and by that means an impediment is given to its free motions, and the energy of its action is gradually diminished, until it wholly ceases to beat. See, then, how well the word of God is illustrated by his works. As a hard and stony heart could not possibly carry on the process of circulation, so when He, who makes all things new, engages to renovate the old man, we perceive with what beautiful propriety he promises to take away the ossified and useless organ, and to substitute the heart of flesh—soft, muscular, pliable, regular in its movements, and thus capable of circulating through the new and spiritual man, all the holy truths of his word, and all the blessed influences of his grace.

Mark the Author of the change. It is none

other than God himself. He expressly and emphatically claims the work as his own. True religion, both in theory and practice, is of divine origin. It never would have had an existence in the world without the revelation of God, and it never will have had an existence in our souls, unless by God's 'working in us mightily.'

Observe the completeness of the change. In this disease of the heart all palliatives are inadequate; the cure, to be effectual, must be radical. To think of modifying and reforming a heart of stone were vain and hopeless. The induration which has produced the callousness that is described as being 'past feeling,' must be made to disappear; the ossified organ must be taken away, and a fleshy heart restored. Such, accordingly, is the remedy here promised and provided. A new heart, a new spirit—that is what is bestowed on all who are born again. Designed as they are for new work and a new world, they must obtain a new nature. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. The Testament Christ hath left us is a New Testament. We have in it a new and living way of access to God; a new name, a new priesthood, a new commandment, a new promise; new sacraments, a new sabbath, a new song. And we look for a New Jerusalem, in the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Now in order that we, ourselves, may be made conformable to all these new and glorious arrangements, we too must be made new. Hence the command; 'Be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Put off the old man, and put on the new; serve in newness of spirit, walk in newness of life.' And hence the promise; 'A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.'

Not, however, that in this promise of a new spirit, there is any thing intended like a destruction of the soul's identity. The change spoken of is not a natural, but an intellectual and moral renovation. The faculties remain substantially the same, but a new and spiritual influence is impressed upon them, a new and heavenly bias is given to them, and new, even divine strength, is imparted, for their right direction, and their proper employment. The renewed spirit has new perceptions, by which he sees himself as a sinner, ruined indeed, yet redeemed, and discovers, in the gospel, the light of the divine glory in the face of Jesus Christ. He has a new understanding, enabling him to discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner. Hence he recognises and adopts a new rule of judgment in form-

ing his estimate, both of men and things, viewing them no longer in the deceitful twilight of time, but in the manifesting light of eternity. He obtains, also, a new will, causing him to delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man; and along with this new spirit he receives a new heart, which implies the renovation of all the feelings and affections of the soul, leading him to hate sin because of its turpitude, and to love holiness because of its beauty, and to desire heaven because there the people are all righteous.

Now as the characteristic of the old heart is, that it is a heart of stone, so the characteristic of the new heart is, that it is a heart of flesh. No longer insensible to divine things, it is a soft and feeling heart. Is it brought into contact with the word of God? The tender heart, like that of good king Josiah, is humbled on hearing God's words. Is it brought into contact with sin? The heart that is waxed gross feels little; the conscience that is seared as with a hot iron feels nothing; but the tender conscience, like the apple of the eye, is offended with a mote. Is it brought under the influence of affliction? The same fire which hardens the clay will melt the wax. 'My flesh trembleth because of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.' Is it led to view the sins of others? 'Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law.' Is it led to view the miseries of others? It feels for them, and with them, rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep. And the tender sympathising heart will always be accompanied with the tongue of kindness and the hand of bounty.

Let us beware of mistaking the real nature of this spiritual transformation. It is not a change of creed, but of character; not new manners, but a new mind. It is not to be confounded with warm sensibilities, or temporary emotions. Pharaoh, Saul, Ahab, Judas, obtained 'another' heart, but it was not a new heart. The new heart is one that can feel after God, and find him, and is sensibly alive to the 'powers of the world to come.' It is the subject of new principles, motives, and aims; it glows with holy love, it beats with holy ardour, it prompts to holy obedience.

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Reader, how is it with you? Are you renewed in the spirit of your mind? Are you grieved at the hardness of your heart? Here is a promise, full without limitation, and free without exception. One thing only is requisite, but that one thing is indispensable; it is that you

plead the promise in prayer. For it is in reference to this very assurance that the declaration is made at the close of the chapter; 'Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.'

## F E B R U A R Y.

### FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom 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,' 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.*

AN object, though within the ordinary sphere of vision, may be rendered invisible to us in various ways; as by the want of light to make it manifest, by the loss of eyesight to perceive it, or by the intervention of other objects which conceal it from the view. The glorious orb of day, however conspicuous and splendid in itself, 'shines not unto' the man who is blind, or who is immured in a dungeon, where its cheering beams never enter. And in like manner the object here mentioned by the apostle, though it not only stands revealed in clearest brightness, but is itself the light which maketh manifest, yet by multitudes remains unperceived, for unto them it shineth not—from them it is hid.

What is the object in question? It is 'the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God.' The sun in the firmament appears an impressive emblem of the divinity—an image of the resplendent lustre, the inexhaustible energy, the all-pervading penetration, the ever-present influence, the rich bounty, the unchangeable perpetuity of the 'Father of lights,' the Dispenser of all good. And in the absence of revelation, we need scarcely wonder that this illustrious display of the Deity should be adored as God. Yet here is one who looketh forth as the morning, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, yea, altogether lovely, of whom it is said, 'Let all the angels of God worship him!' He is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; the Sun of righteousness, the light and life of men. In beholding his gospel, the people who sat in darkness saw a great light. By the doctrines he preached, the precepts he inculcated, the example he exhibited, the death which he died, and the

prospects which he unfolded, he dispelled the darkness of heathenism, and the gloom of Judaism, and upon them who dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, he caused light to arise.

What a contrast to this Declarer and Revealer of Deity, God manifest in flesh, the Light of the world, is presented in the 'god of this world,' the prince of darkness. He it was who led astray our race at the first; and the whole world is still said to 'lie in the wicked one.' He is the evil spirit that even now worketh in the children of disobedience, who 'walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.' As he leads them captive at his will, and holds them as his bond-slaves, they may be said to serve him as their lord; and hence he is called the prince of this world, the god of this world. Not that he is the world's rightful governor—far from it; but how then does he retain his usurped and despotic authority? It is by blinding the minds of the unbelieving world, so that, (such is the emphatic import of the original) 'the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ may not beam upon them.' Well does he know, that one single ray of light from heaven, one glimpse of the divine glory in the face of Jesus Christ, would break the charm, and shiver his yoke in pieces. He knows that if God is once pleased to 'reveal his Son' in a sinner, that sinner will not continue submissive to satan's government a moment longer. And, therefore, he has recourse to wiles and snares, devices and depths, by means of which he makes them account that their most perfect freedom which is in reality the most inglorious vassalage, the severest bondage.

The apostle had been describing the veil that is on the heart of an unbelieving Jew; but he now intimates that besides the natural veil that is spread over all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, satan employs other expedients to obscure their views of gospel truth, and bar the entrance of gospel light into their minds. Of these the most common and the most fatally successful, are the things of this present world, which are fitly represented as a thick veil, woven by this world's

god, and hung by him over the mind's eye of his votaries. There is the veil of deceitful riches, the power of which is so great, that a rich man can hardly see the attractive glories of the kingdom of heaven, so as to seek to enter therein. No less dangerous is the love of money to a poor man, whether it be money desired, or money to the smallest amount possessed; a coin of the basest metal placed upon the eye as effectually closes up its vision as a piece of silver or gold. Then there is the veil of worldly pleasure, 'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye,' the indulgence of which so brutifies the soul in the world of sense, as to annihilate its perception of the world of spirit. There is the veil of worldly honour, fame, and power, the ambitious 'pride of life,' which dazzles so as to blind, saying, 'all this glory will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' And there is, too, what operates with scarcely less influence, the veil of worldly cares, corroding anxieties, and bitter disappointments, 'the sorrow of the world,' which 'worketh death,' and instead of opening up the mind to the light and hopes of the glorious gospel, seals it up in the black darkness of despair.

Nor are these the only methods the god of this world employs to hide the gospel from 'the wise and prudent' who own his sway. There are 'spiritual wickednesses,' as well as 'fleshly lusts.' One man he puffs up with a conceit that he knows enough already, and may therefore neglect, with safety, all means of obtaining farther information. Another he stimulates to the gratification of his corrupt affections and depraved propensities, whether of flesh or spirit, that he may neither have leisure to study, nor inclination to understand the great truths of the bible. Another he fills with prejudice against the gospel of free grace, as not only erroneous in itself, but derogatory to the dignity of human nature, and hostile to the interests of morality; while God's ministers are branded as hypocrites or madmen, and God's people as fanatics and fools. At one time satan will represent the Almighty as too merciful to punish, and at another time as too just to pardon; and thus he either lulls the soul into a false security, or unhinges it by an enervating and cheerless despondency, which, though seen in different persons, are both equally characteristic of 'them who believe not.'

And what is the awful result of this spiritual blindness? When the gospel is hid from a man, he is *lost*. How can it be otherwise—seeing it is the only gospel of salvation, and reveals the only name given under heaven among men where-by they can be saved? And it is no light thing

to be lost and perish. The benighted traveller is lost and perishes in the wintry storm. The wanderers through the sandy and trackless plains of the east, are lost in the depths of the interminable wilderness, and being disappointed of the expected well, lie down to die. The mariner becomes a castaway and is lost, who approaches, in the dark, a shore unknown, without a friendly beacon to guide his course. Yet all these are but faint and feeble representations of the dreadful fate of the man who is lost, because the gospel is hid from him through the blindness of his mind. Departing from the source of life, what can his doom be but death? Shutting out the glorious light of heaven, what can be expected of him but that he be cast into outer darkness, and be there left to wander on, and be lost in the blackness of darkness for ever?

Sinner! does the light of the glorious gospel shine to you? Have the scales been made to drop from your eyes, and the veil from your heart? Has your spiritual vision been purged of every film? Has He who, in creation, commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and in his light do you, in some measure, see light clearly? Then be thankful for the privilege, and anxious to improve it. Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your heavenly Father. Beware lest, though once enlightened, satan again obtain the advantage over you, so as to blind your mind, and harden your heart. Pray habitually for the increasing illumination of the Holy Ghost, that by more enlarged and heart-affecting discoveries of the grace and glory of Christ, who is the image of God, you too may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord; and so shall your path be that of the just, which as the shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

#### FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son,' Col. i. 13.

Two dominions are here spoken of, and placed in contrast—the kingdom of darkness, and the kingdom of light. Every man in this world is the subject of one or other of these kingdoms; there is no middle state between them; 'he that is not with me,' says the Son of God, 'is against me.'

How important for every reader to ascertain to which of the two he belongs!

Here is the kingdom of darkness, the domain of satan, who is pre-eminently 'the power of darkness,' that is, the prince or sovereign who possesses the power. When Jesus was betrayed by a false friend, and seized by the hands of violence at the dead of night, he said to those who sought his life, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness'—a deed of darkness, befitting the season you have chosen for its perpetration, and emanating from him who is the ruler of darkness. What was the object of Paul's commission to the Gentiles? It was 'to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God.' Before we can be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, we must be delivered from the power of darkness. Christians are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they may show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of 'darkness' into his marvellous light. The apostle, in describing the conflict they have to maintain in standing against the wiles of the devil, says, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness, (or wicked spirits) in high places.'

Now under this dominion of darkness all men are by nature. Ever since the apostacy in Eden, satan, the prince of this world, has swayed his iron sceptre over blinded, deluded man. As light is the emblem of knowledge and joy, so darkness is the emblem of ignorance and wretchedness. As darkness wraps up visible objects from our bodily eyes, so ignorance hides the true nature of things from the eyes of the mind. Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but there is nothing more unpleasant in itself, or more commonly associated with the idea of terror, than the gloom of night, and so the term darkness came likewise to be used to denote the feeling of horror and misery. In this sense, therefore, the power of darkness is nothing else than the tyranny which the devil exercises over his wretched and captive slaves, filling their understandings with error, and their consciences at one time with insensibility, and at another time with affright. The depth of his abyss vomits forth, as it were, a black and dense vapour, which conceals from them heaven and its blessed brightness. It was thus that he turned all the heathen nations from the service of their Maker; first obscuring, and then extinguishing those sparks of divine knowledge they yet retained—until so gross was

the darkness, that men were not ashamed to fall down before the works of their own hands, and converted that earth which the Creator God had formed to show forth his praise, into one vast temple of idols. Great is the power of darkness in encouraging and concealing vice. 'He that doeth evil cometh not to the light.' Need we wonder then that the heathen of ancient times, like the heathen of our own day, not retaining God in their knowledge, should have given themselves over to the vilest abominations, which are fitly represented as 'deeds of darkness'—'the unfruitful works of darkness?' So thoroughly was the pagan world pervaded by this character, that they are spoken of as the darkness itself; 'Ye were sometimes darkness.'

Yet why limit the description to pagans? Though Paul had been a well-instructed Israelite of the strictest sect, and touching the outward righteousness of the law was blameless, he yet here includes himself among those who had been under the 'power of darkness.' And not to speak of the many heathens at home—adulterers, profane swearers, drunkards, sabbath-breakers, persons given to covetousness, which is idolatry—are there not thousands and tens of thousands who, though nominally Christian, are as much under the power of darkness as was Paul before his conversion? for they have not the knowledge of God, and the love of God is not in them.

Professing Christian! if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! and how great too its power in misleading you into error, and exposing you to danger! Yes, and unless removed by divine illumination, it will surely end in the horror of great darkness hereafter—the blackness of darkness for ever—the outer darkness, so called because it consists in perpetual banishment from Him who is the light and life of men.

But from this power of darkness true Christians are delivered—the original word denoting that exertion of power which is put forth in snatching a person from imminent peril. God, by the illumination of his truth, and the energy of his grace, rescues them from the darkness and chains of the spiritual Egypt, and gently leading them by the hand, introduces them into the kingdom of his well-beloved Son.

What a contrast between these two kingdoms! The one of darkness, the other of light; the one of pollution, the other of purity; the one of discord, the other of peace; the one of death, the other of life. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.'

Here then is another distinguished privilege in

the covenant of redemption, namely, the being made the honoured and happy subjects of the King of Zion. For God might have been pleased, in the exercise of his sovereignty, to have delivered the sinner from the dominion of satan, and then left him in possession of a liberty like Adam's, and like him liable to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage. But no!—'if the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' This kingdom is called that of God's Son, because he is at once its divine Founder and its glorious Head; he alone can procure for us a meritorious title to the inheritance of the saints in light, and he alone can produce in us an adequate meetness for its enjoyment. None can become heirs of God, but by being first made, through a soul-uniting faith, joint-heirs with Christ; and then all things are theirs, for they are Christ's and Christ is God's. He is his *dear* Son, in whom he is ever well-pleased,—his eternal delight; and, therefore, he will withhold nothing from him or from his. 'The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me.' 'Father! I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am to behold the glory which thou hast given me.' 'Fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

Who is it that effects this marvellous and blissful translation? It is none other than God himself, for none other than He could accomplish it. If we then have reason to hope that we are the subjects of it, unto Him let us give all the glory, and let us be careful to live worthy of so high a calling, and so noble a destiny. 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Walk honestly as in the day, putting off the works of darkness, and putting on the armour of light.' As the subjects and servants of the Lord Christ, be valiant for his truth and his cause on the earth, in opposition to all the powers of darkness. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and his followers war the same good warfare. Each one of us must, in the end, present himself as fresh from the conflict, or be denied to mingle in the eternal joys and triumphs of the conquerors in the world of light and glory.

## SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,' Gal. iii. 10.*

WHAT is the law that bears a sanction so terrible? It is the law of God, the moral Governor of the universe. He has formed us rational and responsible beings. Breathing into us the 'breath of lives,' he has made us spirits, endued with reason, conscience, immortality. He has given to us, in that character, a law to observe as the rule of our conduct towards him, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves. That law, being a bright transcript of his own moral perfections, is, like himself, holy, and just, and good. We are bound to observe it by every consideration of duty, gratitude, and interest, for it is the will of our wise Creator, our mighty Preserver, our kind and unwearied Benefactor; and obedience to it is identified with our real happiness, here and hereafter.

Mark we then, the wide extent of the law's demand, and the awful nature of the law's penalty.

Its demand is obedience *in all things*, obedience *always*; that is, obedience perfect and perpetual. It requires the strict and unflinching performance of all things 'written in the book of the law'—meaning by that, the moral law summed up in the ten commandments, as unfolded in all their spirituality by the Son of God, the Lawgiver, Incarnate. With respect to our duty to God, it tells us, that he will endure no idol in our hands or hearts; that he will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images; that as holy and reverend is his name, so we must ever think and speak of Him with that solemn awe and deep veneration which his character is so well fitted to inspire; and that, claiming as his own, yet blessing for our good, the seventh portion of our time, he will have us duly to hallow it, and greatly to delight in it. But along with piety to God, his law prescribes righteousness and peace, mercy and truth towards our fellow-men. It calls upon us, in the various relations of domestic, social, and public life, to cherish and display respect to superiors, condescension to inferiors, kindness to equals, honour and love to all. Forbidding all violence and impurity in action, word, or thought, it intimates, that causeless anger is of the nature of murder, and that a lascivious glance is of the essence of adultery. Condemning all dishonesty and fraud, either in deed or in desire, it enjoins the most steadfast uprightness,

the most unbending integrity. It bids us lay aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings, and all lying, holding our neighbour's reputation as dear to us as our own. Finally, it requires of us that our conversation be without covetousness, and that we be content with such things as we have. And in all these things it requires us to continue always, with constant, unremitting, persevering diligence. It demands of us, that this perfect obedience be perpetual, reaching from the beginning of life to its close,—the same in youth, in manhood, and in old age—the same under all circumstances of temptation, difficulty, and danger—the same in our days of sickness and poverty, as in our days of health and wealth; and in addition to all this, it utters, with stern rigour, the announcement, 'He that once offendeth in one point is guilty of all;' because by that one act of offence he shows that he is destitute of that love to God, 'with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind,' which is the 'fulfilling of the law.'

Now be it carefully noted, that this statement of the extent of the law's demand, cannot be at all affected by the question of the creature's inclination or disinclination, or his consequent ability or disability to fulfil what it requires. The provisions of the law are one thing—the character of those who may be under it is another; and be that character what it may, it cannot, in the least, impair the law's integrity, detract from its authority, nor relax its obligations. If their character be good, the law requires nothing more than obedience—if bad, it will be satisfied with nothing less. In matters of human legislation, shall we propose to ascertain what is legal or illegal by consulting, not the statute-book of the realm, but the diversified opinions and feelings, inclinations and conduct, of those for whose government the law is designed? The laws of man, indeed, are constantly undergoing change, and frequently prove inoperative in consequence of human imperfection; but as the Deity is perfect, we cannot suppose Him to promulgate an imperfect law, nor to be satisfied with imperfect or temporary obedience. Nor is there any part of his word, which gives the least countenance to the idea, that since the fall, or by reason of the death of Christ, the law is relaxed in its requirements, so as to be accommodated to the weakness of man. Had such an intimation been given, it is evident, that every man would have interpreted the latitude to which he might indulge in sin, according to his peculiar and besetting propensities; and the only thing which would have remained as law, would have simply been what nobody felt any strong disposi-

tion or inducement to violate. But it is at our peril that we bring down the high standard of obligation from the strict requirements of the commandment which is spiritual and exceeding broad—the claims of which are founded on divine, unchangeable righteousness, and which is stable as the pillars of Jehovah's throne, immutable and eternal as Jehovah's existence. Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle pass from his holy law; sooner shall the Deity cease to be than cease to demand a perfect obedience to that perfect law, by which satan is as much bound in moral duty to-day, as at his first creation—however disinclined he may be to attend to any one of its injunctions.

Such being the law's demand, let us now look at the *penalty* it threatens in the event of disobedience. It is a curse, even the curse which stands written at the end of the same book; 'Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them; and all the people shall say, Amen.' The curse is opposed to the blessing; and as a blessing implies the enjoyment of good, so a curse implies, not only the privation of good, but the endurance of evil. When He who is the Source and Bestower of all happiness blesses a man, that man cannot fail to be happy; and when He curses a man, even by simply withholding his blessing, that man cannot fail to be miserable. For the malediction of God is not a mere imprecation of evil, which, in the mouth of a creature, might be only a vain and impotent wish. As his curse is never causeless, so it is never fruitless. It always carries its effects along with it, and ensures every misery which it denounces or foretells.

Among the Hebrews, however, this word *curse* would call up certain more definite ideas of punishment, which took their rise in the irrevocable nature of votive offerings. When a gift was presented to the Lord by any worshipper, not only was the thing offered separated from a common to a sacred use, but it was pronounced to be irredeemable, and thus became as really lost to the offerer as if it had been actually destroyed. Hence arose the two ideas of separation and destruction, as connected with the word devoted or *accursed*; and both are included in the curse of the broken law. There is the curse of *separation*—the being excommunicated from God's holy and happy creation—the being expelled, like the first murderer, from the presence, and deprived of the friendship of God himself. 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.' And is there no curse in that?—to have him, who was our kindest Father, for our greatest foe—to be de-

prived of a parent's blessing, driven from his door, and left to wander as disinherited outcasts far from our native home—to hear the dread words, 'Depart, ye cursed!' and to see a great and impassable gulf fixed, cutting us off for ever from the society and the bliss of heaven—in a word, to 'be banished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.'

For there is the curse of *destruction* as well as of separation. A thing devoted was irrecoverably lost; and to prevent even the possibility of redemption, if it was a living thing, it was 'surely to be put to death.' It is even so here. The man who forfeits the favour of the God of happiness, is devoted to certain destruction. 'They who are far from God shall perish.' Not, however, that we are to understand by this the annihilation of the sinner's being. No; but the annihilation of his happiness, the destruction of that which alone deserves the name of life, that which alone is worth the living for, namely, peace and enjoyment. Hence it is called the 'being lost,' 'the dying the second death.' The exact quality of the punishment we may be unable fully to understand; its undefined nature invests it with unknown horrors; but the plainest testimonies of God's word leave us no room to doubt, that it will consist in inconceivable anguish both of soul and body. And it will be coeval with the happiness of the righteous, for the self-same word is employed to describe the duration of both; that word is *everlasting*.

To beings so circumstanced, how cheering ought to be the announcement, that there is one 'who redeems from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them.'

#### SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,'*  
Gal. iii. 13.

We have seen the extent of the law's demand, perfect and perpetual obedience; we have heard the awful sanction by which this demand is enforced, namely, a curse from God, implying the loss of his Fatherly blessing, and everlasting destruction from his presence. It is only in so far as we are rightly impressed with these facts, and perceive clearly our own personal demerit as transgressors, that we shall cordially welcome the glad tidings of a Redeemer from the law's curse,

by having been himself made a curse upon the tree.

The allusion here is obviously to the kind of death which Jesus died, when he hung a self-devoted victim upon the cross. Nothing had, at one time, been more unlikely, than that the people would allow him to be put to death at all; nor could it well have been anticipated, that, in the event of his being cut off by an oppressive judgment, he would suffer a punishment which was scarcely known among the Jews, but was peculiar to the Romans, and was by them inflicted only on robbers, rebels, and such like notorious criminals. It was a death held by the Jews in the greatest possible execration, being reckoned not merely ignominious, but for a special reason *accursed*. That reason is to be found in a provision of their criminal code, which, while it inflicted no punishments that would stamp perpetual disgrace upon the living, yet allowed in certain cases a brand of infamy to be affixed to the bodies of those who had been punished with death. One of these was the suspension of the corpse upon a gallows or tree; and the person thus suspended was called 'the curse of God,' or the accursed of God, being deemed an abomination in his sight. In this the vilest class of infamous punishments the Jews reckoned death by crucifixion, inasmuch as, after the body was dead, it 'hung upon a tree.'

How may we escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin? Can we deliver our own souls by any works of our own performing? No! we can hope for no redemption from the curse by our own doings, because we cannot obey perfectly and perpetually in the future, any more than we have done in the past; and even though we could, still our future obedience could no more atone for past sin, than the ceasing to increase a debt will cancel a debt already contracted. Nor can we hope for redemption from the curse by our sufferings, any more than our doings, seeing that the penalty of one transgression is eternal death. Nor could the most exalted seraph, the highest archangel, have redeemed us from the curse, for if he could have done so, God needed not to have sent his Son. None but Christ was sufficient for this great work, but he has proved all-sufficient. He assumed our nature, occupied our place, met all the claims of law, satisfied all the demands of justice. Did the law insist on complete obedience? He has yielded it, by working out and bringing in an everlasting righteousness. Did justice threaten us with the law's penalty, the *curse*? 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.'

Here is an assertion no less clear than authoritative, of the grand doctrine of substitution, imputation, redemption by suffering and sacrifice. That we might live Christ died; that we might be happy he became miserable; that we might inherit the blessing, he submitted to the curse. He was our Redeemer by becoming our Surety—acting, enduring, dying for us, and that not merely in a general way as our Benefactor, but in our room and stead.

'He that is hanged is the curse of God.' We found that the curse to which we are exposed as transgressors, includes separation from God, and destruction from his presence. To both these horrible evils was the innocent Lamb of God subjected on behalf of sinners. He was emphatically called the Nazarene, 'the isolated one,' the Joseph separated from his brethren. He left the seat of glory, his Father's house, his eternal home, and dragging himself away from its holy joys and high communions, became an exiled outcast in this world of misery. How often was he a solitary wanderer, spending whole nights alone upon the mountains, far from the busy haunts of men, who 'hid, as it were, their faces from him!' How few companions had he here below! and at the last, even they all forsook him and fled. And when the closing scene of his agony and death arrived, 'he looked for comforters, and there was none.' Not only was he driven forth from the holy city, and excommunicated from the congregation of Israel, but as he hung upon the accursed tree, severed at once from earth and heaven, he was excluded from the gracious presence and blissful fellowship of his Father, God; and while the surrounding darkness was a fit emblem of the state of his own soul, deprived of heaven's light, bereaved of heaven's comfort, he exclaimed, out of the depth of his forlorn desolation: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

His, too, was the curse of 'destruction,' inasmuch as he was devoted to death, as well as to suffering. 'The Messiah was cut off, but not for himself;' he was cut off, not out of the congregation only, but 'out of the land of the living;' for the transgression of the people was he stricken. This grand truth had been typically represented under the ceremonial law, by what was done on the day of atonement. The high-priest took two goats; over one of them, called the scape-goat, he confessed all the sins of the people, 'putting them upon the head of the goat,' and sent him away into the wilderness; and 'the goat bore upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited.' The other goat was sacrificed to make

expiation for sin; so that while in the one we see the curse of separation into an uninhabited desert, in the other we see the curse of being devoted to destruction. Now, in both these respects, Christ was made a curse for his people. 'He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.' 'God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' 'As the bodies of those beasts, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest for sin, were burnt without the camp, so Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.' As the scape-goat was sent forth into the wilderness, far from the commonwealth of Israel, so Christ, our substitute, was expelled from Jerusalem, the type of the congregation of the living, and was led forth to Golgotha, 'the place of a skull;' to Calvary, a hill of infamy, a desert of death. He was treated as one lying under the heaviest excommunication—as one who was accursed to the death—as not only unfit to live, but as unworthy to die within the precincts of the holy city, unworthy even to look with his closing eyes toward's God's holy temple.

Learn from this, Christian soul, that if the Christ was made a separated, devoted curse, it was for you; that voluntarily, and from the love he bore to you, he consented to be cut off from the communion of the blessed. He left Jerusalem, the city of peace, in order that you might enter in, and find there safety and establishment for ever. He went forth to Golgotha, the place of public execution, the spot where was raised the accursed tree, the dismal abode of infamy and death, in order that you might escape eternal death and endless infamy, and be raised to life and honour everlasting. Yes! and it is even there, when surrounded with all death's hideous memorials, and when enduring death's severest pangs and most degrading ignominy, that he redeems his church from death's sting, which is sin, and from the curse of the 'strength of sin,' which is the law. Even then and there, with the cold dews of death upon his brow, he raises the standard of the once accursed but now honoured cross; for the very shame of the punishment serves but to evince the love and exalt the glory of Him who submitted to it—enduring the cross, despising the shame.

The enjoyment of this redemption, however, is not co-extensive with exposure to the curse. He only that believeth shall be saved. 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' If any man love not the Lord Jesus, he shall be 'Anathema Maran-atha'—accursed at his coming!

## THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

'The wages of sin is death,' Rom. vi. 23.

THE labourer is worthy of his hire, and the soldier of his wages; but the hire of iniquity is punishment, the wages of sin is death. 'When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.' 'What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed! for the end of these things is death?'

There is the *death of the body*. No sooner did our first parents commit sin, than they received in themselves the sentence of death, and that sentence has also been executed upon all their sinful offspring, with only two exceptions. The law of mortality is universal and unavoidable, 'because all have sinned.'

How frequently has a holy God inflicted instant death on the presumptuous transgressor in a way of judgment! Remember Lot's wife, and Korah and his company, and the sons of Aaron and Eli, and Ananias and Sapphira, and many others, whose awful fate is recorded in the book of God, and acknowledge, as you read, that verily there is a reward for the wicked as well as the righteous, that verily there is a God who judgeth on the earth! The same truth has been exemplified in the history of communities as well as of individuals. Look at the world before the flood, at the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, at the Egyptians who perished in the sea, and the Israelites who perished in the wilderness. They all toiled laboriously in the service of sin, and they reaped its stipulated wages.

And if we could trace the avenging progress of the angel of death now, we should find the destruction of many a sinner effected in the self-same manner. Liar! swearer! Sabbath-breaker! glutton! drunkard!—what security have you that the next time you utter words of falsehood, or take God's name in vain, or profane his sacred day, or abuse his good creatures to the fulfilment of your base lusts—you shall not receive, in the very act of sinning, the just recompense of your deeds?

But even when sin is not immediately followed by death as a judgment from God, it often, in various other ways, does work out death as its certain consequence. There is a natural tendency in many vices to hurry on the perpetrator to an early, premature grave. We read in the bible that 'bloody and deceitful men do not live out half their days.' Sometimes their passions impel them to the commission of crimes, which bring them to an untimely end by the hands of public

justice. Dissipation and licentiousness not only waste the substance, but ruin the health, clothe a man with rags, and bring him to a piece of bread. Habits of sensual indulgence visibly undermine the bodily constitution; and in the bloated countenance, the emaciated form, or the trembling gait, you at once read the sin in the punishment. To how many fatal accidents does intemperance expose its votaries? How many bodies are found dead or drowned, that are recognized as the bodies of drunkards, who have administered to themselves the slow but sure poison? Nor are these the only methods in which this life, so short at the best, is by the sinner rendered shorter still. Lazy inactivity and luxurious ease enervate the body as well as the mind, and are as prejudicial to health as to happiness. 'Envy,' says the wise man, 'is the rottenness of the bones.' Fretful peevishness, corroding worldly cares, and vexing anxieties, the habitual indulgence of anger, malice, revenge, —all these tend more or less to shorten life; for though the results may seem more remote and are less easily traced, the effect is no less certain. Not one in a thousand is supposed to die a purely natural death; the greater number either directly or indirectly hasten on their dissolution. How many have we known who, there is every reason to believe, would have lived a longer life had they lived a better! They might have enjoyed a good old age, had it not been for their dissolute youth, and their profligate manhood. Some, indeed, of a similar character you may see dragging on their miserable existence for years, but their appearance lamentably testifies that they are filled with the sins of their youth, which shall lie down with them in the grave. In all such cases, therefore, the sinner may justly be regarded as a self-murderer,—acting as if he wished to anticipate his final judgment,—forcing for himself a passage into hell, that in its flames he may be tormented 'before the time.'

For that, after all, is sin's final wages;—not the death of the body only, but the *death of the soul*, the destruction of both soul and body in hell-fire. That is the ultimate hire of those who toil to life's end in the service of iniquity; as is evident from its being here placed in contrast with the 'life eternal' given by God through Christ to those who, being made free from sin, become the servants of righteousness.

And what is the second death? We cannot tell. It is one of those tremendous realities, which must be experienced in order to be described; it is one of those facts which our faith admits without being able to explain. We do

not know—God forbid we ever should—the feelings of the impenitent soul, as it passes out of the body through the gloomy valley of the shadow of death into the broad day-light of eternity, and discovers in the full blaze of that light—that it is lost! This only do we know, that it will be for ever dying without ever becoming extinct,—that it will be for ever living in misery and for ever seeking annihilation, but shall not find it; for the punishment will consist not in the extinction of being, but of happiness and of hope.

This death is as certainly due to the sinner as are wages to the labourer; it is sin's appointed and appropriate recompense. Were not this the due reward of evil deeds, the God of justice would not have assigned it; and were it not to be actually inflicted, the God of truth would not have threatened it. If we knew fully all the obligations sin has violated, all the excellencies it has insulted, all the dire effects it has produced, and will yet produce, throughout the universe, we should then have some adequate conceptions of its odious malignity and its deep demerit. But there is One who knows these things full well, and in his judgment respecting sin's exceeding sinfulness, namely, 'that they who do such things are worthy of death' let us humbly acquiesce, believing that it cannot but be according to truth. In the great day of the revelation of his righteous judgments, His awards shall be made known and vindicated before an assembled world; the convinced and condemned sinner will then be speechless; and the Judge of all the earth will be justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth.

'The wages of sin is death.' Nothing our fancy can picture, or our fears apprehend, can exceed the amount of misery which is represented by the being 'bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth—where their worm never dies, and their fire is never quenched—where they have no rest day nor night—and where the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever.' May the God of mercy have mercy upon every reader, that he die not the second death!

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### THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'But the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' Rom. vi. 23.*

LIFE for our Death! the very blessing we require. Yet it would be a comparatively low and

limited view, were we to regard this as implying merely the restoration of animal life and immortality to the body at the last day. Looking at the word in its fullest and highest acceptation, it must be held to include the spiritual life of the soul here, and the immortal life of soul and body in that glorious state of endless happiness which remains for the people of God; it is 'life eternal.' Death, we saw, is the wages or hire of sin, but it is not said that life is the merited wages, the deserved reward, of righteousness. No! it is a gift, a free gift of the grace of God. True, indeed, it is bestowed only on certain characters, but the formation of that character is itself the work of the Spirit of God, and to him, therefore, belongs all the glory. 'Now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' Yet there is no proportion between the obedience of the highest saint, and the boundless, endless bliss of heaven, which could entitle him to any such reward. It is a reward not of debt, but of grace, and the very holiness which qualifies for its enjoyment, yea, and even the faith which humbly receives it, are not of ourselves—they are the gift of God.

The perfect freeness of this gift is farther apparent from the *medium* through which it is conveyed, viz., through Jesus Christ our Lord. 'As by man came death, by man also comes life.' This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son,' as a treasure sealed up and secured—life hid with Christ in God. And, therefore, as he who has the field has the treasure, as he who has the fountain has the water, as he who has the garden has the 'fruit, so 'he that *hath* the Son hath life.' Yes! it is a sublime and solemn truth, that the eternal Son of God is possessed in the highest and most important sense, not by the worlds that are upheld by his power, not by the heavens that display his glory, not by the angels that worship before his face, but by the lowly heart that bows to his grace, and rejoices in his salvation. To such he is the Resurrection and the Life—the resurrection of the body, and the life of the soul; for transforming the spirit by the energy of his grace, he shall, in due time, change the vile body also, and 'fashion it like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.' Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!

This eternal life is 'through Jesus Christ,' inasmuch as he purchased it for us by his death. To us it comes in every sense free, without money and without price, but dear did it cost our suffer-

ing Lord. If we are to live, he must first die. 'The bread which I give is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.' That we might be rich he became poor; that we might have fullness of joys, he became a man of sorrows; that we might be heirs of glory, he became acquainted with grief.

This life eternal is 'through Jesus Christ,' inasmuch as he publishes it to us by his gospel. 'I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.' He was the life manifested; in him was life, and the life was the light of men. When many of his followers, 'being offended at the spirituality of his doctrine' on this very point, went back and walked no more with Jesus, he said unto the twelve, 'Will ye also go away?' Then Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.' The beloved disciple John bears his solemn testimony respecting 'that which was from the beginning, which he had heard, which he had seen with his eyes, which he had looked on and his hands had handled of the Word of Life.' And he himself, the Witness, faithful and true, declares that power has been given him over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him. 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.'

This eternal life is 'through Jesus Christ,' inasmuch as it is he who produces in us its commencement here, and prepares us for its consummation hereafter. Unto him, as accepted High Priest and exalted King, is committed the entire dispensation of the Holy Ghost,—the ministration of 'the Spirit;—and by virtue of this 'law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus,' the Son quickeneth whom he will.' Hence it is that he is so often spoken of as being 'the Life,' in the abstract. 'When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then ye shall also appear with him in glory.' He obtained it by his death, he announced it by his gospel, he imparts it by his Spirit. He is all our salvation in time, and will be all our praise in eternity.

What is the *gift* which is to be thus freely bestowed by God through Christ on his believing people? It is 'eternal life;' but all that is included in that expression we can no more comprehend than we can conceive of all the misery that is threatened in that 'eternal death' to which it stands opposed. '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.' Suffice it to observe, that it consists in deliverance and exemption from all possible evil, and the possession and enjoyment of all possible good—and that throughout eternity.

There is the removal of all evil. 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.' They rest from their labours and their sufferings together. There is no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither is there any more pain; for the former things are passed away.

There is the fruition of all good, and especially of the chief good,—the beatific vision, and holy service, and blissful fellowship of the Deity. They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. The powers of their minds being purified and perfected, they will search all things, yea, the deep things of God, with unceasing attention and unwearied delight—exchanging the feeble and indistinct conceptions of earth for the living light of heaven. There no darkness shall cloud the mind, no impurity defile the heart, no effort exhaust the vigour, but in ever-growing assimilation to the image of the Blessed, they shall realize with ecstatic rapture the fullest gratification of their desires, the highest consummation of their hopes. Him whom not seeing they love, they shall then see 'as He is;' they shall be for ever with one another, and for ever with the Lord. And conducted, under celestial guidance, to new scenes of adoring contemplation, and to new sources of unmingled bliss, 'the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

#### FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye,'* Ezek. xviii. 32.

It is Jehovah who speaks; and his words contain a *solemn declaration* and an *urgent entreaty*, both addressed to sinful, perishing men.

The *declaration* is, that he has 'no pleasure in the death of him that dieth;' and who that knows anything of God can for a moment doubt this? He is a God of truth; and it were the height of impiety to call in question any of his assevera-

tions. He is a God of wisdom; and can we suppose that he would call beings into existence and then wantonly proceed to destroy his own workmanship? He is a God of goodness and love; and it is as impossible that these attributes should take pleasure in the wretchedness of his creatures, as that his holiness and justice should take pleasure in their iniquity.

Nor has he left himself without many a witness to confirm to us the truth of his own saying, and place it beyond the possibility of contradiction. His works, as well as his word, show him to be a God, who feels for the sinner while he hates his sin.

God is *love*! and that love includes the intense and immeasurable desire of doing good; it is nothing less than the almighty energy of the divine mind, manifested in the unceasing and endless diffusion of happiness. As he is essentially blessed in himself, it is nothing but goodness that could have prompted him to create the universe, and give existence, and the means of existence and enjoyment, to the innumerable orders of creatures which it contains. As he is supremely good in himself, so he is the Author and Giver, the Source and Bestower of all the good that is any where or at any time enjoyed. His goodness is the praise of earth; it is the glory of heaven; it shines and is confessed throughout the universe. And can such a God, think you, have pleasure in the death of him that dieth?

'His tender mercies are over all his works.' The noon-tide sun and the cheerful day; the full-orbed moon as she walks in brightness and beauty at night; the verdant earth, the spacious sea, the bespangled firmament; the healthy breeze, the fruitful shower, the varying seasons; the flowers arrayed by his hand, the beasts fed by his bounty, the birds watched by his care—all his works praise him, all his creatures declare that the Lord is good. And can such an one then have pleasure in the death of him that dieth?

But man is pre-eminently the subject of exquisite and extensive enjoyment, and it is all from God. Other creatures here below he made for man, but us made he for himself, that we might share in his happiness and rejoice in his joy. 'How precious are thy thoughts unto us, O God! how great is the sum of them! if we should count them, they are more in number than the sand.' Are we not the objects of his constant protection, and his ever-wakeful, unwearied keeping? Does not his visitation preserve our spirits, and his kindness bless every moment of our lives? What have we ever had of good that we

did not receive from his gracious hand?—convenient food, needful raiment, secure dwelling, refreshing repose, affectionate relatives, faithful friends—all of us life's necessaries, and many of us its luxurious comforts. In Him we live, and move, and have our being; and can He have pleasure in our death?

But from his ceaseless loving-kindness to us as creatures, turn to his dealings towards us as sinners. The high powers he has conferred upon us, and the providential bounties he has heaped upon us, we have employed as instruments of rebellion against him. And how now must he conduct himself towards us? He might in a moment frown us into perdition—he might crush us into nothing—for he could annihilate with a word those worlds which by a word he created. But blessed be his name! He against whom we have sinned would be our Redeemer; and for this end he sent his own Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that by his labours, his prayers, his agonies, his tears, his blood, his life, the world through him might be saved. Rather than that we should suffer, God spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death for us all. When we hear the eternal Father saying, 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow; smite the shepherd;'—when we see him bruising and putting to grief his best-beloved, and laying on him the iniquity of us all,—can we once harbour the impious thought, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, has pleasure in the sinner's misery?

And who but the same God, so rich in mercy, has suffered our manners and spared our lives until now? If our death and destruction had been with him an object of pleasurable desire, how easily and instantaneously might he have accomplished it! He had but to will it, and long ere to-day our bodies would have been in the grave, and our souls in hell. Yet not only has his long-suffering forbearance prolonged life, but his grace has surrounded us with all the means of salvation, which are fitted and intended to exhibit to us his love in Christ Jesus, and to be the channels for conveying to us his Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of life and peace. Much and earnestly does he strive with our consciences, that he may guide us in the way everlasting; and surely, then, the God who gave his Son to die for us, and who sends his Spirit to quicken us to life, can have no pleasure in our death.

It is upon this solemn declaration, the truth of which is so fully attested by God's entire pro-

cedure towards the sinner, both in providence and grace, that is founded the *urgent entreaty*, 'Turn yourselves, and live ye.' The fact of such an entreaty being addressed to us by God, clearly shows, were any farther proof required, the perfect sincerity and solemn earnestness of the declaration he had made, that he desires not the sinner's death. Nor does this entreaty stand alone. The Bible is full of invitations the most tender and affectionate—addressed to the worst of sinners, without distinction or reserve—to turn from the error and evil of their ways, that they may live. And if these invitations they persist in rejecting to the close of life, then the blame of their destruction can only be laid at their own door. The Almighty has made it evident in a variety of ways, and in a manner the most affecting, that so far from seeking the sinner's death, he would far rather that he should be saved and come to repentance. Yea, he swears to it by his own eternal self-existence, so glorious and happy: '*As I live*,' saith the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel.' Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned; heal us, and we shall be healed; save us, and we shall be saved; for thou art our praise.

FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,'  
John v. 40.

The word *life* denotes in gospel phraseology, not bare, conscious existence, but *happy existence*. A man may be alive, and yet be most miserable; and even though there may be nothing to cause him present uneasiness, he may be rendered very unhappy by the dark uncertainty as to how it may fare with him hereafter. Life, then, in the highest and noblest sense of the term, points us to that glorious state of holiness, peace, felicity—perfect, endless, undisturbed, which awaits the perfected just in the kingdom of their Father—the fullness of joy in his presence, the pleasures at his right hand for evermore.

But while this will be to the believing soul life's ultimate consummation, we also find that under the same designation are included in scripture all those spiritual blessings which precede it here, and prepare the saint for its final enjoyment hereafter.

There is the life of *pardon* and *justification*. Being all sinners against God's holy law, we are

condemned criminals, and in the eye of the law are dead already, and are only waiting for the execution of the sentence; 'the soul that sinneth shall die.' But in Christ there is life; for to them who are in him by a living faith condemnation there is none. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes the Christian free from the law of sin and death. His sin is freely forgiven; his trespass is fully remitted; his iniquities are cast behind God's back, as into the depths of the sea, whence they shall never rise against him in judgment; they shall not be once mentioned unto him, nor remembered any more for ever. Before God, through Christ, he stands up as righteous, having the righteousness of Christ put upon him as a garment, and reckoned unto him as a possession. Being thus justified freely by his grace, he is accepted in the Beloved. And is not this pardon, this acquittal, this acceptance, life in the truest sense?—when God's law being satisfied, and his justice vindicated, the sentence of death is reversed, and the gift of life is bestowed. It is then only when a man is absolved, reconciled, adopted into the family of God, that he begins really to live as his child. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.'

Then there is the life of *renewal* and *sanctification*. By nature we are said to be carnally-minded, which is death—to be 'dead in trespasses and sins.' But as the Father hath life in himself, even so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will. When the Saviour died, and rose, and revived, it was that he might be the Lord both of the quick and dead. As a reward of his obedience to the death, he received into his hands the entire dispensation of the Holy Ghost, and hence it is called the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus making us, in this sense also, free from the law of sin and death. Nothing but the application of that law can ensure the result desired, namely, the awakening us to a life of holiness. Education will not do it, precepts will not do it, example will not do it, argument the most cogent—persuasion the most affectionate and earnest will not do it; the gospel itself will not do it, if it come in word only. It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the letter killeth; the words which Jesus speaks, they are spirit and they are life.

And what then is regeneration but the communication of new life to a dead soul? What is

confession of sin and self-abhorrence on account of it? What are faith, hope, love? What are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? What are the aspirations of prayer, the emotions of thankfulness, the songs of praise, but the evidences and enjoyments of a new-born child of God? And from what do all these things flow, but from the sinner's coming to Christ that he may have life?

Finally, there is the life of *happiness and glory*. For it is after all this that life in the highest degree begins. These earnest and foretastes of heaven shall issue in that eternal felicity for which they prepare the saint. This renewal, sanctification, comfort, peace, shall issue in the joy unspeakable and glorified. For what is glory but grace consummated and perfect? What is the kingdom of God in heaven, but the same kingdom that was begun on earth?—there completed in all its parts, subduing and pervading the whole man in soul, body, and spirit—heightened, refined, sublimated, indestructible, eternal.

Now, in all these senses of the term, life is to be found in Christ, and in Christ alone; and yet, though it be the very thing we dying sinners most need, sinners will not come to him that they may have life. As to the life of pardon and justification they fancy they do not need it—for as they have not (as they suppose) wronged man, they cannot have wronged God; or if they feel that they are chargeable with some offences, they think that God is too merciful to punish weak creatures like them; that if he should require some satisfaction to his justice, their good deeds will at least balance, if not outweigh, their bad deeds, and that their prayers and alms, their services, and sacrifices, and sufferings, will surely be taken into account in the matter of their justification. They cannot bring themselves to suppose, that they ought to be treated as on the same footing before God as the worst of criminals. The humbling simplicity of the gospel of free grace offends them; and as they cannot see how *they* can be under death, 'they will not come to Christ that they may have life.'

Still more reluctant are sinners to come to Christ for a life of holiness. Indeed, there are not wanting many, who would be willing, yea, anxious to accept deliverance from wrath and hell from any quarter, provided it did not come to them in the way of previous deliverance from evil passions and darling lusts. They would have no objection to obtain a title to the happiness of heaven when they die, but they care not to seek after that holiness which forms the indis-

pensable qualification for its enjoyment. If Christ offered them *life in sin*, they would eagerly run to him; but as what he offers is *life in obedience*, they 'will not come to him that they may have life.'

Now, the cause of this refusal is only to be found in the sad perversity of man's will, and in his deliberate preference of darkness to light, of evil to good, of death to life. Most earnest and free is the gospel offer, and most full the gospel promise of wisdom and strength above our own in the sincere use of the means appointed. But the sinner comes not, because he *will* not; he persists in choosing cursing rather than blessing, and therefore the blame of his misery and destruction will lie entirely at his own door. 'Awake, thou that sleepest! and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'

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#### FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?'  
1 Sam. vi. 20.

THIS was the exclamation of the people of Bethshemesh, when the Lord had smitten so many of their number, on account of their irreverent familiarity, and impious curiosity in 'looking into the ark.' They had, at first, received it with all joyful respect, 'offering burnt-offerings, and sacrificing sacrifices;' but its continued presence in the midst of them wore off those impressions of sacred awe. And it required a signal and miraculous display of heaven's vengeance to give a check to their unholy presumption, and to convince them that 'God is greatly to be feared, even in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.' 'Who,' cried they, 'is able to stand before this holy Lord God?'

'The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.' When we would describe the character of a fellow-creature, we endeavour to seize on that peculiar feature by which he is most strikingly marked out from others—that quality which is said to form the *basis* of his character. Now, to speak after the manner of men, it is no disparagement to any of the attributes of Jehovah, but rather constitutes their highest glory to affirm, that holiness lies at the foundation of them all. And by holiness we mean that perfection of the Deity, by which, to use the language of his own word, 'He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity.' Under this title is he worshipped and

feared by his people on earth—'the holy Lord God, the Holy One of Israel.' Under this title is he worshipped and praised by saints and angels in heaven—'the holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty.' His name is holy; his nature is holy; his Spirit is holy; his word is holy; his works are holy; his saints give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness; and holiness becometh his 'house for ever.'

But what sinner is able to stand before this holy Lord God? 'Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?' 'God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.' The careless sinner, indeed, will not believe this, or if he does not deny the truth of a future judgment, he treats it with indifference and unconcern. But whatever he may think, or however he may feel, 'his judgment lingereth not,' and how will he be able to stand? 'The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.' 'Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the day that I will deal with thee? I, the Lord, have spoken it, and I will do it.'

Even in a present life, God can so alarm and dismay the conscience of a sinner with a discovery of his own guilt and misery, and of the bright and spotless holiness, and the burning, consuming justice of his Judge, as to lay him prostrate and trembling at his feet. Unable to look up to the divine majesty, far less to stand before Him, he lays his hand upon his mouth, and his mouth in the dust; and out of the depths of distress and anguish he is heard to groan: 'The arrows of the Almighty are within me, and the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit. My flesh trembleth because of Him, and I am afraid of his judgments. Destruction from God is a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I cannot endure. While I suffer his terrors I am distracted.' When they hear of 'righteousness, temperance, or judgment to come,' again they tremble. When they read in the hand-writing of conscience, the appalling mystic scroll, 'Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting!'—then their countenance is changed, and their thoughts trouble them, so that the joints of their loins are loosed, and their knees smite one against another.

And how comes it then, that so many sinners can live as if there were no God, or as if his title of the 'holy Lord God' were but an empty sound? It is because they have not yet been brought to realize his dread presence as the Witness of their conduct, the Hearer of their words, the Searcher of their hearts, the Judge of their souls. God,

as the God with whom they have to do, is not in all their thoughts; and hence the question has never seriously occurred to them, as to how they shall stand before him; or if it has sometimes been suggested to them, it has promptly been repelled as an unwelcome intruder. But a man's treatment of a truth cannot in the least affect its reality, nor prevent its consequences. Your forgetfulness of death will not keep you alive; your doubt of a resurrection will not hide you in the grave; your denial of a judgment will not delay one moment its approach, nor exempt you from any one of its penal awards. And, oh sinner, what will you do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation that shall come from far? To whom will ye flee for help, and where will ye leave your glory? If thou hast run with the footmen, and they wearied thee, how then wilt thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, how then wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? What will you do, when God riseth up? And when he visiteth, what will you answer him? In that awful day of the revelation of God's righteous judgments—'the day for which all other days were made'—the whole world of the ungodly will lie guilty before God, and not one of them will be able to endure the lightning of his eye, or the terror of his frown. They will call, but call in vain, to the mountains and rocks: 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon 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?'

All joy to the believer who lives, walks, stands by his faith! In drawing near before this holy Lord God, his language is, 'If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Himself a guilty and polluted creature, he, nevertheless, stands up before God in Christ, acquitted, accepted, approved; and living under a ministration not of bondage and death, but of liberty and life, he is even permitted to 'look into the ark' of the gospel—not indeed with the prying gaze of idle curiosity, but with a hallowed contemplation like that of angels when they 'desire to look' into the mysteries of redemption. 'Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape the wrath to come, and to stand before the Son of Man.'

## FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin,' Rom. iv. 7, 8.*

It is thus, says the apostle, that 'David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.' On the occasion upon which the psalmist had tasted the blessedness he describes, righteousness of his own he had none to plead; for he had, in the matter of Uriah, committed an act the most unrighteous, involving a complication of the foulest crimes. When the prophet Nathan represented to him the character of his offence by a parable, he was slow in recognising his own image in the portraiture; and hence it has been supposed that up to the moment of his conviction by that word of God, he had been careless, hardened, and utterly dead to feeling. But he himself informs us, in the thirty-second psalm, (from which the apostle's quotation is taken) that the case with him had been far otherwise. *He kept silence, but conscience spake. The remorse which it excited he hoped might disappear through the influence of time and change; and persisting in the excuse or palliation of his guilt, he would neither confess it before God, nor condemn it before men. But this vain struggle to repress and conceal his mental anguish, not only aggravated the torment, but affected his bodily health. 'My bones waxed old—my moisture was turned into the drought of summer.' It was in this condition that the prophet's message found him, and at last drew from him the humble acknowledgment, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' And Nathan said unto David, 'The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.' And David, filled with emotions of contrition and gratitude, which his bursting, broken heart could not contain, hastened to his chamber, and falling upon his knees, he gave vent to his feelings in this fervid acknowledgment, 'O the blessednesses of him whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.'*

Forgiveness of sin is the first in order of new-covenant blessings; for so long as a man's guilt is uncanceled, God is his enemy, and he cannot know peace. But the youngest believer has forgiveness upon the first act of faith. 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.' It has its source in the infinite mercy and rich grace of Jehovah. He is a 'God ready to forgive;'—a '*God of pardons*,' as the original bears; to him belong mercies and

forgivenesses;' and this is his name and this his memorial throughout all generations: 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.' Yet he reserves to himself the prerogative of dispensing his pardons according to the wise method of his own grace, namely, by Christ Jesus the Mediator, in whom alone we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. When Jesus was on earth, he had full power to remit sin, and if he is exalted to heaven, it is as a Prince to give repentance, and as a Saviour to grant remission; and 'through this man is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins.'

The forgiveness extended to the Christian is most comprehensive and complete. It embraces guilt of every kind, by whatever variety of phrase designated—'sin, iniquity, trespass, transgression.' It includes *all* sins, however numerous—the God of mercy 'abundantly pardons.' It excludes not guilt the heaviest and most aggravated. 'Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.' And the act of forgiveness once passed is never more recalled. The sin is said to be *covered*, blotted out, cast into the depths of the sea, never to be found by man, never to be remembered by God, not once to be mentioned to the offender.

Now can such an one fail to be *blessed*? 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.'

What man is happy if he be not the man whose iniquities are forgiven? Is it a blessed thing to be freed from condemnation, to be delivered from wrath, to be quiet from fear of evil?—instead of having sin imputed, to have righteousness reckoned unto us?—to know that God, from being our greatest foe, has become our greatest friend? to know that the very power and purity of Jehovah, which formerly frowned upon us, now smile upon us in love, and are engaged on our behalf? to know that we have now in enjoyment a peace which passeth all understanding, and in prospect a happiness superior to the joys of paradise, equal to the glory of angels?—all that blessedness belongs to the pardoned penitent. 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' The man whose 'sin is covered,' obtains

assistance and acceptance in all duties; and in his mercies and trials, his comforts and crosses, he has the blessing which enriches without sorrow. Need such a man dread adversity? His troubles, indeed, may be many, constant, aggravated; but they shall not really injure, they shall rather benefit him, for they too are 'blessings in disguise.' He shall be sustained under them, sanctified through them, and in due time delivered out of them all. Every loss shall conduce to his gain; every suffering shall turn to his salvation; every event shall work for his good. Need he fear death? The sting of death was sin, but forgiveness has extracted the poisoned dart, and converted the curse into a blessing? Need he shudder when he looks into the grave? But it is no longer the condemned cell where the criminal passes the night before being led forth to punishment. It is rather the chamber of repose, where the invited welcome guest is attired and adorned, previously to his being ushered into the presence of the great King. Need he be apprehensive of the judgment of the last day, with its accompanying terrors—the opening heavens, the rending earth, the dissolving elements—the wreck of nature, and the crash of worlds? That day will but proclaim his acquittal; it is the day of his complete redemption. Need he shrink from the contemplation of eternity? It will but multiply and perpetuate his joys.

Yet in order to the enjoyment of the blessing of pardon, confession of sin, and supplication for mercy are absolutely required. 'I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.' 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

#### SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' John i. 29.

SUCH was the attestation of the Baptist to the person and work of the King of heaven, whose way in the earth he came to prepare, and whose reign on the earth he announced. 'The prophets prophesied until John;' but John was 'more than a prophet.' Clad in the mantle of Elijah, and with a double portion of his spirit, the herald of the Son of God was 'the greatest of those born of women.' Let us receive his testimony with the believing attention and reverential obedience

which the authority and dignity of such a messenger demand. With what scrupulous fidelity and self-sacrificing devotedness did he fulfil his office! 'There cometh one after me who is mightier than I—who is preferred before me—who must increase, whilst I must decrease.' And when he has at last found the Christ in very deed, he cries out with joy, like one who has suddenly met with what he had been eagerly in quest of: 'Behold him! behold him! the Mercy promised to the fathers! the Desire of all nations! the long-promised and long-expected Messiah!'

'Behold the Lamb of God!' With these few words the Baptist annihilates all the sacrifices and expiations of the law; he declares that in Christ the victim, and in none else, resides the merit and efficacy, which can alone take away the burden of sin's guilt from the conscience, or the stain of sin's pollution from the heart. It is as if he had said. 'All the sacrificial lambs that you have ever seen or read of till now—whether that which was substituted in the room of Isaac, or those whose blood was sprinkled on the lintels and door-posts of our fathers in Egypt, or those which in commemoration of that event we slaughter every year at the passover, or those which, morning and evening, are presented as burnt-offerings upon the altar—all are but types, emblems, shadows. None of them is really the Lamb whose blood we require to wash away sin. He is the true Lamb whom you now behold—the substance, the body, the fullness, the antitype of all the others, who were but figurative images of him. Under that mean outward form, behold the Messiah who is to be cut off but not for himself. He is the Lamb of God—the Lamb separated and sent, furnished and fitted, appointed and approved by God—the Lamb whom God demands, and by whom alone God will be appeased—the Lamb consecrated to God, and who, in God's purpose and promise, was slain before the foundation of the world.'

The figure denotes *gentleness* and *patience*, for a lamb allows itself to be led, tied, shorn, slaughtered without resistance, and even without complaint. It thus becomes a fit emblem of the sweet benignity and long-suffering forbearance of Him, who innocently and meekly endured every insult and injury without a murmur—who allowed himself to be apprehended, condemned, buffeted, spit upon, scourged, crucified without one attempt at resistance, or one word of reproach—who 'was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth,' unless to implore forgiveness to his murderers.

Yet it is not so much to the lamb as a *creature* that the allusion is made, as to the lamb as a *sacrifice*. Now, no lamb was accepted for an offering, unless it was free from all blemish; and here then is an emblem of the spotless purity of Christ our paschal sacrifice—his birth immaculate, his life blameless—‘a lamb without blemish, and without spot’—the Holy One of God, who fulfilled all righteousness.

It is this circumstance which imparted such virtue to his expiation, and rendered it so effectual for taking away sin. For that is the principal idea conveyed here, namely, the removing the imputation and punishment of guilt, by bearing it in his own person, and so taking it out of the way. He himself took on him our griefs and infirmities, and carried away our sicknesses and sorrows. ‘He his own self bore our sins in his own body upon the tree.’ The very employment here of the figure of a sacrificial lamb shows clearly, that Christ takes away sin in some other way than merely by destroying its power through the effect of his precepts, and the influence of his example. If Christ’s death was a real satisfaction for sin, then the ancient sacrifices were intelligible types of him; but if he saves only by the force of moral suasion, it is impossible to perceive any analogy between his death and that of the legal victims; and yet his own word expressly declares that they were all figures of him.

The Baptist’s announcement declares unequivocally, that the blessed result of his substitution and sacrifice would be the removal of sin. He ‘takes away sin,’ even ‘the sin of the world’—not of Jews only (as their exclusiveness and bigotry might suggest) but of Gentiles also. ‘He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.’ But though his atonement be amply sufficient for all, and freely offered unto all, it does not follow that all are actually saved. For just as a remedy, however efficacious, can only heal those who employ it; as food, however wholesome, will only nourish those who partake of it; as a place of refuge, however capacious and secure, will only shelter those ‘who flee to it’ for safety—so the sin of those only is taken away by the Lamb of God who humbly receive him, by believing on his name.

‘We have heard the witness of John.’ If the voice of so great and good a man has any weight with us;—if the glory of his still greater Master is dear to us;—if we value our own soul’s salvation—let us believingly behold, and joyfully embrace this Lamb of God, promised in the ancient oracles, sent in the fullness of time; sacrificed to

atone for guilt on earth; and now in heaven, in the midst of the throne, beheld, beloved, adored as the Lamb slain. Was he manifested to take away sins? Let us willingly part with ours, never again to resume them, and dearly prize the purity he has purchased. His blood is the source of all grace and all blessing; but let it be despised, and it will become avenging blood, calling down the fury of ‘Him that sitteth upon the throne,’ and kindling into fiercer indignation the ‘wrath of the Lamb.’

#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

‘The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,’ 1 John i. 7.

‘WITHOUT shedding of blood is no remission.’ Under the law all things were purged with blood. The expiatory sacrifices were always bloody, and in that did their value consist, for the life of the immolated victim was in the blood. By the ‘blood of Christ’ therefore is to be understood his vicarious sufferings and atoning death, which are uniformly represented as the ransom of the believer’s soul, and the price of his eternal redemption.

It is the ‘blood of *Jesus*’—the name which is above every name. That name he bears because he saves his people from their sins; and as he is able to save unto the uttermost, his blood cleanseth from all sin.

It is the ‘blood of *Christ*,’ the Anointed of the Father, the Sealed of the Holy Ghost, the Messiah clearly promised, amply qualified, fully commissioned to execute the divine purposes of love in saving sinners with an everlasting salvation. To those who are in Christ there is no condemnation; and delivering them from sin’s punishment, i.e. at the same time rescues them from the power, the prevalence, the practice of iniquity; his blood cleanseth from all sin.

It is the ‘blood of *God’s Son*.’ True it is, that the blood shed was the blood of his humanity, for his divinity could not suffer; yet was it his divinity that gave virtue and value to his sacrifice. It is not his blood as the Son of Man, which is the meritorious procuring cause of salvation, but his blood as he was the Son of God, the Son of the Blessed,—Himself God over all, blessed for evermore! ‘Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.’

And in what does the peculiar *value* and *efficacy* of his blood consist? It possesses a purifying virtue; it cleanseth from sin. This evidently

implies, that man being by nature defiled, stands in need of cleansing. Sin is the soul's pollution. Originally created pure and spotless as its Maker, it has lost his image, and is deeply sullied with the stains of iniquity. 'What is man that he should be clean, or he who is born of woman, that he should be righteous?' Pure, indeed, we may appear to be in our own esteem, for 'all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but Jehovah trieth the spirits.' In the sight of that Holy One, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity, we are altogether filthy; yea, 'though we wash ourselves as with snow-water, and make our hands never so clean, yet shall he plunge us in the ditch, and our own clothes shall abhor us.' The heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh up iniquity like water? And as to any ability on our part to remove this pollution, who among us can say, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?' Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. And, therefore, a new and divine influence is requisite to renew and purify the human soul; and it is for this end that a fountain has been opened in the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

This blood cleanseth from sin in its *guilt*, and consequently delivers from its punishment. Satan accuses, conscience condemns, God frowns upon the transgressor; the law flashes its lightnings, and rolls its thunders. But 'we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' Jesus having suffered, the law is satisfied, the punishment is remitted, the believer is absolved, God is reconciled, conscience is pacified, and Satan accuses in vain. To condemn a man who has been washed in the blood of the Lamb, would be contrary both to the justice and mercy of God; contrary to his justice, for he has accepted Christ's sacrifice as a ransom—contrary to his mercy, for it would be to punish one who, in the eye of law, has been found and declared innocent. But 'now being justified by Christ's blood, we shall be saved from wrath by him.'

This blood cleanseth from sin also in its *pollution*. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, sprinkling the unclean, sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your con-

sciences from dead works to serve the living God? Having, therefore, these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

This blood cleanseth from *all* sin—from sin of every kind. Men have often speculated regarding a fancied *panacea* or remedy for every disease to which the human body is subject. But what cannot be found for the body is to be found here for the soul. The blood of God's Son is a universal remedy—it cleanseth from *all sin*—from sin original and actual, sin personal and relative, sin private and public, sin of omission and of commission, sin of heart, speech, conduct. Jesus was delivered 'for our offences,' and there is no offence which his blood cannot wash away. The greatest wickedness ever committed by man was the murder of the Holy One and the Just; yet, even to his betrayers and murderers, was the gospel of reconciliation preached, and *first* preached too—'beginning at Jerusalem;' and upon some of the very persons who madly exclaimed, 'His blood be on us, and on our children,' was that blood sprinkled, not as the blood of vengeance, but as the blood of peace. And as it cleanseth from all sin, however heinous and aggravated, so it cleanseth from all sins, however numerous. They may exceed, in multitude, the stars of the sky, or the sands of the sea, yet this most precious blood will remove their guilt from the conscience, their pollution from the heart, their love from the mind, their practice from the life.

This blood cleanseth from all sin—*sin of every nation*, Jew or Greek, barbarian or Scythian, bond or free. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. From every country, and kindred, and people, and tongue, shall the ransomed of the Lord be brought, and forming that glorious church which is the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, they shall be presented pure and faultless before the Redeemer's throne, not having spot or wrinkle, nor any such thing.

This blood cleanseth from all sin, *sin of every period*. It is not said merely that it had cleansed or will cleanse, but that it *now* cleanseth. Its efficacy is present and perpetual as well as universal. The fountain once opened has never once been shut, but continues to send forth its purifying streams to the ends of the earth. As there is ever a copious source of corruption in our hearts, so there is a constant inexhaustible flow of cleansing blood; it is never lost or congealed like the blood of the ancient sacrifices; it has been deprived of none of its virtue by the lapse of ages, but is, at this moment, as fresh 'as when it first was shed.'

nor will it cease to flow so long as there is a sinner to be saved, or a sin to be forgiven.

Let the unholy and unclean flee without delay to this precious blood of sprinkling, and let saints who feel they are contracting daily habitual guilt, repair daily and habitually to the cleansing fountain; and so shall they be prepared at last for taking part in the sweet song: 'Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' Rom. viii. 33.

THE apostle supposes the judgment to be set, the books opened, and the accused summoned to the bar. But there appears among them those, whom the Judge has not only acquitted but approved—has selected as the chosen friends of his heart, the destined heirs of his glory—and who shall lay any thing to *their* charge? The various but indissoluble links in the golden chain which draws them up from earth to heaven, have been enumerated in a preceding verse;—they are 'foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, glorified.'

The whole had its source in the '*foreknowledge*' of God with respect to them;—by which we are to understand not simple prescience, for 'known unto God are *all* his works from the beginning of the world,' nor the knowledge of bare discrimination, since all things that have been, and that are, that shall be, or that can be, are naked and open to the eternal eye of Him with whom the past, and the future, are one continued ever-present *now*. But God's knowledge of his people, whether from eternity or in time, implies a knowledge of special love, of peculiar complacency, of approbation and acknowledgment. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord *knoweth* them that are his.' 'My sheep hear my voice, and I *know* them.' 'Does God cast off his people whom he *foreknew*?' No! for they are '*elect*' according to the '*foreknowledge*' of God the Father.'

Having thus been from eternity the objects of his free choice, they became the subjects of his predetermined purpose. 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did *predestinate*.' This marks the absolute sovereignty and infallible certainty of the divine decree, and points to the ultimate execution, in all its parts, of the divine appoint-

ment. 'Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' This fore ordination includes a destined conformity to the likeness of the first-born Son of God, and a consequent admission into God's family. 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.' It takes in holiness as the way, and heaven as the end. They are 'chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy;'; they are 'ordained to eternal life.'

And because he loved them with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness does he draw them. 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also *called*.' He calls them indeed, in the first instance, as he does others, by the invitation to observe gospel ordinances, and to share in gospel blessings, for that is a call addressed to all who enjoy the means of grace. Yet though in this sense 'many are called, few are chosen;'; whereas with respect to God's foreknown and predestinated people, they are 'called, and chosen, and faithful.' In addition to the outward and (as regards the impenitent) ineffectual call of God's word, there is addressed to them the inward, spiritual, effectual call of God's grace. When Christ says to them as he said to Matthew the publican: 'Follow me,' they arise and obey the summons. Upon what grounds did Paul assure the Thessalonian Christians that he knew their 'election of God?' It was because 'the gospel had come to them, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.' 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; *wherunto he called you by our gospel*.' 'Who hath saved us, and *called* us with a *holy calling*, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.'

Hence it is here asserted, that they are not merely invited to a participation of gospel blessings, but are admitted to their actual enjoyment. 'Whom he called, them he also *justified*.' A state of justification is opposed to a state of condemnation; it is to obtain at once forgiveness and acceptance, to be treated, not only as negatively guiltless, but as positively righteous, and consequently to pass from death unto life. It has its source in God's gratuitous favour—'being

justified freely by his grace.' The meritorious procuring cause is the finished obedience and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus—'being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.' The instrumental medium is faith in his name—'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, who is the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.'

And what is the final, blissful result? 'Whom he justified, them he also glorified.' The apostle, after looking back to the good pleasure and purpose of God from the past eternity as the originating cause, now looks forward to the glorification of the elect in the coming eternity as the ultimate end. They are the vessels of mercy which God had afore prepared unto glory. The Saviour said of them, when he was on earth, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom;' and when he shall appear from heaven to call them home, he will say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

'What shall we say then to these things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' Not God: for it is he who justifieth them, since he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for them all; and if the Judge be for them, who can be against them? Who is he that condemneth them? Not Christ: for it is he who consented to be delivered for their offences, and who rose again for their justification, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for them. Shall the law accuse? It is satisfied. Shall justice denounce? It is vindicated. Shall conscience torture? It is pacified. Shall satan, the 'accuser of the brethren,' dare to prefer a charge? He shall be put to silence and shame—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.'

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#### SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,' 1 Pet. i. 2.

HERE is another explicit and solemn assertion of the doctrine of an 'election by grace'—originating in the distinguishing love and foreknowledge of God the Father from eternity, and manifested

in time by the bestowal of pardon through the blood of the Son, and the production of purity by the grace of the Spirit. The apostle would represent to us the manner in which the three persons of the adorable Trinity concur and co-operate in the salvation of God's chosen, devised by the Father, procured by the Son, applied by the Holy Ghost.

Even were the testimonies of scripture on this subject less explicit than they are, let us only connect together these two simple facts, (which are admitted by every humble Christian) namely, that salvation is of free grace, and yet that all men are *not* saved, and it is impossible to resist the conclusion that 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy.' 'Who maketh thee to differ from another?' 'Even so, Father! for so it seemeth good in thy sight.'

There are, it is true, difficulties connected with this subject which we cannot explain; but where is the truth of God—where is the work of God that is wholly free from difficulties to the limited capacity of short-sighted mortals? Often has it been asked: 'How can we reconcile the purpose of God according to election, with the universality of moral obligation, or the individual responsibility of man? If God's designs of mercy be restricted to a certain number of the human race, why is the gospel addressed to *all*? and how can it be the duty of *all* to believe it?' Now in reply to these and such like questions, it would be enough to remind the objector, that if salvation is of God's grace, and if all are not saved, the force of the objection lies, not merely against God's *precious decree*, but against his *actual conduct*; it is directed not more against the limitation of his gracious *designs* than against the limitation of his gracious *injunctions*, the only difference being that the former are secret and concealed, while the latter are open and manifest.

But the truth is, that according to the principles of scripture, such objections are wholly inadmissible. If it be one bible-fact that God hath chosen Christians unto salvation, and if it be another bible-fact that unto all men is the word of this salvation sent, and that they are accountable for the use they make of the means of salvation God has afforded them—then no difficulties, real or imaginary, in the way of reconciling these two facts together can invalidate the truth of either. Our business with things revealed, is not to explain, but to believe; not to harmonise, but to practise. If in the course of our inquiries, we meet with some new truth that seems irre-

conciliable with one we had formerly admitted, shall we, on that account, reject either the one or the other? Certainly not. Sound philosophy will tell us to receive both, to reason from both, but not to deduce from the one what might weaken the force of the other. Upon this principle the sacred writers act; for they bring together into close juxtaposition, principles apparently the most discordant, without ever pretending to reconcile them, far less insinuating, that the apparent discrepancy should affect our reception of either. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you.' 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.' 'Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life. No man can come unto me except the Father which has sent me draw him.'

But in point of fact, the doctrine of predestination is not attended with greater difficulties than many other doctrines of revelation, which are received by all who profess Christianity. None, for example, will deny that 'God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' and yet none can deny that iniquity abounds; but who has yet been able to reconcile the holiness of God with the origin of moral evil? None will deny that 'God is love,' but who can perfectly reconcile the goodness of God with the introduction of moral and physical suffering? Again, that the *foreknowledge* of God is a necessary part of his omniscience is acknowledged by all who have correct views of the divine character. On the other hand, that man is a *responsible* agent is taught at once by the law of conscience, and the word of the Most High. But what speculations have yet harmonised these two facts, or fixed the precise point of their agreement? Who of mortals has ever discerned that hidden link in the great chain of truth, by which they are connected? And yet our consciousness of the impossibility of reconciling them does not lead us to doubt or deny either.

Another vulgar objection against the doctrine of election is often stated thus: 'If I am to be saved, I shall be saved whatever be my vices; if I am to be lost, I shall be lost whatever be my virtues.' But such an inference from the doctrine can only proceed from the grossest misconception of its true nature, and an utter disregard of the connection which God has established here, as throughout all his works, between the *means* and the *end*. Apply the same reasoning to the business of life, and its absurdity will be instantly apparent. As certain it is in the purpose and perception of God, that we shall be rich or poor,

healthy or sick, live long or die soon, as that our soul shall be saved or lost. But does any man reason against the use of means for the security or increase of worldly property, the restoration of health, or the preservation of life, because he is persuaded of the foreknowledge and pre-determination of God in reference to these matters? And why then should he for any such reason exclude the use of means from the great concerns of religion? The invitations of the gospel to faith and repentance are as universal and as binding as are the obligations of the law; if a man is saved, it will be because he has embraced those invitations, if he is lost it will be because he has rejected them.

Here, finally, is the great safeguard of the doctrine—namely, that it is an election to holiness, even 'through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience.' The decree is passed in heaven, but on earth it is known only by the result, and that is a holy conversation and godly life. The elect are chosen 'to be holy and without blame'—to be created again in Christ Jesus unto good works, wherein God had before ordained that they should walk in them. To what are they predestinated, but to be conformed to the image of God's Son?—so that if a man's character be utterly destitute of the lineaments of the holy Jesus, he possesses as yet no evidence of his being an elect child of God; while, on the other hand, in proportion as he is made to resemble the meek and lowly Saviour, in the same proportion will the evidences of his election of God increase. And while the doctrine thus secures the interests of holiness, it also illustrates the nature of the final perseverance of the saints. God's eternal purpose of grace does render absolutely certain the ultimate salvation of every one of the elect; but no man has any right to conclude that he is one of the blessed number, unless he is *actually* enduring in faith and obedience even to the end.

#### EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,'  
John iii. 16.

NOTHING but our long familiarity with the marvellous fact here stated, can account for our ever reading this passage without the deepest emotion. How simple, yet sublime the announcement! how plain, yet how profound! The language is so perspicuous as to be intelligible to all, and yet

so fraught with mystery is the sentiment conveyed as to be beyond the full comprehension of men or angels.

The grand truth here exhibited is, that the originating cause of our salvation was the love of God in the gift of his Son. Even if this had not been so clearly revealed in the bible, the view which is there given of God's nature and character would have led us to a like conclusion. He is there represented as *self-existent*—'sufficient to himself alone;' and consequently independent, no less in being than in bliss. He is all-perfect, and therefore all-glorious. His personal felicity being uninfluenced by any thing from without, is necessarily incapable of diminution or of increase. What then, it may be asked, could have moved him to form men upon the earth at first, and when they had fallen from Him, and from happiness, what could have induced him to send down his Son to be their Deliverer? Was it merely that he might thereby found a claim to their gratitude, augment his own grandeur, and promote his own interests? Thy goodness, O creature, extendeth not to Him. He became not more glorious in himself, when he called into existence myriads of intelligent and exalted beings. They were but emanations of the Great Spirit—they were only manifestations of the innate, essential glory that had resided in Him from eternity. And can a *man*—can the poor worm *man*—be profitable unto God? Is it any pleasure—any *personal* benefit to Him, that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect? 'If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he at thine hand?' Far less was it from any *dread* of thy continued enmity and rebellion that he interposed to save thee. 'Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? Will he enter with thee into judgment? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man—but if thou sinnest, what doest thou against *him*? Or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto *him*?' The combined legions of darkness have long been hurling their blasphemies, and directing their machinations against his throne—but all that shall only rebound to the praise of the glory of his justice, which shall be magnified in their everlasting destruction. Was there any *obligation* on the part of God to give up his Son for us? This will not be maintained; for if in any sense it could be said, that we deserved that Christ should die for us—it might be said with equal truth that we deserved salvation without Christ. If then there was no previous obligation of merit

on our part, or of necessity on his, and if there was no room for the exercise of any selfish motive to influence his determination—in what is it that the mission of his dear Son originated? In what can it have originated, but in his own goodness—his desire to relieve our misery, and secure our happiness—in a word, in his *love* towards us—a love absolutely disinterested and sovereignly free—a love exercised without any antecedent obligation, and without the possibility of any adequate return?

Let this view of the Father's love serve to counteract certain notions which many entertain of the plan of salvation—notions most derogatory to the character of God, and calculated to affect materially our grateful and devout feelings towards him. They readily perceive the love of the Son in laying down his life for transgressors; but when they think of God the Father's share in the work of redemption, they picture him to themselves as a gloomy, relentless, blood-thirsty tyrant, who could not find it in his heart to love sinners till his own Son had been first sacrificed; whereas the wondrous truth is, that the death of Christ, so far from being the *cause* of God's love, was just the *effect* of that love. Christ's death was not intended to excite the divine compassion—any more than it was intended to excite the divine justice,—but it was designed to display and illustrate both in a way that never was done before, and so as to shed a brighter lustre over every other perfection of the Deity. But love was at the bottom of the whole;—love was the primary motive of all; love, the purest in its source, yet distinguishing as to its objects, for while it passed by fallen angels, it laid hold on fallen men. Oh! how unlike the God of the gospel, to be represented as if he had waited in calm indifference or stern impatience, until salvation should first be wrought out, and then coldly and reluctantly receiving the sinner to his favour on the bare ground of legal right. Why, what is the most glorious character he sustains, and the title by which he is most honoured? Is it not as 'the God of salvation—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?' Did he not so love the world as to *give* his only-begotten and well-beloved Son—not sparing him, but freely delivering him up to agony and death for us all? Yea, did not He himself take the principal part in the actual infliction of the severest torments which the Son endured? The meek and holy Lamb of God suffered much indeed from the cruelty of men and the malice of devils; but all that was as nothing compared with what in the garden and on the cross proceeded directly and immedi-

ately from the hand of his Father God. Was he stricken, and smitten, and afflicted? It was of God. Was he bruised and put to grief? It pleased the Lord thus to make his soul an offering for sin, and to lay on the devoted head of the innocent Victim the iniquity of us all. Yes, it was his own Father, whose delight he had been from eternity, and in whose love he had from eternity rejoiced—it was even He who now so darkly frowned upon him, and kindled up against him his burning wrath, and pierced him through with his poisoned arrows, and sank him down with the weight of his avenging curse, and compelled him to drink to the dregs the cup of bitterness and trembling. It was his own Father who, standing over the agonised and dying Son, shut out for a season his cries and prayers, steeled his paternal bosom until the world's crisis should be past, and man's redemption secured—and in words, the mysterious and awfully affecting import of which it will take eternity to unfold, called upon his justice to arm itself against his best beloved, and not to spare him: 'Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow! Smite the shepherd.' Who that reflects on these things will harbour the injurious thought, that God the Father sacrificed nothing for sinners, and took but a cold and passive interest in their salvation? Will he not rather, whenever he thinks of the precious blood of the spotless Lamb, devoutly remember, and thankfully acknowledge, that by God he was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world—by God he was manifested and given to the death—by God he was raised up and glorified? And all this he will cheerfully ascribe to nothing but what Paul emphatically styles the *philanthropy* of God our Saviour, or his 'love and kindness towards man.'

If love is to be found no where else, '*herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*' 'We know and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.' '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?'

#### EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

'*He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,*' Heb. vii. 25.

This is the consolatory inference which the apostle draws from the fact of the Saviour's eternal ex-

istence and unchangeable priesthood. It comprises a description of those who are saved by him, and an assertion of the boundless extent and perpetual duration of his saving power.

Who are they that shall be saved by Christ? They and they only who 'come unto God by him.' This denotes, in bible language, the first act of penitential faith, leading to the habitual exercise of humble devotion. To both these feelings men are naturally strangers. They are 'afar off from God;' being alienated from his service and love, and enemies to him in their minds and by wicked works. A consciousness of guilt and pollution, and a consequent dread of his displeasure, make them, like Adam, flee from his presence, and avoid his approach. The very first step then that a wretched creature must take in the way of returning to happiness, is a step towards God, the Author of all happiness. Being made aware of his danger whilst at a distance from God, and believing in the revealed character of God in Christ as a God of mercy, and embracing the calls and invitations of the gospel to return, the penitent soul humbly *comes to God*, as a wandering sheep comes to the fold, as a prodigal son comes to the father, as a subdued rebel comes to the sovereign, at once to offer allegiance, and to implore forgiveness. But very needful is it to bear in mind, that it is through Christ alone that sinners, if they would be saved, must go unto the Father. A deist may go unto God, as did Cain, without a mediator, presenting his own works, the fruit of his own ground, the result of his own labours; but a believer goes, like Abel, by and through another, making mention of his righteousness, of his only, and offering only of his gifts, for of these alone will God testify his acceptance. Look at the Jewish high priest ministering and acting in behalf of the people on the great day of atonement, (for that is the apostle's own illustration), and you will at once perceive how they 'came unto God *by him.*' He has entered within the veil into the holy of holies, carrying with him the blood of the immolated victim. Ask a Jew: 'What mean ye by this service?' And he will tell you, that the high priest has gone in before God *for* the people, and that they, if they would be accepted, must go unto God *by him*, relying on nothing but the sacrifice which he has offered, and the intercessions and incense which he for them has presented. Thus it is also that we must approach unto God, if we would be received of him in favour. We see the High Priest of our profession entering heaven with his own blood, and offering up along with it the incense of his merits and his prayers; and it is upon Christ

so occupied that faith fixes,—it is on Christ so occupied that hope rests. But, whereas the Jewish worshipper, even on the day of atonement, had to stand afar off, with the veil of the temple interposed between him and the inner sanctuary, the devout Christian has free, unrestrained, constant access into the secret of God's presence with his Anointed, and may humbly urge, in Christ's name, at the throne of the earthly grace, the very pleas which the great Intercessor is urging for him at the throne of the heavenly glory.

Being an accepted and ever living Priest, Christ is able to save those who come unto God by him *to the uttermost*—that is, in all conceivable circumstances of misery and helplessness, and always, unceasingly, even to the end. Unlike the Aaronic high priest, he has no need to renew his great oblation, or to devolve his office upon a successor. 'This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable, an untransferable priesthood,' i. e. a priesthood which can never pass into other hands. And hence the perfection of his sacrifice, and the perpetuity and prevalence of the mediation which he founds on it, qualify him for being so 'mighty to save.' From the lowest depth of guilt he can rescue; from the greatest degree of depravity he can recover; from the farthest point in backsliding he can restore; from the extremest length in wickedness, even from a life-time of transgression, he can redeem: yea, and at the eleventh hour, when the hoary-headed criminal seems about to drop like a rotten and withered branch into the flames of hell, He can pluck the fire-scathed brand from the burning, and exalt the saved sinner to a place in his kingdom and a throne by his side. An idolatrous and bloody Manasseh, an adulterous and murderous David, a cowardly and backsliding Peter, a blaspheming and persecuting Saul, he was able to save 'at their uttermost.' A crucified thief he took with him, 'at his uttermost,' into paradise. Corinthians who were debased by every vice—'unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners'—he washed in his blood, sanctified through his Spirit, justified by his righteousness. And all these are set forth as proofs, pledges, patterns, of his long-suffering to forbear, his willingness to forgive, his power to redeem. So long as there are in this world sinners to save, there is a Christ to save them; for as his life in heaven can have no end, so his office of High Priest admits of no interruption, and his ability to save of no decay. Is there a sinner reading these pages who can be beyond Christ's *uttermost*?

## NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,' 1 Tim. ii. 5.

THE fundamental truth of *revealed* religion, that there is but one Saviour, is here connected with the fundamental truth of *natural* religion, that there is but one God. The latter is a truth which is admitted by all but pantheists or idolaters; it is proclaimed by that unity of design and operation which pervades the Creator's works; and the supposition of there being more than One Infinite Spirit—'of whom, and to whom, and through whom are all things,' would involve a manifest absurdity. Yet not more true is it that there is only one God, than that there is only one Mediator.

The *necessity of mediation* between opposite parties arises from their being in a state of variance or enmity; and such is the lamentable state of things between God and man. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God,' and God hath a controversy with every sinner. He is 'angry with the wicked every day'—and the alienation thus produced might have remained perpetual, had not a daysman or umpire appeared to make both *at one*, by 'laying his hand upon them both.' But 'this man shall be our peace,' inasmuch as he maketh peace by the blood of his cross, and preacheth peace by the word of reconciliation, and giveth peace by the sweet influence of his grace. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses; and men being justified by faith, have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as he died on earth to make atonement, so he lives in heaven to make intercession. '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.' His mediation for man in the world of glory is effected through his perpetual and prevalent intercession at God's right hand—an intercession based upon the perfection of the work which he accomplished here below. As the high priest under the law, who was the mediator of the old covenant, went in before Jehovah in behalf of the people, but not without blood, bearing on his breastplate the names of the twelve tribes of Israel;—in like manner, Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, appears continually in the presence of God for us, presenting before the throne the blood of the covenant shed for the remission of sins, and bearing on his heart and on his shoulder the names of his people—on his shoulder that he may

sustain them by his power, on his heart that he may bless them with his love. Whether he needs to mediate for them by express words is a useless inquiry. The blood of Abel had no audible voice, any more than the spheres in the firmament, which nevertheless speak the Maker's praise to men of every tongue. Abel's blood had a voice, and so has the blood of Christ. But it speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. The blood of Abel cried loud for vengeance; the blood of the Lamb slain, seen in the midst of the throne, gently whispers peace. This is the true Israel, who as a Prince hath power with God and with man, and prevails.

But if it be a blessed truth that there is a Mediator between us and our offended Sovereign, let it be deeply impressed upon our minds that there is but *one*. This necessarily results from the fact of there being but *one* God, with whom we have to do. As he is the infinite and unchangeable, there is but one sacrifice can meet the demands of his perfect law; there is but one Intercessor who, upon the plea of that sacrifice, can propitiate his favour. Every saint, however holy, is a sinner saved by grace; every seraph, however exalted, is but a servant fulfilling his own appointed work. Other foundation for acceptance can no man lay, save that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. His is the only name given under heaven among men whereby (if we are to be saved at all) we *must* be saved. 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.'

Rejoice, O Christian! in your having such an advocate with the Father, as Jesus Christ the Righteous One, who urges your suit at the court of heaven in the form of a man, and with the feelings of a brother. Yes! the Mediator is the *man* Christ Jesus. Men as they rise in honour and power too often lose the recollections and forsake the friendships of their humbler days. But though Jesus the Son of God hath passed into the heavens, we have not there a High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but one who feels with us and careth for us. Does Christ live for you in heaven, and ought not you to live for him on earth? Does he represent you before God? And should not you, in your humble sphere, seek to represent him among men? Does he stand and plead your cause with God? And will not you stand up for him before the evil-doers, and plead his cause with the workers of iniquity?

## NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

'He that cometh from above is above all,' John iii. 31.

It is of the utmost consequence, that we entertain correct and scriptural views of the *person* of Christ the Mediator. Now his forerunner, John, here solemnly testifies to the great and essential difference that existed between himself and the Master, in that, while he, like all former divine messengers, was of the 'earth, earthy,' Christ was from heaven above, and coming as the Lord from heaven, is 'above all.'

Mark here the recognition of a *distinction of natures* in Christ; for the words seem clearly to imply that he possesses another nature besides his human. And the same idea is confirmed by a variety of other passages, where there is no express assertion of his Supreme divinity. 'What and if ye should see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before? I went out from the Father, and am come unto the world; again I leave the world, and go unto the Father. No one hath ascended up to heaven, save he who came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, who is in heaven.' To denote his possession of a nature superior to the human, is he not often expressly distinguished from men? 'Paul an apostle not of man nor by men, but by *Jesus Christ*.' 'Not as pleasing *men*, but as the servants of *Christ*.' 'The law maketh *men* high priests, but the word of the oath maketh the Son.' What mystery, indeed, could there have been in the 'Word being manifest in flesh,' unless it was the manifestation of a higher nature than that of mere man—a nature till then invisible?

But the Baptist here further asserts the *pre-existence* of Christ, or that his superior nature had a being before his appearance in our world. The same sentiment had previously been uttered by John when he said: 'He that cometh after me is preferred before me, (or goes before me) for he was before me.' Witness, too, Christ's own remarkable declaration to the Jews: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.' Even if that does not imply self-existence, it must certainly denote an existence prior to that of Abraham; for this was the proof which he adduced of his being 'greater than Abraham,' and so the Jews understood him, nor did he contradict the inference they drew from it.

It is farther intimated here, that this higher, invisible, pre-existent nature of the Christ, had its abode *in heaven*; and lest we might suppose that it was an angelic nature, other passages assure us that it was *not* the nature of angels, but

a nature far superior to theirs. In describing his incarnation it is said, 'He took not on him the nature of angels,' i. e. the new nature he assumed was not that of angels; the angelic was not his former superior nature, nor was it the inferior nature which he afterwards assumed. Angels, as their name imports, are only messengers or servants; and the Almighty employs, in that capacity, even inanimate creatures, making 'the winds his messengers, and the flaming fire his ministers.' But unto which of the angels saith he at any time, 'Thou art my Son. Sit thou at my right hand!' Unto which of the angels saith he *not*, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him!'

'He that cometh from above is above all,' because he was *before* all. He had an existence prior to the foundation of the world. 'In the beginning was the Word,' even in that beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. He had a glory with the Father before the world was, for the Father loved him before the foundation of the world. 'The same was in the beginning with God;' he was 'before all things.' These declarations, if they do not explicitly assert his *existence from eternity*, seem necessarily to imply it; and it is elsewhere set forth in terms as plain and distinct as can be furnished by the language of man. He is that 'Eternal Life that was with the Father and was manifested unto us.' To him the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews applies the sublime description of the psalmist: 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands,' (there is the past eternity). 'They shall perish, but thou endurest—thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail,' (there is the eternity to come). How is the eternal, independent, necessary self-existence of God the Father set forth in the book of Revelation? By language which is elsewhere in the same book applied to the Lord Jesus Christ: 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last.' Connecting all these proofs together, can we now err in acknowledging, that he who came from above is above all, seeing that he is God over all, blessed for ever? Amen.

How consoling to the Christian to know, that his Lord and Saviour came 'from above!' Did he reveal the character of God? He had been in his bosom from eternity. Did he make known the bliss of heaven? It had been his eternal home. On the other hand, how much does this consideration enhance the responsibility and aggravate the guilt of those who reject him! He is 'the Lord from heaven!' 'See then that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped

not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.'

TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father,' John v. 23.

WE have seen the plain testimony of scripture as to a *distinction of natures* in Christ—the one human, the other superior to the nature of man, superior to the nature of angels—a nature which existed before his manifestation in flesh, yea, before the foundation of the world, even from all eternity. But, in addition to this, the bible contains many intimations, more or less direct, of his true and proper *divinity*.

How is the Supreme God known and acknowledged by his rational creatures? Is it not by the *perfections* of his character, and the *names* that are consequently given to him? Is it not by the *works* of his hand, and the *worship* that is consequently paid to him.

Is *omnipotence*, or the power of doing every thing that seemeth to him good, an essential attribute of Jehovah? Jesus is the 'Mighty God.' In nothing is the 'exceeding greatness' of the divine power more signally exhibited than in raising the dead. Yet he had power to lay down his own life, and he had power to take it again; and he will raise and change the vile bodies of his saints, and fashion them like unto his glorious body, according to the energy whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Is *omnipresence* a necessary perfection of the divinity, no less than underived eternal self-existence? Christ's ability to show himself everywhere present is asserted in terms as express as those which the Old Testament had employed in reference to the God of Israel. By Jehovah it was promised: 'In all places where I record my name I will come unto you, and I will bless you.' And by the Saviour it is promised: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there *am I* in the midst of them. Lo, *I am* with you always, even unto the end of the world.' The same perfection is involved in his *omniscience*, or the prerogative of knowing all things. Every circumstance in human character and human conduct lies naked and open before him. He 'knew all men, and needed not that any man should testify to him of man; for he knew what was in man.' He knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who he was that should betray

him. Now to know the human heart is described as a distinguishing characteristic of Jehovah. 'The heart is deceitful above all things. Who can know it? I, Jehovah, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.' But the self-same power is asserted of the Son of God, 'who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire:' 'All the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.' Hence the declaration of Simon Peter: 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' Hence the prayer of the disciples when assembled to appoint a successor to Judas: 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen.' Hence the expectation of the waiting church for the time when 'the Lord shall come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.'

Turn we from his *perfections* to his *works*,—from what he is to what he does. What is the most common representation given of the Supreme God in the bible? Is it not as the 'Maker of heaven and earth?' What is the most common of all the proofs appealed to there, as well as in natural religion, for the being of a God? Is it not the work of creation, in which the invisible things of him, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the things that he made? But of Christ it is asserted, in terms the most explicit and comprehensive, that he made the worlds—that without him not any one thing was made that was made—that by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him. Is it alleged that he may have done all this by delegated authority and communicated power? What then becomes of the argument for the existence of a Supreme God, drawn from the works of his hand? Is it supposed that nothing more was intended in these passages than a *spiritual* and *moral* creation by the gospel? But did the unfallen principalities or powers stand in need of this new creation? Or can it be said that in this sense the world was made by him, when it is added of the same world, 'the world knew him not.' Moreover, of the earth and the heavens which he created, it is affirmed that 'they shall perish,' but can that be affirmed of any part of his *new* creation?

But there are other works of God, no less

honourable and glorious, which demonstrate his existence, and show forth his praise, and these likewise are ascribed to Christ. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand—all things pertaining to the providence of the universe, the government of the church, the judgment of the great day. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power; by him all things consist. When on earth he had power to forgive sins, and now he is exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. All things are put under his feet; in all things he has the pre-eminence; he is the Head over all things to his church; and as in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, he filleth all in all. Hence to him belongs the mighty work of the resurrection, and none but He shall fill the seat of judgment. 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of *Christ*: so then every one of us must give an account of himself unto *God*.'

It is after we find these *attributes* and *works* of God ascribed to the Saviour, that we are prepared to understand the sense in which the *names* and *titles* of God are given to him, for we then perceive that it is not the language of *figure* but of *fact*. 'The Word was God.' 'God was manifest in flesh.' As concerning the *flesh* he was of the seed of David, but being justified in the Spirit, he was declared to be God over all, blessed for ever.

Need we wonder then that he has been, and now is, the object of humble adoration, and the subject of grateful praise, both on earth and in heaven. The first disciples in every place called upon the name of the Lord. Thomas owned him as 'his God;' often was he besought of Paul, and to him Stephen commended his departing spirit. All the angels of God worship him; all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; and a time is coming, when at the once despised name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that he is Maker, Proprietor, Governor, Lord of all—to the glory of God the Father.

## TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren,' Heb. ii. 17.

In setting forth the love of God the Son towards our sinful race, as shown in his spontaneous and devoted interposition between them and merited punishment, the scriptures often dwell upon the fact, that he did not disdain to assume their own frail and dying flesh. And it is, indeed, very evident, that this is a circumstance which is well fitted to show the deep intensity of his attachment to them, and the low condescension to which, on their account, he was willing to submit. For suppose the case, that it had come within the purpose of the Father's mercy to have devised, and of the Son's grace to have undertaken a scheme of redemption for fallen angels, and that, in order to its execution, Christ had taken upon him the nature of angels; though doubtless it had been infinite humiliation for the Creator to have veiled himself in any nature not his own, still as he made angels spirits like himself, and as they retain their high powers of intellect, even in their apostacy, there would have been some shadow of assimilation in point of spiritual capacities and spiritual energies between God the Spirit and those angelic spirits whose nature he had deigned to assume. 'But verily he took not on him the nature of angels—he was made lower than the angels,—he took on him the seed of Abraham.' There was this peculiarity in the case of ruined man, that that body in which, had he preserved his innocence, he would have flourished in immortal health and strength, has now become the source of debility, disease, death. And yet that is the very body in which, with all its weaknesses, the Son of God appears—that is the very body which, with all its meanness, misery and mortality the ever-blessed One deigns to put on. Knowing that without this depth of humiliation, the salvation of men could not have been accomplished, he despised not their affliction, he abhorred not their misery, he consented that a body should be prepared for him, and forasmuch as 'it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren,'—like unto his brethren in all things, sin only excepted, did he become.

The leading fact involved in this statement is the *incarnation* of our blessed Lord, or his taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, becoming a partaker of the flesh and blood of those whom he came to redeem, and whom, in consequence of this assumption of their nature, he acknowledges as his brethren. Like them he passed through infancy, childhood, and youth, till he

reached the stature of a perfect man. He was susceptible of hunger and thirst, cold and heat and weariness; in short, of all the sinless pleasures and pains of our common humanity.

This truth of the incarnation is set forth by the apostles of the Lord in a great variety of phraseology; and the frequent and emphatic manner in which they dwell upon it seems to show, that they thought there was a risk of the primitive Christians losing sight of it in the acknowledged glories of his divinity. But while they delight in unfolding that glory in all its splendour, they represent it as enshrined on earth in the tabernacle of his flesh. Great, indeed, is the mystery of godliness, 'God manifest in flesh.' It passeth the knowledge of men; it transcends the comprehension of angels; and, therefore, all our speculations and conjectures about the *modus* of the union and co-existence of the two natures, divine and human in one person, are unprofitable and vain. But as a clearly revealed bible-truth we must receive it in the simplicity of faith, in the same manner as all but atheists receive the truth of the being of a God who yet cannot be searched out or understood—in the same manner as all but materialists admit the union and co-existence in one person of the fleshly body and spiritual soul of man, who is himself one of the greatest mysteries with which he is conversant.

But if the Son of God became man, it was purely for the benefit and advantage of men his brethren; it was that he might be a High Priest, *merciful* towards them, while *faithful* in the things of God, and that fulfilling the law's righteousness and suffering the law's penalty in the nature that had transgressed, he might make reconciliation for the sins of the people. The heathen represented their deities as sometimes coming down to earth in the likeness of men. But with their grovelling conceptions of the divine character, they ascribed as the reasons for this disguise, either motives of curiosity, a wish to engage in vain-glorious exploits, or to indulge in the most debasing vices. But contrasted with these imaginary visits, O how holy and beneficent, how pure and godlike, does the manifestation of the Son of God appear, when He descends into the lower parts of this earth. The meanness of our origin, the frailty of our frame, the agonising sufferings and ignominious and accursed death which in our flesh and blood he knew he was to undergo, nothing repelled him, nothing could discourage him. Never was there disinterestedness, never self-devotedness like his; for he became like unto man, not merely that he might introduce them into God's family as his brethren, but

in order that in their nature for them he might suffer, and for them he might die, and that by his sufferings and death they might escape endless suffering and death everlasting. The importance then of this doctrine cannot be too greatly magnified. Reject the fact of the incarnation, and you undermine the whole gospel scheme, you destroy the possibility of a sacrificial atonement, you deprive the Christian of a suffering and sympathising brother, a powerful succourer, a once crucified but now ever-living Redeemer.

Let his own people, whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren, fix their adoring and grateful contemplation upon this marvellous truth, that he was in very deed partaker of their flesh and blood. We see him who thought it no robbery to be equal to God, vailing for a time his glory behind our feeble, dying clay, and humbling himself to the manger, to the cross, to the dust of death. We see him who inhabited the praises of eternity, leaving the happy society of heaven, and mingling with wretched outcasts; becoming an heir of the same infirmities, subject to the same laws, exposed to the same curse, and coming down among us, not in the splendours of majesty and power, but in a form of meanness and poverty, degradation and servitude. When we can realize the simple fact, that in that young man of Nazareth there dwelt for a period of thirty-three years, 'all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,' we stand in amazement at the divine condescension; we are overawed by a sense of the divine loving-kindness; we 'fear the Lord and his goodness.' Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? When we know that God *did*, in very deed, dwell with man upon the earth, we feel as if this polluted globe had been sanctified by such a visitant, and every spot of it on which we tread is now holy ground.

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ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me;'*  
Luke xxiv. 44.

THE ancient Jews divided the Old Testament scriptures into three great portions, viz. the *Pentateuch*, or five books of Moses: the *Prophets*, comprising the historical books (exclusive of the *Pentateuch*), and the *Prophets* strictly so called: and the *Chetubim* or *Hagiographa*, i. e. holy

writings, which was sometimes simply called '*the Psalms*,' from the book with which it began. Our blessed Lord then in the above passage, before 'opening the understandings of his disciples to understand the scriptures,' intimates to them that all these scriptures had testified of himself. He was the sum and substance of all the ancient revelations, and especially of the recorded predictions. To Him gave all the prophets witness, throwing around him the beams of their united light. The 'spirit of prophecy' was 'the testimony of Jesus;' for it was the 'Spirit of Christ' that was in these holy seers, and it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Even in the *age before the flood*, God left not himself without witness to the great work of redemption that was to be accomplished by his Son. No sooner had man fallen, than his guilty fears were relieved (even *before* the threatened curse was uttered) by the cheering announcement that the 'woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head.' In the faith of his advent, Adam worshipped and Abel sacrificed before the 'presence of the Lord' at the east of Eden; and Enoch walked with God as reconciled by the Messiah's first coming, while he prophesied of his second coming to judgment. Noah, too, was a preacher of that righteousness of faith of which he was an heir, his deliverance by the ark being a figure at once of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and of the baptismal purification of his people.

In *patriarchal times* the Redeemer was made known to Abraham as he in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed;—and the gospel promise thus preached to him was, through his faith, counted unto him for righteousness. The same assurance was often renewed to him, more especially on the occasion of his offering up Isaac the son of promise—an affecting emblem of God not sparing his own Son but delivering him up for us all. In Melchisedec, the righteous and peaceful king of Salem, and the priest of the Most High God, do we not perceive a figure of the Son of God, who is now a priest upon his throne, and being a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec hath, like him, a divinely-derived and untransferable priesthood? At Bethel, where the Angel of the covenant talked with Jacob, he saw a mystic ladder bringing heaven and earth into union like the great Mediator, and upon which the holy angels of God ascended and descended as on the Son of man. But from which of Jacob's many sons is the Messiah to be born? 'That our Lord was to spring out of Judah

it is evident; for of him was it said by his dying father: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until *Shiloh* come; and to him shall the gathering of the nations be.' About the same period a voice was heard from the land of Uz, saying, 'I know that my *Redeemer* liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.'

We next come to the grand era of *Moses*, who was himself an eminent type of the Christ, as Deliverer, Prophet, Governor, and Judge of his people. And in 'the law of *Moses*' many things are written of him. As his salvation had been shadowed forth by the redemption from Egypt, by the passover and the sprinkling with blood, so the whole ritual that was established was one grand prefigurative image of Him that was to come. He was set forth in every bleeding sacrifice as an offering for sin; in the manna from heaven as the bread of life; in the smitten rock as the source of refreshment; in the brazen serpent as the crucified, exalted Saviour; in the tabernacle and temple as the residence of the present Deity—God with man upon the earth; and in the Urim and Thummim of the sacred oracle as the brightness of glory, the perfection of beauty, the light and life of men.

The frequency with which Christ is spoken of in the 'Prophets and Psalms' may be gathered from the fact that in no less than *thirty-three* different places, the Evangelist Matthew alone, after adverting to some particular incident in the life of his divine Master, adds: 'These things were done that the scripture might be fulfilled.' The period at which he should appear, the family whence he should descend, the place where he should be born—the beauties of his character, the value of his doctrine, the might and mercy of his works—all was foretold. But still more minute were the predictions to which he himself here referred, as having been fulfilled in his last sufferings and death. The description of the traitor had been given in the Psalms, as 'his own familiar friend who ate of his bread, yet lifted up his heel against him.' The exact price for which he sold his Lord (the price of the vilest slave), and its employment in the purchase of the potter's field had been specified by the prophet Zechariah as 'the price of him whom the children of Israel did value.' When brought to prison and to judgment, 'false witnesses were to rise up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty.' All that should then see him would 'laugh him to scorn.' He was to give his 'back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and hide not his face from shame

and spitting, so that 'his visage would be more marred than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.' They were to pierce his hands and feet, and yet a bone of him was not to be broken. They were to part his garments among them, and yet for his chief vesture they were to cast lots. Even the sorrowful plaint he was to utter from the cross had been expressed by the Psalmist by anticipation: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' In fulfilling the law and the prophets, he who is the grand theme of the Old Testament, the antitype of the types, the substance of the shadows, the sum of God's ancient revelation, not only put honour upon it through life, but in the very act of dying. He held his life until the scriptures should be accomplished. And knowing that his receiving a draught of vinegar was the last thing connected with his death, recorded in the book of Psalms, he looked down upon his murderers, and raising his expiring voice into 'a loud cry,' he begged that that might be given him as the last conclusive proof that he was indeed the Messiah of whom Moses, and David, and Isaiah had spoken: 'Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.'

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,' Gal. iv. 4, 5.*

God is not a God of confusion, but of order; he does every thing not only in the best possible way, but at the best possible time. He might have sent his Son into the world as soon as man fell, or he might have delayed his mission until the end of the world; but in making known to us the riches of his grace 'he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence;' and, therefore, not until the period fixed in the eternal counsels of the 'only wise God,' was the Lamb manifested, who had been foreordained before the foundation of the world.

Hence the gospel is called the 'dispensation of the fullness of times.' The mystery hid for ages was not disclosed till the moment appointed and approved of God; and that moment was 'the fullness of time'—because it was neither too

*soon nor too late.* All the reasons for this arrangement can be known only to God, yet there are some of them which appear sufficiently obvious to every candid and humble inquirer.

It was not *too soon*; for it was necessary that men should be taught by long and universal experience, how little could be effected by human wisdom or human power, in securing the grand objects of religion and virtue. 'The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;' and the Gentile nations were suffered so long to walk in their own ways, that they might have at last a thorough proof and an entire consciousness of their spiritual malady, and thus be the better prepared to welcome the Great Physician. After so lengthened and so extensive a trial, it had become evident beyond all controversy, that mankind were utterly impotent to deliver themselves from their darkness and misery; and this conviction would pre-dispose them to embrace more readily the light and life of the gospel. 'For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.' Another reason for the seeming delay may be found in the necessity which existed for preparing the untutored minds of Jews as well as Gentiles, for the revelation of abstract truth, by a previous economy of type and symbol, which presented outward things to the outward senses as patterns of the things spiritual and heavenly that were to be exhibited to the eye of faith. Moreover, the peace and consolation which the gospel was to impart would be more eagerly sought, and more highly valued, in consequence of the dispensation of terror and bondage which preceded it; and thus the law, both ceremonial and moral, 'was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.'

But while the period here designated the 'fulness of time' was not too soon, so neither was it *too late*, as (speaking after the manner of men) it might have been, had the coming of the Son of God been delayed any longer. For by this time, as at the period of the deluge, 'all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.' The heathen world had been for ages sunk in the grossest ignorance of all that it most concerned them to know and to practice in order to happiness. And the night of thick darkness which so long overspread the other nations had now extended its deadly shadow to the favoured land of the Most High. Religion had degenerated into a lifeless form; morality was an empty name; judgment, mercy, and the love of God had nearly disappeared beneath the withering influence of Pharisaic hypocrisy and Sadducean infidelity and licentiousness.

There had nevertheless arisen not in Judea only, but throughout all the East an earnest, longing expectation of some merciful Deliverer. And at length the day dawned, the Sun of Righteousness appeared, the Great Prophet was manifested, mighty in word and deed, who was to be at once a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. 'When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.'

And as there was manifold wisdom displayed in the *æra* selected for his mission, so there was love and grace unutterable in the mission itself. It was not the highest of created beings that was sent, but God's own Son, his only Son, his well-beloved Son, who had been in his bosom from eternity, and in whom his soul delighted. Him he 'sent forth' from riches and glory to poverty and shame, from the songs of angels to the scorn of sinners, from heaven's highest happiness to earth's lowest misery. He became 'man born of woman,' and his days, therefore, though few, were full of trouble. He was 'made under the law'—subject to its ritual ordinances which he scrupulously observed, bound by its moral precepts which he righteously fulfilled,—yet, as the substitute of transgressors, exposed also to its penalty which he meekly endured. He thus became the Redeemer by being himself the Ransom. By his perfect righteousness imputed, and his powerful grace imparted, he redeems at once from the yoke of the law ceremonial, and the curse of the law moral, from the dominion of sin and the tyranny of Satan. His ransomed people thus pass from darkness to light, from death to life, from the condemnation of rebels to 'the adoption of sons.' God is their Father, Christ their elder brother, angels their ministers, and heaven their home.

'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!' Amazing condescension! that the Son of God should become the Son of Man, in order that sons of men might become sons of God. Let the life and character correspond, in some measure, to the high rank, the exalted privileges, the glorious hopes. 'Now are we the sons of God; and we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him.' 'Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.'

## TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever,' Rom. ix. 5.*

DIVINE grace does not extinguish natural affection. Faith worketh by love; but this love is discriminating, and has a respect to all the different relations by which we are connected both as men and as Christians. Paul desired the salvation of all men, but he felt a peculiar and most pressing concern for the spiritual welfare of his Jewish countrymen. On their account he had 'great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart.' He went so far as to say, 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.'

The Jews had many strong claims to his sympathy. Some of them were united to him by the ties of blood; many of them had been endeared to him in the bonds of friendship. They were all his fellow-countrymen, members of one commonwealth, the descendants of one great progenitor. Now they were a degraded people; but the apostle looked back to their former distinction, and viewed them as a nation that had been set apart and singularly honoured of God. Speaking of them, he says: 'Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.'

It was the peculiar honour of the Jews that of them, 'as concerning the flesh, Christ came.' His descent can be traced from Abraham downwards in one unbroken line of succession. Agreeably to ancient prophecy, he sprung from the tribe of Judah, and the family of David. When he came to the Jews, 'he came to his own, but they received him not.' That which should have recommended him to their acceptance, was made by them a ground of objection against him. Even the brethren of Jesus, we are told, did not believe in him. Natural relationship is often unconnected with spiritual affinity. Many who stand highest in privilege are lowest in character, and shall be last in condition. The Jews gloried in being the descendants of Abraham, but despised the honour of being the progenitors of Christ.

The descent of the Saviour does not affect his essential dignity. He, who in his human nature could claim no higher than Jewish origin, is de-

clared to be 'God blessed for ever;' and to make it manifest that this name was applied to him, not in the way of accommodation merely, nor to express an inferior and delegated authority, but to affirm his proper and supreme divinity, he is pronounced to be 'over all, God blessed for ever.' We are expressly commanded to honour the Son, even as we honour the Father. He bears the titles, possesses the attributes, performs the works, and claims the worship which belong exclusively to God. He himself asserted his Godhead; he accepted the homage which is peculiar to Deity; he allowed himself to be addressed by names which are descriptive of true and proper divinity. The work which the Father had given him to do required that he should be God, and proves that he is God. To bear the iniquities of his people in his own body on the tree, and by the one offering of himself to make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness; to act the part of Mediator between God and man, so as to sustain the honour of the former, and secure the interests of the latter; this is a work which Deity alone could execute. Jesus is a divine Saviour, and therefore 'mighty to save.' His obedience unto death has all the worth and efficacy which Deity could give it, and is worthy of all the confidence we can repose, of all the gratitude we can feel, and all the honour we can render.

As God he is the portion of his people. They have renounced every other ground of dependence; they have seen the vanity of earthly things; they have learned the guilt and folly of self-righteousness; they have abandoned all those 'refuges of lies' which the pride of an unbelieving heart naturally prefers; they have fled to Christ as their only hope; they build on him as the sure foundation; they accept of him as their all-sufficient portion. He is precious to them as the pearl of great price: they feel his service to be perfect freedom, and can say, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth whom I desire besides thee: thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'

They honour him by their submission 'as well as their confidence, for he is at once their Sovereign and their Saviour. They confess his supreme dominion, and with the apostle declare him to be 'over all, God blessed for ever.' As God he is 'over all' in virtue of his essential and undivided prerogative. But he sways the sceptre of authority as the reward of his voluntary and meritorious abasement. He 'humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, wherefore God also hath highly

exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.' He is 'over all' in—

The kingdom of nature. The earth is his, and the fullness thereof, and he giveth to every man severally as he wills. All creatures, from the mightiest to the meanest, 'live, and move, and have their being' in him. He rules over them as his subjects, and makes use of them as his instruments to fulfil his purposes, to protect his people, and show forth his praise. He is 'over all' in—

The operations of providence. Events occur exactly in the time, and manner, and order of his appointment. He sits at the helm of affairs, and guides the stupendous vessel in her course, permitting every storm that blows, producing every calm that succeeds, 'working all things according to the counsel of his will. Whatsoever pleaseth him that he doeth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath.' He is 'over all' in—

The dispensation of grace; for he is Head over all things to the church, which is his body. Ministers possess a degree of authority, but it is derived from him, and must be exercised in subordination to him. Ordinances exert a beneficial influence, but they owe all their efficacy to his blessing. His will is our law in all matters both of faith and practice. This is a prerogative which he will not give to another, and which he will not share with another. But he has a two-fold empire in the church: one external and visible, another spiritual and invisible; the former extending to all who profess the faith of Christ, the latter confined to those who possess it.

His people are they who have been made willing that he should reign over them. They bear his image, and bow to his sceptre, and live in dependence upon him, and hold themselves at his disposal, and offer up the daily homage of their united ascriptions, saying, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.' 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people. O visit me with thy salvation: that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.'

#### TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth,'* John i. 14.

WORDS are the signs of our ideas, and the means of intercourse and communication between man and man. The bible is 'the word' of God, because it conveys to us the expression of his mind or will. But when the evangelist declares that 'the Word was made flesh,' it is evident that he speaks of a person, and it is equally obvious that he speaks of the person of Christ. In him from eternity were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and in the fullness of time he appeared on earth, in the character of a teacher sent from God to unfold the mysteries of his kingdom, to display the glories of his character, and reveal his purpose of mercy for the instruction and salvation of a benighted and perishing world.

But to fit him for his work it was necessary that the Word should be made flesh. The term 'flesh,' expresses the reality of our Lord's human nature, and embodies the great fact of his incarnation. He emptied himself of the glory which he had with the Father, and took upon him, not the nature of angels, but the nature of man, for he came to save not angels but men. His obedience could not have answered the end for which it was designed, had it not been the obedience of a man. He, therefore, became literally 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,' having a true body and a reasonable soul, endued with the same faculties, performing the same functions, and subject to the same infirmities which are common to men. But his flesh had no mixture of depravity in it. He was in reality made flesh, but he was made only in the 'likeness of sinful flesh.' Because he had no sin of his own, he could offer himself a sacrifice for the sins of his people. It was a pure and perfect sacrifice that he presented; and the righteousness which he wrought out, in his life and by his death, was strictly and properly the righteousness of a man, and such as might be imputed to man for the ground of his justification and acceptance with God. 'Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.'

In his incarnation Christ emptied himself, but by thus emptying himself he acquired a fullness which he could not otherwise have possessed; a

mediatorial fullness, a fullness of all spiritual excellencies and blessings; not the fullness of a vessel which is diminished by communication, but the fullness of a fountain which is ever flowing, yet ever full. He is 'full of grace and truth.' These words are descriptive of the character of Christ, and attribute to him the—

Perfection of all moral excellency. Grace expresses, in particular, the benevolence or compassion of Christ. The apostle has employed it in this sense in writing to the church at Corinth, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he who was rich for your sakes became poor, that ye by his poverty might be rich.' It was grace that brought him down from heaven to earth; grace appeared in all that he said, and did, and suffered; grace was infused into his lips, and breathed in all his discourses; his miracles were all acts of grace; his submission to the death of the cross exhibits a manifestation of sovereign, disinterested, unparalleled grace. He not only had grace, but was full of it; he possessed not one gracious property merely, but had grace in all its varieties, combining the estimable in character with the amiable, things pure and excellent with things lovely and of good report. But he was also 'full of truth.' This marks the sincerity and uprightness of his character. The Jews called him a deceiver, yet none of them could convince him of sin. He taught the way of God truly, and proved himself to be the faithful and true Witness. In him grace and truth were blended together in beautiful consistency, and absolute perfection. But the terms 'grace and truth,' apply to the redeeming work of Christ, and ascribe to him a—

Plenitude of all spiritual blessings. Grace expresses generally the privileges of God's favour and family, including pardon and acceptance, a new heart and a right spirit, deliverance from the bondage of corruption, the victory which overcometh the world, a title to heaven, and a meetness for it. In particular grace very frequently denotes the influences of the Holy Spirit. These and all other spiritual blessings are contained in the fullness of Christ. They are his by the appointment of the Father, for it pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell; they are his by the purchase of his own blood, in terms of the everlasting covenant whose conditions he fulfilled. To him especially has been committed a dispensation of the Spirit, and what he said to Paul he says to every disciple: 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' Truth, on the other hand, is expressive of knowledge or doctrine, and in this view of it Jesus could affirm, 'I am the truth.' He is the

essence of eternal truth, and the substance of revealed truth. He must, therefore, have a perfect comprehension of truth, as well as be supremely qualified to make it known to others.

All the spiritual wants of his people have been provided for in the fullness of Christ. They are by nature ignorant, having the understanding darkened by the god of this world, who leads them captive at his will. But Christ is full of truth to open the eyes of their understanding, to turn them from darkness to light, and to train them up 'unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.' By nature also, and by wicked works, they are enemies to God, exposed to his wrath, destitute of his image, averse to his service, incapable of honouring or enjoying him. But Christ is full of grace to pardon their sins, and restore them to favour, to purify their hearts, and fit them for duty. There is in him a fullness of all that they should desire, or can stand in need of either in time or for eternity. And his fullness is like himself—infinite and inexhaustible. As it is sufficient for all so it is accessible to all.

'Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.' But as it was with him, so is it in some measure with his people. Grace and truth are combined in them as they were in him. He first opens the blind eyes by the light of his truth, and then subdues the stubborn and stony heart by the power of his grace. Truth is the instrument to prepare the way for grace, and grace is the agent to apply and give effect to the truth. Neither of them can be dispensed with, and in the experience of every true Christian both are combined. There may be truth in the understanding without grace in the heart, but grace cannot exist without the accompaniment of at least some portion of the truth. Hence the necessity of prayer in order to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. The light of truth may be diffused by mere human efforts, but the truth can be made effectual only by the operation of grace promised and put forth in answer to prayer. Truth is mighty and shall prevail, but the might of truth comes into operation through the omnipotence of grace

It is our privilege, as it was that of his personal followers, to behold in the flesh and fullness of Christ the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. We behold the antitype of that glory which overshadowed the mercy-seat, and which shone forth permanently, then first in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. We see not a material glory which dazzles the external

eye like that which the worshipping Israelites contemplated in the wilderness of Sinai, and which caused even Moses to exclaim, 'I do exceedingly fear and quake,' but a glory equally real, and incomparably more effulgent; the concentrated glory of all the divine perfections, not dimly shadowed forth, but clearly and intelligibly manifested. Let us behold his glory by making it the object of our devout contemplation, the theme of our study, and our song of praise; and 'beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord,' 'let us seek to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Unto us a child is born, and his name shall be called, The mighty God,'* Isa. ix. 6.

'Of whom speaketh the prophet this?' There is only one Being in the universe to whom this language can with any appearance of truth or consistency be applied. It is he who 'was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but who took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man;' who is at once the Creator and a creature, the everlasting Father and an infant of days; who combines in one mysterious person supreme dignity with the deepest abasement, the majesty of heaven with the meanness of earth, the peculiar attributes of Deity with the common properties of humanity.

The Old Testament saints were enabled to view the birth of Christ as an event already past. Regarding it in the light of inspiration Isaiah foresaw its certain approach, and could anticipate the angel's message to the shepherds of Bethlehem: 'Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' Jesus is said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; with equal propriety he may be pronounced the child born from the foundation of the world. Jewish patriarchs and prophets realized the fact of the Saviour's birth, not only as an object of hope, but a source of joy and thanksgiving. What was to them an article of faith, is with us a matter of history. We do not anticipate a future, but commemorate a past event, when we say, 'Unto us a child is born.'

The gracious design of Christ's birth should be

carefully observed, and gratefully remembered. He is a child born 'unto us,' that is, for our benefit. He was given to us that he might be given for us a sacrifice to God of sweet smelling savour. The gift was perfectly free, and is inestimably precious. God had no greater or better gift to bestow. And he gave it not because he might not honourably have withheld it, but because sinners could not be saved without it. Truly 'in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him;' and 'herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'

The humiliating circumstances of the Saviour's birth must not be overlooked. These were all expressive of extreme indigence and lowliest abasement. His mother was the wife of an obscure and humble carpenter. His first dwelling was a stable, and a manger his bed. Even ordinary comforts and accommodations were denied him. But in the birth of Christ the lowliness of assumed humanity was connected with intimations of essential divinity. A voice from heaven declared him to be the Son of the Highest. An angel from before the throne descended to announce the event of his birth, and a host of angels joyfully hailed the announcement with a song of celestial melody, proclaiming 'glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, goodwill to men.' The inhabitants of Bethlehem regarded him not, but eastern sages, travelling from a distant land, and guided by a supernatural star, hastened to do him homage.

To the eye of sense, indeed, the birth of Christ presented a scene of abject poverty and wretchedness. The child lay in all the helplessness of infancy, needing support, and imploring sympathy. But to the view of an enlightened faith the stable of Bethlehem exhibited a spectacle of sublime and surpassing interest. In any circumstances the birth of a child is an event of incalculable importance. It is the production of an immortal spirit, destined to spend an eternity, either in the light of God's countenance, or in the misery of outer darkness, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Who can tell to what extent he may become the instrument of good or of evil! Of unspeakably greater importance is the birth of a prince, the heir of a throne, the guide and the guardian of a nation's destinies! But how momentous beyond all comparison, and above all comprehension, must be the birth of Him who is the Prince of all the kings of the earth, and of whom it was

predicted, 'and his name shall be called, The mighty God.'

This name has been given to him, not by the wisdom of fallible man, but by the word of the true God; not in obscure and doubtful terms, but in language plain and unequivocal; not in a few, but in many instances. As his name is, so is his character. He proved himself to be the mighty God by the words of truth which he uttered, and the wonders of power which he performed. At his bidding the waves ceased their raging, and devils abandoned their victims. His word gave health to the sick, hearing to the deaf, eyes to the blind, speech to the dumb, feet to the lame, and life to the dead. A virtue went out from him which produced immediate cures upon all to whom it extended, how distant soever in place, or hopeless in condition. His omnipotence reached to the souls of men as well as their bodies, and discovered itself in tranquilizing the troubled mind, in healing the wounded spirit, in converting the heart of stone into flesh, and the principle of enmity into a spirit of love.

The believing followers of Christ have learned to call him by the name of 'the mighty God.' They have seen its inscription written by the finger of God, and shining forth as with the light of a sunbeam on the page of inspiration. To the evidence of scripture has been added the testimony of experience. By revealing his Son in them, God has effectually convinced them of his deity, and constrained them with Thomas to exclaim, 'My Lord and my God.' They have the witness in themselves, and from what they have felt of his gracious power they know and acknowledge him to be indeed 'the mighty God.' This conviction is at once strong and unanimous. On many other points they differ in opinion, but with respect to the deity of Christ they are all of one mind. They all repose in him an unlimited confidence, and render to him supreme honour.

What may they not expect from him who is the mighty God! All things are his in nature, providence, and grace. But all that he is and has is theirs, for 'he is not ashamed to be called their God.' Therefore all things are theirs, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. His infinite resources are pledged to supply them with all necessary good, as well as to support and deliver them from all existing evil. 'He hath provided for them a city.' And he is preparing them for it, and will put them in personal and everlasting possession of it. He is their Sun, and their

Shield, he will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from them.

But as he is theirs, so they are his. If they may warrantably expect so much from him, how much is he entitled to demand from them. 'Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.' 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'

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#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him,'* Heb. i. 6.

THE scriptures afford little information with regard to the angels of God. Yet some interesting particulars have been recorded. We read of 'the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation,' and are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Hence we learn that there are fallen angels as well as men. But their apostasy was not universal. Those that maintained their allegiance are called 'holy angels.' With respect to their residence we are told that they dwell in the more immediate presence of God, before whom they offer up the homage of their united and unceasing devotion. We read of 'an innumerable company of angels,' all of whom are animated with one spirit of reverence, humility, zeal, and gratitude. They 'excel in strength,' and they exert their strength in fulfilling the pleasure of their Creator, and in promoting the ends of his government both in providence and grace. Angels are God's messengers to declare his will, and his ministers to execute it either for mercy or judgment. God's church and people derive important benefits from their instrumentality; for 'are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them which are the heirs of salvation. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.' But it is their highest privilege to serve him of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; 'And when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.'

It is to the period of our Lord's incarnation that this emphatic injunction obviously refers. In his pre-existent state he had been the object of worship to angels who saw his glory, and acknowledged his divinity by presenting to him in common

with the Father and the Holy Spirit the expressions of the most profound adoration and fervent praise. His mediatorial abasement in taking our nature upon him, did not lessen his claim to these angelic ascriptions, but on the contrary invested him with a new and most peculiar title to them. Accordingly, he had no sooner made his appearance upon earth, 'in the form of a servant,' and 'in fashion as a man,' than a voice, proceeding from the eternal throne, asserted his supreme dignity in the command: 'And let all the angels of God worship him.' By this order the babe lying in the stable at Bethlehem, in circumstances of apparent meanness and destitution, exposed to the contempt of a world which he had made, was notwithstanding declared to be the Lord of angels, and not only worthy of the respect which was due to their superior, but entitled to the worship which belonged to their Creator.

For it does not admit of a doubt that the worship required from the angels by this command is strictly and properly of a religious nature. As the reward of the Saviour's humiliation we are informed that 'God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' He claims from angels the worship of adoration, which is expressive of reverence, humility, confidence, and gratitude in the highest possible degree. But they are commanded to give him also the worship of their submission and service; for it is not the homage of the lips merely that is required or will be accepted, either from angels or men, but that of the heart and life. We read that 'angels, authorities, and powers were subject to him;' and he not only rules over them as subjects, but makes use of them as instruments to fulfil his purposes, and promote the interests of his kingdom. The command is most just and reasonable that all the angels of God should worship him. Their worship is due to the perfections of his Godhead; it is no less due to the honour of his mediatorship. By the angels themselves the command is understood in its most comprehensive import; they cordially approve of it, and yield to it a cheerful and perfect obedience.

During his abode on earth Jesus had to bear the scorn and contempt of men, but he was honoured with the worship of angels. They expressed their joy at his birth in a song of pious exultation and thanksgiving, doing honour alike to the Son and the Father, by ascribing 'glory to

God in the highest.' In the wilderness, which had been the scene of his triumph, they attended him to supply his wants, and congratulate him on his victory. They stood by him in the garden to strengthen him under the weight of his mysterious agony. They uncovered his sepulchre to open the way for his resurrection; and they were present at his ascension to comfort his disciples, and announce to the church the event of his second coming. On these and other occasions, during the days of his flesh, the angels of God discovered their zeal for his glory, and declared their readiness to do him homage.

But their feelings of devotion are fully expressed in the services of the heavenly temple. There the glories of the Lamb fill every heart with love, and every mouth with praise. All the angels of God worship him, 'whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.' They cover their faces with their wings in the contemplation of his greatness, and under the consciousness of their own insignificance. It is a willing, united, and harmonious service which they render to him. No constraint is employed, no reluctance felt, no hypocrisy assumed. Their worship has nothing in it of cold indifference or empty formality, but is full of ardour and energy, and at the same time pure, perfect and perpetual, offered without interruption, and to be continued without end.

From the command imposed upon the angels we learn both the Saviour's dignity and our duty. God is the only proper object of worship, and he will not give his glory to another. But when he brought in the first-begotten into the world, he said, 'let all the angels of God worship him.' If Christ is adored by all the hosts of heaven, surely he may be worshipped by the inhabitants of the earth. If he claims the homage of angels, much more is he entitled to the worship of men. The law given to them must be also the rule for us. Their practice should be our pattern. We have a law for ourselves, no less explicit in its terms, and if possible still more peremptory in its demand, for it is the declared will of God that 'all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.'

'To them that believe he is precious.' In their estimation he is infinitely worthy of the warmest love, and of the highest honour. They cannot, in their present state, equal the purity, the fervour, and elevation of angelic worship. But they are by grace enabled to offer a tribute of devotion no less acceptable to Christ than that of angels; the offering of a sincere, humble, contrite and devoted heart. And they have the

prospect of being made like unto the angels, with whom they shall unite as fellow worshippers in singing the song of the Lamb, serving him day and night in his temple, having washed their robes, and made them white in his blood. 'And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.'

#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken,'*  
Deut. xviii. 15.

Moses was held in high estimation by the Jewish people. They gloried in being called his disciples. Yet they practically disregarded the testimony of Moses in rejecting Christ, who exposed their inconsistency, and said to them, 'If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me, for he wrote of me.' Like all the other scriptures, the writings of Moses testify of Christ; in particular, we know upon the authority of Stephen, an inspired interpreter, that he pointed to the Messiah in these emphatic words, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken.' This prediction describes the Saviour's character, and declares the sinner's duty.

A prophet is a person who foretells future events. The Jews themselves were on one occasion compelled to admit the prophetic character of Christ; for, in obvious allusion to this prediction of Moses, they said, 'Of a truth this is that prophet which should come into the world.' The spirit which had been poured out upon him above measure was the spirit of prophecy. Of the predictions which he uttered some were fulfilled before his ascension, others received their accomplishment soon afterwards. Of those which remain to be accomplished, it may be affirmed that 'heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away till all shall be fulfilled.'

But he did also the work of a public instructor, which formed an essential part of the prophetic office. Nicodemus could say, 'We

know that thou art a Teacher sent from God, and even the soldiers who had been sent to apprehend him were constrained to acknowledge, 'Never man spake like this man.' He differed from all other teachers, and was superior to them all, both in the matter and the manner of his instructions. As he is the wisest and best of teachers, his followers should be the most humble and diligent of scholars, looking into the perfect law of liberty, and continuing therein, not being forgetful hearers, but doers of the word, that they may be blessed in their deed.

It was predicted that Christ should be not merely a prophet, but a prophet like unto Moses. Many prophets arose after Moses, but none of them could be pronounced like unto him. All that Moses was, and infinitely more, may be affirmed of Christ. Moses, however, did not claim equality with the Messiah, but only a resemblance to him; and the resemblance may easily be traced in a variety of important particulars.

In Moses the office of prophet was combined with the character of *redeemer*; he rescued the people of Israel from the yoke of Egyptian oppression. Christ redeemed his people from the curse of the law, from the tyranny of satan, and the bondage of corruption. He delivered not their bodies only, but their souls, and accomplished for them not a temporal but an eternal redemption. Jesus was like Moses, both a *lawgiver* and a prophet. He put an end to the observances of the ceremonial law which Moses had instituted; but he confirmed the obligation of the moral law, to which he added some peculiar precepts of his own, and illustrated the whole in his perfect example, which possesses the force of a law. Moses acted the part of a *guide* to the Israelites in their way to the promised land; so Jesus, the Captain of salvation, was made perfect through sufferings, that he might bring many sons unto glory. His presence attends them like the fiery cloudy pillar, both by day and by night. He will guide them by his counsel, and receive them into his glory. Besides, Moses exercised the authority of a *ruler*, and Jesus has been anointed King on his holy hill of Zion, and shall reign till he shall have put all his enemies under his feet. On various occasions Moses acted the part of an *intercessor*, and either mitigated or averted threatening judgments. Jesus, too, made intercession for the transgressors by dying for them on earth; and he ever liveth to make intercession for them in heaven. In all these points of view Christ was raised up a prophet like unto Moses.

Yet in these, and in every other respect, he

was a prophet far superior to Moses. As a prophet he infinitely surpasses Moses in the dignity of his person, in the extent of his power, in the excellencies of his character, in the value of his ministrations, in the permanency of his office, in the number and force of his claims. If therefore the people of Israel were required under the most awful penalties to obey the word of Moses, how much more is it incumbent on us to yield obedience to the voice of Christ? 'Unto him shall ye hearken.' These words declare—

The sinner's duty. It includes the exercise of considerate attention. This is the first step to conversion. A most important point has been gained when the mind of the sinner is awakened to serious concern about salvation, so as to make it the subject of earnest and prayerful inquiry. The gospel demands, and will bear the most minute and scrutinizing investigation. It speaks to the understanding and the judgment, as well as to the conscience and the heart, and says, 'Whoso hath ears to hear, let him hear.' It is the sinner's duty to hearken by—

Believing the word of Christ; for 'this,' says he, 'is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent.' And the faith which he requires is not a mere act of the understanding, but a principle of the heart, consisting in the exercise of a simple and affectionate confidence, working by love, and enforcing obedience. They that know his name put their trust in him, and whilst they believe all his doctrines to be true, they esteem his precepts concerning all things to be right. To hearken expresses—

Submission to the authority of Christ: the submission of the will to the guidance of his word, of the heart to the influence of his love, and of the life to the demands of his law, and of the circumstances to the disposal of his providence. He demands an affectionate and unre-served submission; and he is entitled to it both as a testimony of respect to his authority, and an expression of gratitude for his redeeming grace. All who live by him, he disposes to live to him and for him. His love to them is evinced by their devotedness to him. They daily kneel at his footstool, and inquire, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

To us the word of his salvation has been sent. It is his voice that speaks to us in every part of it, and we are called on by every consideration of interest and duty to hearken to it with a teachable, obedient, and prayerful attention, whether it addresses us in the language of doctrine or precept, of promise or threatening, of

mercy or of judgment. 'Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.'

#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven,' Heb. xii. 25.

WE have here an admonition, and an argument, both of which, by alarming our fears, combine to enforce a most important duty. But in order to understand the meaning of the admonition, and feel the force of the argument, it is necessary that we should be made acquainted with the character of the Speaker, and also with the subject of his address.

The character of the Speaker possesses the highest claim to our attention. He is invested with supreme *authority* over us, and has an unquestionable right to dictate to us in all matters both of faith and practice. It is his sovereign prerogative to deal with us, and with every thing that belongs to us, and every thing that concerns us, according to his sovereign pleasure. Besides he is a Being of perfect *veracity*. His word may be implicitly depended on, 'for he is not a man that he should lie.' When he speaks, it is with the voice of truth and wisdom. Nothing, therefore, which proceeds from him can be either erroneous and hurtful, or even trifling and unprofitable. For he unites infallible wisdom with infinite *love*. He has the best interests of those whom he speaks to deeply at heart. His design is to make them happy; and he points out a way that will ensure their happiness both in time and for eternity. And he can give full effect to every word he utters, by a *power* to which all things are possible. He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. In him all the promises of God are yea and amen; for he is both faithful and able to perform. But his *holiness* constitutes the chief glory of his character. In him is no sin. He cannot look upon sin. And there is no sin so heinous and so offensive in his sight as the sin of refusing him that speaketh from heaven; it is a sin which he has expressed his determination to punish 'with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his

power.' Such is the Speaker who demands our attention. In connection with these views of his character let us advert to—

The subject of his address. He comes to us with a message from God. He speaks the word of truth; it is the word of him who is 'the truth.' All other speakers are fallible, and, therefore, what they say ought not to be taken on trust, but should be received with caution, and examined with care. But the Speaker here is 'the faithful and true Witness.' There may be much in what he says to us that we do not and cannot fully comprehend; but there is nothing in it that we may not with safety and confidence believe. It is both 'a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.' The communication which he addresses to us is not only true, but in the highest degree important. He declares to us the word of salvation. He tells us of our low and lost estate as sinners, lying under a sentence of condemnation, exposed to wrath, and ready to perish. He declares to us 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.' He assures us that 'with God there is mercy, and plenteous redemption;' a redemption exactly suitable, perfectly complete, infinitely precious, and altogether free. He speaks to us, in short, all that is necessary to be known, and nothing but what it supremely concerns us to know, for the salvation of our souls.

To refuse such a speaker, addressing us on such a subject, is to commit the most unaccountable folly, and to incur the most aggravated guilt; the guilt of base ingratitude, of daring impiety, of ruinous presumption: 'It is to dispute the sovereignty of God, to arraign his wisdom, to set his power at defiance, to deny his truth, despise his grace, and rush on the thick bosses of his buckler.' 'What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?' for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.' This question appeals to the facts of Old Testament history, and embodies an—

Argument that can neither be misunderstood nor evaded. It bids us take warning from the experience of the people of Israel. They 'refused him that spake on earth.' On various occasions they rebelled against Moses, and what was the consequence? Did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, escape the punishment of their rebellion? Did Nadab and Abihu escape the vengeance which their impiety had provoked? Did the congregation of Israel who refused Moses, desiring to be led back again into Egypt, did they escape the effects of

that in lignat on which was due to their apostacy? To these questions an answer will be found in the devouring plagues which desolated the camp of Israel, and successively carried off thousands and tens of thousands from among the people. One recorded fact speaks volumes on this subject. Of six hundred thousand persons who came forth with Moses out of Egypt, not more than two individuals were permitted to enter into the promised land. The whole, with these two exceptions, perished in the wilderness, as a memorial to every future generation of the solemn truth, that they escape not who refused him that spake on earth.

'He that despised Moses' law died without mercy.' Punishment inevitably followed transgression. No concealment could be practised. The offender, like Achan, might attempt to elude the stroke of justice, but, like Achan, he was sure to be detected. No lenity was to be expected. Moses had no discretionary power to remit, or even mitigate the penalty. The law was, in all cases, plain, explicit, peremptory, and inexorable. Every transgression received its just recompence of reward. From these facts the inference is too important to be overlooked, and too awful to be disregarded. We read it in the word of inspiration: 'If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace!'

It is our privilege to live under a dispensation of grace. Christ, speaking to us from heaven in his word and ordinances, proclaims the message of reconciliation, and addresses the offer of forgiveness to the very chief of sinners. But there is no salvation in any other; and even he can save those only who believe and obey him. To all who reject him 'there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but the fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary.' 'The sin of turning away from him must, therefore, place the sinner beyond the reach of mercy, and expose him to the accumulated penalties of a violated law, and a rejected gospel, which admit neither of the possibility of an escape, nor the prospect of a deliverance. But to as many as receive him, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. 'Let us, therefore, fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest any of us should seem to come short of it.

Having received the Lord Jesus, so walk in him.'

FIFTEENTH DAY—MORNING.

*'Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in. Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.'* Mal. iii. 1.

Two illustrious persons are here distinctly alluded to, each of them called by the name of messenger, bearing a very intimate relation to one another, yet widely different in the rank and character, both personal and official, which respectively belong to them. We know upon divine authority that the first part of this prophecy received its accomplishment in the person of John the Baptist. Our Lord made this announcement to the Jews, when he spake of John, saying, 'For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.'

But a greater than John the Baptist is here; one whom John acknowledged to be incomparably his superior, and to whom he did not consider himself worthy to perform the meanest office. 'He it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.' It was customary for kings and conquerors to be preceded on their march by persons who acted either as heralds to proclaim their approach, or as pioneers to remove obstacles out of their way. In like manner, the advent of Messiah was to be announced beforehand by 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'

The names here applied to him by the prophet, expressive at once of his supreme dignity, and of his gracious character, show him to be pre-eminently worthy of such honour. He is 'the Lord,' the universal ruler, to whom all power belongs, on whom all beings depend, from whom all blessings proceed, and to whom all homage is due. Like the forerunner who came to announce his approach, he sustains the character of a 'messenger,' but in a far higher and more important sense; for he is 'the Messenger of the covenant.' The scriptures make mention of many covenants, but this is 'a better covenant, established on better promises, a covenant of peace, an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.' Jesus Christ is himself a party to this covenant,

and is therefore called the Mediator of it, having undertaken to execute its conditions by the obedience of his life, and the sacrifice of his death for the redemption of those whom the Father had given him. But he is also 'the Messenger' or 'Angel' of this covenant, having received a commission from the Father to make known its provisions unto men, and to dispense them to his church and people throughout all ages to the end of time.

From the beginning of the world the coming of Messiah had been foretold and expected. Patriarchs saw it afar off, and were glad. The whole system of Jewish worship and government evidently pointed to it. To keep alive the expectation of it, holy men of God, speaking with the voice of inspiration, prophetically alluded to it. And Malachi, the last of these, made it the subject of a plain and most explicit prediction which expresses the certainty of the event, and confirms it by a twofold repetition. Probably there were then, as there are now, unbelievers, who scoffingly asked, 'where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were.' To silence the cavils of the profane, and alarm the fears of the secure, and establish the confidence of the doubting, and animate the hopes of the pious—the inspired prophet declared that 'the Lord, the Messenger of the covenant' would assuredly come, and that not only soon, but 'suddenly to his temple.'

In predicting the advent of Messiah, the prophets sometimes speak of him in his human nature as the son of David, and tell us that he would come and sit on the throne of David his father, and exercise dominion 'from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.' The highest place which a man can occupy is a throne, but the lowest place which God can accept is a temple. Accordingly, when the prophets connect the advent of Christ with his divine dignity as David's Lord, they declare that he would come not to his throne, but to his temple, as the only fit and appropriate place for his reception. The temple was erected for his honour, and dedicated to his service. He had said of it, 'This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell for I have desired it.' The visible symbol of his presence had indeed been long withdrawn from it. The Jews who were bound to protect its sanctity had allowed it to be prostituted to the vilest of purposes. But the Lord had not finally deserted it; and the time was now approaching when he would return to it, and expel the profane intruders who had degraded it into

a house of merchandise, and a den of thieves; and when, by making it the scene of his personal ministrations, he would cause the glory of the second temple to exceed that of the first.

The event of Messiah's appearance was not only expected by the people of Israel, but desired and longed for. They understood not his true character, and grossly misapprehended the design of his coming. Predictions and promises, which held forth to them the prospect of a spiritual redemption, were so misinterpreted by them as to engender the hope of a temporal deliverance. A few there were among them, who, like Anna and Simeon, escaped the delusion which proved fatal to the great body of their countrymen, and with an enlightened and well-founded confidence 'waited for the Consolation of Israel.' But all of them looked forward to his appearance as an object of ardent and delightful anticipation; and therefore to all of them the prophet could truly say, 'The Lord whom ye seek shall come, even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in.'

This intimation, which assured them of the speedy fulfilment of their hopes, loudly called them to the work of preparation. The design was to awaken serious concern, to enforce self-examination, to excite repentance, to induce humility, watchfulness, and prayer. The prospect of Christ's coming had in it much that was fitted to console and animate, but it had in it much also that calculated to rouse and alarm them. For he was to be to them as 'a refiner and purifier of silver; having his fan in his hand that he might thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he would burn with unquenchable fire.' Knowing the terrors of the Lord, the prophet warned them of their danger, and anticipated the Baptist's message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

All that is here predicted of the first coming of Christ, may with truth be affirmed of his second advent. His second coming, like his first, will be personal and visible; for he 'shall come in the clouds of heaven, with his own and his Father's glory, and every eye shall see him.' It will be sudden and unexpected; for 'the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, and at such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.' It will be full of terror to his enemies; for 'he will try every man's work, and render unto every man according to his work, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil.' But to his own people it will be the day of redemption which

they love, and long for, and haste unto; for as 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, so unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.' 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,'* John i. 18.

God is to be seen in his works; 'for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. The earth is full of his riches. He may be seen in the operations of his providence; for what is providence but God manifesting his perfections in the preservation and government of the creatures he has made? Above all he may be seen in his word, which reveals to us his being and attributes, his purposes and will. Every man, therefore, who looks with attention and understanding into the world of nature, or the arrangement of providence, or the record of scripture, may be said to have seen God.

In the early ages of the world God was pleased to discover himself in a visible manner to his servants and people. He appeared to Adam immediately after the fall, and to Noah after the flood. He was seen by Moses and Manoah, by Samuel and David, by Elijah and Daniel. The people of Israel saw him in the cloud of glory which hung occasionally over the tabernacle, and which rested permanently on the mercy-seat. But he was seen only in his attributes and actings. His essence is spiritual, and, therefore, invisible. In this sense no man hath seen God at any time, nor can see him. And how little was seen of God amidst the shadows of the Old Testament revelation. Even Moses, unto whom 'the Lord spake face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend,' desired a fuller manifestation of the divine character, and prayed, 'Shew me thy glory.' But the privilege which was denied to him has been conferred on us: for '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.'

All that mankind have ever seen of God was unfolded to them through the mediation of the Son; for 'no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' He is 'in the bosom of the Father,' a partner in his counsels, perfectly conversant with all the movements of the divine mind; and he came forth from the Father to declare that which the world by its wisdom did not know, and never could have known concerning God. Having fulfilled his commission he could say, 'I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou givest me out of the world.' This he did in—

The constitution of his person. By uniting the human with his divine nature, he embodied the Godhead, and made it not only visible to our contemplation, but in some degree level to our comprehension. In the Man Christ Jesus we are brought into immediate contact with the divine presence, and we behold a distinct and intelligible exhibition of all that is peculiar in the divine character. 'Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?' He declared the character of God in—

The doctrine which he taught. He exposed the errors of heathenism by declaring the unity of God, the spirituality of his nature, and the unlimited extent of his dominion. At the same time he corrected the prejudices of the Jews by inculcating the truth that God is not the God of any one people exclusively, and that Jerusalem is not the only place where men ought to worship, but that of every nation and in every place, 'he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.' He spake of God, of his names and attributes, of his prerogatives and purposes, with the freedom, and fullness, and familiarity of one who had a perfect knowledge of the subject. He taught 'the way of God truly.' He declared God by—

The redemption which he accomplished. What is the cross of Christ but an illustration of the perfections of God, of his absolute sovereignty, his inflexible justice, his immaculate holiness, his unfathomable wisdom, his everlasting love; of all that is great and gracious, or awful and amiable in his character? Attributes seemingly inconsistent with each other are there made to appear in perfect harmony. We see God to be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, manifesting at once his hatred to sin, and his love to the sinner, strict to mark iniquity, yet merciful

to pardon it; righteous in executing his law, yet gracious in passing by the transgression of the remnant of his people, because he delighteth in mercy.

'Blessed are our eyes for they see.' We see God made clearly manifest not only to our understandings, but even to our bodily senses. The Lord said to Moses, 'Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live.' The view of God's unveiled glory would be too bright and dazzling for our feeble faculties. But in the face of Christ it is softened down, and brought nigh, and presented in a form which we can safely approach, and intimately contemplate, and profitably study. The Saviour has conferred upon us other and, in some respects, more important benefits. But in estimating his claims to our gratitude it is ever to be remembered that all the knowledge of God which we have or can attain to comes to us through Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. They only who know Christ can be truly said to have seen God.

The pure in heart alone shall see God. He that ascends into the hill of the Lord, or stands in his holy place, must have both clean hands and a pure heart; for 'what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, or what communion hath light with darkness?' To see God is not so much the act of a mind enlightened by his word, as it is the exercise of a heart renewed by his grace. And as moral purity is the necessary qualification for seeing God, so it will be the invariable effect. 'But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

After all, how little can we see of God in our present state of imperfection and sinfulness. Here we see darkly as through a glass. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he who is our Life shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Who can conceive the blessedness of seeing God face to face, of beholding his beauty, and of being satisfied with his likeness? 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; 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 soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.'

## SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life,' 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.*

'A SWEET SAVOUR' is that which gratifies the senses, such as the taste of some delicious fruit, or the fragrance of a rich perfume. The expression is used by the sacred writers chiefly in connection with the offering of sacrifice. To intimate the divine acceptance of Noah's sacrifice we are told that 'the Lord smelled a sweet savour.' The offerings required by the Jewish law were presented for 'a sweet savour unto the Lord.' These were merely the shadows of good things to come, but the body is Christ, who also 'gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.' The labours of his servants in the ministry of the gospel cause to ascend to the throne of God the incense of a precious and acceptable offering, promoting, as they do, the honour of his name, and the advancement of his kingdom; therefore, Paul speaking for himself and his Christian brethren could say, 'We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish.'

All existing diversities of character belong to one or other of the two classes which are here contrasted, and may be identified either with them that are saved, or with them that perish. The former of these classes may be comparatively few, but absolutely they will be a multitude whom no man can number. Nor are they confined to any one sect or party in the church, but include all of every sect and party who have been renewed in the spirit of their minds, and who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. But all have not faith. The apostle, in making mention of 'them that perish,' speaks not of heathens, nor of such as never heard of Christ, but of those to whom the gospel has been preached, and by whom it has been professedly embraced. It is a mournful yet undeniable fact that a large proportion of those who have access to the means of grace, instead of improving them for their salvation, abuse them to their own destruction. If from the professing friends of the gospel we could deduct the ignorant who do not understand it, and the lukewarm who are indifferent about it, and the sceptical who secretly disbelieve it, and the hypocritical who selfishly pervert it, and the profane who openly trample upon it, and the licentious who daringly abuse it; if, in short, we could separate from those who bear the name of Chris-

tians all who are Christians only in name, what a distressing minority would be left behind!

The same instrumentality which proves effectual in saving some is not merely unproductive of good to others, but will be to them the occasion of a heavier condemnation. In itself the gospel is calculated in every instance to become 'the savour of life unto life.' Such is its designed effect, and such too is its actual effect upon all who believe and obey it. But it does not produce this effect mechanically or necessarily. Every thing depends, under divine influence, upon the manner in which it has been received. The wilfully ignorant, the unbelieving, and impenitent, who reject the counsel against themselves, cannot be saved. And they perish not only without excuse, but under a fearful aggravation of guilt. They have incurred the penalty not only of disobedience to the law, but also the heavier penalty of disbelieving the gospel. By holding the truth in unrighteousness they pervert the word of life into an instrument of death. They extract poison from the flower which was intended to yield only honey. Instead of being renewed and sanctified by the truths, and precepts, and ordinances of the gospel, they become, through a presumptuous and thoughtless familiarity with these, more hardened in sin, more alienated from God, and tenfold more the children of hell than before; and in consequence, that which was appointed to be 'the savour of life unto life,' is to them 'the savour of death unto death.'

But God will be glorified both in them that are saved and in them that perish. His infinite holiness, justice, and truth will be manifested in the one; his sovereign compassion, wisdom, and love will be displayed in the other. He delighteth in mercy, and hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, yet they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. And his procedure will be triumphantly vindicated, and his character supremely honoured in the estimation of an intelligent universe, who will confess that in this, as in every thing else, the Judge of all the earth has done that which is right.

The labours of his faithful servants may fail to be useful to men, but they cannot fail to be acceptable to God; for 'we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.' He is not indifferent to the success of his own word. He commandeth all men every where to repent, and willeth that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved. Sinners may turn a deaf ear

to his call, but they cannot deprive him of his glory. His servants may spend their strength for nought and in vain, but they shall in no wise lose their reward. They are accountable for the want of fidelity, but not for the want of success. Those for whose salvation they labour may derive no benefit from their exertions; but having acted their part honestly and faithfully they shall deliver their own souls, and receive at last the approving welcome of Him who is not unrighteous to forget their work of faith, and their labour of love, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

He has provided for our work, as well as for our reward. We serve a liberal Master, who is both our righteousness and strength. Let us honour him by our simple dependence on his word, on our cheerful submission to his will. 'For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.'

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SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he will testify of me,'* John xv. 26.

WE learn from these words what the Holy Ghost is both in nature and in office. The language here employed by our Lord obviously describes, not a mere influence, but a distinct and divine person. In this sense the disciples unquestionably understood it. They often had occasion to allude to the character of the Spirit; and in all that they either said or wrote on the subject, the idea of his personality is clearly expressed or implied. Personal feelings and actions are uniformly ascribed to him. It was their practice to consult the mind of the Spirit, and their privilege to receive communications from him. Thus the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul;' we read of their having been 'forbidden of the Holy Ghost.' They inform us that the 'Spirit searcheth all things;' that he 'beareth witness;' they admonish us not to 'grieve the Holy Spirit,' with many other expressions of similar import, all attributing to the Spirit the character and properties of a distinct personal subsistence.

But it is chiefly in his official capacity that the Spirit is here presented to our contemplation. He is by name and by office 'the Comforter.'

He sustains also the character of a reprove: for 'he will reprove the world of sin.' By reproving or convincing of sin, he produces feelings of alarm, and grief, and self-condemnation in the soul. But having wounded, he also heals. He gives 'the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness.' His gracious influences are equally effectual in removing the anguish of spiritual distress, and alleviating the pain of temporal affliction. To mourners of every description he says, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.' He fulfils also the office of—

An Instructor. The disciples were in distress, and needed the ministrations of 'the Comforter.' But much of their anxiety proceeded from ignorance; and therefore the Comforter was promised to them in the appropriate character of 'the Spirit of truth.' 'Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come.' On the day of Pentecost they obtained the expected Comforter in the descent of the Holy Ghost, who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light, and imparted to them all necessary gifts and attainments for the arduous work to which they had been set apart. Their experience was peculiar and miraculous; but the dispensation of the Spirit which began with them was designed to be perpetual: and the subject matter of the Spirit's teaching is to us what it was to them. It is He 'of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, and the King of Israel.' 'He shall testify of me,' said Christ to his disciples; and again, 'He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.'

But there is a difference in the manner of the Spirit's testimony. To the primitive disciples it was communicated by immediate and supernatural inspiration. We have a permanent record of it in the holy scriptures, which were given by inspiration of God, and in every part of which the Spirit testifies of Christ—of his personal glory and mediatorial abasement, of his justifying righteousness and atoning blood, of his perfect character and plenteous redemption. These are 'the things of the Spirit of God,' which the natural man receiveth not, and knoweth not, for they are spiritually discerned. 'But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now

we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God.'

We have, therefore, not only the external testimony of the Spirit which speaks to us, but also the internal testimony of the Spirit which speaks in us. In the one case, the Spirit testifies of Christ as revealed in the scriptures; in the other, the Spirit testifies of Christ as formed in the heart by the working of that mighty power which raised him from the dead: for 'the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.'

The wisest of men are liable to err, as the best of men are prone to sin; but the teaching of the Spirit is both infallible and efficacious. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps; but He is wise in counsel, and leadeth the blind by a way that they knew not, and which is the right way that will bring them to a city of habitation. 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.'

#### SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'O send out thy light and thy truth,'* Psal. xliii.

3.

THIS psalm contains the record of David's feelings on an occasion of very trying emergency. In consequence of Absalom's rebellion he had been driven from Jerusalem, and subjected to many sad reverses. But there was one privation which he felt and lamented above every other. He expressed no concern about the recovery of his royal honours and prerogatives; but his heart was ready to faint within him when he remembered Zion, and the courts of God's house, now no longer accessible to him. His affections still lingered in the sanctuary, and he poured forth his desire in these emphatic words, 'O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, and bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.'

Doubtless the psalmist uttered this prayer with a special reference to the circumstances of his own condition. Light may be understood to express the joy which springs from a manifestation of the divine favour. Never did David stand more in need of it than now when his soul was bowed down with grief, and filled with disquietude and alarm. Yet there was good reason to

expect that God would interpose in his behalf, as he had graciously promised to do, and as he had done on many former occasions. He, therefore, prayed not only for the 'light' of God, but also for his 'truth' or faithfulness in the fulfilment of those promises upon which he had been encouraged to hope.

The situation of David was peculiar, but the feelings which it awakened are common to all the children of God, and the petition which it called forth will be found equally applicable to every variety of spiritual distress. The terms 'light and truth' fitly represent the illuminating and comforting influence of the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of truth, whose entrance gives light, and produces a joy that is 'unspeakable and full of glory.'

In offering this prayer we do not ask from God any new revelation of his will. We have no warrant to expect the light and truth of immediate and supernatural inspiration. But we ask from him the right and profitable understanding of that revelation which he has already granted, and which is perfectly sufficient for all the purposes both of holiness and comfort. Nothing is to be expected in answer to such a prayer without the use of ordinary means; but these means can be effectual only when they are accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.' That knowledge by which the soul is savingly converted unto God must, therefore, be the effect of divine illumination, opening at once the eyes of the understanding and the door of the heart, turning it from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God. And the same divine influence which begins the good work of grace in the soul, is needful to carry it forward, and bring it to perfection. Not only in the commencement of the spiritual life, therefore, but in every subsequent stage of its progress, even under the most favourable circumstances, and with the most matured attainments, the believer has occasion to adopt the prayer, 'O send out thy light and thy truth.'

There are, in the experience of every child of God, particular situations which more especially call forth this devout aspiration. When the mind is harassed with difficulties relative to the truths of revelation, arising from inability to understand them, and to reconcile them with each other, or with the perfections of God, or the demands of his law, or the dispensations of his providence; when cases of perplexing doubt

occur in which conscience is at a loss to discover the path of duty, or to decide between what is lawful and what is merely expedient, and knows not either what to think, or how to act; in such circumstances how precious the privilege of being permitted to ask direction from Him who is wise in counsel, and who has promised to guide the meek in judgment, and to teach them his way!

To mourners of every description, to those especially who mourn in Zion, who are cast down and disquieted with fears respecting the safety of their spiritual condition, or oppressed with grief and vexation of spirit under a sense of their own exceeding sinfulness, and of the unprofitableness of all their services, and of the little comfort which they have found in religious ordinances, and the small progress which they have made in Christian attainment; to those who lament the hidings of God's countenance, and the absence of all satisfying communion with him; who go mourning all the day, walking in darkness, and ready to faint with the sickness of hope deferred; to all such there is provided a never-failing resource, a fountain of rich and refreshing consolation lies within their reach; and they are invited to approach it, taking along with them a form of application, which the Hearer of prayer has himself prepared for them in the words of the inspired psalmist, 'O send forth thy light and thy truth.'

As a preparation for duty this prayer is no less appropriate than it is necessary for our comfort in distress. David said, 'I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar.' Not only the more solemn services of devotion, but every act of religious worship requires the preparations of the heart which are from the Lord. To him we must look for the capacity to serve him acceptably and profitably in the ordinances of his own appointment; and after all that we have done or can do in the work of preparation by examining the state of our hearts, by reflecting on the conduct of the past, and forming purposes of obedience for the future, or otherwise cultivating the frame and feelings which are suitable in drawing near to God, we must have recourse to Him with whom is the residue of the Spirit, and without whom we can know nothing, and do nothing aright. 'Search me, O God, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. O send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles; then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.'

## SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Thy word have I hid in mine heart,' Psal. cxix. 11.

By the word of God we understand the revelation of his will in the holy scriptures. It is his word, inasmuch as it came from him, treats of him, and will lead to him. He is its Author, its subject, and its end. Holy men of God were employed by him as the channels of communication, but they spake only 'as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

The bible is proved to be the word of God by its peculiar excellence, and its practical influence; by the originality of its doctrinal discoveries, by the purity of its moral precepts, by the harmony of its different parts, and the perfect adaptation of the whole to the condition of man as a sinner. It requires no addition, is susceptible of no improvement, admits of no alteration; it exhibits in every part the stamp of truth, and the impression of divinity, and 'is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'

Few men have been so well qualified as David was to appreciate the value of the word of God. He had made it the subject of humble, habitual, and prayerful investigation. It had been his meditation by day, and his song in the night. His knowledge of it, obtained through divine teaching giving effect to his own researches, was extensive, intimate, and experimental. He could say, 'I have more understanding than all my teachers;' and he uttered the language not of ignorant superstition, but of enlightened and practical devotion, when he declared, 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart.' It is evident that David possessed a very minute and distinct recollection of the word of God. It was his privilege to have constant access to the scriptures themselves; but he had transferred a large portion of them to his memory, from whose stores he could derive either subjects of meditation, or motives to duty, or sources of comfort, or helps to devotion, as circumstances might require.

The language of David is strongly expressive of his attachment to the word of God. With Job he could say, 'I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.' What is sweeter than honey? The Psalmist replies, 'How sweet are thy words to my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.' What is more valued than riches? Hear David again, 'The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.' It was to him

more precious than anything and everything else. He therefore hid it, as men hide a treasure, which they wish to preserve, but are afraid of losing; and having no other place worthy of its character, or fit for its reception, he enshrined it in the affections of his heart. 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart.'

This was in him the testimony of experience. The word of God he had felt to be 'quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword.' It had taught him the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness. He had found it to be a 'lamp to his feet, and a light unto his path.' In affliction it had been his comforter, and his guide in difficulty and distress. When temptation assailed, it fortified him with the means of defence and security; and when conscience accused, it cheered him with the assurances of forgiveness and favour. In allusion to the effects which it had produced upon himself, he could affirm that 'the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart.'

He hid it there both for convenience and security. We cannot be certain of having the word of God always in our possession, or within our reach. Circumstances may exclude us from the opportunity of reading it; sickness may deprive us of the capacity of reading it. How important, then, to have it laid up in the heart, so as to carry it continually about with us, and to have ready access to it in all places, and on all occasions, for instruction and comfort. For David hid the word, not as the miser hoards his gold, for preservation merely, but for use. It was given not to amuse us with curious speculations, but to influence the affections, to regulate the conduct, and form the character.

The only way to render the word of God fruitful is to have it hid in the heart. If the seed is permitted to lie on the surface, instead of being buried under ground, it would be altogether unproductive. The incorruptible seed of the word, when sown in the soil of a good and honest heart, 'takes root downward, and brings forth fruit upward.' Its truths and precepts, its cautions and encouragements, received into the heart, exert a powerful and purifying influence, and become so many principles of holy activity and devoted

obedience. Even its dark sayings, and its hard sayings, are revered for their wisdom, and loved for their excellency. The service which it requires is approved as a reasonable, and enjoyed as a pleasant, and recommended as a profitable service. 'Therefore,' says David, 'I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way. I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart.'

It was not for the purpose of concealment, but rather for the purpose of communication, that David hid the word of God in his heart. 'My tongue,' says the Psalmist, 'shall speak of thy word.' And again, 'With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.' The word of God is not merely a trust which we should keep with a jealous care, but also a talent which we should employ with diligence and zeal for the spiritual good both of ourselves and others. No man who knows its value feels any disposition to monopolize the precious treasure; on the contrary, as it is his duty, so it will be his delight to put his fellow-sinners in possession of it; and in attempting to make it the instrument of good to others, he will render it more productive of benefit to his own soul. 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.'

#### EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' Col. ii. 3.*

THE fullness of Christ constitutes the all-engrossing subject of scripture testimony. 'It pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell,' and 'in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' He is full of compassion; for 'we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' He is full of power; for 'all power is given to him in heaven and in earth;' and 'he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' He is full of grace; for 'his grace is exceeding abundant, and of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace;' he is full of truth, for in him 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' Let us consider what is the

amount of this representation, and what is the use which we should make of it.

Peter uttered the language of truth, when, addressing himself to Jesus, he said, 'Lord, thou knowest all things.' As God he is essentially omniscient; and his knowledge, as it is infinite, so it is underived. But it is in his official and delegated capacity that we have now to do with him, as the divinely appointed Mediator between God and man, and Head over all things to his body the church. 'He needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.'

'Wisdom and knowledge' often express the same thing. But in their nature they are essentially different, nor are they necessarily united in the same person. Men of very extensive knowledge often discover a very small share of wisdom. But knowledge without wisdom to guide its application can do little good either to the possessor or to others, and may do much evil. Christ combines in himself both wisdom and knowledge: his knowledge is wisdom, for it maketh wise, and without it there can be no true wisdom. It is the knowledge of God, of his attributes, his counsels, his will, and his ways; especially the knowledge of his purpose of redeeming mercy. Of these subjects how little can we know, and how much less can we comprehend! 'No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' His understanding is infinite. Nothing is concealed from him; nothing is mysterious to him.

In man the acquisition of wisdom and knowledge is commonly the result of long and laborious exertions. But from eternity the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hid in Christ. They were never hid from him; but they are hid in him, laid up in store as a precious treasure, that must be kept in safety, and be ready for use as circumstances may require. He had them in himself originally, independently, and inherently; but he has them also in trust for his people. They were committed to him by appointment of the Father, to qualify him for the discharge of his prophetic office. They are hid in him, not that they may be concealed, but that they may be communicated. He opened his treasures to man at his creation in the light of nature around him, and of conscience within him. He unfolded them anew to him immediately after his fall in a revelation of mercy, and in the promise of deliverance. To patriarchs and prophets in succession the same gracious discoveries were repeated with increasing fullness; and the light which had dawned upon the

world in the prefigurations of the Mosaic economy, shone forth more and more unto the perfect day.

By the personal ministrations of Christ upon earth, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which had been hid in him, were exhibited in rich and abundant profusion. He came that he might bear witness to the truth, and could say, 'I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' The Jews were astonished at his doctrine, and asked, 'From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him? How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' But they spake ignorantly, and in unbelief. His doctrine was new to them because it had been hid in him. But he knew it perfectly from the beginning, and now revealed it in order 'to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

This view of the Redeemer's character serves to show both what he claims from us, and what we may expect from him. Men eminently wise and learned are universally regarded with respect and admiration. Yet how much ignorance and folly do they often discover! The mind of man can know only a few things, and it cannot know any one of these perfectly. But our Saviour is the only wise God. What are the stores of wisdom and knowledge which the industry and ingenuity of man have produced from the beginning of the world to the present day, compared with those boundless treasures which are hid in him? He is light, and in him is no darkness at all. All the wisdom and knowledge which his creatures can attain to is but a faint emanation of that light in which he dwells, and which no man can approach unto. To him, then, let us ascribe glory, and dominion, and blessing, and praise. And let us by faith and prayer look to him as the fountain of all true wisdom and saving knowledge, that he may give unto us 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the glory of our inheritance in the saints; that we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Till we all come in the

unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'

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EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him,' James i. 5.*

THAT which the apostle has here made a matter of supposition is in reality a matter of fact; for it is undeniably manifest, from the testimony of scripture, experience, and observation, that every man 'lacks wisdom.' 'Vain man would be wise, though a man be born like a wild ass's colt.' But his pretensions to wisdom serve only to discover his folly. The children of this world are, indeed, wise in their generation, but their wisdom is 'earthly, sensual, devilish.' Of that wisdom whose beginning is the fear of God, whose 'ways are pleasantness,' and whose 'paths are peace;' of that wisdom 'which is from above, and which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy,' of such wisdom they are altogether destitute.

Man is naturally blind to his real character and his highest interests. He overlooks altogether the chief end of his existence. He knows not in what true happiness consists, nor where it is to be found. He prefers the body to the soul, time to eternity, earth to heaven, death to life. He calls sweet bitter, and bitter sweet; he mistakes light for darkness, and darkness for light. The world is his idol. He looks only at things which are seen and temporal. Daily he puts the question, 'Who will show us any good?' but never joins in the prayer, 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me.' He is led captive by satan at his will. His language and conduct, his desires and pursuits, make it abundantly manifest, that with all his boasted attainments he still lacketh one thing, that is, wisdom. 'But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.'

'Blessed be God, for wisdom and might are his.' He giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.' Solomon surpassed all other men in wisdom, but we

read that 'God gave Solomon wisdom.' Daniel afforded proofs of extraordinary wisdom, but he acknowledged it to be God's gift, saying, 'I thank thee, O God, who hast given me wisdom.' And in both of these cases wisdom was bestowed in answer to prayer. Solomon asked it; Daniel and his pious friends in Babylon prayed for it. God's way of communicating wisdom is through the instrumentality of prayer. 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God.' The same rule is observed by him in dispensing all other spiritual blessings.

He needs not to be informed, or argued with as if he were either ignorant or unkind. He is acquainted with all the exigencies of our condition, and has promised to supply all our need. But he intends that his people shall be made sensible of their own wants, and of his ability to help them; he desires to bring them to that state of mind which will prepare them to enjoy with the greatest comfort, and to employ with the greatest advantage to themselves and others, those blessings which he sees to be needful, and which he purposes to confer upon them. Hence it is, that 'for all these things he will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.' The recipient of his favours must, in the first instance, be a suppliant. We must ask that we may receive, and seek that we may find, and knock that it may be opened unto us.

Other means should be used in connection with prayer. God teaches wisdom in his word, and by his ordinances, which must be carefully and devoutly attended to. Prayer is designed not to supersede other means, but to enforce their observance, and insure their success. And as prayer is necessary, so it will be effectual. We know that 'if we ask any thing agreeable to his will he heareth us.' He has said, 'if any man lack, let him ask.' No conditions are proposed, no price is demanded, no characters are excluded. He requires only that we should feel our need of wisdom, and express it in prayer. In other cases the success of our prayers may be doubtful, but here it is certain. We know not what things to pray for as we ought, and in our ignorance and folly we often desire what we should dread and deprecate. But in praying for wisdom we act in obedience to God's express command, and in reliance on his promise. In answer to such a prayer he not only gives but gives liberally; never less than is asked, generally more. 'And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life, but hast asked wisdom and

knowledge for thyself; wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.' Thus it appears that 'godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.'

Wisdom comprehends all that is essential to the spiritual and eternal interests of man. It is another name for real and saving religion. In principle, it is faith; in experience, it is peace; and in character, holiness. It is the pearl of great price; it is the one thing needful. Other things may be desirable, this is indispensable. Other things may be needful to some, but all stand in need of wisdom, whether learned or ignorant, high or low, rich or poor.' 'Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to compared unto her. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her.' And as wisdom is necessary to all, so it is attainable by all. 'Wisdom crieth aloud; she uttereth her voice in the streets, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' But wisdom is God's gift; as he confers the blessing, so he claims the glory. Let us then live in the spirit of dependence and gratitude, daily asking, 'So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.'

'Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.' Amen.

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#### NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Wisdom crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors,' Prov. viii. 3.

By wisdom Solomon intends the Son of God. His people may be wise, but he is wisdom. He is the essence, the source, the perfection, the personification of wisdom. The term wisdom may, however, be understood to represent that system of divine truth which was taught by him, and by the apostles in his name. The gospel is eminently entitled to the appellation of wisdom. 'It is the wisdom of God in a mystery; the manifold

wisdom of God.' Its doctrines are 'the word of wisdom;' its precepts are 'the ways of wisdom.' All who believe and obey it have been made 'wise unto salvation.' The voice of Christ speaks in every part of it, and in every part it speaks the language of true wisdom. Observe—

The publicity of its announcements. The heathen oracles uttered their responses in secret, and with studied ambiguity. Error shuns the light; but wisdom 'crieth' that all may hear. She comes forth to the gates of the city, or the streets, and other public places, where all classes of the people usually congregate in the greatest numbers. Thus did Jesus in the course of his personal ministry. In the last day, that great day of the feast, he stood and cried, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' To Pilate, who asked him of his disciples and of his doctrine, he could say, 'I spake openly to the world, I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.' He had not one doctrine for the rich, and another for the poor; but addressed to the people without distinction and without exception the word of truth and salvation. That which he did in his own person, he commanded the disciples to do in his name, 'What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house tops.' It is his will that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved. Still he cries, 'Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.' The gospel is recommended by—

The kindness and impartiality of its administration. Wisdom crieth 'at the gates, at the entry of the city,' in the hearing of a large and promiscuous multitude, comprehending persons of every variety of rank and character. No where is the preaching of the gospel so much needed as in places of public resort, frequented as they usually are by the most ignorant, depraved, and worthless of mankind. The master of the feast commanded his servants, 'Go out into the high ways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage.' In him there is enough and to spare; and as the provision is sufficient for all, so it is offered to all 'without money and without price.' There is no respect of persons with him. He condemned the proud Pharisees who felt no need of repentance; but kept company with the publicans and sinners, who confessed their guilt, and desired instruction. The gospel is remarkable for—

Plainness and simplicity. It speaks not only to the multitude promiscuously, but particularly to individuals. All the knowledge of it which is necessary may easily be obtained even by the most illiterate inquirer. Wisdom crieth not only 'at the gates, at the entry of the city,' but also 'at the coming in at the doors.' Thus Christ taught both publicly, and from house to house. Not only has he placed the word of salvation within our reach, he has brought it to our very doors. He has made it not only accessible, but intelligible to all, so that every man may read and can understand it for himself. 'And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.' The gospel is characterised by—

The urgency of its calls and invitations. Accordingly wisdom 'crieth' with an earnest and importunate voice. And she does not wait to be applied to, but goes forth to meet the people 'at the entry of the city,' and there solicits their attention. She perseveres in the attempt, and continues to press upon them with her importunities, following them from 'the gates' of the city even to 'the coming in at the doors' of their houses. Truly the Lord 'is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' He not only waiteth to be gracious, but employs positive means in order to persuade sinners to turn and live. He addresses them by his word and ordinances, by his ministers and people, by the remonstrances of conscience and the dispensations of providence. He speaks to them in the language of kindness and terror, of promise and threatening, of exhortation and entreaty. Instead of leaving them to the consequences of their criminal resistance, he bears with their indifference and renews his solicitations; he raises another and a louder cry; has recourse to more urgent importunity and more powerful means to enforce their compliance. With some the means prove successful; and when sinners repent and turn to the Lord, he sees in them the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. Others continue impenitent; and over them he utters the lamentation of unavailing sympathy: 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes!'

How fearful, yet how just, will be the condemnation of those who turn a deaf ear to the cry of heavenly wisdom! They are without excuse; and the invitations of mercy which they

have refused, and the means of grace which they have despised, and the opportunities of improvement which they have neglected, and the capacities of usefulness which they have misapplied, will form so many bitter ingredients in their cup of misery. But 'now is the accepted time.' Let the cry of wisdom, calling to repentance and promising forgiveness, be responded to in the prayer of the publican, who smiting on his breast, and not daring so much as to lift up his eyes to heaven, cried, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Such a cry will assuredly come up with acceptance into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth, who is not only compassionate and merciful, but 'faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

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NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!'*  
Deut. xxxii. 29.

THE JEWS were proverbially inconsiderate. Isaiah complained of them saying, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' Moses had witnessed many sad proofs of their forgetfulness and folly: and at the close of a long and laborious life, spent in their service, his heart's desire and prayer for them was, 'that they would consider their latter end.' The subject was not more important to them than it is to all. It teaches us that to 'consider our latter end' constitutes true wisdom. By our latter end he means death. But it cannot be profitably considered unless it is properly understood. We understand it to be—

The end of our present state of being, of its joys and sorrows, its duties and dangers, its possessions and pursuits, its comforts and cares. The hand then forgets its cunning, the tongue is silent, the pulse ceases to beat, and the lungs to breathe; the whole frame becomes a lump of cold and senseless clay. The ties which bind us to our nearest and dearest friends, and to every thing earthly, are then broken asunder; for 'they that have wives shall be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that buy as though they possessed not; for the fashion of this world passeth away.' And the change is final. 'There is hope of a tree if it be cut down, that it will sprout again. But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the

ghost, and where is he? We understand our latter end to be—

The commencement of a future and eternal state of being. The 'dust shall return to the earth as it was; but the spirit shall return to God who gave it.' After death cometh the judgment, which shall try every man's work; and the sentence of the Judge shall admit of no appeal, nor can the consequences which follow, whether happy or miserable, be ever altered, or reversed. They that are Christ's, made perfect in holiness, shall immediately enter on the full and everlasting enjoyment of God; whilst the enemies of his cross and his cause shall be cast into outer darkness, 'where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.' We understand death to be—

The universal destiny of man. The stroke of death cannot be resisted by force, nor evaded by artifice, nor set aside by the influence of rank or wealth. One event happeneth to the righteous and the wicked, to the king and his subjects, to the philosopher and the fool, to the man of wealth and the child of poverty, to the sinner of fourscore and the infant of yesterday. 'I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.' We understand that the event of death may come—

Soon and suddenly upon us. It cannot be far off, and it may be very near at hand. This night thy soul may be required of thee. How often are children carried off before their parents, the scholar before their teacher, the physician before his patients. 'Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' We understand death to be—

The penalty of guilt. 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' In Adam all die, even those who never sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. But as death is the wages of sin, so 'the gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.' To understand death aright we must view it in connection with—

The remedy which has been provided for it in the sacrifice of Christ, who by dying took away sin, which is the sting of death, and destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, and who are enabled to say, 'Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.' How awfully momentous is the event of death, when thus understood! How unaccountable, how fatal the infatuation which treats it as a matter of trifling or of distant con-

cern. All who are truly wise will consider their latter end. Wisdom requires them to consider it with—

Serious attention, as a subject in which they are deeply interested, and with which they must very shortly be brought into personal connection. Fools may altogether exclude the thought of death; but instead of being resisted as a presumptuous intruder, it ought to be welcomed as a friendly monitor, and permitted habitually to influence our feelings and conduct. It is not more calculated to alarm the sinner and bring him to Christ, than it is necessary to humble the believer, and excite him to duty. They who are wise will consider their latter end—

Practically, and in the way of diligent preparation, by cultivating a state of mind and character suitable for meeting death. This includes the exercise of a simple and steady reliance on the work of Christ; connected with the cultivation of exalted spirituality, unfeigned and universal repentance, enlarged and active benevolence. Our lamps must not merely have oil in them, they must be filled with it, and exhibit a bright and vigorous flame. Nothing but the privilege of union to Christ realized by faith, evinced in the purification of the heart, and in the victory which overcometh the world, can prepare us to meet death with safety, or warrant us to meet it with confidence and comfort. 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' They who are wise will consider their latter end—

Without delay. The Bridegroom may tarry, but the delay cannot be long; and the suddenness of his coming may be such as to take even those who love and long for his appearance by surprise. Then 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.' 'Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.'

#### TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you,'* Prov. i. 23.

WISDOM has a word in season for persons of every variety of character and circumstances. For the ignorant, she has a word of instruction; for the sorrowful, a word of consolation; for the

secure, a word of alarm; for the fearful, a word of encouragement. She speaks here to sinners, to 'simple ones' who 'love simplicity,' to 'scorners' who 'delight in scorning,' to 'fools' who hate 'knowledge;' that is, to wilful, daring, and obstinate transgressors, and for them she has a word of 'reproof.' Her reproofs are conveyed through many different channels. One of these is—

The word of God. 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for reproof. It points out the evil nature and ruinous consequences of sin, and declares the certainty of a coming judgment, by which 'the wrath of God shall be revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men.' At the same time it deals with the peculiarities of individual character; it holds up to sinners of every description a mirror which reflects the image of their own depravity, and it comes home to the conscience of each in language which reproves alike the indifference of the careless, the duplicity of the hypocritical, the pride of the self-righteous, the impiety of the profane, and the excesses of the voluptuous. 'For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

Ministers are reprovers. They are traitors to the cause of Christ who 'speak smooth things,' saying, 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace,' and seek to please rather than to profit and edify the people. Their commission runs in these terms, 'Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.' John the Baptist did not flatter Herod the king, but reproved him as he deserved without fear or favour. Of Jesus it is said, that he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes; and his servants are commanded to 'preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.' Popular errors must not be countenanced, but corrected; prevailing sins must not be connived at, but condemned; unwelcome truths must not be concealed, but declared; the vices both of individuals and communities must, without distinction of rank, or sex, or age, or circumstances, be fearlessly exposed; the people must be addressed not in vague generalities, but in plain, pointed, and searching appeals to the conscience and the heart. He is a bad preacher who makes the hearers forget themselves in their admiration of him. Discourses which give greatest offence frequently do most good.

Conscience is a reprove. The sinner may shut his eyes to the light of scripture, and his ears to the voice of the preacher; but where can he find a retreat from the lash of an awakened conscience? By nature conscience is defiled; and it may be blinded through ignorance, or misled by error, or seared as with a hot iron by sensual excess. But the force of natural conscience cannot be altogether subdued; and when its testimony is heard condemning the sinner, and setting before him the terrors of a coming retribution, as in the case of Belshazzar whose 'knees smote one against another' when he beheld the hand-writing on the wall; or of Melix who 'trembled' when Paul 'reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;' what is this but a message of reproof from heaven? How precious are the reproofs administered by the counsels of—

Christian friendship! 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend.' David held them in high estimation, '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.' Such reproofs ought to be received as tokens of affection, and listened to as the dictates of wisdom.

The afflictive dispensations of providence speak the language of reproof. Manasseh had been one of the chief of sinners, but solitude and suffering brought him to repentance, and he found mercy. We are prone to complain of our trials, but if we viewed them in the proper light we should see cause to be thankful for them. We ought always to bear in mind that to improve them aright is to be reprov'd by them. The reproofs of wisdom all aim at one practical object, it is to awaken repentance.' But reproofs cannot produce this effect without the operation of—

Divine influence. This is graciously promised; for wisdom has said, 'I will pour out my Spirit unto you.' Repentance is man's duty, but God's work. We may change the conduct, but he renews the heart; we may avoid the act of sin, but he destroys the love of it; we may go through the forms of duty, but he implants the principle of obedience. To the commandment which says, 'Turn ye at my reproof,' let us therefore reply, 'Turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God.'

Reproofs must be understood in order to be effectual. Wisdom has provided and promised all needful instruction. She therefore adds, 'I will make known my words unto you.' The Spirit has given the word, but he must also give the capacity to discern its meaning. In his light

only shall we see light. Let us unite dependence on his teaching with the diligent and prayerful use of all appointed means of instruction. Let us beware of setting at nought his counsels, or despising his reproofs; for he who being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.'

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 TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Because I have called, and ye refused, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh,'* Prov. i. 24, 26.

THE government of God demands from us now, and will ultimately obtain from all his intelligent creatures, unlimited acquiescence and approbation. We are not, indeed, permitted, in many cases, to know the reasons of his conduct; nor do we in any case possess the capacity fully to comprehend them. But he has a reason for every thing that he does, which, when clearly revealed, shall at once demonstrate the necessity of his procedure, and display its perfectly wise, and holy, and gracious character. 'Clouds and darkness are round about him;' yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne; mercy and truth shall go before his face.'

In the indulgence extended to wicked men there is an apparent deviation from those principles of rectitude and impartiality which regulate the divine government. Not only do they seem to enjoy impunity in sin; they often attain to a far higher degree of prosperity than falls to the lot of others. This has in all ages been a source of perplexity and discouragement to the people of God, whilst it renders sinners bolder and more hardened in wickedness. But they abuse the divine forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance; and they treasure up to themselves 'wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgments of God.' 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' But God will bring every work into judgment, and will render unto every man according to his work; and he will be glorified no less in the destruction of his enemies than in the salvation of his redeemed people. He has distinctly stated—

The grounds of their condemnation. They shall not be permitted to urge the plea of ignorance, nor the want of opportunity, nor even moral inability as their excuse; far less shall they be allowed to plead the decrees of God, or the

limitation of Christ's atonement to those whom the Father has given him. It will be sufficient to answer every objection, and silence every murmur for the Judge to say, 'I have called, and ye refused.' 'Few are chosen,' but 'many are called;' and it is not with the purpose of election, which has not been revealed, that sinners have to do, but with the call of mercy which addresses to them the free, unrestricted, unconditional offer of salvation. In refusing this call they act wilfully, deliberately, from enmity to God, and aversion to his service. 'This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' Thus they incur the guilt of disobeying the command of God, of denying his truth, of despising his mercy, of rejecting his counsel, of counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith Christ was sanctified, an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace. Resting on such grounds the punishment of the wicked shall be perfectly—

Righteous. The justice of God demands it; his mercy permits it; his truth and faithfulness cannot be maintained without it. All the attributes of his character will be infinitely honoured by it. The whole intelligent creation will approve of it. Sinners themselves will silently acquiesce in it. The man who had not on the wedding garment was speechless in presence of the king, so shall be the finally impenitent under the sentence of the Judge. And their condemnation as it is perfectly righteous so it is inevitably—

Certain. Now they have an 'accepted time,' and a 'day of salvation.' But the door, by which they are now invited to enter, will then be shut. Prayer will no longer avail. All the things that belong to their peace will be hid from their eyes. The God of mercy will then have 'forgotten to be gracious,' and will 'be favourable no more.' How vain must be the hope of the poor and distressed when their prayer for relief is met not by the look and language of sympathy, but by laughter and mockery! How dreadful to hear the Father of mercies declare, 'I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.' And he is not a 'man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent.'

How then shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Who can resist the force of his Almighty arm, or elude the inspection of his all-seeing eye? What is there to make up for the want of his friendship, or to protect us from the effect of his anger? The punishment of the sinner will be unspeakably—

Awful. To them on the left hand the Judge shall say, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' 'When, therefore, the great day of his wrath is come, who shall be able to stand? Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?'

But, blessed be God, there is still a way of escape. The time has not yet arrived of which it is said, 'Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer.' His patience continues to wait, and his Spirit to strive. He calls upon us to 'come, for all things are now ready. Turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel? 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.'

#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,' Deut. vi. 6, 7.*

THE words which form the subject of this exhortation obviously refer in the first instance to the law of the ten commandments, which had on that very day been delivered to the people of Israel. 'These words' may, however, be supposed to comprehend generally the whole of revelation, including both the Old and New Testaments; and in particular they apply to the record which God has given of his Son Jesus Christ, which unfolds a complete system of truth to be believed, and a perfect rule of duty to be followed, with all necessary means to be observed for the purpose of enabling us to understand the one and to obey the other. Our duty in reference to the words of inspiration consists of two parts: we are commanded to receive them for our own benefit, and we are required to communicate them for the benefit of others. They demand in the first instance a—

Cordial reception from ourselves. It is not enough that we put them in our houses, so as to have constant access to them for reading and meditation; nor even that we have them in our memories so as to be able to repeat them with ease and accuracy from beginning to end. They must not only be known and remembered, but understood and approved; they must be regarded not

only with profound respect, but with affectionate acquiescence; they must be submitted to not only from a sense of duty, but in the spirit of love. To this effect it is enjoined, 'These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart.'

The words which God has commanded us deserve a place in the heart. They are the words of infallible truth, and merit our fullest confidence; they are the words of eternal life, and claim our warmest attachment. 'More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb.' It is the heart that God looks to, and speaks to: and the services we perform in obedience to his word can be acceptable and honouring to him in so far only as they express the feelings of the heart. So long as it has not taken possession of the heart, the word of God can produce no sanctifying effect on the character; and is in reality rejected. The good seed must be sown not by the way side, nor on stony ground, nor among thorns, where it would be either entirely lost, or exert only a superficial and temporary influence; but on the soil of a good and honest heart, where it will take deep root, and bring forth fruit in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred fold. But as it is man's duty to receive the word into his heart, so it is God's work to put it there, and he has graciously promised to do his own work. 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after these days, saith the Lord. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

Having taken possession of the heart, the words which God has commanded us will necessarily exert their proper influence in securing all those practical effects which are intended or required. The memory will carefully retain them, the mind will seriously reflect upon them, the mouth will loudly speak of them, and the life habitually correspond with them. In particular, the reception of them for ourselves will produce the desire, and enforce the endeavour to—

Communicate them to others. This we are directed to attempt in two different ways. One is by teaching, or—

Instruction. 'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.' Children represent the youth of every family; and in this view the injunction is addressed to parents. To them has been committed the charge of teaching unto their children the words which God has commanded.

For this purpose they should read and explain the bible to their children, and enable them to read and understand it for themselves. Other branches of knowledge may be useful and even necessary; but what shall these avail in the end if the one thing needful has been neglected? The work of parental instruction requires much time and great labour; and it must be done not by substitutes, but by parents themselves, in a course of diligent and well directed personal efforts. It is truly said that 'a good man leaveth an inheritance to his children.' He may have nothing else to give, but if he has conferred on them the advantages of a religious education, followed up by fervent prayer, and illustrated and enforced by a consistent example, he leaves them an inheritance that is more valuable than any thing and every thing else. But 'children' represent the rising generation in general, and in this view the precept speaks to all without exception. Many parents care not for the spiritual interests of their families; in such cases it becomes the duty of every professing Christian to endeavour, as far as possible, to supply their lack of service. In no other way can we do so much good at so little expence as by extending the blessings of a religious education to the ignorant and neglected youth. But another mode of communication is by talking, or—

Conversation. 'Thou shalt talk of them.' To talk is to convey our thoughts upon any subject in a simple, homely, and familiar style of address, such as we are accustomed to employ in the common intercourse of domestic and social life. Without being necessarily coarse or undignified it has the recommendation of being universally understood, and of being calculated to attract and interest the minds both of the learned and the ignorant. It is the style which God himself has adopted in the revelation of his will, for the scriptures which contain it are distinguished throughout by their extreme plainness and simplicity. What was the teaching of Christ but a series of conversations in which he talked familiarly with his disciples or with the Jewish people? Some talk on religious subjects evidently for no other purpose than to display their own attainments: but our design should be to instruct and edify others; and this requires that we should speak of them with the utmost simplicity, and at the same time with great fervour and frequency. To obtrude these subjects officiously on the attention of others, would invariably do harm instead of good. A word fitly spoken, how good is it! In this as in every department of duty 'wisdom is profitable to direct;' but if it is the wisdom that

cometh down from above it will determine us to embrace every opportunity that may be presented, whether in public or private, of inviting the attention of those with whom we associate to the things which belong to their peace.

Few points of character may be more safely relied on as an evidence of personal godliness than the desire to converse on religious subjects. It is truly mournful to think how very seldom matters of a spiritual nature find their way into our ordinary conversation. The professing people of God meet together and converse about many things; they talk on the state of the weather, or the news of the day, or on questions of national policy, or the merits of public men, or the defects of private character, but have not a word to say respecting the truths of the bible, nor the concerns of their souls, nor the realities of an eternal world. How different is the course which the authority of inspiration has dictated on the subject! 'Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.'

This practice has many advantages to recommend it. It is of comparatively easy observance. Those who cannot produce a regular and well connected discourse upon the truths of God, are yet able to talk about them in familiar conversation. No man feels himself at a loss for something to say when he speaks of subjects that lie near to his heart, for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' Another recommendation is the probability of usefulness. In this way valuable lessons of truth may be communicated, and seasonable warnings administered, and serious impressions produced, no less extensively and no less effectually than by more public and laborious instrumentality. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt gather it after many days.' But personal holiness is an essential qualification for religious usefulness. We must seek to have our own hearts impressed with the truths of the bible, and then the work of communicating them to others will be easy, pleasant, and successful.

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#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'That from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,' 2 Tim. iii. 15.*

WE know very little with regard to the early history of Timothy. One most important circumstance has been recorded for our instruction.

His father was not a Jew, nor a proselyte to the religion of the Jews, but a Greek, and consequently, if not hostile to the Jewish scriptures, yet ignorant of them, and indifferent about them. Timothy had not been circumcised in his infancy; but his religious education had, notwithstanding, been carefully attended to by his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, who were not only Jewish by birth, but, which is far better, decidedly pious women. Through the blessing of God upon their labours, young Timothy acquired an early and intimate knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures; and he was by this means prepared to follow the example of his excellent mother by embracing the gospel, and devoting himself to the service of Christ. During the whole of his subsequent life he continued to cherish a grateful sense of the benefit which he had derived from early parental instruction; and Paul, his spiritual father, took occasion to remind him, both as a ground of thankfulness to God, and a motive to perseverance in duty, 'that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

Other writings make men wise, but not 'wise unto salvation.' The wisdom that may be derived from them is valuable in a very high degree, and capable of being applied to many useful purposes, and worthy of being sought after with ardour and diligence; but it is the wisdom of this world, which has to do only with the things of the world, and which, with the world, will at death pass away and be forgotten. What can all the wisdom avail us which the facts of history supply, or which may be derived from a minute acquaintance with the maxims of philosophy, the mysteries of science, or the rules of art, so long as we remain destitute of that wisdom which the light of inspiration has revealed? 'Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.'

The arrogant deist who denies the necessity of revelation, labours under a delusion scarcely more palpable and pernicious than the blinded votary of the Church of Rome, who asserts its insufficiency. We know that the scriptures need not the help of interpretations to clear up their obscurity; much less do they need the help of traditions to supply their deficiency. The end for which they were given, and their perfect efficacy to the accomplishment of that end, could not have been more clearly and conclusively af-

firmed than in the words of the apostle, who declares that they 'are able to make wise unto salvation.' They do this—

By the discoveries which they afford. The first step towards the attainment of saving wisdom consists in the knowledge or conviction of sin. The scripture hath concluded all under sin, 'that every mouth may be stopped, and that all the world may become guilty before God.' But a conviction of sin without the hope of forgiveness could only lead to despair. The awakened sinner finds a refuge in the holy scriptures, which assure him of an acceptable atonement offered for the expiation of his guilt, of a perfect righteousness wrought out for the justification of his person, and an effectual influence provided for the sanctification of his nature. Here is a redemption alike honouring to the perfections of God, and suited to the circumstances of man, comprehending everything which we can possibly need, or reasonably desire, or profitably seek after, knowledge for our ignorance, pardon for our guilt, love for our enmity, purity for our corruption, strength for our weakness, hope for our fears, life for our death. The holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation by—

The influence which they exert. Our Lord said of them, what cannot be affirmed of any other writings, 'The words that I speak unto you they are spirit, they are life.' Paul had felt this influence in himself, and from experience he could declare, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' He had witnessed it in others, and he could appeal to thousands when he said, 'For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.'

But the holy scriptures can exert no influence unless they are believed. Articles of food may be wholesome and nutritious, but in order to impart strength to the body they must be received into it. Medicines may be calculated to effect a cure, yet the patient would inevitably perish if he should continue to resist their application. Our unbelief cannot affect the truth of the scriptures, but it will prevent their efficacy. The influence which they exert is not mechanical, but moral: it is the influence of doctrines and precepts, of promises and threatenings, addressed to the understanding and the judgment, the conscience and the heart. But these cannot operate unless they are felt; nor can they be felt until they are believed. Instead of being the savour of life unto life, which they are graciously intended and calculated to be, they become to all who reject

them the savour of death unto death. And as it forms the chief aggravation of their guilt now, so it will constitute the bitterest ingredient in their cup of suffering hereafter, that the holy scriptures, which they have resisted, 'are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

After all, the holy scriptures exert only an instrumental power. They are perfectly fitted to do their work, but being merely an instrument, they can do nothing effectually without the agent. Since all men are by nature inclined to reject the scriptures, and since, in point of fact, the great majority of those to whom they have been addressed do actually reject them, the question arises, How comes it to pass that any believe them? This effect results from the operation of a power distinct from the scriptures, and which makes use of them only as its instrument. 'To you it is given,' says the apostle to the Philippians, 'to believe in his name.' And he speaks elsewhere not of the things which he wrought, but of 'the things which God wrought by him to make the Gentiles obedient in word and deed.' Without the agency of the Spirit, Paul would have planted, and Apollos watered in vain. Hence the Saviour prayed for his disciples, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.' But as the scriptures are nothing without the influences of the Spirit, so the Spirit does nothing without the instrumentality of the scriptures. Through them he begins his good work of grace in the soul, carries it forward, and brings it to perfection.

We have an important duty to perform in regard to the holy scriptures. It is to cultivate the knowledge of them. 'Thou hast known the holy scriptures.' All the knowledge that is necessary may be acquired by our own efforts in the use of appointed means, by reading and hearing, with diligence, meditation, and prayer. But to be made 'wise unto salvation' implies that we know the scriptures experimentally and practically, and in such a way as to be sanctified by them. They can be savingly useful to us in so far only as we mix faith with our knowledge of them, by realizing their truth, and by having recourse to them for principles to govern, rules to direct, motives to animate, and consolations to support us under all the difficulties, and troubles, and temptations of our present militant condition.

An early acquaintance with the holy scriptures is peculiarly necessary. How highly favoured are they to whom it can be said, 'that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures!' Let

parents remember the word which says, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' The experience of young Timothy serves to show how much a pious mother or grandmother may do for the salvation of children. To all who have enjoyed similar advantages, the apostle would say, 'Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Those things, which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.' 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'

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#### TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head,'* Gen. iii. 15.

THE curse pronounced on the serpent consists of two parts, the one having a relation to its natural, the other to its representative character. An irrational animal cannot be the object of moral blame. The serpent was nothing more than the unconscious and involuntary instrument of corrupting Eve. Yet the serpent was made to share in the punishment of her disobedience. From being probably both harmless in disposition, and beautiful in form, it was degraded into an ugly and venomous reptile. 'Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field, upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.' In consequence, the serpent has ever since been an object of dread and detestation, and it continues to this day to be shunned or destroyed as a dangerous enemy of the human race.

But the curse of God, which extended even to the visible instrument of the temptation, was chiefly directed against 'that old serpent, called the devil, and satan,' who was the invisible agent in the temptation. He tempted the woman by means of the serpent, and the divine displeasure was accordingly conveyed to him through the serpent as his representative. Let us view the curse in connection with its execution.

The design of the tempter was to put enmity between man and his Creator, and he succeeded in his diabolical purpose. In yielding to his solicitations, the woman accepted his offered friendship, and promised a willing obedience. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. The

heart of man, which had till then overflowed with love to God, became hardened with enmity against him. But satan could not retain the conquest which he had made. The victim whom he had deceived and enslaved was instantly torn from his grasp. To punish his treachery, and at the same time to defeat his purpose, God said to him, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman.'

But the evils of the first transgression descended to posterity. By the divine permission satan enjoys, to a limited extent, the influence he had acquired. He has had in every age a numerous offspring, who acknowledge him as their Father, and prove their descent from him by their devotedness to him. They breathe his spirit, bow to his authority, exhibit his likeness, and execute his will. In particular, they all inherit that enmity to God which actuates him; and are thus distinguished from the seed of the woman, who act under a different influence, and pursue an entirely opposite course. It is therefore added, 'I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed.' The seed of the woman is confessedly no other than the promised Messiah, the eternal Son of God, and the Saviour of a perishing world. He undertook to repair the ruins of our fall; and in particular he came 'to destroy the works of the devil.' But in the 'seed of the woman' are comprehended all the members of Christ's spiritual body, whom he redeemed on earth, and represents in heaven, who resemble him in spirit and character, and fight under his banner against the common enemy.

To the tempter the intimation here made was fraught with disappointment and alarm. It revealed a purpose which involved his defeat and degradation. He had gained a triumph, but it was to be neither universal nor perpetual. A remedy was provided for all the miseries which he had entailed on mankind. Even the woman who had fallen a victim to his treachery, was to commence in her own person, and to continue in her posterity a course of active and successful resistance to his authority. A far mightier than he was to arise who should control his dominion, and drive him from his throne, and cast him into 'everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'

But the same announcement which spoke the language of terror to the tempter conveyed a message of mercy to man. We read in it a clear and comprehensive revelation of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. We behold in it the first ray of the Sun of righteousness which dawned on our benighted world. We hear in it a publication of those glad tidings which in the fullness

of time an angel announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem. Our first parents did not deserve, but greatly needed the comfort of such a gracious assurance. It has proved effectual in confirming the faith, and animating the hope of God's people throughout all succeeding generations.

They have in every age been exposed to the effects of satan's enmity. From this source have sprung, more or less directly, all the evils either from within or from without by which they have at any time been afflicted. By him the assaults of temptation are directed, by him also the flames of persecution are kindled. Calumny, reproach, ridicule, blasphemy, with every form and degree of violence against the truth and its friends, have all their origin in the enmity of the serpent. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places.' The agency of the tempter, indeed, does not visibly appear, but its reality is notwithstanding unquestionable. The voice of inspiration has asserted it, the language of uniform experience has demonstrated it, the page of universal history bears witness to it. His names express his enmity as well as his acts. He is satan the adversary, Apollyon the destroyer, the devil an accuser; he is a liar, a deceiver, murderer, a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

But the enmity which pursues the members of the church was directed chiefly against the person of its divine Head. He who had seduced Eve in the garden assaulted Christ in the wilderness. The opposition he encountered, the persecutions he suffered, the snares that were laid for him, the insults that were heaped upon him, the resistance of avowed enemies, the treachery of pretended friends, were all the effects of satanic enmity. His death was emphatically the 'hour and the power of darkness.' The prince of this world seemed then to be triumphant. But 'the seed of the woman' conquered by submission. He suffered an injury in the heel; but in return inflicted on his adversary a mortal wound. 'It shall bruise thy head.'

This he has done effectually in his own person. 'Through death he destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' Having spoiled principalities and powers he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross.' This he will do actually in the experience of his people. Believing in him they participate in the honours of his triumph, and shall reap the fruits of his victory. Relying on him they are strengthened to maintain the con-

flict in which he engaged, and to pursue the course which he set them the example. He will bruise satan under their feet, and enable them to say, 'in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.'

'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne.'

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 TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God,'* Psal. xl. 7, 8.

THE Psalmist did not say this of himself. The inspired author of the epistle to the Hebrews has applied the words not to David, but to David's Son and Lord. Spoken by any other person they would have been unintelligible or contradictory; proceeding from him they are clear, appropriate, and full of deeply interesting truth.

It was in the time of man's extremity that the Redeemer undertook to work out his deliverance. No other expedients could be of any avail. Sacrifice and offering had been resorted to; but they could not take away sin. God did not desire and could not accept of them as an adequate atonement for the guilt of man. In this awful emergency, when his case seemed to be hopeless, and his salvation impossible, then it was that He, who alone had power to save, exclaimed with generous promptitude, 'Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God.'

In these words he expressed his adherence to the terms of a previous agreement. It had been from eternity 'written' in the book of the divine counsels; but that it might be manifest to the church it was 'written in the volume' of the Old Testament scriptures. The Son of God discovered no wish to shrink from his undertaking, now that the time of its fulfilment had arrived. On the contrary, he declared his willingness to act up to the very letter of his engagement, by doing and suffering according to all that had been written in the law, and by the prophets, and in the psalms concerning him. In the immediate prospect of entering on his work he gave utterance to the feelings of his heart in these memorable and most emphatic words, 'Lo, I come: I delight to do thy will, O my God.' He alludes to the work which he had to do, and expresses the state of mind with which he regarded it.

By the will of God we are to understand his

law. The Saviour has explained his own meaning. Having said, 'I delight to do thy will,' he immediately proceeds to express the same sentiment in a different form, by adding, 'thy law is within my heart.' As the substitute of his people he was required to do all that the law enjoins, to abstain from all that the law prohibits, to render the full amount of submission and of service both in heart and conduct which the law demands, that he might become 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' He had not only to pay their debt of obedience, but also to bear the penalty of their guilt. It was necessary that he should fulfil the precepts of the moral law; but it was no less necessary that he should realize the prefigurations of the ceremonial law, by submitting in our nature to the privations and pains of a laborious and sorrowful life, and to the suffering of a cruel, ignominious, and accursed death.

Yet in the near and certain prospect of all this sorrow and suffering he felt and expressed the most perfect acquiescence. There was on his part the absence of all disinclination to the will of God which he had to do. He moreover declared his cordial approbation of it. He did not merely submit to it as that which must be done; he heartily approved of it as that which ought to be done. He not only approved of it; he was delighted with it. He looked upon it with a high satisfaction, a sublime complacency, which disposed him to sacrifice and suffer everything that might be required in the doing of it. He said, 'Mine ears hast thou bored,' alluding to the ceremony of piercing the ear of a slave who refused to leave the service of his master, and who requested that his ear might be perforated with an instrument in token of perpetual servitude. In like manner, the Redeemer devoted himself unreservedly to the cause which he had espoused. And to show how entirely he was engrossed by it, how fervently he was attached to it, and how firmly he was resolved to persevere in it, he could declare, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.'

He said this not in ignorance, but with a clear and certain foreknowledge of all that the will of God had appointed for him both to do and suffer. He discerned every ingredient of bitterness that was to mingle in his cup of sorrow; the treachery of Judas who betrayed him; the cowardice of Peter who denied him; the inconstancy of his other disciples, who, with one exception, forsook him; the injustice of Pilate, who first commanded him to be scourged, and then condemned him to be crucified; he anticipated the full amount of

suffering that was reserved for him, when he cried, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.' He said this not from insensibility to pain. There was nothing of stoical apathy in his constitution. His dread of suffering he did not conceal, but expressed on various occasions; and the expression which he gave of it forms an interesting feature in the example which he left. It shows the sincerity and genuineness of his character, and forms a striking contrast to the philosophers of Greece and Rome, who boasted of their indifference to pain, and their contempt of death. He prayed three times, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;' and yet could say, 'Not my will, but thine be done.' Resignation is too feeble a term to describe the state of mind with which he suffered. He not only 'endured the cross,' but 'despised the shame.' He rose superior to it; he delighted in it, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.'

This was not the language of momentary feeling, but of conviction and principle. Our Lord acted in conformity with this declaration from the commencement of his life to its close. His cup of wrath was felt to be palatable and even pleasing when he reflected that it was a cup which 'the Father had given' him. It was sufficient to render his work of suffering not only tolerable but delightful to know that he had been appointed to it by the will of his Father in heaven. We have in him, not only an object of faith which we should devoutly contemplate, but an example of holiness which we should carefully imitate. His disciples are they who, like him, delight to do the will of God. Their obedience falls infinitely short of his, yet it possesses a measure of conformity to his in the spirit and principle of it. He could say, 'I do always those things that please the Father;' and he claims kindred with those only who walk by the same rule, 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother.'

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 TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,' Isa. liii. 10.*

OFFERINGS for sin have been presented in all ages, and among all nations. This practice can only be accounted for by tracing it to the positive appointment of God. There is nothing in the light of nature that seems to dictate such a mode of propitiating the divine favour. Yet the

universality of the practice may be appealed to as a testimony to the fact of man's apostacy, and in confirmation of the truth that 'without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.'

These awful words are legibly inscribed on every part of the Jewish dispensation. Under the law 'almost all things are purged by blood.' To no purpose would the high priest have approached the mercy-seat had he not taken the blood of atonement with him. Prayer and intercession could be of no avail unless accompanied and enforced by the offering of sacrifice. But 'it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. For the law having a shadow of good things to come, could never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.'

The death of Christ was truly an 'offering for sin.' All that the sacrifices under the law did ceremonially and typically was done by the sacrifice of Christ actually and effectually. To adduce the whole of the passages in which this great truth is either obviously implied, or expressly and strongly asserted, would be to quote a large portion of the New Testament scriptures. One passage may suffice: 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'

Christ's 'offering for sin' is a sacrifice of God's own providing. When no eye pitied, and no other hand could save us, He, against whom we had sinned, in the tenderness of his compassion, and in the plenitude of his mercy, said, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom; I have laid help on One that is mighty.' He is the 'Lamb of God,' and 'the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all.' His work of suffering was a work which the Father had given him to do, and his cup of sorrow was a cup the Father had given him to drink. 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he hath put him to grief.' As he hung on the cross he verified the pathetic language of the prophet, 'Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.'

But the offering of Christ for sin was not more distinguished in its origin, than by its excellence. He offered up himself, his human nature; an offering absolutely without spot or blemish. He offered himself, not in part, but wholly. The offerings under the law were merely bodily sacrifices; and the offering of Christ was, in like manner, an embodied sacrifice; hence we read that he 'bare our sins in his own body on the tree;' and of our being 'sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all.'

But his body was not the whole, nor the principal part of the sacrifice which he offered. It is not the body but the soul that makes the man. His body connects him with the inferior animals which have bodies without souls; but his soul unites him to the angels of heaven, who have souls without bodies. In the offering of himself, Christ 'poured out his soul unto death.' He underwent the most intense bodily suffering; yet this bore no proportion to the 'travail of his soul,' which was quite distinct from the pain of his body, and did not result from it. Before the hand of violence had touched his body he felt all the anguish of this mysterious travail. In the garden it convulsed him with agony, and expressed itself in drops of bloody sweat, and drew from him the exclamation, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.'

Christ presented his offering in the view of the people; yet the people could see a small portion only of his sufferings. They saw his countenance 'marred more than any man's, and his visage more than the sons of men.' They saw his back torn with the scourge, his head bruised with thorns, his body bending under the weight of his cross, his hands and his feet fastened by nails to the accursed tree. But they could see nothing of the anguish of his spirit under the hidings of his Father's countenance, when the sword of justice was plunged into his innocent side, and the storm of infinite wrath poured out its fury on his head, and the load of his people's guilt pressed him down to the lowest abyss of wretchedness, when he trode the wine-press alone, and magnified the law, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and triumphed over principalities and powers, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

In the offering of the Redeemer's soul for sin let us contemplate, with adoring wonder and gratitude, the transcendent love of God the Father in appointing so expensive a sacrifice, and of God the Son in consenting to become the victim; and let the love of Christ constrain us thus

to judge, 'that if one died for all, then were all dead; and he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.'

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,'* Heb. vii. 26.

AARON was an high priest, but not such an high priest as became us. As a man, he was guilty in common with all other men, and, therefore, needed daily to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people's. The sacrifices which he presented, moreover, had no power to take away sin, and could not 'make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience.' The priesthood of Aaron, indeed, was divinely appointed, and it completely answered all the purposes of its institution. But it wanted both influence and permanence; it was entirely typical in its nature and use; and derived all its importance from that better dispensation which it prefigured, and by which it was superseded.

But we have 'an high Priest over the house of God.' This name has been given to Christ, not in the way of mere accommodation to the Levitical priesthood, but to express his mediatorial office, and redeeming work. He was like Aaron 'called of God an high priest;' and anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. The Jewish high priest offered sacrifice; Christ in like manner gave himself for us 'an offering and a sacrifice to God of sweet-smelling savour.' The high priest under the law went into the most holy place once every year, and presented himself before the mercy seat, having the blood of atonement in his hand; so Jesus our High Priest, 'by his own blood entered in once into the holy place, and sat down on the right hand of God, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us.' But Christ was not called to the priesthood after the order of Aaron. He belonged to a different family, and another tribe. Aaron represented Christ partly, but not perfectly. The law made nothing perfect: there was therefore 'a necessity for another priest, who should rise after the order of Melchizedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron.' Christ rose to the priesthood after the similitude of Melchizedec, of whom it is said that he was 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.' He had parents like other men:

he had both a beginning of days and an end of life. But his descent is not recorded; neither is the date of his birth, nor of his death. These particulars were concealed, in order that he might be 'made like unto the Son of God,' who, as man, was without a human father, and as God, without a mother; who was in the beginning with God, and liveth for evermore; who is 'made higher than the heavens,' having a name given to him which is 'above every name.' Such an High Priest became us. He supplied all the defects of the Levitical priesthood, and realized all its pre-figurations. He has power with God, and prevails. Him the Father heareth always. He is just such a priest as we needed, and as a priest, he is all that we need. For in one mysterious person he combines supreme divinity with—

Sinless humanity. He took upon him the reality of our flesh, but he assumed only the likeness of our sinful flesh. 'It behoved him to be in all things made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.' He who knew no sin consented to be reckoned sinful, and submitted to be treated as sinful, that we 'might be made the righteousness of God in him.' But he is 'holy,' not merely in virtue of his consecration to the priesthood, but personally and inherently, in the possession of every moral excellence of which human nature is susceptible. He is, therefore, perfectly 'harmless,' as well as infinitely 'holy,' free from actual transgression, chargeable with no neglect or violation of duty. And as he committed no actual sin, so he contracted no moral pollution; for he was 'undefiled.' Wickedness prevailed around him, but it affixed no stain on him. He may with truth be said to have been 'separate from sinners.' He dwelt among them, and associated with them. He felt for them, and expressed his sympathy towards them by going about doing good both to their bodies and souls. Yet he was entirely separate from them in spirit and affection, in practice and character. In a moral point of view, he had nothing in common with sinners, and was in every respect opposed to them.

In the priesthood of Christ what a sure foundation is laid of confidence towards God! His work is perfect. We behold its effect in sin taken away, justice satisfied, peace procured, grace provided, death disarmed, and glory promised. Believing in him, we may ask with the apostle, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 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.'

What a lovely character is here exhibited for our imitation! He left us an example that we should follow his steps. His people were pre-destinated to be conformed to his image. 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.' 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' Let all who believe in him be careful to maintain good works.

As he represents us in heaven, let us represent him on earth. As he pleads with God for us, let us plead with men for him. Speak well of his ways, commend his truth, promote his cause, reprove the ungodly, edify the church, 'be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

#### TWENTY-FOURTH DAY—MORNING.

*'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,'* Isa. liii. 3.

THE Saviour as a man is distinguishable from all other men by the character he exhibited, and the sufferings he endured. He is fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into his lips. No man ever spake, and none ever acted like him. History records no example equal to his in purity, in zeal, in excellence, and usefulness. As his character was peculiar, so was his experience. He descended as far below other men in humiliation and sorrow, as he rose above them in piety and moral perfection. The treatment he experienced was connected with circumstances which, in the highest degree, aggravated its criminality. He was treated with—

Contempt, for 'he was despised of men.' They despised him for the obscurity of his birth, and asked, 'Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?' They despised him for the meanness of his occupation and kindred, saying, 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon: and are not his sisters here with us?' They despised him for the company with whom he associated, 'When the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth with publicans and sinners?' They despised his person and pretensions; his doctrine and miracles: they regarded him as a man utterly unwor-

thy of respect or attention; they held him up to scorn and infamy as 'a wine-bibber and a glutton, the friend of publicans and sinners.' They even preferred a murderer to him. And after he had been given over to them to be crucified, as if the death of the cross were not a sufficient degradation, they loaded him with insult and indignity; they buffeted and spat on him; they clothed him in a purple robe; put on him a crown of thorns, and with impious mockery bowed the knee before him, and cried, 'Hail, King of the Jews.' To contempt there was added—

Rejection, for he was also 'rejected of men.' 'He came to his own, and they received him not.' They hated his instructions, and said, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' They resisted his authority, and declared, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' He invited them to believe, that they might be saved; but they continued in unbelief: he commanded them to repent, that their sins might be blotted out; but they persisted in their impenitence. He was rejected by the elders; the lawyers rejected him; the whole Jewish nation, with a few exceptions, rejected him. They rejected the truths which he taught, the blessings which he offered, the ministry which he exercised, the sacrifice which he offered, the salvation which he wrought out. 'My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.' In addition to contempt and rejection he was subjected to the endurance of unparalleled—

Distress. His experience of pain and grief procured for him the distinguishing appellation of 'the man of sorrows;' a name alike honouring to him, and instructive and consolatory to us. What is the history of his life, but a tale of distress, having written on it within and without, 'lamentation, and mourning, and woe?' Grief was in him not an occasional feeling, but a habitual state of mind; and there were in it an intensity and an acuteness of suffering, of which he alone was susceptible. His acquaintance with grief began at his birth, and it became every day more intimate and agonizing until, under the weight of accumulated and overwhelming sorrow, he 'bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.' Such is the treatment which the Saviour met with; and in his character and conduct there was everything to aggravate its criminality. Let it be viewed in connection with—

The innocence of his life. He could appeal to his bitterest enemies, and ask, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' Never did he either pro-

voke or resent an injury, for he was both harmless and holy. He exhibited a combination of all those qualities which are most calculated to disarm hostility, to command esteem, and engage affection. How strange, and contradictory, and seemingly unaccountable that the holiest of men should be the greatest sufferer! But the treatment he met with will appear still more inexplicable, when viewed in connection with—

The usefulness of his labours. He went about doing good, giving food to the hungry, health to the diseased, sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, comfort to the sorrowful, and life to the dead. He spent his life in ministering to the relief of human misery, and in adding to the amount of human happiness. What numbers of the Jews were debtors to his compassion and power! By his teaching, example, and miracles, he made himself a benefactor to the whole Jewish nation. Yet they despised and rejected him. Peter explained the mystery, when he said to them, 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' They were merely God's instruments, and did what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done. But they acted wilfully, and wickedly, and therefore righteously perished.

Let none imagine that in similar circumstances they would have acted a different part. The spirit which influenced them is common to all. Hence it is that the stone which the builders rejected is still disallowed: and of those who confess him in words, how many deny him by their works! But to them which believe, he is precious. Whilst others see no beauty in him that he should be desired, they exclaim, 'how great is his beauty!' Yet how small a portion do they know of him. But what they know not now, they shall know hereafter. They shall see the King in his beauty, and appear with him 'when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.'

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TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,' Isa. liii. 4.

IN the time of Isaiah, the sufferings of Christ were future; yet he spake of them as if they had

been already past. He foresaw them by the spirit of prophecy; but he described them in the language of history, to intimate their absolute certainty, and their perfect efficacy. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.' This from eternity he had undertaken to do, and the engagement became available in behalf of man from the period of his fall. The death of Christ possessed the same importance, and exercised the same influence under the Old Testament dispensation, which belong to it under the New, as the only way of access to God, and the sure ground of acceptance with him. The prophet tells—

What the Saviour suffered—'griefs' and 'sorrows,' representing an extremity of pain and anguish both in soul and body which no finite mind can conceive, and which no human language can express. Never was there any sorrow like his sorrow. The prophet describes the manner of the Saviour's endurance, and tells us *how* he suffered; with what meekness, and patience, and cheerful resignation he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Above all, he points out the *principle* of the Saviour's sufferings, and declares them to have been purely—

Voluntary. It was not possible, indeed, that the cup which the Father had given him should pass away from him. But the obligation to suffer resulted from choice, not from necessity. He could say, 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' We had no claim on his sympathy. He beheld in us nothing to attract his favour, but every thing to provoke his displeasure, and excite his abhorrence. Yet he 'loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish.' His sufferings were strictly—

Vicarious. He endured them not merely for our benefit, but as our substitute, and he endured them in our nature, which he took upon him with all its sinless infirmities attached to it. Thus he literally put himself in our place, and bore not his, but our griefs, and carried our sorrows. So that what he endured actually for his people, they endured virtually in him. Hence they are said to be crucified with him, to be buried with him, and to be risen with him. What he is mediatorially, they are in virtue of their union

to him; all that he did and suffered in their behalf, they did and suffered in his person. And as their griefs and sorrows were transferred to him, so the merit of his submission and suffering is imputed to them. They become righteous in his obedience, and are accepted in him the Beloved. The Lord, looking upon them in the face of his Anointed, sees no iniquity in them, approves of them, delights in them, and blesses them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. His sufferings were completely—

Effectual. All that he undertook to do, he has accomplished. In him we have the antitype of the scape-goat, which carried away the sins of the people, after having been confessed by the high priest, into the wilderness. 'He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.' The offering of the scape-goat needed to be renewed every year; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God, having by this one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and 'become the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' The members of the church on earth unite in expressing their dependence on him, and acknowledging their obligations to him saying, 'in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;' and the ascriptions of the redeemed in heaven assert the same truth, and breathe a similar spirit, and commemorate the same deliverance, 'Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.'

The sufferings of Christ, it is true, have not procured for his people the privilege of exemption from the griefs and the sorrows of temporal affliction; far less can they serve as a substitute for the griefs and the sorrows of genuine repentance. But they open up a fountain of rich consolation and never-failing support under trials of every description; and in particular, to mourners in Zion they 'give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' Let us, by faith and prayer, look to him for strength both to act and endure as seeing him who is invisible; let us go to him without the camp, bearing his reproach; not only willing to serve, but prepared to suffer in his service and for his sake; rejoicing in the belief that they who suffer for him shall also reign with him, and that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.

## TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Gal. vi. 14.*

THE *subject* of this resolution is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which we are to understand not the material or wooden cross on which the Redeemer was suspended, and in which there could be nothing whereof to glory; but the sacrificial cross, by which he made atonement for sin, and reconciled us unto God. In a more extended sense the cross means the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which all refer to the cross as the foundation on which they rest, and the centre in which they terminate. We may observe—

The *state of mind* which the apostle expressed in reference to this subject. He resolved to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; thus expressing his approbation of it, his confidence in it, his attachment to it, his expectations from it, his determination to adhere to it, to commend it, to contend for it, to live under its influence. He spake in his public capacity, and expressed the determination of every faithful minister of Christ; he spake also in his private character, and gave utterance to the feelings of every real believer.

He excluded every other ground of glorying *not consistent* with the honour of the cross. There were many other things in which he had been accustomed to glory: but he no longer regarded them as grounds of glorying. What! Shall he glory in his honourable descent; sprung from the father of the faithful; of the stock of Israel; of the tribe of Benjamin; a Hebrew of the Hebrews? 'God forbid.' Shall he glory in his connection with the church of the living God; circumcised the eighth day; a member of the commonwealth of Israel; to whom pertained the covenants, the adoption, the giving of the law, and the promises? 'God forbid.' Shall he then glory in his superior intellectual attainments; brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; possessing a mind highly cultivated by the pursuits of philosophy, and richly furnished with the stores of literature? 'God forbid.' Shall he rather glory in the correctness of his moral deportment, as touching the law, a Pharisee; and as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless? 'God forbid.' 'What things were formerly gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ: yea, I count all things but loss that I may win Christ, and be found in him.'

But whilst Paul rejected every ground of glorying not consistent with the claims of the cross, he made every other subject of glorying

*subservient* to the honour of the cross. He still gloried in many things. He gloried in his infirmities; but it was that the power of Christ might rest upon him. He gloried in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses; but it was for Christ's sake. He became a fool in glorying. He gloried in the birth of Christ, in his life and labours, in his teaching and miracles; but it was because they all pointed to the cross. He gloried in the doctrine of Christ, because it was the doctrine of the cross; in the preaching of Christ, because it was the preaching of the cross; in the death of Christ, because it was the death of the cross; in the triumphs of Christ, because they were the triumphs of the cross. The apostle had the best possible—

Reasons for resolving to glory in nothing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He saw in it the most interesting display of the divine character that was ever presented to the world; exhibiting the justice, the holiness, the power, the truth, and the mercy of God in perfect harmony, and with the clearest evidence. He beheld in it the end and fulfilment of the Old Testament dispensation, which all pointed to the cross, and terminated in it. In the cross the type was met by its antitype, the shadow by the substance, the prefiguration by the reality, the prediction by the event: the dawn was succeeded by the day, the stars disappeared in the brighter light of the Sun of righteousness. In the sacrifice of the cross the apostle witnessed the achievement of a complete and final victory over sin, and satan, and the world, and death. He discerned in it the sure foundation of a sinner's confidence and hope towards God, than which 'other foundation can no man lay,' but on which whosoever believeth shall not be confounded, world without end. He knew it to be the only effectual mean of securing the attainment of personal holiness, both by the moral perfections which it exemplifies, and the purifying influence which it exerts. The enemies of Christ praise virtue, but the disciples of the cross practise it. And as the cross is the effectual mean of sanctification to believers, so it is the appointed instrument of conversion to sinners. Upon all these grounds Paul might well say, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

This was in him the language of grateful experience. He knew the value, because he had felt the efficacy of the cross. What but the influence of the cross changed the fury of the persecutor into the zeal of the preacher, and the

pride of the self-righteous Pharisee into the humility of the Christian disciple? What but the power of the cross supported him under the fiery trials that befel him, and enabled him in the near prospect of martyrdom to say, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing.' For Paul is one only of an innumerable multitude who possess the same confidence, and taste the same consolations, and whose lips and lives express the same acknowledgments.

Mankind are naturally disposed to glory in everything save in the cross of Christ; but whilst some glory in their wealth, and some in their rank, and some in their honours, and some glory even in their shame, let our language be, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.'

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

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

EVERY view in which the sufferings of Christ can be contemplated serves to enhance their value, and furnishes additional reason for wonder and praise. How important do they appear when viewed in connection with—

The character of the sufferer! 'It is better,' as the apostle had observed, 'that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.' And he could appeal to Christ as an illustrious example of generous and undeserved suffering. He was perfectly 'just,' yet he suffered. The Jews loaded him with accusations, and demanded his crucifixion; but his innocence shone forth even to the conviction of his enemies. The wife of Pilate proclaimed it; for she 'sent to him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with the blood of that just man.' Pilate himself bore public testimony to it; for he 'took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person.' And to the same effect the Roman centurion exclaimed, 'Certainly this was a righteous man.' We are assured by far higher authority that he did no sin, and knew no sin; that he is the Holy One and the Just, and did always 'those things that pleased the Father.' The sufferings of Christ acquire a still

deeper interest when the character of the sufferer is contrasted with—

The unworthiness of those for whom he suffered. He the Just One suffered, but it was 'for the unjust;' for the guilty, who were obnoxious to his justice; for the depraved who were odious to his holiness, and averse to his service; for aliens and enemies, for the worthless and helpless, who neither deserved his favour, nor desired it; 'for the ungodly,' whom he might not only have left to perish in their sins, but whom he was called on to punish for their sins. But in order justly to estimate the sufferings of Christ, we must consider—

The gracious design for which he suffered. It was not merely that he might save us from wrath, but that he might sanctify us from sin, and 'bring us unto God.' He suffered that he might bring us to the *knowledge* of God, of his perfections and government, of his righteous law and redeeming love, of his abhorrence of sin and his compassion for sinners, of the way in which he might be both a just God and a Saviour. He suffered that he might bring us to the *favour* of God, by expiating our guilt, and procuring the blessing of a free and full remission of sin; by fulfilling the law, and working out for us a complete and everlasting righteousness. He suffered that he might bring us to the *likeness* of God, by providing a channel through which the influences of the Spirit are sent forth into the hearts of his people, to renew them 'after the image of Him that created them in righteousness and true holiness.' He suffered that he might bring us to the *enjoyment* of God on earth, by taking away sin which had set up a barrier between God and us; by thus opening up a way of access to God, and laying a foundation of acceptance with him, on the footing of which we may come boldly to the throne of grace for mercy to pardon, and grace to help us in every time of need. And he suffered that he might bring us to the *presence* of God in heaven. The kingdom which he received for himself, is at the same time the inheritance which he purchased for his people. At his ascension he took possession of it in their name, and on their behalf. He is now, by his word and Spirit, preparing them for it, and conducting them to it; and as the completing act of his mediatorial administration he will introduce them into the personal possession of it by presenting them before the presence of his Father's glory 'faultless and blameless with exceeding joy.'

Those for whom Christ suffered needed to be brought nigh to God. They are by nature the

children of wrath even as others; they are far from God, and ready to perish. But they 'who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.' And having thus been brought nigh they ought to live near to God, cherishing a humble and contrite sense of their natural alienation and estrangement from him, and a grateful and affectionate sense of their restoration to his friendship, cultivating the feelings which are suited to the relation which they bear to him, and acting habitually under the impression that they are no longer 'strangers or foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.'

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice,'*  
Psal. l. 5.

It is well known that, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the most fearful judgments were executed upon the unbelieving Jews, those who had believed in Jesus Christ were miraculously preserved. And to this historical fact there seems to be a reference here, in the spirit of prophecy, for the announcement comes from Jehovah in the midst of threatened vengeance. 'Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.'

But there is a more awful judgment than that of Jerusalem intended here. It was typical of the final judgment of the world. And blessed be God, he who preserved the Christians in the siege of the ancient city, so that not a hair of their heads was injured, will deliver his people in the day of final retribution, with a far more glorious deliverance,—fulfilling again the gracious promise of Christ, and far more illustriously than before. 'He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' Nor will he be satisfied with their deliverance merely, for he will exalt them to be sharers of his own glory; as it is written, 'the saints shall judge the world,—yea, they shall judge angels.'

But who are they that shall thus be delivered and honoured? What is their present character?

What are their attainments? The answer is clear and full,—'the saints of God, who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice.'

'The saints!' The title is borrowed from the sanctuary of old, and it means to be set apart, or separated, implying, that as the sanctuary was set apart for the service of God, so his believing people are separated from the ungodly, and devoted to his worship and fear. Did God dwell in the sanctuary? They are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Were all the ordinances of the sanctuary expressive of purity? They are pure in heart. Was holiness the law of the house? They are enjoined, 'be ye holy, in all manner of conversation.' With what propriety then are they termed saints? And is it not reason of surprise and humiliation that the term is used in the world as a reproach; and that there are many who shrink from bearing the appellation as though the deepest dishonour attached to it? Let it be our highest ambition to be reckoned among the saints of God, for they truly are the excellent of the earth.

As saints they are in *covenant* with God. This is the bond of connection between Jehovah and his people. His address to men is, 'hear and your souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.' According to this covenant he becomes their God and they his people,—He engaging to provide for all their wants, and they unreservedly yielding up themselves to him. It engages pardon and acceptance and purity and peace, all spiritual blessings here and hereafter, with a right to a competent portion of the good things of this life, so far as they may be necessary and conducive to the real interests of his people. And the relation of God to them is expressed in this form of covenant for their encouragement and comfort: as it is written, 'God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.' Let the sinner enter into this covenant, and he will find it the ark of safety, the city of refuge, the hiding-place from the storm of life and death and judgment. At the same time it implies a hearty and universal surrender to God. He receives us into favour, and we give him our hearts. He provides for our necessities, and we yield him our services. He pledges to us his love, and we lay ourselves, all we are, and have, upon his altar. He avouches us to be his people, and we avouch him to be our God.

And how can a pure and holy God thus treat

with sinners, such as we are? This covenant is made with him 'by sacrifice.' It was made in eternity, not with the sinner, but with the Saviour, in the sinner's room. This is the testimony of the divine word, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen,—I have given him for a covenant unto the people.' Jehovah treats with sinners through the mediation of his Son, nor could his purity allow him to do so otherwise. The covenant secured all the blessings the sinner needs, but it was on the condition of the death of its surety. Sinners are taken into covenant with God 'through the blood of the everlasting covenant.' They come to Jesus, are united to him by faith, obtain an interest in his death, are then entitled to plead what he has done and suffered, and so enter into covenant with God by sacrifice, even through the merits and mediation of the sacrifice which Christ presented, when he gave his soul an offering for sin, and bare our sins in his own body on the tree. In no other way can the sinner come to God or enjoy his favour. 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me.' But coming thus he is welcome. When the blood was seen on the houses of Israel in Egypt they were passed by and left in safety by the destroying angel; and when the blood of the covenant is seen upon the sinner God accepts him, and owns him for a son. On the ground of that sacrifice he may ask and receive till his joy be full, God will withhold no good thing from him. And he may continually say, 'having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' Thus, coming to God through a covenant, sealed by the sacrifice of his Son, we need not fear even to stand before him in the judgment.

Meantime, in the solemn anticipation of that judgment, let us see that we live as those who have entered into covenant with God by sacrifice. In the prospect of being gathered in judgment, let us now gather together in the name of our great High Priest. There are many assemblies where we ought not to be found,—not with the ungodly in their pursuit of earthly pleasures and sensual gratifications, not at the race-course, the theatre, or the ball-room. Let us gather together at the family altar, knowing God will pour out his fury upon the families that call not on his name; in exercises of social prayer, knowing that if two shall agree upon earth, touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done unto them; in the sanctuary, for God loveth the gates of Zion more

than all the dwellings of Jacob; at the sacramental table, seeing Christ hath said 'do this in remembrance of me.' Acting and living thus, then may we trust there is evidence that when God shall pour out the vials of his wrath upon the ungodly, we shall be included in the number of his people, of whom he shall say, 'Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.'

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,'*  
Psal. lxxiii. 25.

THERE are many temptations, in the present aspect of the world, to doubt and distrust the providence of God; and on many occasions the mind of David appears to have been greatly harassed by them. He says, ver. 2, 3, '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.' Still worse, he was tempted to express himself, ver. 13, 14, 'I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.' But he was delivered from these vain and sinful thoughts. He informs us how this was, ver. 17, 'I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.' Looking at the events of time, as there shown in the light of eternity, he exclaimed, ver. 19, 'how are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are consumed with terrors.' Humbled for his distrustful suspicions, he cried out, 'My heart was grieved, so foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.' He counted his own conduct highly irrational, and recovering the right exercise of his mind, he lifted up his soul to God, and said, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.'

These are the words of truth and soberness; and whatever may be the outward aspect of affairs, the more the exclamation of the psalmist is considered and tried, so will it be found to be wise and reasonable.

'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' We know of two glorious orders of beings in heaven besides Jehovah, glorified saints and holy angels. But what are these compared with God? They may be admired, and in some respects imitated, and their fellowship earnestly desired; but they cannot be sought unto in prayer, nor confided in

to bless us, nor approached with the honour of worship. There is a disposition in the human mind to exalt them beyond their true condition, but this is condemned in the scriptures as superstitious and idolatrous. In the book of the Revelation, xxii. 8, 9, we read, 'When I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant; worship God.' Jehovah will not give his glory to another. Let us beware, that however we may admire the glorified inhabitants of heaven, we do not trust in them nor adore.

But whatever temptation may arise from this source, it is more difficult to say, 'There is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.' Our great attractions are to the earth and earthly things. And yet how vain are they all!

Riches! They are uncertain, and make to themselves wings and fly away. They are unsatisfying, mere husks, that cannot be food for a rational and immortal mind. They are perplexing, often more difficult to keep than obtain, to use than earn. 'If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them.' 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.'

Pleasures! They are commonly the seeds of pain. Hear one who tried all their rounds, and bore faithful testimony to their insufficiency: 'I gave myself unto wine, I made me great works, I got me servants and maidens, I gathered me also silver and gold; whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.'

Ambition! A mere bubble! A phantom that may amuse for a moment, but beguiles and leaves to the bitterness of disappointment. Remember the history of the great king Nebuchadnezzar. 'He spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken. The kingdom is departed from thee. They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.' 'Those that walk in pride, he is able to abase.'

The creature! We may love him, but not supremely. We may enjoy him, provided only we enjoy God in him. Apart from God he will be a snare. If put in the room of God, he will

be a disappointment. Let us prize him as the gift of God, employ him as the servant of God, use him for the glory of God; but remember his and our dependence upon God, and be ready to part with him at the command of God. 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?'

The wise man raises his thoughts above the earth. God is his chosen portion. How satisfying and secure! He is reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, and loves, and serves, and honours, and enjoys him as a Father. The divine perfections are his security; unerring wisdom his counsellor; almighty power his support; unchanging faithfulness his refuge; unbounded love his consolation; inflexible justice his defence. 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.' 'O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.' 'They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' O that we may ever breathe the spirit of David, saying with our whole heart,—

'Whom have I in the heavens high  
But thee, O Lord, alone!  
And on the earth whom I desire  
Besides thee there is none.'

#### TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Without shedding of blood is no remission,'  
Heb. ix. 22.

If any one will turn to a concordance, and search for the term *blood*, he will find it is used with so much frequency in the scriptures as at once to suggest the idea of great importance being attached to it. Nor is it the mere frequency of the term that is remarkable so much as the use of the blood itself, in connection with the doctrines intended to be taught, and the ends to be answered by it. Throughout the whole of the Old Testament scriptures, under all dispensations of religion, it has the greatest prominence given to it. If Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, one feature of difference between their offerings was the shedding of blood. When Abraham was taken into covenant with God it was sealed by blood. And for its use under the Mosaic economy see the preceding context, from which the passage under meditation is an inference, and in every verse of which the term occurs, ver. 18—22. 'Neither the first Testament was dedicated without blood. Moses took the blood of calves and goats and sprinkled the book and all the people—this is the blood of

the Testament—he sprinkled with *blood* the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry—and almost all things are by the law purged with *blood.* When it is considered that this is the language of the Holy Spirit, it must be felt that it is used with wisdom and design.

So also in the gospel. Marked attention is paid to the shedding of the blood of Christ. In the agony of the garden his 'sweat was as it were great drops of *blood* falling down to the ground.' At the time of his death the blood poured freely from his hands and feet, rudely lacerated by the nails that fastened him to the cross, as well as by the injury of the thorns with which, in mockery, he was crowned. And the incident is particularly noticed that as he hung on the cross, a soldier pierced his side with a spear, so that there came thence *blood* and water. Does there not seem to be a design to teach that all the blood which had flowed in the body of Christ was poured out until life became completely extinct? And when he died, and ordinances were instituted to commemorate his death, these are so ordered as still to keep the shedding of his blood prominently in view. Witness the water in baptism, and wine in the supper.

But let us inquire what meaneth this? What is the mystery in the shedding of blood? The principle of interpretation is thus given in the law of Moses, 'the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul,' Lev. xvii. 11. By pouring out the blood the life was given up, and by giving up the life, in the room of another, atonement was made. Under the law this was figuratively and typically declared, and only so, for the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin. But under the gospel this was literally and really accomplished when Jesus Christ poured out his soul unto death, and presented it an offering for sin. The ceremonies of the law were only the shadow, while his death was the substance. And so important is this doctrine, that the entire epistle to the Hebrews was written for its elucidation.

And what was there so peculiar in the shedding of Christ's blood as to render it thus efficacious? This is explained by John saying, 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' He was the Son of God. As Son he was an equal partaker of the nature and glory of the Godhead with the Father and the Spirit. Hence the efficacy of his death—its merit is infinite—enough to satisfy for the sins of an apostate world.

But why was this necessary to the remission of sin? The law of God required it—the truth of God required it—the honour of God required it—the character of God required it. 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' Wondrous economy! God glorified while the sinner is saved! 'The law magnified while the guilty is pardoned! Heaven sounding with praises while earth is redeemed from sin.

For in the one appointment of the shedding of blood a provision is made to meet the evil of sin in all its bearings. Here is pardon, and peace, and purity, and redemption. The blood of Christ is alike a title to heaven, and a motive to holiness. 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ.' And upon all such is it enjoined, 'ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and spirit, which are his.'

Am I in Christ? Does the holiness of my life evidence the reality of my faith? O! my soul, the blood of Christ now speaketh peace. Let it be sprinkled on the conscience by the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to apply it to the sinner. But it may be disregarded, and neither its necessity nor worth may be known, and if so, the day cometh when it shall cry for vengeance, worse than that of Abel—when the charge shall be, 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' And then shall the punishment be that of him 'who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace.'

'Behold the Saviour on the cross,  
a spectacle of woe!  
See from his agonizing wounds  
the blood incessant flow;  
Till death's pale ensigns o'er his cheek  
and trembling lips were spread;  
Till light forsook his closing eyes,  
and life his drooping head!

'Tis finish'd—was his latest voice;  
these sacred accents o'er,  
He bowed his head, gave up the ghost,  
and suffer'd pain no more.  
'Tis finish'd—The Messiah dies  
for sins, but not his own;  
The great redemption is complete,  
and Satan's pow'r o'erthrown.

'Tis finish'd—All his groans are past;  
his blood his pains, and toils,  
Have fully vanquished our foes,  
and crown'd him with their spoils.  
'Tis finish'd—Legal worship ends,  
and gospel ages run;  
All old things now are past away,  
and a new world begun.'

## TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you,'* Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

THIS promise is addressed to the Jews, and contains an assurance of their final restoration to the favour and service of God, as is manifest from the context, 'Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God,' ver. 28. 'Then the heathen, that are left round about you, shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate; I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it,' ver. 36.

Viewed in this application, the promise is singularly rich and precious. For how great is the guilt of Israel! Yet shall it be removed. How deep their depravity! Yet shall it be healed. How invertebrate their sinfulness! Yet shall it be overcome. They crucified the Lord of glory, and cried out, 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children;' for eighteen hundred years they have continued to 'trample under foot the blood of the Son of God;' and by an obstinate perseverance in iniquity they have done despite to the Spirit of his grace. Yet is there mercy in store for them. The blood which they shed shall be applied to them for cleansing. This is the clean water spoken of in the promise. It can, and will make even guilty Israel clean. 'There shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.'

What exalted views does such a promise give us of the redeeming power and love of God! It is, indeed, a satisfying evidence of the precious doctrine of the apostle Paul, 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.'

And does it not encourage and require us diligently to seek the recovery of Israel? God has thoughts of mercy towards them, and we should labour to see them blessed with his favour. O for more of the prophet's spirit in the Christian church, breathing its anxieties for the ancient people of God in his words, 'For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.'

But it is not Israel only that is concerned in such a promise as this. The dealings of God

towards them are illustrative of his dealings towards us. They are a living exemplification of the depth of the divine love, and the power of divine grace. Hence Christians are addressed, 'Ye are come to mount Zion, and the city of the living God'—to all the promises and privileges of ancient Israel. The clean water of Calvary has healing virtue for the souls of men in all ages and countries. And the rich promise upon which we dwell may be pleaded wherever there is guilt to pardon, or impurity to cleanse, or ungodliness to change. The address is to sinners, 'ye shall be clean.' And O how various and valuable the blessings which it contains.

It is a promise of pardon. 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' 'In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' There is no amount of crime beyond the reach of pardon. In this respect well might Jehovah say by the prophet, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' He pardoned Saul of Tarsus and Mary Magdalene. There may be defilement which water cannot cleanse, but there is no guilt which the blood of Christ cannot remove.

It is a promise of purity. And hence is it accompanied with this explanation, '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 an heart of flesh.' The blood of Christ is the 'laver of regeneration,' in which the soul is washed, and in which, while its guilt is removed, its nature is changed. However hardened in sin before, it becomes tenderly alive to the claims of God and the obligations of his service. Its views, and dispositions, and purposes undergo a complete revolution. It may truly be said, 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.'

It is a promise of external holiness, as well as inward purity. For it is added, 'I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' When sin is pardoned, it is not that it may be contracted afresh. On the contrary, a powerful motive arises hence to avoid it in future. A sense of pardoning mercy is a mighty sanctifying principle. And when the heart is renewed, this is the qualification for a godly life. Till then the inclination is wanted; but as soon as this is done, holiness becomes the delight of the soul. As Jesus is loved,

so is he imitated and obeyed. The more his work is considered, the more powerful its influence in determining to walk after his precepts. The very habit of the Christian is 'always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in his body.' He feels the force of the poet's sentiment—

'Talk they of morals! O thou bleeding Lamb!  
The grand morality is love to thee.'

But let us not omit to notice that it is a promise upon which we have been meditating. A promise! Therefore we must come to God by prayer, and plead it with him. His language is, 'I will for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.' A promise! Therefore we must receive the blessing gratuitously. We cannot purchase it. While we dream of a price, we hinder our reception of it. We are to ask and receive. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to apply the blood of Christ to the conscience, and this is the exhortation of Jesus, 'If your fathers, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?'

#### TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

'That will by no means clear the guilty,' Exod. xxxiv. 7.

'By no means!' The phrase is intended to be a strong expression of that which is affirmed. But the expression is not stronger than the reality. God cannot—will not—on no account—'by no means clear the guilty.'

His nature forbids it. They who know him must join with the prophet in saying, 'thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.' How hateful sin is to a good man when he turns his eyes from the sight of it, loathing it in his very soul, and feeling towards it only hatred and disgust. But feeble are the emotions of the purest hearts when compared with the displeasure of a pure and holy God. 'Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing; the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.'

The law of God forbids it. This law is correctly and beautifully described by the apostle Paul to

be 'holy, and just, and good.' Holy! distinguishing in every instance between right and wrong, good and evil. Just! determining the claims and duties of all intelligent creatures. And good! securing the best interests of all who obey it. Now to this law are all subject, at all times, and in all things. None can escape from its observation, or evade its requirements. Nor can it relax its demands, nor forego its obligations. Wherever sin is found, the law detects and condemns it. It is the guardian of Jehovah's character, while it is the expression of his will. Nothing, therefore, can it tolerate that is contrary to the nature and the will of God.

And how illustrative of both the nature and the law of God have all his dealings towards mankind been. His law was published with a solemn sanction, 'in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' And since it has been violated, the history of guilty man has been a record of 'weeping, and lamentation, and woe.' 'By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.' One sin involved a world in ruin. And as in this sinful world iniquity has abounded, so have the divine judgments been poured out. These have sometimes been general, as when the waters of the deluge swept away, in one awful destruction, the guilty inhabitants of the earth. At other times they have been more special, as when, provoked by special transgression, God destroyed the cities of the plain with fire and brimstone. And still are they manifest in the individual history of sinners, who have been plainly warned, 'be sure your sin will find you out,' and who have usually found, sooner or later, that verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth. To all which must be added the day of righteous retribution, when God will lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and detect, and expose, and punish the guilty.

Nor will the mercy of God extinguish the attribute of his justice. Let us particularly observe the connection in which we find the subject of our meditation. 'The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' The highest expression of mercy is joined with the strongest assertion of justice. And these are obviously brought together for the sake of warning and instruction. Let us carefully weigh the truths which are thus presented for our consideration.

We learn that while God delighteth in mercy

he will yet maintain the claims of his justice. In the gospel, which is the brightest display of love, we have the most awful expression of justice. The very same act, even the gift of his Son, proclaims at the same time both these attributes. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son;' yet 'it became him to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering.' This way of salvation was chosen, because it was the only one by which the divine attributes could be harmonized in the redemption of sinners. 'God hath set him forth to be a propitiation though faith in his blood; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.'

We learn that notwithstanding the mercy of God and the gracious provision which it has made for sinners, they who continue in sin shall not escape the righteous judgments of God. Such as have fled to Christ are looked upon in him. God is well-pleased with them for his sake, and he can and does justify them freely through him. But they who have not been united with him, and must therefore be treated upon the ground of their own worthiness, cannot stand before him when he ariseth to judge terribly the earth. For as his nature is still opposed to sin, and his law still condemnatory of it, the transgressor cannot escape either his cognizance or his wrath. As the provision of the gospel has not been embraced by him, 'the wrath of God abideth on him.'

We learn that the mercy of the gospel aggravates the guilt of the sinner. After describing its provisions, the apostle Paul exclaims, 'how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Unbelief is a sin of the greatest magnitude. The fullness, the freeness, and the grace of the gospel, are its high aggravations. The unbeliever makes Jesus, the Friend, the Saviour of sinners, his enemy. He has rejected the proffers of his love, and he shall meet the terrors of his displeasure. And it becomes him to ponder well the question, 'Who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth?'

Finally, we learn that God will visit for sin, even in his own people. In them, indeed, it is specially hateful to him. It is said with great emphasis, 'Our God is a consuming fire.' The God of the believer is a consuming fire to him, for he will not suffer sin upon him, but will burn it up with the breath of his judgment. How heavy was his hand upon ancient Israel when they disobeyed him! And his judgments upon them were heavy because they were dear to him. And what is still more to the point, he visits not merely his professing people, but those who are really his,

when they sin against him. This is among the promises he has given them, 'I will visit your iniquity with stripes.' And has he not ever done so? How has he exposed and humbled his erring servants! The sin of Abraham, when he deceived Abimelech, was detected, and is recorded to his shame. David sought to cover his sin, but God made both it and its punishment public. An ungodly man may be allowed to conceal his crime, for it will be punished hereafter; but God will not permit his own servants to escape. Let us learn to be watchful. God is jealous of the holiness of his people. And may we never forget what may be interpreted either as a warning or a promise, '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.'

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TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,' Isa. liii. 6.*

In this passage the prophet states comprehensively the doctrine of our Lord's atonement, setting forth in few and simple words its origin, and nature, and extent. Let us follow him in the views which he has so well expressed. And may their contemplation warm our cold hearts!

1. What took place is ascribed to the *Lord*. He it was who laid the iniquity of sinners upon Christ. The wonderful scheme originated with God himself, nor could it have been conceived by any finite mind. In the wonderful person and the atoning work of his own Son, he saw how pardon might be dispensed to the guilty consistently with justice; how the law might be magnified, while the transgressor was acquitted; how God might be glorified, and the sinner saved. What divine wisdom devised, his unbounded love consented should be done. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but might have everlasting life.' He gave his Son—his only-begotten Son—to death—to the most cruel, cursed, and ignominious death—for men, for sinners, for enemies, for their sin, their salvation, their redemption. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' But justice was not meanwhile relaxed. When the Son of God took the place of sinners, the hand of his Father was

heavy upon him. The commission went forth, 'Awake, O sword, against the Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow; smite the Shepherd.' On the cross he was constrained to utter the distressing cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' He endured the wrath of his heavenly Father.

Thus conspicuous was the hand of God in the whole scheme, originating, executing, and consummating it. O! how they misrepresent our views who think we make Jehovah a hard master, requiring to be pacified towards his sinful creatures by a sacrifice that should satisfy his justice. True, his holiness and truth required that an atonement should be made for sin, in order that it might be pardoned; but let us not forget that the atonement he required was by himself provided, that in the depth of his counsels, and the infinity of his love, he found the remedy, and proclaimed, 'Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.' We find the origin of the scheme for man's deliverance in the doctrine of the psalmist, 'The Lord is full of compassion;' or in the same truth, more strongly expressed, by the apostle John, 'God is love.'

2. But let us clearly understand what it was Jehovah did for sinners. 'He laid our iniquity upon him.' Words could not more clearly express the idea of substitution. In the most literal sense, our iniquity was laid upon Christ. This was required by the nature of the case, for sin must be punished in the nature in which it was committed; and as Christ took our nature to qualify him to stand in our place, he took also our sin that he might suffer in our room. In this doctrine alone do we find the meaning of the Mosaic ceremonies. To instance one out of many, let us remember the design of the scape-goat on the solemn anniversary of expiation, as described by the pen and authority of inspiration, 'Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, and all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.' Perhaps it would not be possible, in any other arrangement, more completely to exhibit the doctrine of substitution. Nor is it less manifest in the personal history of Christ himself. He was sinless; yet was there no sorrow like

unto his sorrow. He said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;' language which could arise only from the pressure of suffering under sin. We may, and must acquiesce in the plain testimony of the apostle Paul, 'God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' not a sin-offering merely, as some would have it, but sin, inasmuch as our sin was reckoned to be his, and he was treated as though it were his own. This is the plain doctrine of the scriptures; simple and satisfactory, the Son of God in our nature, taking our sin, bearing its punishment, and bearing it away to the land of forgetfulness. What a provision! Meeting all the necessities of the case, as respects the honour of God, the character of his law, and the safety of sinners.

3. And for whom did the Lord make such a provision? We are told, 'He laid upon him the iniquity of *us all*.' The expression is certainly designed to declare the infinite efficacy of the atonement. In the death of Christ there is merit enough to satisfy for the remission of sins unto millions of apostate worlds. Are we then to infer that all the iniquity of all men was literally laid upon Christ? This cannot be, else none would suffer for sin, for Christ's death has availed to atone for all the iniquity laid upon him. Are we taught, then, that only some iniquity of every sinner was laid upon him? This cannot be admitted, for then none would be saved, as against every one some iniquity would lie. We are shut up to one interpretation—the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of all whom he represented, of all whom the Father gave unto him, of all who should be united to him, of all who would believe upon him. And thus interpreted, this mode of expression is worthy of the Spirit by whom it is employed. It is so universal as to hold out a warrant to all who will, that they may come and trust in him. Yet is it so limited as to remind us, that except we believe in him we cannot be saved. Let us then consider ourselves addressed in the solemn, searching question of our Lord, to the blind man whom he had healed, 'Dost thou believe upon the Son of God?' And may we be enabled to reply, 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.'

## MARCH.

## FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,'* 1 Cor. v. 7.

WERE an inspired teacher to go through the Old Testament in a series of comments upon it, there can be little doubt that he would find and preach Christ in every part of it, and that he would discover types of his person and work where, did an uninspired interpreter find them, he would expose himself to the charge of following his own fancies. Who, for example, would have seen a type of our Lord's death in the elevation of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, or of his lying in the grave, in the history of Jonah, had not our Lord himself condescended to notice it! True, the interpreter of scripture must beware that he do not yield to his imaginations, where he has not an inspired guide to lead him. But the necessity of this caution arises only from his incompetency. And we are well persuaded, that when the light of the upper world bursts upon our view, and when in it we contemplate the ancient law in its ceremonies and institutions, it will be found to reflect the glory of Christ in a much fuller degree than we ever saw it before, that it will be seen to exhibit his person and work in places where these did not formerly appear to us; in short, that in the law, as in every thing else, Christ is all. He is the treasure hid in the word of God, and it is only when we find him there that our search for it has been successful.

But our attention is now confined to a single type or illustration, the ancient passover. And how striking the form of expression used to point out its reference to Christ. He is called our Passover, intimating that the substance of the ceremony was Jesus Christ,—that whatever other purposes it may have served, it was designed mainly to be typical of him, and illustrative of his person, and history, and work. Hence, the mind of the apostle naturally passes away from the ancient ceremony to the great feast of the gospel, in which Christ is manifestly set forth crucified among us. And both are represented as having all their meaning and design in setting forth his truth and glory. They are two spectators, gazing upon the same object; two witnesses, testifying to the same person; two columns, bearing like inscriptions; two signs, pointing the same way.

Let us then for a little, contemplate the passover as illustrative of Christian doctrine.

1. And who will not here think of the paschal lamb? It must be chosen from the flock with care,—the best of its kind,—free from every blemish,—and in due time sacrificed and eaten. We have not been left to conjecture in finding here an emblem of Jesus Christ. Even the apparently trivial command, 'neither shall ye break a bone thereof,' is afterwards quoted in the history of Christ, as having been designed to have reference to him, and a whole train of circumstances is put into order and motion to bring about the intended allusion. 'These things were done,' saith the historian, 'that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.' We would not have seen this meaning had it not been pointed out. And O! how fitting is the type. Jesus is indeed well set before us as 'the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' The emblem is tenderly illustrative of his character, and history, and work, and well expresses his innocence, and patience, and sacrifice. Particularly does it exhibit him as the satisfying food of the believer's soul, and in this point the lines of the Jewish and the Christian passover meet, and both proclaim that the slain Lamb is the sacrifice to be eaten.

2. Equally clear and united is their testimony to the great blessing that has been obtained by the sacrifice which has been offered. They both commemorate deliverance. Of the one we are told, 'it is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.' That was a great deliverance. They cried by reason of their taskmasters, and God heard them and rescued them from bondage. But even that deliverance was only typical of a better. How largely is the language descriptive of it employed to set forth the higher deliverance of the soul from the dominion of sin and satan! Often do the prophets commence with the one theme, and then rise to the other, elevating our minds from things temporal to those that are spiritual, and teaching us to see in the former the greater blessings of the latter.

3. The very manner of deliverance is strikingly in unison, under both dispensations. The last and awful judgment upon Egypt was the death of the first-born. 'There was a great cry in

Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.' And who will not think of him, by whose death it was that deliverance has been obtained for guilty men? The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin, because he is the Son of God. He is the only begotten of the Father, his first-born, and therefore did his sacrifice avail to procure the freedom of his people.

4. The very sign employed in the time of Israel's deliverance is full of meaning and instruction. 'Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with blood.' This was the sign to the destroying angel to pass by and leave the inhabitants within unhurt. And it is by the sprinkling of blood the sinner must now be preserved from the destroyer. The mark of Christ's blood forbids his entrance upon the security and peace of the believer.

5. Nor let us omit to notice in what manner the passover must be eaten. 'Thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; ye shall eat it in haste.' Emblem of the believer's condition upon earth! He is a pilgrim and a stranger here. Earth is only a lodge, heaven is his home, and he must maintain the spirit of one who is travelling to Zion.

6. In the passover they must use unleavened bread, with bitter herbs. And the meaning here is plain. Bitterness of soul, in exercises of deep humiliation, is well becoming in him who commemorates the death of Jesus as the sacrifice for his sins. While towards others there must be the suppression of evil passion, and no leaven of iniquity allowed to disturb the soul, well is it enjoined by the apostle, 'let us keep the feast, not with old leaven; neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' And this agrees to our Lord's own lesson, 'if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift, first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.'

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FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,' Rom. i. 4.*

How many and how weighty are the themes of meditation here. The passage bears the ordinary mark of the word of God, clothed in the simplest

language, yet containing the profoundest sentiments, truly 'apples of gold in pictures of silver.' The Son of God—declared to be the Son of God—with power—according to the Spirit of holiness—by the resurrection from the dead. Help us, O Spirit of truth, to apprehend and receive these gracious announcements.

'The Son of God.' A title which belongs exclusively to Jesus Christ. True, Adam is called the son of God, so are angels, and even sinful men; but not in the sense in which Christ is so called. He is the only Son of God, in the sense of being a partaker of his nature, and an equal sharer of his glory. The phrase is habitually so employed in the scriptures, and was understood in this highest acceptation by the Jews. For when Christ called himself by the name of the Son of God, they charged him with blasphemy, alleged that he thus made himself equal with God, and proceeded to inflict the punishment of the law for blasphemy, even to stone him to death. In this name let us receive and adore him for—

'He has been declared to be the Son of God.' Declared! The term is well chosen, and is fraught with meaning and deep allusions. By the resurrection he has been *declared*, not *made*, to be the Son of God, as some would teach. And this peculiar style of language accords with what we observe in another place, where the angel, announcing the miraculous conception and birth of Christ, says, 'that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God'—called, not made the Son of God at that time, nor by that means. In all such passages the allusion is to the eternal generation of the Son of God. As Son he is eternal. And it is only upon this principle we can interpret many portions of the word of God. It is written, 'God gave his only begotten Son.' Then he must have been the Son of God when the Father gave him, and this was from eternity. How blessed is our privilege to have such a Saviour, one whom we call the Son of God, and with whose name we associate the honours of the Godhead. And for what purpose is he thus announced? Glorious reply!

He is declared to be the Son of God 'with power.' As Son of God he is proclaimed to be Mediator, and as Mediator all power is given to him in heaven and in earth. As Son all power belongs to him essentially, but as Mediator all power is delegated to him for the salvation of his people. How often are these two thoughts brought together in the scriptures, the sufficiency of Christ, and the security of his people. 'It

pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell—and by him to reconcile all things to himself.' 'In him dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily—and ye are complete in him which is the Head of all principality and power.' His glorious title now is, 'Head over all things to the church.' Not over the church merely, but over all things for the church's benefit. Over the material world—all its elements which he employs as he will. Over all mankind—influencing them according to his pleasure. Over the devils—for they are all subject to his control. Over angels—for he is at the right hand of God, angels, and principalities, and powers being subject unto him. His power is unlimited, sovereign, and absolute. So testifies the great Being whose office it is to bear witness unto Christ. For we read—

He is declared to be the Son of God with power, 'according to the Spirit of holiness.' Such testimony is borne to him by the Holy Spirit according to his office and custom. For he has always been engaged in so witnessing to Christ. It was he who dwelt in the ancient prophets, and instructed them in the knowledge of the coming Saviour. Their predictions are his testimonies. He met him when he appeared in the flesh, and publicly announced him to Israel, visibly descending on him as a dove, while the Father declared him to be his beloved Son. He attended him in all his ministry, in which we see the accomplishment of ancient prophecy, enabling him in his humanity to utter predictions, work miracles, and sustain the burthen of his ministry. Hence, saith Christ, 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me.' He continued with him in his sore conflicts, his bloody sweat, and his bitter death, ever sustaining his own character as the Spirit of holiness, and recommending Jesus as the Saviour of men. But the best and surest evidence which he gave was subsequent to his death. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness—

'By the resurrection from the dead.' And as that was the grand proof, how clearly has the Spirit caused it to be substantiated. The evidence is irresistible. The witnesses were numerous—they were intelligent—they were honest—they endured hardship for the truth—they suffered death for their testimony, and could not be induced to conceal the fact of the resurrection of which they were witnesses. They who denied it were obliged to forge the most absurd stories in order to evade the force of evidence. And the Christian sabbath, then established, and designed

to commemorate the event, has come down to our time, an imperishable monument, bearing upon it, indelibly engraven by the finger of history, the fact of Christ's resurrection.

In this fact of the resurrection we are furnished with the proof that the work of Christ is complete and accepted with the Father. He said on the cross, 'It is finished,' and he proved his saying true when he rose from the dead. Now, therefore, may we come to him with confidence for the ends of his mission. 'He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins.'

We too shall be raised from the grave in virtue of his resurrection. 'The hour is coming, when all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.' Gracious God! enable us to embrace Jesus as our Saviour now, that we may meet him at last with joy as our Judge. May we be found in him now by faith, and at length be partakers of his glory!

#### SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'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.*

Love is not strictly an attribute of God, it is more correct to say that the nature of God is love. Hence when the apostle, who speaks most of love, exhausts his thoughts upon it, he relieves himself, and sums up the whole subject, saying, 'God is love.' How then shall we meditate upon the love of God? 'Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou know? Deeper than hell, what canst thou do? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.' The apostle Paul discovers the same incapacity to grasp the theme of divine love. His prayer for the Ephesians is that they may be 'enabled, with all saints, to comprehend what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of God,' adding, 'which passeth knowledge.' And so in the passage before us the form of expression is very peculiar, 'Herein is love.' Herein, as though in nothing else it could be found. And, comparatively speaking, this is true, for there is no love like the love of God. It is like himself, and the vast, incomprehensible character

of this love will soon be felt by us, while we endeavour to catch some of its features.

1. It is eternal. How deep the thoughts, how elevated the conceptions of the apostle Paul when, meditating on the love of God, as exercised towards man in eternity, he exclaims, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love!' Here is love in all its condescension, entering into the case of man, long before he had existence; love in all its ingenuity, providing against his condition as a sinner. What importance this view attaches to the expression of Jehovah's love. It made sure the redemption of his people before they became men or sinners. The whole plan was laid and fixed in eternity.

2. As the love of God is eternal in its origin, so is it immutable in its nature. This is only what should be expected as a natural and necessary consequence. For if God set his love in eternity upon his people, it is not to be expected that he would suffer its great design to be frustrated by the accidents of time. His love is occupied in time carrying out and consummating the plans it formed in eternity. Those whom he then chose, he now effectually calls. And having called them in his sovereign pleasure, he keeps them by his almighty grace. It is thus we are to account for their still abiding the objects of his love, notwithstanding their provocations and unworthiness. 'I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' 'Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.' 'Saints are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' But let us not abuse this feature of the divine love. In eternity it chose its objects that they might be holy, and its immutability maintains and confirms their holiness. If the love of God changes not, that is not merely an argument why our love should not change, but it is a security that it shall not change. And our Lord makes our perseverance an essential mark of our discipleship, saying, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.'

3. In the exercise of this eternal and immutable love, God 'sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' His Son was chosen; for no other being was competent to the work, and the Father freely gave him up. He came as the messenger of the Father's love; and to carry out the purposes of his grace he assumed our nature, stood as our surety, bare our sin, and expiated

its guilt. By this mediation he became a propitiation, reconciling his people to their offended God. He provided that the sentence of death should be reversed under which they lay; that their souls should be quickened and made alive unto God; that they should have opened before them the prospect of eternal life; and that, finally, they should be possessors of 'an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.' Surely herein is love! Well may we acquiesce in the emphatic language of our Lord, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but might have everlasting life.'

4. And for whom did God thus signify his love? For sinners. And how is it enhanced by this consideration! Hear how an inspired apostle regards it, 'When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.' 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Helpless, ungodly, sinful—these were the features of that creature upon whom God set his love. Not only was there nothing to attract, but everything to repulse. How loathsome to a renewed mind is the conduct of the ungodly; and how distressing to be obliged to hold communion with them. And if this be the case with believers, who are still men encompassed with infirmity, and bearing about a body of sin and death, how must it be with that pure and holy God who cannot behold evil nor look upon iniquity. This truly is the mystery of mysteries, the love of God for sinners.

O that this love may be shed abroad in our hearts, and that we may live continually under its constraining and sanctifying power!

#### SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

'We love him, because he first loved us,' 1 John iv. 19.

THE great secret of the gospel, in its influence upon the sinner, consists in its use of the principle of love. God is there manifested to the soul in the exercise of love, and that discovery produces love. The apostle Paul, proceeding upon this principle, thus states the great burthen of his ministry, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;' and then on the ground of this revelation, addresses himself to sinners, saying, 'we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' So close is the

connection between a right apprehension of the love of God towards us, and the exercise of our love towards him, that it is laid down as a universal principle, 'we love him, because he first loved us.'

It is not inconsistent with the gospel to love God on account of the benefits which he has conferred upon us. True, we ought to love him for his own excellence, independent of his kindness to us. But we are not forbidden to be influenced by a sense of our obligations to him. Gratitude is a principle natural to man, and ought to be cherished by lively exercises. Where it is wanted we expect nothing that is good. The gospel is both designed and calculated to call it forth, and the blessings which it confers highly aggravate the guilt of ingratitude. If we do not love God for what he hath done in Christ, we can have no evidence of the enjoyment of his favour. Our love to him is an indispensable token of our participation in his love to us.

Let us then entertain the question of our Lord to Peter, 'Lovest thou me?' and remembering the solemn emphasis by which it was thrice repeated, let us examine our love to Jesus. We put the inquiry in the form of love to Jesus, for this is substantially the same as love to God, and it seems more easy to our weak apprehension.

If then we really love Christ we ought to be conscious of the existence of this affection in us. This was never questioned by Peter, when our Lord inquired at him, but in the simplicity of an honest heart he replied, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' It grieved him to think his love to Christ should be questioned. Nor are we at any loss to determine whether we have love toward any of our fellow-creatures. Why then should it be counted weak and fanatical to speak of our love to Jesus? We may and ought to be conscious of its existence, and its exercise, and never rest until we are so.

But if this be thought an evidence too refined and unsatisfying, let us remember that love will show itself by the marked preference which it ever gives to its object, and especially so, when that object is Christ. 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Such was the language of Paul, and the same is the sentiment of every true Christian, placing Christ above every other object, and renouncing every thing inconsistent with his service. In the Song of Solomon the church is made to say, 'my beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.' He has attractions for her above every other being,—causing her to think upon him with great delight, to speak of

him with rapturous praise, and yield him a cheerful and devoted service.

More particularly, love is ever found ardently to desire the presence of its object. And nothing can be more natural than the exercises of the church, in this respect, as described in the Song of Songs. 'By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth. I sought him but I found him not,' earnestly desiring communion with him. 'I will rise now and go about the city; in the streets and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth; I sought him but I found him not.' Ah no, Christ was not to be found in the concourse of sinners. 'The watchmen that go about the city found me; to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' These were the ministers of religion. 'It was but a little way that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.' This is the enjoyment of Christ in the ordinances of the church. 'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.' Every thing is avoided that might disturb the sweet communion of the soul with Christ.

But let us not suppose that love is merely sentimental. It is an active, moving, mighty principle, urging to deeds of noblest daring, and calling forth other affections of the soul to vigorous and sustained exertion. It animates with indomitable zeal. See the apostle Paul, and hear how he spoke and acted under its influence: 'Whether we be beside ourselves it is to God, or whether we be sober it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us.' It induces a spirit of self-denial. Many waters cannot quench love. Any thing will be borne that can secure the favour or enhance the happiness of those we love. Nor is there any principle but this that will account for the hardships and privations which the servants of Christ have borne for his sake, and not merely borne with patience, but 'rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name.' Love prompts to unwearied efforts in behalf of the people of Christ. A tender interest is felt in all that concerns them for his sake. 'Who-soever loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.' Our affection for the parent binds us to his children. And as we love Christ so shall we love his people, and delight to do them good. This Christ requires at our hand, and he has distinctly forewarned us that he will look for this distinguishing mark in the day of judg-

ment, when to all his servants he will be able to say, in explanation of their kindness to him, 'inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' In short, love prompts to the universal obedience of Christ. This is his own test: 'If ye love me keep my commandments.' And the same is the rule of his beloved apostle John: 'Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.' And again he repeats the sentiment: 'He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.'

By these evidences let us try our love to Christ. Let us deal faithfully with ourselves. And while we are encouraged by the apostolic blessing, 'grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,' let us be warned by the awful sentence, 'if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema, maranatha,—accursed at the coming of our Lord.'

### THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'For 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,' Rom. v. 10.*

WE are accustomed to reason from the past to the future. As we have been treated, hitherto, for good or ill, so are our expectations for the time to come. Applying this principle to the dealings of God with us, the experience of his goodness may well induce our confidence in him for all we need. But especially may this rule be adopted by the believer, who, when he thinks what Christ has already done for his soul, may well confide in him for all the purposes of his future salvation. This is the principle inculcated in the passage before us. Let us follow out the views which it suggests of the blessings which the believer has already received, and of his security for the future.

It reminds us that 'we were enemies.' Enemies to God. We were such by nature. No language could be stronger than that which is employed by the apostle Paul to describe the natural enmity of the human heart to God. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' By the carnal mind is meant the disposition which we inherit according to the flesh, and which is as universal as human nature. This disposition is enmity, not merely discovering some symptoms of opposition, but radically, in its very

nature and constitution, opposed to God. As for the law of God, it does not feel nor own its obligation, nor until it is completely changed by the power of God, can it do so. Its nature is sinful, and must be regenerated before it can love God or his law. What is thus asserted may be proved by the least observation. Men every where are found in a state of rebellion against God. What he teaches they are indisposed to receive, and 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.' What he forbids they are disposed to do, and they go astray from the womb. What he requires they neglect, and say, We will not have him to rule over us. And the dispensations and appointments of his providence provoke them to murmuring and impatience, for they desire to follow their own ways. It is, therefore, not too much to declare that men are enemies to God.

Now it was when they were such that God was pleased to provide for their reconciliation to himself by the death of his Son. And on every part of this provision how clearly do we see his sovereign grace. It originated with himself, unsought by the offender. When our first parents sinned, they hid themselves from God, and came not forth to confess their sin, and seek for pardon. The promise of deliverance came wholly and freely from God himself. Its nature was as gracious as its origin. It consisted in the humiliation, and suffering, and death of his own Son. Nothing else could suffice, and even this sacrifice was not withheld. By it the recovery of the sinner was completely secured. A new and living way of access was opened up for him to the pure and holy Being whom he had offended. Pardon was rendered compatible with the law and character of God. An atonement was made for sin, and nothing stood in the way to hinder the offender's return to God, if he could only be persuaded to embrace the provision of the gospel. And even this also was secured. The Holy Spirit was a part of the Saviour's purchase. He is sent into the heart, and inclines it to receive Christ. 'By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' Thus the whole scheme is one of sovereign mercy from first to last—its origin, its nature, its completeness, its very application. And this last not less so than any of all the rest. For however gracious the dispensation, such is the blindness and hardness of the sinner that, if left to himself, he would never submit to it. He must be constrained by the same grace that originated and completed it. And it is his consciousness of this that affects him perhaps as much as the scheme of

mercy itself. For why should God deal so tenderly by him? What was there in him beyond any other sinner to induce the favour of God? He is sensible there was nothing, and he acknowledges, in the fullest sense and with heart-felt gratitude, that 'when he was an enemy he was reconciled to God by the death of his Son.'

Shall he not then trust this gracious God for the future? Will not he who has begun so good a work in him carry it to perfection? Yes; here also the provision is complete. If the believer has been reconciled to God when an enemy, by the death of his Son, 'much more being reconciled shall he be saved by his life.' The death of Christ secured his reconciliation to God, and the life of Christ is abundant security that his salvation shall be completed.

By the life of Christ we are reminded of what he is, and does, and has undertaken to accomplish as our risen and exalted Saviour. 'All power has been given unto him in heaven and in earth.' He rose the conqueror of sin and satan, he ascended leading captivity captive, he has gone to heaven the representative and advocate of his people, he pleads their cause at God's right hand above, he sends out his Holy Spirit in his gifts and graces as these may be needed by them, he restrains their enemies, he controls and guides all the affairs of men, and he makes all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. All this, and far more, is implied in the saying of the apostle Paul, 'he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' And how noble the triumph of believers, celebrated by the apostle, as resting on this secure basis! 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, (*yea rather that is risen again*), who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that 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.'

### THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,' Psal. cx. 3.

WHAT are we to understand by the day of power? This is determined by the context, in which there is a prediction of gospel times. Christ is congratulated by the Father upon his victory as the Saviour of men, ver. 1. The extension of his cause and truth is clearly foretold, ver. 2. And then, as the consequence of this, it is promised to him that his people should willingly submit themselves to him. By the day of power, therefore, we are to understand the gospel age and dispensation.

But why, or for what reason is the gospel so described? There is great propriety in the representation, and that for many reasons. The gospel was the age of miracles. It was long foretold that it should be so distinguished. Isaiah writes of it, 'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.' When Christ came he applied these predictions to himself, and by an appeal to his own miraculous works proved that the Messiah was come in him. Again, the gospel is 'the ministration of the Spirit,' and is remarkably accompanied by his power. Compared with the full measure of the Spirit's influences, enjoyed under the gospel, it is said of all former dispensations, 'The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.' The new dispensation was opened by the miraculous effusion of his gifts and graces upon the day of Pentecost. The word preached by the apostles was accompanied by 'the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' And they could appeal to their hearers, that they 'had preached the gospel unto them with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.' But besides these general interpretations, there is a view of 'the day of power' suggested by the expressions accompanying it, which it may be well particularly to notice. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth.' Does it not foretell the time when the converts of the gospel would be as numerous and beautiful as the dew-drops of the morning, and that these would be found especially among the young? Assuming that this is a right interpretation, then by the 'day of power' is to be understood the day of conversion, when the Holy Spirit comes in mighty and saving operation upon the mind, quickening the conscience, renewing the heart, and creating the

sinner a new man in Christ Jesus. Such a time is well called the day of power. Nothing but the mighty power of God can regenerate the sinner. 'He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' He alone can correct our wayward dispositions, subdue our rebellious wills, change our sinful habits, and reform our evil practices. When such a change is effected, it is truly a 'day of power'—saving and divine.

And let us now observe the result of such a day, and its gracious operations. The subjects of it are 'willing,' they become the voluntary servants of the Lord Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit their minds are so enlightened as clearly to discriminate between right and wrong, between good and evil; their hearts are so changed as to choose and take pleasure in the ways of God; their taste becomes spiritual, their affections heavenly, their desires pure, their pursuits righteous. Thus 'God worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Their will and conduct he conforms to his own. Let us remember the service of the believer is not rendered in the spirit of a slave but a son. What he does for God he delights to do. He is emphatically 'WILLING.'

He is willing to be saved by Christ. He is willing to be a debtor to sovereign grace. Nor will anything but the power of Jehovah's Spirit ever make him so. The gospel is the last refuge of the sinner. Until he sees that either he must perish or embrace it, he will not embrace it. Self-righteousness is the great enemy of Christ. It can exist under any form. The great complaint of men, whether nominal Christians or heathens, unenlightened Protestants or degraded Papists, is the same. 'Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' Only he who has felt the power of the Holy Ghost, perceives and receives the truth that 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' But he does understand and submit to it. He humbles himself to be taught of God. He thankfully embraces this only hope of the sinner. And he willingly rejoices to say, 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; that I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith.'

He is willing to have Christ for his master as

well as his Saviour. Whatever is shown to him to be contrary to the will of Christ in his life he is willing to abandon. We see in him the proof of the testimony, 'God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' The grace of the Spirit is seen in him, enabling him to renounce long-cherished and sinful practices, to obey the trying command, 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee.' Nor is he merely made to cease from that which is evil, he is taught to do well. He feels the force of the remonstrance, and seeks to comply with its demands, 'Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his.' He is willing to imitate Christ. He longs after greater conformity to him, desirous to have the mind in him that was also in Jesus, to walk even as he walked, to be pure as he was pure, benevolent as he was benevolent, self-denied, and holy, and devoted like him.

He is willing to honour Christ. Not only in his own heart, but in the world. He is zealous, yea, jealous for the honour of Jesus upon the earth. This makes him willing to contribute to his cause. He contributes of his substance, 'a cheerful giver,' because he feels the power of the exhortation, 'Freely ye have received, freely give.' He contributes of his labour, in doing good as he has opportunity. He contributes of his time and talents, desiring to obey the command of his Lord, 'Occupy till I come,' and anticipating his summons, 'Give an account of thy stewardship.' Should difficulties arise, and disappointments, and distresses, and even persecutions, he is willing to bear them. God enables him to receive the consolation, 'Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.'

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#### FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me,' Rom. vii. 21.*

'I WOULD do good.' So said Paul and so saith every believer. He has undergone an entire moral change, which lays the foundation of holiness in a regenerated heart. The language expressive of this change is singularly strong and pointed: 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works.' The believer is the work of Jehovah's hand, who causes him to

undergo a revolution of character that changes all his principles and motives of action, and in virtue of which he is led into the practice of good works. The same change is described by another apostle under another view, and he says of it, 'whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' This meaning must be that so far as he is a partaker of a new, regenerated nature, he does not commit sin. That nature is contrary to sin. It is pure as its own author, and were there no other nature than this in man there would be no sin found in his life. This is the nature which is called in the scriptures the 'new man,' and whose voice is uttered in the earnest cry, 'I would do good.'

He desires to do good. This is his bent and inclination. It appears as soon as there is a work of grace in the soul. In the young convert it is singularly interesting. It cannot be repressed. It is ardent to be engaged. Often does it err in the way of doing good, and may many times transgress the limits of human prudence, yet the disposition is strong and inextinguishable, nor can it rest in indolent inaction.

He delights to do good. What he purposes does not arise from any constraining sense of duty merely. There is such a sense of duty, but there is something higher at the same time. He takes pleasure in his pursuits. The word of God is precious to his soul. The people of God are dear to his heart. The ordinances of God are the joy of his spirit. He 'delights in the law of God after the inward man,' approving it, applauding it, and anxiously aspiring after clearer views, and more hearty conformity to it.

And he does good. It is not all mere desire and purpose with him. God gives him, more or less, the desire of his heart, and he finds and embraces opportunities of doing good. The house of mourning, or the social meeting, or the dying bed, or the sabbath school, may be the scene of his labours. He must watch the providences of God, and follow them as his guide. In labouring in that department which God, he believes, has assigned him, he labours not in vain, but in due season shall he reap if he faint not.

But alas! 'When he would good, evil is present with him.' This arises out of remaining indwelling sin. For as there is a new nature, out of which all good desires and holy purposes arise, so there is an old nature upon which the new nature has been superinduced by the grace of God. There are thus in every believer both the new man and the old man. There is the law of the spirit of life, and the law of sin and of death. As

Paul says, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' It is by reason of this old man, this corrupt and sinful nature, that 'evil is present' with the believer. And so much is this the case that Paul says, 'in me, that is, in my flesh (in his old nature) there dwelleth no good thing.' As far as the new nature prevails there is no sin; as far as the old nature prevails there is nothing but sin.

An evil heart is present. Its 'corruptions are not altogether destroyed. These discover themselves from time to time as there are provocations to call them forth. They are hard to be suppressed. The soil once barren, but now enriched by cultivation, is ever inclined to send forth its native evil fruit. And although the heart be renewed by grace, there is still a remaining depravity that attaches to it by nature, and inclines to manifest its evil dispositions.

An evil body is present. Its passions are strong. Its lusts cry for their gratification. By its infirmities it darkens the mind, by its propensities it pollutes the imaginations, by its weaknesses it incapacitates for duty. This is what Paul seems particularly to have felt when he cried out, 'O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

An evil world is present. Its temptations are many. Its riches deceive, its pleasures allure, its ambition blinds the soul. Our Saviour well said, 'beware of men.' Man is the enemy of man. The ungodly seek to destroy the work of grace in the believer. They malign it, and persecute it, and thwart it. 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.'

An evil enemy is present. Satan has access to the mind. He employs the corrupt heart, and the flesh, and the world, for his devices against the believer. All temptations are rendered stronger through his agency. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood (merely) but against principalities, and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'

Such is the Christian life. This is its law. It is a controversy at the best. It is no doubt well that it is so, for it tends to our humiliation, and to the glory of Christ, and weans from this life, and makes us long for the next. And O! it is well that this law of the Christian's condition should be carefully considered and remembered. Let us not wonder at the strong temptations that beset us, but let us be prepared against them. The more we shall desire to do good the more

may we expect evil to be present with us, through the hindrance of satan. Let us be vigilant. 'What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.' Let us be prayerful. 'Pray without ceasing.' 'Be vigilant, be sober, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' Let us seek to grow in grace, 'bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' And let us in faith, and hope, and patience, and purity, wait for the time when we shall lay down this body of sin and death, be delivered from temptation, see Christ as he is, and be satisfied with his likeness.

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#### FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,' Psal. li. 10.

WHAT earnestness is here! How it reproves the indifference with which we too often call upon God. There is no studied form of expression, but the very reiteration of thought and variation of language which might be expected when the heart is poured out. Let us consider what is sought, and from whom, and by whom it is sought.

What is sought? The creation of a new heart, the renewal of a right spirit. All the terms employed are strongly expressive of the change that was desired. A *creation*. To create is to call into being that which before did not exist. And the work of the Spirit, in restoring the sinner to holiness, produces a change as great as when he first called him into existence. The figure of a new or second birth is therefore habitually used to illustrate this operation of divine grace. The creation of a *new heart*. This is the seat of life, and therefore must it be sound if the functions of the body shall be properly discharged. The heart is the fountain, and it is only by its purification the streams which issue from it can be made pure. Christ has said, 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies—the things which defile a man.' If such defilement would be avoided, the heart must be created anew. A *renewal*. This supposes the previous existence of powers, but that they require to be restored to their right condition and exercise. And when this term is connected with the former, a creation, we have a just idea of the work of regeneration. It is a change as great as in a new creation, yet it is not the production of any new powers, but a change upon those faculties that

previously existed. The understanding is not formed, but it is enlightened; the will is not called into being, but it is subdued; the passions are not originated, but they are engaged with right objects; the affections are not produced, but they are occupied aright. The renewal of a *right spirit*. The disposition must be changed. As it was before averse to God, it must be brought to acquiesce in his will, and delight in his ways. And the law to which before it refused subjection, must now be approved as holy, and just, and good, and cheerfully chosen as the unvarying standard and rule. This was what David here so earnestly desired—the creation of a new heart, the renewal of a right spirit. He varies his language, more perhaps to express the fullness and fervour of his heart, than to give any different views of the object which he sought. Still, the variety of his language is not without its meaning, and this much at least may we gather from it, that the change which he desired was thorough, radical, and universal.

From whom did he seek it? From God alone, for he alone was able to bestow it. The scriptures are pointedly full in representing the new birth to be a divine work. The language of the evangelist John is plain and instructive, saying, 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' The new birth is not of blood—by no connection of the child with the parent, however godly that parent may be. Nor is it of the will of the flesh—arising from no desire, nor effected by any power inherent in human nature. Nor yet of the will of man—produced by no influence which one man can exercise over another, however that may be the instrument in the change. But of God—by the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind, according to his own pleasure, and by the exercise of his own power. The description of the apostle Paul is drawn from the work of the Spirit in creation, and is as follows, '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 Christ Jesus.' The same power that was necessary to reduce to order the rude chaos at the first creation, is no less necessary to the creation of a new heart, and the renewal of a right spirit now. And it is needful to keep this truth in mind, not merely because it is only thus the blessing can be obtained, but to expect to obtain it otherwise discovers a defective apprehension of the nature of the work, be-

guiles the soul into self-deception, and must end in disappointment. Let us seek it where David did, from God, for there alone can it be obtained.

And was this the prayer of David? Yes, of David the man after God's own heart. How comes this? Had he not already a new heart and a right spirit? Of this there can be no doubt, yet did such a prayer become him now. He is engaged in an exercise of deep humiliation for gross sin. The evidence of his conversion must have been greatly darkened by his offences. He had no legitimate title to count himself a child of God while sunk in such grievous criminality. It is well said by Thomas Scott, 'I would not give a farthing for that assurance which sin does not shake.' In David it was shaken, and so he comes to God as though he had never been a partaker of his grace, and cries to him for a new heart and a right spirit. Or if, in exercises of humiliation, he had been restored to a comfortable sense of pardon and acceptance, still would this prayer become him. He had sad evidence how little progress he had made in the divine life, how weak was his heart, how strong was remaining sin. He might well therefore cry out for growth in grace, and that in the strong language which he did employ. For although the work of regeneration be complete, yet is that of sanctification progressive; and as for the increase of holiness, we have reason daily to pray, 'Create a clean heart, O God; renew a right spirit within us.'

Let us learn from this case not to rest in any reformation short of a thorough regeneration of the soul. Till that is effected, there is no vital godliness, no true religion, acceptable to God, and saving to the soul.

Let us learn how dangerous it is to have the evidences of our salvation darkened by sin. If we act so, we are laying the foundation of bitter exercises, and can be restored only through much tribulation.

Let us learn to set no limits to our desires after conformity to God. The longer we live, and the more we learn of him and of ourselves, of his purity and our sinfulness, so should we seek the destruction of the old man, and the confirmation, and advancement, and purification of the new man.

## FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am,'* John xvii. 24.

THE people of Christ are here described as 'those whom the Father has given to him.' Yes, they were given to him in an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, before the world was. 'Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' How surprising! that in eternity the love of God should be placed upon any of his rebellious creatures, and a sure provision made for their deliverance. In accordance with this eternal covenant they are given, in another sense, to Christ now. And to this he alludes in the opening of his intercessory prayer. 'Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' They are given to Christ now, by an act of adoption, that he may provide for them as his own children. The blessing he confers upon them is eternal life, not merely the future mansion, but the present possession of it. 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life.—Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.—He that hath the Son hath life.—Hear, and your souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.' Thus the people of Christ have now 'eternal life abiding in them;' for as Christ himself saith, 'this is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' His people have been given into his hand, and he has removed their guilt, clothed them with his own righteousness, renewed their hearts, reformed their ways, and he will preserve them, through life and in death, to the full enjoyment of eternal life in heaven.

And what glorious prospects are set before them there! They shall be *with* Christ. This will constitute the height of their blessedness. Even on earth how mighty the influence of the little acquaintance they have already with him, on both their holiness and their happiness. These originate in their knowledge of him, and as it progresses so they advance. But faith, by which they now obtain an indistinct view of their risen Lord, shall in heaven be turned into sight. And when they see him, what effect will this produce

on their purity and their bliss. 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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.' The influence even of this prospect is great, and 'every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.' What then must the reality, the enjoyment, be? Holiness and happiness mutually influence each other, and when there is entire conformity to Christ what shall be the enjoyment of him? The prophet has drawn aside the veil and given us a glimpse of the heavenly glory; and it is worthy of remark that the grand enjoyment ever appears to be the immediate presence of Christ. 'They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' Is not this the amount of the Saviour's own consolatory promise, 'I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.' And this is the apostle's consummation of all the blessedness in store for his people: 'the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which remain and are alive shall be caught up unto the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' Are we prepared for the presence of Christ? How should we feel, were he at this moment to manifest himself? Would we hail him with joy, and be ready to enter into his rest? Let us remember that, to prepare them for this the people of Christ are 'given unto him.'

And to this glorious end they shall assuredly come, for this is the will of Christ. 'Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' And he shall not be disappointed. It has long been promised unto him, 'that he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.' And what will satisfy him? Nothing short of the eternal redemption of his people. See how he was exercised when his ministry was about to terminate on earth. 'I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.—I pray for them which thou hast given me.—Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me;—while I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name, those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none

of them is lost.' So in eternity, he will not be satisfied that one, whom he has redeemed, that one of all those who have been given to him, should be wanting. How the fond father longs to see his scattered children home, and with what delight he surveys them all safely collected beneath the paternal roof again, after many wanderings and temptations! So Jesus waits and longs to see his people home in heaven. His mediatorial bliss will not be complete till then. And as he has the will, so he has the power. His eye is on them wherever they are, his arm is around them by land and sea, his bosom heaves with love to admit them to his rest, and make them sharers of his glory. 'I pray that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us.' Then shall the Saviour be satisfied and the blessedness of his people completed.

Have we, by our own consent, been given unto Christ? Do we set our heart on heaven as the object and consummation of our hopes? Shall we behold the glory of the risen Saviour, and be glorified with him for ever? O! that we may be enabled truly to say, 'our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.'

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FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,' 1 John ii. 1.*

So then 'any man' may sin. Yes, all men do sin. What a strange perversity it is that has led some to teach there may be men free from sin. It is a sad misapprehension of the scriptures, for their testimony is so plain that he who runs may read and understand. 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not,' Eccl. vii. 20. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,' 1 John i. 8. 'In many things we offend all,' James iii. 2. And the very persons addressed in the passage before us are true Christians, under the designation of 'little children.' Let us be careful not to resist the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures, for it is very displeasing to him, and blinding and hardening to the soul. Let no imagination of ours, however specious and beautiful, be placed in opposition to his truth, but let every hypothesis, and prejudice, and pre-con-

ceived theory give way when it does not stand the test of 'thus it is written.' And is not the divine testimony in exact accordance with all experience and observation? Who will say I am innocent? Who will lay aside the daily use of the Lord's prayer, on the ground that the petition, 'forgive us our trespasses,' has become inappropriate to his case? Or whom have we ever seen or known that we could account to be faultless? How can it be that any are so ignorant of themselves as to imagine they do not sin? If there be such persons, they have yet to learn the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. They need the Holy Spirit to convince them of sin. All who know themselves must say, 'our hearts condemn us.' And if so, how must we be in the sight of him 'who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things?' The enlightened conscience can have no peace, under a sense of the divine cognizance and judgment, save in the apprehension of the righteousness of Christ. The cry of such a one is, 'behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed.' There the soul does rest, and can bear the scrutinizing eye of God, but there only. As for himself and his attainments, the more holy he grows he becomes the more humble. As he increases in knowledge he thinks the more lowly of himself. And there is nothing wonderful in hearing an apostle proclaim himself to be 'the chief of sinners.' There are times when the most advanced Christians are ready to make the same complaint of themselves. All have sinned, and do sin, and come far short of the glory of God.

But let us beware we do not abuse this humbling confession. It is not made by one who desires to live in sin, and uses it as an excuse. On the contrary, it proceeds from the hatred of sin, and the jealousy of himself as a servant of the Lord. He does not willingly commit sin. When at any time he is overtaken by temptation, and hurried, in an evil hour, into sin, it is his burthen and grief. We see the operation of gracious principles in David and Peter when they were drawn aside for a season. Let the humiliation of the 51st Psalm be witness for the former, and the flood of penitential tears for the latter. They did sin, but they could find no pleasure in it. They were wretched and uneasy, and found no rest until they returned to God in deepest humiliation, and were restored to the enjoyment of his favour. It is not the mark of a believer that he never sins, for then could no one have the consolation to know that he was a believer; but it is the mark of a believer that whenever he is betrayed into sin he is overtaken also with godly

sorrow. The Christian cannot live in sin. It is a burthen heavier than he can bear. And his life is a life of controversy with it, striving against sin.

Let us be careful, when at any time we have sinned, not to delay exercises of humiliation. There is a reluctance then to come before God. We shall be tempted to hide our sin, and there is danger of the heart being hardened. Let us be watchful here. As soon as conscience upbraids us let us hear its faithful warning, and go and confess our sin. This will operate most favourably and powerfully on our sanctification. We shall not be so likely to fall into the sin again for which we have written bitter things against ourselves. Particularly should we be watchful to adopt this course with respect to our besetting sins. They are most likely to have dominion over us. But if we are accustomed, whenever we have committed them, to go with lowly confession and self-condemnation to God, we shall gain the dominion over them. God will bless the exercises, and his grace will confirm us in the habit of resistance. And this is essential to our comfort. God has graciously so ordained it that the souls of his people must bear dispeace while sin is allowed upon them. But when they have been duly exercised for it, he graciously restores them for his name's sake. And it may even prove that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound in elevating them to higher joys, and confirming them in holier habits than before—their very sins, wonderful to think! being made to contribute to their sanctification.

And O! what gracious encouragement we have to humble ourselves thus before God seeing 'we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' He is on the right hand of God, and pleads the merit of his own work, for the remission of his people's sins. Hence the ground of his advocacy is declared, 'he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' The merit of his death is infinitely efficacious. There is no sin in all the world but it is equal to remove. At the same time he acts the part of an intercessor, and presents our humiliations before the throne of God. These are worthless in themselves; but presented by him, and perfumed with the incense of his mediation, they are accepted, and we are restored and blessed. Nor does it suffice to procure our pardon, he confers grace suited to the time of need. He sends out his Holy Spirit in his gifts and graces. He restores the joy of his salvation, and upholds us with his free Spirit.

## SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'He ever liveth to make intercession for them,'*  
Heb. vii. 25.

'He ever liveth!'—and is therefore competent to make intercession. 'He ever liveth,'—and sustains an uninterrupted intercession. 'He ever liveth,'—for the very purpose of making intercession. Let us pursue these thoughts for a little.

1. Because Jesus 'ever liveth,' he is competent to the office of an intercessor between God and man. There is a great peculiarity of person necessary to occupy such a position. He must have power with God and man that he may prevail. No sinner therefore can be a prevalent intercessor, not even a created angel, for neither possesses any claim upon God by which he can plead for the benefit of others. Behold the constitution of the Saviour's person, and see how suited he is to the office. He is God, and may therefore treat with the Father; while he is man, and may appear for men. He who would undertake the redemption of sinners must be a partaker of their nature; but to be competent to the work he must possess power that is divine. And such is Jesus. 'The Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever.' 'Great without controversy is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.' And this is the very argument of the apostle in the passage before us. 'Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's, for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity, but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.' O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! He saw, and he only, what was essential to the character of an intercessor. And, blessed be his name, he provided what was needed. Hence the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus by the virgin Mary—a man, but sinless—the assumption of humanity by the Son of God. 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy

thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' We have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God. Our intercessor is the living One, and therefore competent to save. With what confidence may we come to him! He can give us what we need. He can prevail with God for us. 'As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son also to have life in himself.' And he dispenseth it to whom he will.

2. In this relation he has ever stood to the church of God, and sustains an uninterrupted intercession. How largely is this feature of our Intercessor's priesthood here illustrated and enforced? He is described as 'a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.' And see the extraordinary history and position of that mysterious person, that herein he might be a proper type of our ever-living High Priest, 'Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.' On all these points the world was left in ignorance that he might the more fitly be a type of him to whom eternity literally belongs. But not merely was the Intercessor's person eternal, but his priesthood also. He sustained it from the first in accordance with the eternal covenant. And he has exercised it, and shall continue to do so, while there shall be believers to need its benefits. So early as the time of Job it sustained the hearts of the faithful. It was in a season of darkness and temptation that, losing sight of the great Intercessor, he exclaimed, 'He is not a man as I am that we should come together in judgment, neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both.' And it was the apprehension of the Mediator that again filled him with peace and joy, and caused him to exclaim, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' Afterwards, when the law was given to Israel, it was through the great Intercessor, for it is written, 'It was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator.' At length he came, the substance of all the ceremonies of the law, and declared his own doctrine, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.' And when he had finished his work, and rose triumphant, and was about to ascend, he did so in a way very illustrative of his intercession. 'He lifted up his hands and blessed them, and while he blessed them, he was taken from them and carried up into heaven.' He was afterwards revealed to the

prophet in the same character, for 'he stood as a lamb that had been slain,' intimating that he did so in the capacity of an intercessor, pleading his own atoning death. Well therefore might the apostle infer, 'This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.'

3. And he 'continueth,' 'ever liveth,' for the very purpose of maintaining his intercession. To this was he set apart in the councils of eternity. For this was he anointed by the Holy Spirit in the fullness of time. And in this does he delight himself in the courts of heaven above. He is occupied in preparing his people upon earth for their removal thence, and in receiving them to his own rest when their work is finished here. On earth he gives them of his Spirit, washes them in his blood, guides their steps, sustains their labours, and presents their prayers; in heaven he carries them to the throne, acquaints them with its holy habitations, unfolds the purposes and plans of God, and rejoices in their unbroken praises. To each believer does he bend his attention as though there were not another in heaven or earth but he, and on all he waits as though no one needed his special care. He sympathizes with each and with all, and proves himself a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

'He who for men their surety stood,  
And pour'd on earth his precious blood,  
Pursues in heav'n his mighty plan,  
The Saviour and the friend of man.'

'Our fellow-suff'rer yet retains  
A fellow-feeling of our pains;  
And still remembers in the skies  
His tears, his agonies, and cries.'

#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Lord, let it alone this year also,' Luke xiii. 8.

THIS language was originally employed with reference to the Jewish nation and their privileges. They had long been the favoured people of the Lord, the Son of God himself at length came among them, he had sent out instructors among them, but they rejected both him and them. By their unbelief and obstinacy they greatly provoked Jehovah, and he threatened to withdraw their opportunities. The time was fast approaching when they would bring upon themselves swift destruction. But the merciful and forbearing Saviour first admonished them. And to administer his reproof, and give them warning in the least offensive form, he uttered his instructions in the form of a parable. 'A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and

he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig-tree and found none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.' All this indulgence was granted, these advantages conferred, but in vain, the nation persevered in unbelief, and resisted the ministry of the Son of God, till at length he proceeded reluctantly but determinedly, to pronounce its doom: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate, and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' The threatened destruction soon followed, Jerusalem was laid on heaps, the temple was consumed to ashes, the nation was scattered abroad, they have ever since been a people robbed and spoiled, and are a standing testimony to the destruction awaiting all who abuse their privileges.

What a lesson is here to the nations professing Christianity! They are now enjoying the national privileges which the Jews forfeited by their unbelief. But they hold them on the same terms, by the same tenure, even that they shall improve them. 'Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.' If ever there was a time when this warning seems to be necessary, it is now. National religion has become a term of reproach with many. The nations are letting go many sound principles to which they once adhered. May the Lord have mercy upon Britain, and not suffer her to forsake the national allegiance which she owes to Jesus. Let her take hold of his truth with a firmer grasp, or, great, glorious, and free, though she be, the time may come when she shall not be known among the nations.

What a lesson is here to the professing churches of Christ! The Jewish church and nation were both alike unfaithful to their opportunities, and they perished in one common destruction. Nor does the Jewish church afford the only warning. Let us call to mind the seven churches of Asia. They were plainly threatened that unless they repented their candlestick should be removed. But they repented not, they filled up the cup of unbelief and sin, the divine forbearance would

endure no longer, the little light that remained was soon extinguished, the crescent of an impostor was hoisted where the cross once floated in triumph, and the desolations of many generations now proclaim the consequence of abused and neglected privileges.

What a lesson is here to every Christian congregation! We are blessed with our sabbaths, our sanctuaries, and our sermons. But how are these improved. Is the sabbath our delight, holy unto the Lord, and honourable? Is the sanctuary our refuge, of which we devoutly say, How amiable are thy tabernacles? Are our sermons accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power? Are men convinced of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment? If so, well. If not, God may soon be provoked to deprive us of our means of grace. Our teachers may be removed from our eyes, our sanctuaries closed, or a mere dead service performed there, and our sabbaths overrun with desecrations, till they can scarcely be distinguished from any other day. Alas! alas! How far is this the case already. Let us consider our ways. The revival of religion in the land must begin with the churches. Let us inquire what can be done to stay impending judgments.

There is a solemn lesson here to every individual. Our opportunities are still many. We have the word of God in our hands, and his ear is open unto our cry. Opportunities of doing and receiving good are presented on every hand. Much is given to us, and much shall be required. Ah! what fruit are we bringing forth? Is the good seed that is sown amongst us bringing forth, some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred-fold? Surely this may reasonably be expected by the Lord of the vineyard. He cometh seeking fruit, even repentance, and faith, and holiness. If he find it not he will pour forth his judgments. Our blessings may be withdrawn from us, or we may be removed from them. 'Let us kiss the Son lest he be angry, and we perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.' When the Lord cometh may he find us watching!

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SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith,'* Heb. x. 21, 22.

'The house of God' is a common appellation for the church, in the scriptures. 'Moses was faith-

ful in all his house, as a servant.'—'Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house are we.'—'That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God.' It is not without good reason the appellation is so common. It is intended to express the character of the church, whose members are under one head, bound in love to a common father, loving one another as the children of one family, and having a common dwelling-place, both in this world and the next. Even death does not break the union that binds them together. 'Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,' is the description of inspiration. For although the church militant is yet far removed from the church triumphant, still have they a tender sympathy in one another. Daily are they becoming more assimilated, and soon shall the whole number be complete, and safe in heaven. Alas! that this unity should have so little distinguished the church in its history hitherto. It has rather been as a house divided against itself. Hence has it not stood as it might against the assaults of the wicked one, and its dissensions have been no small hindrance to its progress. May the prayer of Christ speedily be answered: 'that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.'

'Over this house of God we have an High Priest.' This is Jesus, the Son of God, who in the character of an high priest has taken the care and oversight of the church. And how faithfully does he sustain the offices of that high and holy relation. The apostle Paul elsewhere says of him, 'we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.—We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' Greatness and mercy are the features of his character. So great, that nothing is beyond his power. So merciful, that there is no creature beneath his notice. O! what it is to possess the sympathy of such a Being. He condescends to discharge towards his church all the duties of the office he sustains. Is it the duty of a priest to offer sacrifice? He offered up himself, he gave his soul an offering for sin, himself the priest, the altar, and the sacrifice. Does it belong to the priest to offer intercession? '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.' 'He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he

ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Did the high priest bless the people? As he ascended he lifted up his hands and blessed his followers, in that attitude he remains, and he was seen by the prophet in glory, pleading his sacrifice, and dispensing gifts to men. He is 'an High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedeck.'—'The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

'Let us then draw near.' O yes, we may now draw near to God. We may 'enter into the holiest 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.' Appearing in his name, we shall be accepted for his sake. 'Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.' We may draw near for Christ is there, heaven is sprinkled with his blood, it is perfumed with the incense of his intercession, he will appear our friend, our elder brother, and we need not fear to come even to the throne. O! how we live beneath our privileges, standing afar off when we should draw nigh.

But let us beware that we draw near 'with a true heart.' No insincerity must be allowed in that approach. 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' We have to do with him who searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men. And it becometh us to say and feel like David, 'if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.' What we ask we must honestly desire to obtain; what we vow we must be careful to pay; what we profess we must take care that we feel. Let us not draw near with the mouth, and honour him with the lip, while the heart is far from him. Let us remember all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. For when the apostle saw the High Priest in his heavenly glory 'his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters.'

Still, if we draw near with a true heart, we may also come 'in full assurance of faith.' On his word we may confidently rely, his promises we may assuredly believe, his merits we may boldly plead, and in his name we may fearlessly confide. Whatsoever we ask, believing, we shall receive. The more we trust in him the more we honour him. We may encourage our souls in

every approach and say, 'Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' What a ground, what a warrant, what an encouragement to faith! A throne of grace! Come boldly! Obtain mercy! Find grace! Surely it is not unreasonable to exercise the assurance of faith.

'In ev'ry pang that rends the heart,  
The Man of sorrows had a part;  
He sympathizes with our grief,  
And to the sufferer sends relief.  
With boldness, therefore, at the throne,  
Let us make all our sorrows known;  
And ask the aids of heav'nly pow'r  
To help us in the evil hour.'

#### SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'That men ought always to pray, and not to faint,' Luke xviii. 1.

THERE is great danger of men fainting in prayer, and therefore are the exhortations of Christ on this subject most seasonable and sustaining. How much instruction is conveyed in these few words, 'Men ought to pray!' Prayer is natural—a duty, a privilege. It arises out of the relation in which we stand to God as his dependent creatures, but especially is its obligation increased, and its benefit required by our sinful condition. 'Men ought always to pray.' In all situations and at all times is it needful and binding. The habit of prayer should be diligently cultivated, that, as the apostle enjoins, we may 'pray without ceasing.' Every event and every circumstance should remind us of God, bring us to him, and lead us to seek his direction, or praise his goodness. And we should be on our guard against neglecting prayer, knowing, as we are here warned, that there is great danger of fainting.

This danger partly arises out of the nature of prayer. It is a simple, spiritual exercise—the communion of the soul with God. But this is an exercise very distasteful to men. Hence the constant inclination to turn it into a mere ceremony. To say prayers is easy, to perform penances is easy, to endure pilgrimages is easy; but to pray is not easy, it requires a change of heart, the help of the Holy Spirit, constant watchfulness over the heart, and an abiding sense of eternal things upon the mind.

Besides, God is pleased often to delay apparent answers to prayer. Even where it is most sincere this may be the case. Let us remember how Christ treated the woman of Canaan when

she came to him to supplicate for the deliverance of her daughter, who was grievously vexed with a devil. At first he seemed entirely indifferent to her entreaty, for 'he answered her not a word.' Even when his disciples took up her cause and became intercessors for her, being annoyed by her importunity, he alleged she had no claim on his mission, as he had been 'sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Not yet discouraged, she drew still nearer, and worshipping him, said, 'Lord, help me.' But he seemed immovable, and replied, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.' She had her answer, 'Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.' Not till then did he grant her request. He delayed—he raised up apparent difficulties, and it would seem as if her request could not be granted. Was this unkindness in our Lord? None will say so. The issue justifies the delay. And this case is recorded for our instruction. God may delay to answer our prayers, but we should not therefore faint. There is a time to withhold, and a time to bestow. God knows what is best for us. Let us wait his pleasure, and not faint.

Or it may please God to answer our prayers in such a way as we do not expect, or which at the time we may not understand. We have an instructive example of this case in the history of the apostle Paul. 'A thorn in the flesh was given him, a messenger from satan to buffet him.' Although we cannot tell what this was, yet we know it was some strong temptation. He betook himself to prayer as his only refuge. 'For this thing,' says he, 'I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.' Here also was delay, for he prayed once and again, apparently without an answer, and was obliged to urge his suit upon the Lord thrice. Nor was this all. For although an answer came, it was very different from what he desired and expected. The temptation was not withdrawn as he prayed it might be. The answer was, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' The temptation was continued, but he obtained strength to bear it. And this he understood to be the answer, for he added, 'Most gladly therefore will I glory in mine infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' Who does not justify the divine procedure, not only in the delay, but in the nature of the answer. Let us not limit the Holy One of Israel. He understands our case better than we do ourselves. And let us gratefully receive such answer as he may be pleased to give, and not faint.

Great good may arise to the suppliant both by the delay and by the answer being different from what he expected. It is well fitted to throw us back upon exercises of *self-examination*. Have our prayers been such as we should offer, or as God should answer? Is there anything in our life that proves a hindrance to our supplication, and which must be removed before a righteous God can answer it? Are there means which we have neglected to employ, and in the neglect of which it is presumption to expect that our prayers shall be heard? How good it were to engage in such reflections as these! In the happy results of them we might eventually find the answers to our prayer.

At the same time, such a delay is calculated and, no doubt, intended to exercise our faith. We must learn to trust God when we do not see the reasons of his conduct. How nobly is this grace manifested in Abraham! He had received the promise of a son, but how unlikely that it should ever be fulfilled, how long the trying delay, years after years passing by, and to all human apprehension the long-promised and much-cherished object growing more unlikely than before. But his faith in God sustained him. He had his hours of trial and seasons of darkness, and there were times when he was tempted to seek the fulfilment of the promise by unlawful means. But on the whole he clung to the hope set before him through all this dark night of disappointment, and his example is thus quoted by the apostle Paul, 'He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.' Our business is to learn what God has promised, and in persevering prayer and labour to wait the time of his performance.

By this means the grace of *patience* will be much exercised and strengthened. We must not be in haste when God is not. We must submit ourselves and our ways to his government. It may be well to have our fond schemes crossed by his providence. We must learn to bear his will no less than to do his will. It is a wholesome lesson when we are taught that 'our strength is to sit still.' And it is a high attainment when we can say with all our hearts, 'Thy will be done.'

Let us pray thus, and in due season we shall be answered. Only let us be sure that what we ask is agreeable to the will of God, and sooner or later our request shall be granted. Let us remember the parable of the importunate widow.

## EIGHTH DAY—MORNING.

*'There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,' Acts iv. 12.*

THERE is no Saviour but Christ. The language of the scriptures is very strong and decided. 'Neither is there salvation in any other'—not in angels, nor in men, and they cannot confer what they do not possess; those things essential to salvation are not within the compass of their feeble powers and limited capacities. 'There is no other name,' no other being or character so constituted as to be capable of undertaking or executing the salvation of sinners. Not 'under heaven'—and this is a large compass. 'Not among men'—be their attainments what they may, knowledge, or influence, or goodness, or whatever else they may possess. It is manifest the language of scripture is thus precise and pointed, for the purpose of forcing men out of the many refuges of lies to which they are apt to betake themselves, and of shutting them up to the one only method of salvation which God has provided.

For how numerous are the vain devices of men! One trusts in his innocence—never having seen himself in the light of the divine law, nor having felt the condemnation which it pronounces upon sin. Another rests in an idea of his comparative purity—others seeming to be much more depraved than himself—and not understanding that all men stand as sinners upon the common ground of guiltiness in the sight of God. Not a few are satisfied with their purposes of future reformation, not doubting but opportunity shall be given, and that when embraced all shall be well. A larger class are building their hope upon some vague expectation, that what is wanted in them will be supplied from the grace and righteousness of Christ. Many are proud of their attainments, and entertain no doubt that they shall be accepted and rewarded for them. Some are satisfied with notions of the divine mercy that float in their imaginations, without being able to say precisely what their hope is. And very many form no ideas upon the subject, are wholly engaged with the things of time and sense, or, if a serious thought betimes should visit them, they dismiss it with the idea that they are no worse than others, and must fare as well as they in the chances of eternity. So it is, notwithstanding the fullness, and plainness, and urgency of the gospel. Where men are at pains to form opinions, they are almost as various as their countenances. Something, indeed, they have in common, for all sa-

voir of the self-righteousness of man, but the forms which they assume are almost as many as the persons who indulge them. But they are alike vain. Of them all may it be said, 'the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.' 'The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.'

Blessed be God, however, if there be only one Saviour, he is all-sufficient. If there be no other name that can prevail, it is all-prevalent. And what is his name? The Lord Jesus Christ. O! who can fathom this name! And what thoughts are suggested by these titles! The Lord! This name belongs to him, both by nature and by office. By nature he is Lord of all—by office all power has been given to him in heaven and in earth. He is the Lord of the conscience, moving it as he will; the Lord of life, bestowing and withholding it; the Lord of glory, to whom all praise belongs; the Lord of all men below as well as the redeemed and angelic hosts above. Jesus! This is a name altogether taken from his office. He is called Jesus because he saves his people from their sins.' This is the design and purpose of his mission. For that end he came, and this he is ever engaged in accomplishing—saving men from the guilt of sin by washing them in the fountain of his blood, delivering them from its power by renewing their hearts in righteousness, and upholding them in the midst of duty and temptation by the grace of his Holy Spirit. Christ is also a term of office. It implies his appointment to the work of saving sinners, and includes his offices of prophet, priest, and king—as a prophet communicating instruction by his word and Spirit, as a priest reconciling sinners to God by his atoning blood, and as a king ruling the hearts of his people and restraining the rage of their enemies. What a Saviour! How complete in person and in work! Yet we are prone to distrust him. Even when the need of such a Saviour is in some measure felt, we are fearful to commit ourselves into his hand. His salvation is full and free, and these are man's great stumbling-blocks. He would prefer to be indebted to the Saviour only in part. He would like to pay some equivalent for redemption. But know, vain man, either Christ must be a whole Saviour or none. We must either be complete in him or have no interest in him at all. O! that man understood how in him 'God justifieth the ungodly.' This is the grand offence. Yet if we would be saved it must be borne. In that testimony we must acquiesce,

'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.'

And O! let us consider what interest is at stake, even the salvation of the soul. How precious is the soul! 'What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' The soul may be lost, and unless we come to Jesus so it shall. Or the soul may be saved, and if we come to Jesus so it shall. We may neglect his salvation, and 'dying, we shall die;' or we may embrace him by faith, and living, we shall live for ever. United with him there shall be no sentence found against us. No sin shall have dominion over us. We shall be preserved in life, sustained in death, acquitted in the judgment, and made blessed throughout eternity. Shall we then trifle with this salvation. O! let us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. And never let us rest until we are enabled, in faith and hope, to say, Christ is 'all my salvation and all my desire.'

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EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,'*  
Psal. ii. 12.

'Trust' is used in the Old Testament scriptures as equivalent to faith in the New Testament. It implies an unreserved confidence in its object. That object is here declared to be the Son, meaning Christ, and the confidence of the soul is to be reposed in him. In the exercise of this confidence all other dependencies are forsaken, the heart is wholly withdrawn from them, but it is conscious of resting on a sure foundation when it builds upon Christ, and it neither needs nor desires any other security.

Such trust is declared to be 'blessed,' and that in trying times, which are here predicted. The heathen should rage, and the people imagine vain things. The rulers of the earth would be joined together to oppose the progress of the gospel; God would rise up in his indignation, proclaim the dominion of his Son, extend it upon every hand, inflict heavy judgments which would make the earth to tremble, and dash every opposer in pieces as a potter's vessel. But in the midst of these convulsions some would be safe, they would be preserved as the apple of the eye, even all they who put their trust in Jesus.

Times such as these have often been seen upon the earth, and may be expected again. But this word of consolation never has failed, and never can fail. At all times, indeed, scenes of trouble

and temptation abound. And although these may not be public, nor acted on the great theatre of the world, yet in every heart is there a sense of its trouble or deliverance, it knows its own bitterness, or experiences its secret joy. Of this joy or security the great principle is trust in Jesus, and it may be profitable to trace it in some of its operations.

What peace does it give to the soul that has been harassed by a sense of sin! The exercised and awakened sinner only needs to know the Saviour, and his anxieties are at an end. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' The eye of faith sees the Saviour in his fullness, discovers God in him casting upon the sinner a benignant look, beholds him reconciled and reconciling sinners unto himself, sees the light of his countenance lifted up, and rejoices in him as a father and a friend. It is enough for him that Jesus has lived and died. Every demand of the law he sees met in him. And now he hears his tender invitation, and thankfully accepts it, 'Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

The same confidence in Christ sustains under the heavy pressure of this life's tribulations. From these the believer is not exempted. As the child of Adam, inheriting his depravity, and still, in a measure, retaining it, he must expect sorrow; for man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. But especially as a child of God must he lay his account with afflictions. They are among the promises that are made to believers, for when they are needful for correction they shall not be withheld. But the principle of trust sustains him under them all. He can enter into the view of the believing Corinthians, and say, 'When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.' He is satisfied with the assurance, that 'all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.' And he is comforted by the exhortation, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'

Should outward calamities arise, either in the world or in the church, his trust in Jesus does not leave him. He is not indifferent to them, but may be deeply moved and affected by them.

He ought to be so, yet he is not to despair. Enough for him, 'The Lord reigneth.' The convulsions of society, as the storms in the atmosphere, may be the means of its purification. The interests of religion are dearer to his Master than they can possibly be to him. He could hinder what now agitates and distresses, but he is pleased, for purposes known only to himself, to permit it. In his own hand the believer leaves his cause—assured it is safe, well knowing that he will bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion. 'He will make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath will he restrain.' Christ reigns, therefore all shall be well.

Even in death his hope does not forsake him. He trusts in Christ, and is not disappointed. He can sweetly sing of Israel's Shepherd, 'Yea, though I pass 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.' Death is the hour of satan's triumph, and therefore is it commonly the chosen hour when Jesus is pleased to glorify himself in his overthrow. 'By death he conquered him that had the power of death,' and in death he makes his people partakers of his victory. In much submission he enables them to say, 'Father, thy will be done;' or in confidence to cry, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day;' or it may be that he elevates them to the spirit of a holy triumph, and they sing, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

In eternity the principle of trust is consummated in both its nature and enjoyment. Faith becomes sight, and hope, fruition. The song of victory is sung, '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 and ever.' He becomes one of the holy, happy throng so beautifully described in answer to the elder's question, 'Who are these, and whence came they? These are they that have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor

any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' Well may we say, 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.'

#### NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied,'* Isa. liii. 11.

THE sorrow of Christ is called the 'travail of his soul.' The phrase is borrowed from what is known to be the greatest example of human suffering, and to which our Lord has frequently alluded as emblematic of painfulness. It is particularly his mental anguish that seems intended. For although his bodily sufferings were great, those of his soul were greater. He suffered from persecution when a child, and was obliged to be concealed among strangers. He endured great privations, so as to be led to say 'foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' And at the time of his arrest, and trial, and death, many and grievous tortures were inflicted upon his person. But these seem to be comparatively overlooked, and we are directed to his internal anguish as answering to the 'travail of his soul.' There are many periods of his history in which this was pointedly apparent.

Such was the hour, when in full prospect of his agony and death, he said, 'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.' But for this cause came I unto this hour.' The prospect of suffering is perhaps equal to the reality. Of this distress we are happily free, by our ignorance of futurity. But Christ foresaw what he was to suffer. We do not wonder if the tradition be correct, which says he was never known to smile. What a load must have rested on his spirit! And there were times when this was peculiarly oppressive. He had vivid apprehensions of his coming sorrow, and this appears to have been one of those afflictive seasons.

Of the same kind was his temptation in the wilderness. Satan cast out his vilest poison, and sought to pollute his soul. The temptations were all mental—distrust, presumption, and pride. There was a conflict of his soul with the great enemy of himself and of his people. Some of his followers have had bitter experience of 'the depths of Satan,' but they have endured little in comparison with their Master.

It is only on this principle we can understand our Lord's agony in the garden. At this time there was no violence done to his person, yet his suffering seems to have been as acute as any he ever endured. He said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' And thrice did he fall upon his face and cry, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' We cannot explain his exercises on any other ground than that he gave his 'soul an offering for sin.' 'Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' It must have been the wrath of God, which his soul then endured, that so drank up his spirit.

And so upon the cross. The height of his anguish was when he cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.' The nails that pierced his hands and feet, the crown of thorns that was placed on his head, the reed that smote him, all these were painful, but beyond them all was the withdrawal of his Father's countenance, while he hung a sacrifice for sin! This completed the travail of his soul.

O! what must sin be that so agonized the Son of God! What the love of God that gave up his Son to endure such sorrow! What the spirit of Jesus, who voluntarily submitted to all this for man's redemption! And what ought to be our humiliation, and gratitude, and sense of duty and obligation when we thus behold the travail of the Saviour's soul.

But this is past. As his anguish was bitter, his joy is proportionably great. It is described in terms expressive of perfection: 'he shall be satisfied.' He is satisfied now, and shall be so more and more, as he sees the fruit of his labour brought to consummation.

He is satisfied in the retrospect of what he has done. As when God surveyed the work of his hands, at the conclusion of the creation, and pronounced it good, so Christ can look back upon redemption and echo his own dying cry, 'It is finished.' In it all he sees no imperfection. Redemption is complete. Let us rest in it too.

He is satisfied, while he sees the work of salvation carried forward in the hearts and lives of men, by the operation of his own Holy Spirit. He convinces men of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. He keeps his saints by his own mighty power. He is ripening their souls for glory. And Jesus joyously awaits their arrival. Let us not be satisfied, unless the work of salvation is begun and carried on within us.

He is satisfied as he sees his sons and daughters brought safely home to glory. He sympathizes

in their present struggles, and will detain them here no longer than is necessary for his purposes and their own good. His prayer is, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' Daily and hourly are they arriving there. And as each is ushered in, heaven bursts with new songs of praise and victory. And the bosom of the Redeemer heaves with growing satisfaction. Let us anticipate this hour and be able to say, 'I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.'

He shall be satisfied still more, when he shall have gathered all his people home. 'He shall send out his angels with a great trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds of heaven.' He shall cause them to sit down in the kingdom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they shall go no more out. Not one of all his redeemed family shall be left, and he shall rejoice over them with exceeding joy. O! shall we be there?

He shall be satisfied when he shall contemplate the great and numerous purposes that have been answered by his mediation. 'He shall restore all things.' His voice shall be heard, 'behold I make all things new.' He shall command, and the earth, polluted by sin, shall be burned up, while 'a new heavens and a new earth' shall rise out of the ruins. O! where shall we then be, and what shall be our destiny?

He shall be satisfied while, as the exalted Saviour of the church, he receives the praises of eternity. 'I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'

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#### NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,' Rev. vii. 7.*

THE martyred saints of God are here specially intended. The multitude of the redeemed are described at ver. 9. 10. Among these some ap-

peared peculiarly distinguished, and the elder inquires, 'what are these?' They are represented as those who have particularly borne tribulation, and the description so accords with that given of the martyrs in the preceding chapter, ver. 9—11, that we doubt not they are the characters specially designed. Still the account of their blessedness applies to others also. Although in degree their happiness may be exalted, in kind it is the same with that of all the saints of God; so that the representation now before us may be understood of the redeemed universally.

They are in the presence of Christ, who is described as a 'Lamb in the midst of the throne.' The double figure is common, and it is designed to hold forth the Saviour in his glory, under the most endearing character, as a Lamb, and at the same time as clothed with supreme dominion, so that he is a Lamb in the midst of the throne. The very same are the ideas expressed in another part of this book, only that the imagery is a little more full and complete. 'I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth,' Rev. v. 6. 'A Lamb,' meek and gentle. 'A Lamb in the midst of the throne,' clothed with authority and power. 'A Lamb on the throne, having seven eyes and seven horns'—the emblems of knowledge and power. Once he endured affliction, and as 'a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' But now he is exalted to honour. He has passed from the cross to the crown. Yea, because he was humbled in the character of Mediator, now he is exalted. In the presence of that great and gracious Being do the redeemed now stand. They are admitted to the most intimate and endeared fellowship with their once crucified but now exalted Lord. He still bears to them the relation of their Shepherd, and as such he is here represented to guide, satisfy, and cherish them.

He feeds them with knowledge. It is of their abode the prophet speaks, saying, 'the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' His presence is enough. He makes all mysteries plain. The dark providences of earth are now fully unfolded. Much that once distressed them is now made to minister to their joy. And they can heartily join in the song of Moses and of the Lamb, 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of

saints; who would not fear thee and glorify thy name?' As the God of providence they admire and adore his ways, acknowledging them to be great and marvellous; but as King of saints, they bow in lowliest reverence, and own them to be just and true. Thus they follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth, drinking in knowledge from his instructions; and as they learn more and more of God, rising in their rapturous praises, and making the mansions of glory to resound with their songs.

He satisfies them, 'leading them to living fountains of waters.' What a heaping up of figures, to convey some faint idea of the rich provisions of the upper sanctuary! Water—fountains of water—fountains of living water. Water is employed to convey the idea of luxurious enjoyment, for what a blessing is it esteemed by those who dwell beneath the scorching influence of a burning sun. It is a favourite emblem in the scriptures, and with good reason, for it was well understood by those to whom it was then addressed. And here it is carried even into the description of the joys of heaven, to impart some idea of the refreshment there provided for the soul. But it is not water merely, but 'fountains of water.' There is no limit to the enjoyments of heaven. Unlike those of earth they are never spent. On the contrary they are still increasing. God is better and better known, and more and more enjoyed. The glories of redemption are becoming more and more endearing. The fountain of their blessing is exhaustless. To complete the description, they are 'fountains of living water.' They proceed from the throne of God and the Lamb. They are living themselves, and they impart life to all who partake of them. As they quaff the sacred draughts of heavenly love and consolation, they grow increasingly vigorous in the service of their God. They rest not day nor night. They have life, and are continually made to have it more abundantly, while the Lamb leads them to the fountains of living waters.

Finally, the Lamb cherishes and comforts them. 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' And the Lamb is God. The terms are used promiscuously. In no part of scripture are the views of Christ more exalted than in this book of the Revelation. And the prophet describes him as he saw him in heaven. As God, the Lamb dries up the tears of the redeemed. Many did they shed on earth. Over their own sins. Over the sins of others. Over their own and others' calamities. But now sorrow and sighing are fled away for ever. There is no more sin, therefore no more curse, and no more

sorrow. They now rejoice in their former sorrows. Their tears were carefully put into the bottle of the Lord, and now their joys are proportioned to their bitterness and number.

Happy, happy world! Are we prepared for its exercises and joys? O! let us not deceive ourselves. 'There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.'

Now let us hear the heavenly exhortation, 'Be ye ready.' Now let us 'prepare to meet our God.' Are we ready? The time is short. 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' Let us not defer till to-morrow. Death determines our eternal destiny. As the tree falls so it lies. And once having entered on the eternal world, the unchanging sentence is pronounced, 'he that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still; and he that is holy let him be holy still.'

TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion,'* Psal. ii. 6.

'YET'—although at one time nothing seemed more unlikely. For this is he who was crucified as a malefactor, who, when he said, 'Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven,' caused the high priest to 'rend his clothes,' and cry, 'He hath spoken blasphemy,' while all the people shouted, 'He is guilty of death.'

'Yet'—in spite of all the opposition that was given to him. The princes, the priests, and the people were all leagued against him; the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians laid aside their jealousies and dissensions, and joined their power to crush him; rulers who before were at enmity, forgot their alienation, and became one to make common cause against him; his own friends, terrified and despairing, forsook him and fled; satan mustered all his forces to overthrow him, so much so, that our Lord said to him, 'This is your hour and the power of darkness;' death and hell combined their power to make him their prisoner. But all in vain—'he rose from the dead, spoiling principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.' He hath ascended on high,

leading captivity captive. And when revealed to the prophet who was favoured with visions of his ascended glory, he beheld him 'having on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.'

The description of kingly authority, in the passage before us, is as complete as language could render it. 'I'—Jehovah—'have set him'—firmly and unchangeably—'my King'—mine own chosen and anointed One—'upon my holy hill of Zion'—supreme over my beloved people—all the interests of Zion, which is the church, being committed to his hands. In language, justly approved and familiar to our ear, 'Christ executeth the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies. What an office! Subduing, ruling, defending, restraining, conquering.

'Subduing.' He subdues his people to himself. Like all other men they are born estranged from him, and their hearts are enmity against him. They soon discover dispositions of bitter hatred, and fall in with the company of his betrayers and murderers. But he has power over the human heart. He made it at the first pure and holy, and now that it has become corrupt, he can create it anew. He comes in the power of his Spirit and touches their hearts. He reveals himself to them as their almighty Saviour. He discovers to them what he has done for their redemption. They are made ashamed of their rebellion, lay down their arms which they had lifted up against him, adore his mercy, praise his name, love him supremely, and devote themselves to his service. Thenceforth they are subdued to his will.

Having subdued them, he continues to rule over them. He does so by his word—putting it into their hands, inclining them to acknowledge its authority, and follow its lessons in all things. By his Spirit—causing Him to accompany the word that he may explain, recommend, and enforce it. By his providences—disposing the events and circumstances of their lives so as to accomplish his purposes of mercy towards them. Thus he rules in their hearts, in their lives, in their families, and in the church. Everywhere his supremacy is acknowledged, and his will is their law.

And while he rules them, he defends them. Against their own hearts, which are deceitful and would draw them aside to vanity. Against temptations, which continually assail them and seek to overthrow their constancy. Against satan, who 'goeth about, as a roaring lion, seek-

ing whom he may devour.' And against the world, which is ever laying snares to entangle them. He defends their principles, and enables them to maintain them. Their character—'bringing forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day.' And their hope—helping them to cling by it through all the perils of life.

In defending his people, he restrains their enemies. His power reaches to them, and he can control them as he will. He is 'head over all things to the church' He can hinder their purposes of injury. 'When king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.' He can incline them to offices of kindness. 'The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, and he made a proclamation, saying, He hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem. Who is there among you of all his people! The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.' He can employ them for purposes of chastisement. 'O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.'

Finally, he will conquer all his and their enemies. 'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.' So full is the divine testimony. Jesus shall reign and conquer. The nation and kingdom that will not serve him shall perish. The kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. 'Ask of me, and I will give thee

the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' And all this, for 'he hath set him King upon the holy hill of Zion.'

#### TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'My kingdom is not of this world,' John xviii. 36.

A KINGDOM is one of the most common representations of the church of Christ, to be found in the scriptures. Particularly was our Lord himself accustomed to employ it. There must, therefore, be a special propriety in it, nor is it difficult to perceive the reason of it. The church is a kingdom because it is a community, placed under the government of Jesus Christ as its King and Head—its members are closely united by common interests and pursuits—they are subject to the same laws—possess the same privileges—adopt the same customs—and are called to contend against common enemies. But while the church, in all these things, resembles the kingdoms of this world, it is very different from them in others. In many things it is directly opposed to them, and they to it. It has ever been an object of the world's jealousy and hatred. And while its design has been to bless and regenerate the world, the purpose of the world has ever been directed to its destruction. The grand peculiarity of the church is, that it 'is not of this world.'

Its subjects are not of this world. They have been chosen out of the world. They are called saints, meaning that they have been separated from others, and that they are set apart, by divine grace, to serve and glorify God. They are called the elect, implying that they have been chosen out of a multitude as objects of special favour, and subjects of peculiar influences. The very term church is most expressive of the same idea, for it means *called out*, and imports that it consists of persons who have been called out of the world by means of the preaching of the gospel, and are now united in the faith and fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Men are not members of this church, in the sight of God, because they have been born in a land of Christian light, nor because they have descended from Christian parents, nor even because they have been presented to God in baptism, nor because they have sat down at the Lord's table. By these means they may and are constituted members of the visible church. But of the church, as its men-

bership is known and approved by God, they can become members only by the new birth unto righteousness. Such are 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'

And after they have been called out of the world, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, they are required to keep themselves apart from the world. On no subject is the language of the divine word more full and pointed. 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.' Love is an affection of which the world is unworthy. It may be esteemed according to its value, but it cannot be loved without sin. For love is an affection that allows no rival, and to place our love upon the world is to shut out Christ. Let us be on our guard against its temptations, for they are dangerous and deceitful. Against its people, who may allure us into sin. Against its riches, which may withdraw our hearts from God. Against its pleasures, which may fascinate and lead to folly. And against its honours, which may render us ambitious and proud.

Between the world and the church there is constant enmity. At the fall, God said, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' God hath put it there and none can remove it. It has ever been apparent from that hour to the present. Cain hated and slew his righteous brother Abel. Ishmael persecuted Isaac. Jacob was the object of Esau's jealousy. At all times he that is born of the flesh has persecuted and injured him that was born of the Spirit. It matters not that all make one profession. In the visible church itself there have ever been two distinct societies. One has been worldly in its spirit and pursuits, the other spiritual and heavenly. These cannot coalesce. Many are the forms under which their opposition has been apparent, but the principle from which it has proceeded has ever been the same. Christ himself did not disarm the enmity of the world. And let us not wonder if his most righteous, and consistent, and benevolent followers are misrepresented, and maligned, and injured.

But in this controversy it is to be remembered the servants of Christ are not to employ the weapons of the world. This Christ would not allow in his defence. 'If my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but

now is my kingdom not from hence.' His apostles also disclaimed the use of such earthly weapons, saying, 'the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual, and mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.' Our Lord, indeed, will not own such weapons in his service, for he has plainly warned his followers, 'they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.' The officers of the church must exercise authority, but even this must be wholly spiritual, the sentence and the punishment alike.

The world is only for a season the residence of the church. It is what the wilderness was to Israel. The people of God are journeying through it. They are pilgrims and strangers here. All their supplies are furnished by their great Head. He gives them water to drink from the rock, and bread from heaven to eat. He goes before them in the cloud of his presence, and guides and protects them. And as soon as they cross the Jordan, and are settled in the heavenly Canaan, the wilderness through which they have passed shall be left to desolation and destruction. The world will be destroyed. All its interests shall perish, while none of those of the church of Christ shall be injured. It is a mere scaffold on which the heavenly architect is pleased to stand until he shall build up his church, and complete the spiritual building. As soon as that is done, the scaffolding shall be taken down and cast aside, the world shall be consumed with fire, while the church shall stand for ever a monument of the love, and power, and faithfulness, and truth, of the divine hand by which it was constructed. May we be living stones in this temple of the Lord!

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,'* John xix. 19.

NOR only did he write this title, but the manner and spirit in which he did so are truly surprising. For the historian farther informs us: 'this title read many of the Jews, for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews, but that he said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.' What he had done he would not recal, nor yet alter the way in which he had done it.

Observe here the over-ruling providence of God. We cannot suppose that Pilate understood what he had done. He could not assign a reason for having written the title in various languages, or if he had a reason it was not in accordance with the divine will; nor could he explain, in all likelihood, why he preferred to write as he did, rather than in the amended form recommended to him. But having adopted a certain course, his obstinacy caused him to persevere in it. Nor is this the only occasion in which we see a restraint upon the human will in the history of our Lord. A similar case is recorded by John in chapter xi. 49—52. 'And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this he spake not of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God, which were scattered abroad.' These are two remarkable cases, the one that of the civil governor, the other that of the ecclesiastical ruler. Both ignorantly and truly bore witness unto Christ. If they attached any meaning to their own words, it was not the correct one. Whatever motive influenced their conduct it was not a right one. Yet they were both instruments in the hand of the Lord, for the accomplishment of his purposes. Even their bad passions and unholy purposes were employed for the fulfilment of his gracious designs. 'He made the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath did he restrain.' O! how he can turn the hearts of men as he will, guide their words, and govern their actions. Let us remember he is doing so every day. He is making enemies bear unwilling or undesigned testimony to his Son. He is employing their agencies and activities for his own ends. He says to their enmity, 'hitherto shalt thou come and no farther.' And he moves them to do what his hand and counsel had determined before should be done. Yet they are free and responsible in what they do. God tempts them not to evil, nor puts any constraint on them to do it, although he may be pleased, in his inscrutable sovereignty, to leave them to their own will and suffer them to commit it.

Observe farther in this conduct of Pilate the spirit of prophecy. He wrote the title in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. His reason may have been to make it thus intelligible to the various persons of different countries, who might read it. But the Spirit of God had an ulterior object.

In this inscription, so written, there was an intimation that all nations and tongues were interested in the death of Christ. He should indeed die, not for that nation only who crucified him, but for the whole world. And was there not here a prophecy, that the time was approaching when all should read in their own tongues the wonderful works of God, and hear the story of redeeming love? The providence of God had so ordered it that at this very time people of all nations were assembled at Jerusalem, for the purpose of celebrating the feast. Thus the wonderful events which had taken place would be carried throughout all countries. And it was not many days after when the Holy Ghost came upon the apostles, with the gift of tongues, and the representatives of all nations were present to attest its reality. 'We do all hear in the language wherein we were born.' This is but a figure and a foretaste of that day 'when the angel shall fly through heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell upon the earth, to all nations and people, and tongues, and kindred.'

Observe here too the Spirit of truth. Pilate wrote 'the King of the Jews,' nor would he alter what he wrote. The form suggested by the chief priests would certainly have been much more agreeable both to the Jews and the Romans. The Jews counted it a disgrace that a malefactor should be called their king, and they wished the title altered. The Romans considered the claim made by the title to be treason against Cæsar. And is it not wonderful that Pilate did not adopt the suggestion lest he should offend his royal master? It may have been that he wished to annoy and disgrace the Jews, knowing that Christ was an innocent man, and that what they did was from envy and the basest motives. Still he adhered to his purposes. No fear nor desire to please could make him change. Yet he was a man devoid of principle. O! see the Spirit of God working even by the worst passions of the human heart, and laying an arrest upon them to do his will. Truly the king's heart is in the Lord's hand, and he turneth it as the rivers of water. Its turnings may be as numerous and tortuous as the playful, fitful meanderings of the stream, yet the Lord governs them all, and will make them tributary to his counsel. He made the pusillanimous Pilate boldly and determinedly to proclaim the truth, and abide by it in this instance; saying, 'this is the King of the Jews.' So can he ever do, and so is he doing every day with the hearts of the children of men.

Finally, observe here the spirit of love. Jesus is proclaimed the King of the Jews, notwith-

standing the baseness of their conduct towards him. They crucified him, yet did he not disown them. Even his murderers among them he entreated to return and submit themselves to him when, by his resurrection, he was proved to be their King. The apostles were to preach to all, 'beginning at Jerusalem.' And still has he purposes of mercy toward them. In love will he return to them and yet restore them to his favour. He now chastens them for their rejection of his claims, but he will be pacified towards them. He has commanded that a special regard shall be had to them by all the churches of the Gentiles. He has promised that they who love them shall prosper. He hath loved them with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness will he draw them. This is his promise, 'behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock, in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.' May the Lord hasten it in his time!

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ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,'* Heb. i. 3.

THE mediatorial person, and work, and glory of Christ, are often found united in the scriptures. The dignity of his person qualified him for his work, and gave efficacy to it; that work is complete in itself, and fully meets the condition of the sinner; and, in consequence of the perfect accomplishment of the work entrusted to him, he is now raised to the highest glory in the presence and enjoyment of his heavenly Father. An example of this kind occurs in the passage before us. Let us follow out its views in a few meditations upon it.

1. The person intended is emphatically marked, 'Who—himself.' The work he had undertaken was such that he could have no associate in it. He was equal to it, and he alone. And his qualifications for it are largely set forth in the context. 'The Son of God—heir of all things—maker of the worlds—the brightness of the Father's glory—the express image of his person

—the upholder of all things.' What a heaping together of images and illustrations! What a glorious object must he be in whom all these rays of divine majesty meet! Let us reflect upon them for a moment.

'The Son of God.' The phrase denotes equality with God. It applies to Christ in a sense which makes him an equal partaker with the Father and the Spirit in the nature and glory of the Godhead. It belongs to him as it does not to any created intelligence. And hence is he called his own Son—his beloved Son—his only-begotten Son—his first-born. How far short language falls of conveying just ideas of the persons of the Godhead!

'Heir of all things.' Who could inherit all things? Who possesses a capacity to do so? Of what avail were it to a creature to appoint him the possessor of the earth? It would profit him nothing. He could not enjoy it. He could not use it. He might bear the name, but it would be a name merely. Is this the idle compliment paid the Saviour here? No! No! He is capable of being heir of all things. And the capacity arises from his divine nature.

'Maker of the worlds.' Let it not be said he was employed merely as an instrument or agent. A creature is not capable of being employed to create. And the testimony of scripture is not limited to this mode of expression. If it is said here, 'by whom he made the worlds'—it is said elsewhere, 'all things were made by him.' He is the Creator in the fullest and highest sense, even as the Father and the Spirit.

'The brightness of the Father's glory.' He saith himself, 'He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.' The perfections of God shone in him, and were exercised and manifested by him. In him the character of Jehovah is presented to the contemplation of men. What an absurdity, yea blasphemy, it would be to speak thus of a finite creature!

'The express image of his person.' The phrase recognizes a distinction of persons, while there is unity of nature. And that is more fully declared at ver. 8, 'Unto the Son he (God) saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.' God said unto God. Is not the only reasonable and right interpretation, the Father said unto the Son?

'Upholding all things by the word of his power.' Precisely a similar representation occurs in Col. i. 16, 17, where there is added to a most sublime description of Christ as the Creator, 'by him all things consist.' What are we to think of a creature sustaining the universe?

Is it not plain that the scriptures labour to raise our views of the Saviour's person to the highest conceptions we can form? The representations are as exalted, and as numerous and varied as of the Father himself. And why? To lead us to right views of the work he performed. For—

2. He, himself, 'purged our sins.' None but he could do so—he did so fully. The phrase is used to signify the removal of sin in every sense in which it attached to man. He atoned for the guilt of sin, having borne its punishment in his own body on the tree. And how full is the divine testimony to the complete satisfaction which has thus been made! 'The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' 'Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.' '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.' The blood of Christ, once applied to the soul, removes all its guilt. Though its sin may have been as scarlet, it becomes as wool; though red like crimson, it is made white as snow. But not merely is the guilt removed, the power of sin is overthrown. The sinner is not only pardoned, but sanctified. And this purification is ever, in like manner, traced to the blood of Christ. 'For if the blood of bulls and of goats sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God.' 'Who, his ownself, bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.' The blood of Christ renews the heart, furnishes the motive of obedience, and is thus, in the hand of the Spirit, the destruction of sin in the heart and the life. Thus has he purged our sin in the removal of both its guilt and its power. And hence is his work celebrated in the heavens in these very aspects of it, '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 and ever.' Nor can any doubt remain upon the completeness of his work. For—

3. His glory has succeeded to his work. Having purged our sins, 'he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.' He sat down—his work being finished. He sat down on the right hand—his work being accepted.

He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high—himself being honoured. Jesus is glorified as the triumphant Saviour of his church. The Spirit has it now for his office to take the things of Christ and show them unto men, that he may be exalted. He waits in glory till his enemies shall be made his footstool. His cause had its foundation securely laid in his death, it is now carried forward by his grace, and shall be brought to a glorious consummation. 'His name shall endure for ever. His name shall be continued as long as the sun. Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed. And blessed be his glorious name for ever. And let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.'

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TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us,'* Isa. xxxiii. 22.

How seldom do we think of that great day for which all other days are passing! How little do we live under the conviction that before the bar of the Omnipotent each one of us must hereafter stand, and render an account of every word, and thought, and deed! And yet thus saith the scripture of truth: 'God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.' 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.' Even here, even in the present world, it is manifest that he judgeth. How often do we see the sinner caught alive in his own devices—the wicked man eating the bitter fruit of the evil he sowed! How often has the sudden and terrible destruction of the blasphemer constrained the most careless to acknowledge that the hand of an avenging God was in it! But though the sentence of the Judge may have gone forth already, it is not generally executed here; it is only in eternity that divine justice will be fully vindicated in the face of the universe. And how solemn a consideration is it, that he unto whom we must answer is the *omniscient* one. Ah! there can be no escaping him amid the crowd; no darkness nor shadow of death in which to elude his eye! 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the day of thy youth, and walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.' Ay, and we may

not forget that it is by the 'man he hath ordained,' the Lord will judge the earth—that now he hath committed all judgment to the Son. A most consoling truth this is, indeed, to the believer—for how can he fear, hereafter, the tribunal of his elder Brother—his dear Redeemer, with whom he delights now to hold fellowship, on whose arm of love he leans incessantly! But how startling is it to the unbelieving and impenitent! Methinks I would rather plead before the great and terrible God, than meet, on the day of his wrath, the rebuking eye of that Jesus whose grace I have so often despised, to whose invitations of love and mercy for years and years I have turned a deaf ear!

Seeing then that there is a universal judgment, we cannot fail to inquire what the *rule* of it is—and the answer is plain, 'the law of the Lord.' It is written, that he who is our Judge, is also our lawgiver. The Lord is the Head of his spiritual kingdom; and his part it is to order it as he sees meet—to prescribe the principles on which it is to be administered. On the heart of every member of it, more or less distinctly, he hath written the work of his law; at any rate all men must answer him at last according to the light he has given them. 'As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.'

Yea, the Lord is not only our Lawgiver and our Judge; he is also 'our King.' All power in earth and heaven is his—he rules in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will; on his vesture and thigh, as Mediator, the name is written, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' It is impossible not to see how terrible in this character he must be to his foes. Who can fight against God? who can rush unscathed against the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler? The kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords; but he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision.

Ah! but judgment is his strange work! The exercise of regal power in which he delights most is the defence and salvation of his people. How emphatic are the prophet's words, and which of us with our whole hearts will not join him in drawing the inference: 'The Lord is our king—he will save us.'

Surely, surely, than this there cannot be any thing more mightily calculated to animate the people of God.

The Lord is our king; we may trust, therefore, that he will not allow sin to have dominion over us, nor the guilt of it to subject us to the condemnation of hell.

The Lord is our king. We may commit our souls, therefore, in life and death to his keeping, and rest with perfect confidence in his care.

The Lord is our king. Let us not fear, therefore, what men can do unto us—greater is he that is for us than all that can be against us.

The Lord reigneth. The church, therefore, is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Though evil days come unto her, he on whose shoulders is the government shall deliver her out of them all. She may be brought down into the dust—but she is the king's daughter, and he will loose the bands from her neck, and restore unto her beauty for ashes. She may be cast into the furnace—as often she has been—but the fires will only purge her dross. Long and heavily the cloud may hang over her, as again and again it has hung of old—but it is a cloud surcharged with light, and will but rain blessings down as it rolls by. 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities; thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.'

#### TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,'* Eph. i. 22.

ALAS! we do not yet see these blessed words realized in our world! very far, indeed, to human view, are the kingdoms of the earth from being the kingdoms of the Lord Jesus. It is only a few, a very few, called by his name, who acknowledge him. Multitudes there are who deny his right, and defy his power. And yet in the eternal counsel it is fixed that he shall be Lord of all; the book of prophecy is full of pictures of the peace and blessedness of his universal sway. Who can help wishing that these bright days would come speedily—who can fail to pray the prayer that very soon the wilderness and the solitary place may be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. And yet though men see it not, it

is true that God hath put all things already under the feet of his Son. It was for this that he endured the cross, despising the shame; this is the mighty prize which his toils, and sorrows, and travails have won. The prediction was, 'the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' And these glorious words abundantly prove that the prediction has been accomplished. 'Therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' And for what purpose has the sceptre been given to Jesus? To what end does he wield it? How does he employ the absolute and unlimited authority with which as Mediator King he has thus been invested? O how we rejoice to know that it is singly for the good of his people—for the glory of his redeemed! The apostle, under the guidance of inspiration, declares that he is 'Head over all things to the church.'

And well, well may he be styled its sole Head. He is its Head—because he hath purchased it with his own blood. 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it—that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.'

He is its Head—because it is by his grace alone that every member of it is converted. He came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance—and not till his word is brought home in power to the heart can any feel their need of salvation, and flee for refuge to the hope of the gospel.

He is its Head—because he pours down on it continually from heaven the sanctifying influences of his Spirit. 'It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you.' Blessed be Jesus that that promise has never failed! He lives still freely to communicate to all who seek it in faith the free gift of his Spirit—and all on whom it descends are transformed and regenerated—most graciously prepared for the sinless exercises and joys of the habitation whither he has gone before them.

And what more consoling truth can there be to believers than this, that he who rules the church rules the world also—ay, and rules the world in accordance with the designs of his church. The kingdom of providence is now subservient to the kingdom of grace. The rise and fall of kings—the revolutions of governments—the decline and

growth of empires—the most diverse vicissitudes of human affairs—all are under the control of the mediatorial dominion—all are subordinated to the growing glory of Zion.

What then shall we say of a church which owns not Jesus as supreme? How shall we characterize a spiritual community which fails to own and confess him before the world as Master and Lord in his own house? It is no church of Christ at all. It is a body without a head. Let us never forget what is written, that his church is 'Christ's body,' the fullness of him that filleth all in all; so that such are the riches of his condescension, that even He who filleth all in all is not complete in his mediatorial character without the preservation and salvation of its members! How thankful ought we to be to God that the church of our fathers has clung to this truth at all hazards; in evil times and prosperous alike; let us pray that she may never be tempted to let it go.

Still let me not boast vainly of Christ's Headship, if I have not yielded my own spirit to his sway. Such boasting is vain, as it is impious. O Lord, bow thy heavens, and come down and subdue me unto thyself. I desire to be wholly thine. Casting myself down at the foot of the cross, let my believing cry be, 'my Lord and my God!' And then, indeed, as the willing subject of Christ's kingdom, by whatever name I am called here, how may I rejoice in the thought that my Redeemer reigneth, yea, reigneth over all as a man. He to whom all power in heaven and earth belongs is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; on the throne of the universe—on the throne of heaven, and earth, and hell—a human heart, the heart of a brother, is beating.

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom,' Heb. i. 8.

THESE words plainly refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. They are quoted from the xlth Psalm, which contains one of the most beautiful prophetic descriptions in the whole bible of the grace and glory of Christ's dominion. 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.' And most gracious words they are: the truth which they inculcate is one on which it is most pleasant to meditate. The sovereign whom we serve is indeed King of kings and Lord of lords; but the height of power to which he has been exalted only serves more

brightly to display that righteousness which is the fairest jewel in his crown! With the sword girt on his thigh, it is true that he rides prosperously in his majesty; but it is all because of meekness and truth. His arrows are sharp in the heart of his enemies, whereby the people fall under him. Ah! but faithfulness is the girdle of his loins, while his garments smell of myrrh, and aloe, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces! The righteousness in which Jesus rules is particularly exhibited in the forgiveness which he bestows on the church. This forgiveness is not the gift of mere mercy: it is the triumph of truth not less than of mercy. In the room of his people he satisfied by his death all the demands of the law; by his resurrection from the dead it was plainly declared that eternal justice was satisfied with the sacrifice; and having now ascended to heaven he has a manifest right to distribute to whom he will the blessings which he purchased at the cost of his own blood. Well then may the sceptre of grace he holds out for sinners to touch be styled a sceptre of righteousness; for in righteousness he has won the power to stretch it out to the very chief of sinners. In his salvation, truth and mercy meet together on equal terms: in the eye of the law he is declared to be just even when he justifies the ungodly.

And how mightily is this calculated to relieve all those desponding souls against whom the terrors of the judgment have arrayed themselves! The very justice, the very inflexible justice of heaven, is the guarantee of the believer's security. It is because He is faithful who has promised—it is because the Judge of all the earth must do right and cannot lie, that the church of Christ is built on a rock, and even the humblest, poorest member of it is safe.

Blessed be God that the government which by righteousness Jesus hath thus won, in righteousness he conducts and shall conduct to the end. With him there is no respect of persons: under him neither may any fear to find injury, nor hope to escape if they commit it. The widow's cause he delights to plead; he is the stranger's shield and orphan's stay; the humble folk also he forgets not who put their trust in him. But his right hand worketh terrible things to the proud—he breaks in pieces the oppressor. This was the prophecy of him of old, 'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, but with righteousness shall he judge the

world, and reprove with equity for the meek: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.'

Who can help reflecting on the difference between his own people and his enemies under Messiah's sway?

See the *righteous* man. Is he subjected to the reproach of the world, falling on evil days and evil tongues? He has his appeal to the King who sits on his holy hill of Zion with justice and judgment as the habitation of his throne, and most surely of the King he will be justified. Is he the prey of persecution and intolerance here? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right, and vindicate his violated truth hereafter in the face of the universe? Is he called to eat the bitter bread of penury, or to agonize on the bed of pain and languishing, or to weep often by the deathbed and over the graves of those he loves? It is the will—it is the doing of the righteous One—and whatever he orders is ordered wisely and well.

Ah! but these are the stinging thoughts of the *wicked*. In the midst of his godless prosperity a still small voice within whispers fearfully that his sin shall yet find him out! Even though his fraud, and treachery, and tyranny, escape unseen and unpunished on earth, he feels that there shall be a retribution beyond. He cannot believe that the denunciations of the Judge will not be executed: he cannot persuade himself that his threatenings are empty sounds, intended merely to frighten the weak and timid. They are the words of Him who cannot lie—whose sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness—and who speaks as he acts. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall perish.' O Lord, I cannot stand before thee in my own righteousness: if thou deal justly with me my portion in eternity shall be misery and despair. Give me grace now to flee for refuge to the hope of the gospel; that in the face of Jesus Christ my Redeemer thou mayest look on me, and in thy truth visit me with thy salvation.

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,'* Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

THE Lord Jesus, as the Head of his spiritual kingdom, has taken care to provide for the loyalty

of his people. In their natural state he finds them rebels and aliens, and he makes them willing in the day of his power: in their natural state they hate his law and his gospel, and he inclines their hearts unto his word; by a sweet violence he constrains them to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments, and do them.

If we sit down with the simplicity of little children to our bibles,—if we search at all into the sins of our hearts and lives, we will all be convinced that we must needs undergo a change of nature ere we can be the true subjects of the King of Zion! This change is so great, so thorough, so pervading, as to be called a 'new creation:' it is represented by such strong figures as these, 'passing from darkness into light,' from 'Satan to God,' from 'death to life.' We may not be able to point out to others,—we may not know ourselves, the precise time at which it began, or the exact manner in which it was effected. There are persons indeed who aver that it is always sudden, always violent, ever accompanied with strange excitements, and strong agitations and throes of the heart and frame. Such persons are presumptuous enough to dictate to the Spirit of God the mode of his operations in the conversion of sinners, which is just as various as the various tempers and habits of sinners. Sometimes conversion is a sudden, sometimes a gradual work: in one it is wrought in a moment, in others it is the slow result of diverse processes that may have been in operation for years; in this man it is begotten of many labours, and travails, and tears; in that man it is calm, and soft, and gentle, as the heart is opened, and love melts and subdues the whole spirit into tenderness. But in all it is a *real* work, and though we may not specify the day and date of its taking place, we can take two different periods of our life, the present and some one gone past, and by the contrast show that it must have taken place. 'One thing is certain,' every believer can say with him of old, whom Christ restored to sight, 'one thing is certain, that whereas *once* I was blind, now I see.'

Now the author and agent of this change is the Holy Spirit,—whose gifts Jesus hath purchased for his people. The scriptures tell us that no man can truly call Jesus Christ Lord but by the Spirit,—that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. It is his office to convince men of sin; it is his office to guide men to the truth; it is his office to renew men after the image of God, and to prepare them for the sinless exercises and happy society of heaven. There is not a single grace of the Christian life which does not flow from his influences. Would you know his fruits, mark

the catalogue, 'Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' O how blessed a thing it is to have the heart right with God! how happy those who account the statutes of the King their joy, and his testimonies their song in the house of their pilgrimage! This evening let us all search and see whether the promise of Ezekiel, 'I will put my Spirit within you,' has been realized in our experience. Is our affection to the Saviour cold and weak? is our faith in him a faith merely of the letter? are our services in his sanctuary dull and formal? are our prayers at his footstool, in the family and the closet, few and short and heartless? have we no love to his truth? are we not diligent to keep his judgments and do them? are we barren and unfruitful in good works? O! then, just as surely as if a voice from heaven proclaimed it, we may believe that we have not yet the Spirit of Christ,—that we are none of his.

And yet this is not so, because the Spirit has not done his part with us. At some time or other, to some degree or other, we have all experienced his working. Who can say that the arrows of the Lord have been flying around him for years, and yet that he has escaped utterly untouched? In a Christian land, with the bible in our possession, and a gospel ministry at our doors, if we are yet unbelieving and impenitent, it is just because we have grieved, and vexed, and quenched the Spirit. And yet the Lord is waiting to be gracious. O come and let us petition for an outpouring of God from on high, on our family and our neighbourhood! Blessed be God that the days of revival and refreshing from his presence are *not* gone by in the land; ever and anon rumours of them are filling our ears, from east, and west, and north, and south. And alas! as we survey the vast fields of spiritual death that are spread around us, who will not give thanks with his whole heart for the gracious visitation? True, there may be extravagance, and fanaticism, and enthusiasm; true, there may be extraordinary excitements and agitations, which, as they pass away, leave men more inveterately ungodly than before.—And such things satan loves. But wherever the Spirit of God is vouchsafed, the invariable and eternal effects are 'goodness, and righteousness, and faith.' Come then, and on our knees let us plead God's own promise of this precious gift to the fervent prayer of faith; 'if a son shall ask bread of any of you who is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? if ye then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your

heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?'

FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.'* Hosea xiii. 14.

WE cannot tell what it is to die. We can follow a man to the very verge of being—but the last step between the two worlds, the final link between time and eternity, is invisible. We trace the ravages of the growing disease—we see the body tossing in agony, the multitude of the bones vexed with strong pain—we mark the gathering paleness, the closing eye, the stiffening features, the shortening, sinking breath—we watch till the spirit hovers on the very lips—but none ever returned to tell of the parting struggle which rent the tabernacle of flesh, none ever returned to tell us of the experience of the last feeling, of the very severing of the thread of life. The last enemy must be fought alone—without any earthly companion the gloom of the valley of shadows must be trodden by all; and no one can stand beside the bed of a dying man without witnessing the awful solitariness that sits on his face. Now this is the blessed privilege of believers, that in the situation of all others the most trying to human nature, they lean with perfect confidence on the arm of their Lord. To them death is a covenant-mercy, and the grave a quiet place of rest; to them death, in his worst shape, environed with all his terrors, is but the messenger that calls them home to their Father's house.

Let us meditate for a little on some of those circumstances in death, which though most terrible to others, their faith teaches them to overcome.

1. Painful, bitterly painful often is the last struggle with mortality—the earthly tabernacle falling to pieces—the mysterious bond between soul and body breaking. And yet how often have the testimony of a good conscience, and the hope of a better inheritance through the cross of Christ, inspired composure and fortitude amid the worst agonies of the flesh! There are few better appeals to the infidel than the voice from the death-bed, 'See how a Christian can die.'

2. Again, very grievous are the separations which death makes. It is sad to part from scenes we have known long, and objects on which our fondest affections were lavished; it is sad

to leave for ever the 'old familiar faces.' That is a fearful text to the worldling: 'Thou shalt have no more a portion in any thing that is done under the sun.' Ah! but the Christian knows that he is a pilgrim and a stranger here, and as a pilgrim he lives; all the while his chief treasures are in heaven, and a removal from earth in God's good time he frequently looks forward to as not less good for him than inevitable. It is true that he were a traitor to his nature did he not feel, and feel keenly, as friends and kindred are weeping around him. But though his heart be sad, and tears may flow, he sorrows not as those who have no hope. This is the truth that scatters flowers around his tomb, 'there is a meeting again in heaven;' and if a fear will sometimes arise within him for the future provision of those whom he is about to leave behind him to the pity of a cold world, it cannot disquiet long. He commends them to his Father in heaven—and sweet, soothing to his soul, beyond ought that thousands of silver and gold can give, are these gracious words, 'Leave thy fatherless children, I will keep them alive, and let thy widows trust in me.'

3. Again, who can contemplate the gloom which hangs over the tomb of nature, and not weep? See the dust given to the dust; see the turf wrapping the little heap; see the flesh consumed from the bones; see the very bones mouldering away. O the grave, the grave! Is this the end of him whose thoughts wander through eternity? 'Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?' Ah! but from the Star of Bethlehem light has been flung on the tomb of nature, and athwart the dunnest gloom of the valley of shadows. 'Come, see the place where the Lord lay.' It is desolate, tenantless for ever; and written over it ineffaceably are these glorious words, 'I am the resurrection and the life; if a man believe in me, though he were dead yet shall he live again; he that believeth in me shall never die.'

4. Finally, it is the doubts and fears—it is the apprehensions of wrath and forebodings of judgment which accompany it—that make death most terrible to a man. To enter into the immediate presence of the great God—to appear with all his sins unshriven on his head before the Judge of the quick and the dead; how fearful a thought! See that poor conscience-stricken one, vainly weeping, and vowing, and confessing, and promising; see that weary soul idly casting a look every where for some anchor on which to rest—panting hopelessly after any refuge which may shield it, any thing that may quiet it in that awful hour! O! how fearful is death to him who

has no part nor lot in the everlasting covenant! Ah! but what enemy can intermeddle with the peace of him for whom Jesus died, for whom Jesus is interceding in heaven? As from the foot of the cross he looks to his crucified Redeemer, and thence lifts his eye of faith to mount Zion, this is the triumphal song he takes up, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God who hath given me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ.' My soul, enter not thou into the secrets of those who live and die without the consolations of the gospel of the grace of God.

'O may the grave become to me  
The bed of peaceful rest,  
Whence I shall gladly rise at length,  
And mingle with the blest!  
Cheered by this hope, with patient mind  
I'll wait heaven's high decree,  
Till the appointed period come,  
When death shall set me free.'

#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'And the God of peace shall bruise satan under your feet shortly,' Rom. xvi. 20.

ONE of the most beautiful titles of Jesus in the scriptures is the 'Prince of peace.' And well may he be so styled. At his birth the herald angels sang, 'Peace on earth, good-will to men;' his ministers are 'ambassadors of peace;' his gospel is a 'message of peace;' he 'makes peace through the blood of his cross;' himself is the 'peace' of the believer.

Let us consider the way in which this blessing is secured, and of what value it is.

Naturally we are enemies to God, fearing him, hating him—and, as enemies, he cannot suffer us to live in quiet, 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' But there is reconciliation with God through his Son! By grace he draws us nigh to him in the name of Jesus;—he shows us the suitableness of the gospel salvation to our case as guilty and polluted sinners, and enables us with our whole heart to accept it;—and then he enters into a covenant with us, saying, 'I will be no more wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee;'—being justified by faith we have peace with God. And to peace with God succeeds peace of conscience. Who shall lay any thing to our charge? The demands of the law are satisfied in our stead—and the Judge is well-pleased. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again. We look to divine mercy leagued with divine

truth in our behalf—we look to the all-sufficient merits and all-prevailing intercession of our Mediator—we look to the gospel promises confirmed to us with an oath for ever—and we are 'filled with peace in believing.' No one may estimate the value of that peace save they to whom it is given! It is a perpetual feast; it is the joy and sunshine of the soul; it passeth all understanding; the world cannot give it nor take it away; it is heaven upon earth begun. Without this thousands of silver and gold cannot buy content—all the honours of time piled on the head cannot charm disquietude away: with this, in the worst privations of penury, in the face of the world's scorn and the proud man's contumely, on the wasting bed of disease, amid the weariness and pain of dissolution, the believer is happy. With a reconciled Father in heaven, with an interceding Redeemer, with a witnessing Spirit, with an approving conscience, what has he to fear—who can intermeddle with his joy?

Now, satan is ever ready with all his arts to obstruct us in the acquisition of such a blessing as this, because it is utterly subversive of his kingdom. He fills us with doubts and fears—he tries to disturb us with hard thoughts of God, and miserable forebodings of guilt—he tempts us at times into dejection, and despondency, and despair. But our consolation is, that through Christ Jesus, though he be our enemy, he is a conquered enemy. He cannot hurt us if we adhere stedfastly to our Saviour, and fail not to implore the constant supply of his grace to direct and strengthen us in the evil hour. Faith and prayer are the weapons of proof which he cannot stand. And yet strive as we may, we must not expect in this life to be complete victors: not till death call us hence, will he be bruised utterly under our feet. As long as we carry about with us a body of sin in an evil world, we have to wage a keen and continual warfare with the great enemy of souls; and the calm we do enjoy is but an 'armed truce' maintained with the sword in our hands. Ah! but there is nothing to hurt or destroy in all that holy mountain whither death leads the weary pilgrim of faith; the arrows of the tempter cannot reach him there. 'O that I had wings like a dove—for then would I flee away and be at rest.'

There is another truth which very naturally suggests itself in connection with such reflections as these. All they who have found peace with God in Christ delight to live in peace with one another: brotherly communion is one of the tests of their discipleship. And why should not all be united together in heart and spirit as well as in name?

They have one faith, one Lord, one baptism—they have the same hopes, and the same promises and privileges—they are devoted to the same cause, and subjects of the same gracious government—fellow-pilgrims are they in the journey of life, and heirs together of one heaven. How blessed a thing it is for such as are brethren to dwell together in unity! Ah, but satan hates that unity! He rules by their strife and divisions—and therefore he ceases not day nor night to foment them. And, alas! he has but too well succeeded. On which ever side we turn, the eye cannot fail to witness and deplore his triumphs. See how the poor church is torn, and rent, and bleeding with a thousand wounds; see the professed followers of the Prince of peace hating each other, slandering each other, persecuting each other—the worldling's scoff, the laughing-stock of the infidel!

And yet the book of prophecy declares that all these sad breaches shall assuredly be healed. The kingdom of satan shall totter and fall: the God of peace shall bruise satan shortly under the feet of his Son. The day is coming when 'the mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills righteousness;' the day is coming when the soldiers of the cross shall league together with 'lines unrent and confederate banner' against the common foe, and gather from the north, and the south, and the east, and the west, and go forth to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Great God, in thy great mercy let it come speedily! 'I will pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee.'

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FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,' 2 Cor. x. 5.*

OUR greatest sorrow here as Christians arises from the body of sin we carry about with us—from the working of yet unsubdued corruption within us. 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that the good we would we do not, and the evil which we would not, that we do'—'even when we mean to do good, evil is present with us.'

But the power of Christ as King is pledged to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of his gospel—and neither his power

nor his promise can ever fail. However hard and obdurate our hearts are, the word of the Lord is as 'fire, and as the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces;' and we are melted and subdued before it. However haughty we be in our rebellion, the grace of Jesus is irresistible; it casts down every imagination, every high thought that exalteth itself against him; it constrains us to acknowledge him as absolute Lord, and with our whole soul, and body, and spirit to become his willing subjects. Now the way in which we are thus brought and kept under the complete obedience of the gospel, is by having implanted within us, as a living, vital affection, the love of Jesus. Grace subdues us, and love holds us captive. O! there is no principle which exercises such sway over the heart as this! It has led men to renounce riches, and reputation, and honour as dross for Christ's sake; it has led men to abandon all the endearments of home and kindred, and to go out to the land of the stranger and the savage to preach Christ; it has led men to brave the dungeon gloom, and the rack, and the wheel, and the stake for the 'testimony of Christ;' it constrains men still by a sweet violence to dedicate every faculty and every possession, all they have, and all they can do to the service of Christ. 'None but Christ, none but Christ,' is ever the cry of fervent faith: 'I charge ye, daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him I am sick of love.'

That we may form some estimate of its influence on the frame and tenor of a man's character, see how changed he is since he yielded himself to the love of his Saviour.'

Once the sanctuary was a weariness to him, now it is his joy and song, for Jesus is there. Once the sabbath was in his eye the dullest day in all the week; now he longs till it come round again, for it reminds him of the triumphs of Jesus. Once his prayers were barren and heartless; now his choicest moments are spent at the footstool of the throne, because he pleads with his God in the name of Jesus. Once he preferred all other books to the bible; now he meditates in it day and night, and the oftener he reads, he likes it the better, because it testifies of Jesus. Once he talked about any thing and every thing but religion; now it is his pleasantest theme, for he cannot cease speaking of Jesus. Once he chose his companions out of the gay, and the foolish, and the frivolous; now his communion is with the household of faith, for on each member of it he delights to trace the image of Jesus. And let us not suppose that the change he has thus undergone is a partial and a temporary change. 'If

any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' He has new hopes and new fears, new duties and new pursuits, new desires and new aversions, new joys and new sorrows. The same things which he did before he does now in a new way, and with new motives; even his very diligence in the business of life receives now a new direction, and springs from new motives. 'To me to live is Christ;' he takes up the words of Paul as emphatically expressive of the dedication of his whole soul to the Lord: 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'

Do we know any thing of this 'captivity to the obedience of Jesus?' We call ourselves by his name. In avouching him to be our Lord are we rendering him the unqualified homage of the heart and the life? Is he 'in us,' and are his laws our songs in the house of our pilgrimage? O Lord God, thou knowest. Blessed Jesus, I desire to be thine—thine now—thine wholly—thine for ever. Do thou help me to watch against every disloyal thought and deed. Teach me to order my steps in thy word, and let not any sin have dominion over me. Alas! even when I am most diligent in self-examination, there is much evil within which I cannot feel nor see as I ought! 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

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FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King,'  
Psal. cxlix. 2.

IN the eye of the men of the world religion is continually associated with moroseness and gloom. They chase it away from their social circles as the enemy of their peace; melancholy they regard as merely another name for it. And yet never could there be an idler nor more slanderous deceit. The mariner rejoices when his little bark is rescued from the sucking whirlpools of ocean; the captive exults when he exchanges the dungeon gloom for the sweet light of the sun, and the fetter for freedom; the weary exile leaps with joy when he is restored again to the old faces and the pleasant home of his youth. But these are all faint and feeble emblems of the blessedness of penitent sinners, when after many dark days and nights of tears, the light of gospel truth breaks in on their souls, and the weight of wrath which was weigh-

ing them down to death is lifted off, and they have found Jesus, and through Jesus, peace with their Father in heaven, and a heritage in their Father's house! There are none so happy, none in all the world so happy as they. They are beautified with salvation; the high praises of God are in their mouth; they sing aloud upon their beds; even though sorrowful they are always rejoicing. Their path is as the shining light, which shineth ever brighter and brighter: their life is associated with the sweetest and softest imagery, smiling skies and green pastures, and quiet waters. And hear how David speaks of them in the verse which is prefixed to his evening's meditation, 'Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.'

'Children of Zion' is one of the scripture titles of believers: their 'King' is the Lord Jesus Christ. And well indeed may they rejoice in him,—ever as they look on him in faith,—in whatever light they contemplate him.

Let them rejoice in his *person*. He is the image of the invisible God,—fairer than the children of men,—the chiefest among ten thousand.

Let them rejoice in his *love*. Many waters could not quench, nor floods drown it; it is the burden henceforth through eternity of the hosannahs of paradise.

Let them rejoice in the *righteousness* which he has wrought out for his people. It has magnified the law and made it honourable; it acquits and absolves from the condemnation of sin; it furnishes a right to the tree of life.

Let them rejoice in his *salvation*. It is rich, and free, and full,—suited to all,—ready for all,—offered to all.

Specially let them rejoice in his omnipotent and eternal *sway*. O there is no single conceivable element of decay or dissolution in human empires which has any place in the government of Jesus! Death wrests the sceptre from the best and bravest on an earthly throne: but the mediator King is alive for evermore, and holds the keys of hell and of death. The rebel may usurp the rights of his prince here, and the traitor may plot and betray; but the subjects of the King of Zion count his testimonies 'their songs,' and none that is unfaithful or covetous hath any inheritance with him. The impotence of an earthly monarch may make him a prey to tumult and sedition, or his ignorance may tempt the crafty to ensnare him into destruction, or neglect of his office may beget ominous complaints and murmurings among his people, or his tyranny may arm them up against him to hurl him headlong from his throne. Ah! but our Lord knoweth all things, and his wisdom is infinite,—his arm breaks in pieces the enemy,

—he hears the sighing of the needy, and pleads the widow's cause,—in truth he judges the nations, and his folk with equity. A rival may start up against an earthly monarch and dispute his title and defy his power, or the fatigues of government may wear him down, or disease may waste him, or old age may leave him helpless and defenceless to the invader. But who of the sons of the mighty can once be likened unto the King of heaven; nothing is too vast for his superintendence, or too minute for his concern; his eye never sleeps, nor is his right hand ever weary; with him a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. Well then it becomes all the children of Zion to be joyful in their King. For the present blessings he dispenses let them praise him; let them praise him for the future hopes he inspires. What more effective barrier could there be to despondency from within or from without than this, *that Jesus reigneth!* The crowd may rage; but he it is that stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves and the tumult of the people! Rulers may take counsel together and unite their lawless power against his church: he shall break them with a rod of iron, he shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. And why should any be troubled in heart who have touched the golden sceptre which he has stretched out, and avouched Jesus to be their King. Rejoice rather in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice: cry out, and shout thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

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SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name,*  
 Psal. lxxxvi. 11.

To avoid wandering in the dark, we are all very ready to inquire our way when the shades of night are descending on the earth. O how much need there is of far more anxious inquiry that we may not be lost in the everlasting night which lies beyond the grave?

Here I am a pilgrim travelling towards eternity. Now, the bible declares that to a happy eternity, there is but one way. And what is that one? Jesus Christ, and the truth as it is in Jesus. There are many ways to hell—a thousand different tracks—and troops of travellers may be found in each gaily and giddily dancing or lazily toiling along. To heaven, however, the single solitary way is through the blood, and

merits, and mediation of our Redeemer. These are his own words, and they cannot be misconstrued, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life—no man cometh to the Father but by me.' And who can fail to rejoice in Jesus as the medium of intercourse between God and men—as the means of communication between earth and heaven?

In this character, I cannot help connecting him with that beautiful type of old, *Jacob's ladder*, hanging midway in the sky, and clustering with bright spirits! Down that pathway it is that the angels come when they are commissioned to minister to the heirs of salvation—and up it again they mount, to tell of another and another poor sinner repenting, and believing, and saved, and to make heaven's arches ring with the news! Along that pathway it is that every redeemed soul, since time began, has climbed to paradise; along it it is that every single prayer of faith has ever reached the throne; ay, and down it alone come every grace and blessing from the tabernacle on high which cheer and sustain men on the earth.

It is called the '*new*' way: the former one, through the perfect obedience of Eden, has been shut up utterly since the fall, and shall continue shut for ever. It is called also the '*good old*' way: the blood of the Lamb by which it is consecrated was slain from the foundation of the world. It is a *plain* way: the way-faring man, though a fool, cannot err therein. It is a *safe* way: no faithful pilgrim has ever been hurt or lost who trode it. It is a *pleasant* way: the ransomed of the Lord return to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads. Ay, and blessed be God, it is a *free* way: there is no angel with flaming sword standing at its portal—the poorest and meanest may enter it without money and without price. Now, it is surely a momentous question, 'How is this way to be known?' The answer is simple. The Lord, the Lord alone, teacheth it. And how does he teach it? By bestowing on us his Holy Spirit. That Spirit is emphatically '*the Teacher*.' It is he who clears away every prejudice, every obstructing cloud, and guides us into the truth. It is he who opens up the word, and inspires us with a relish for it, and every day helps us to discover in it something new. It is he who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us in power, and conforms our hearts and lives unto his image. Without him we can neither know the Lord's will, nor walk in his statutes, nor fear his name: without Him we can do nothing. And how is this great gift of God to be brought down from

heaven? O we rejoice to believe that it is promised to the fervent prayer of faith! Come, then, and let us cry together at the footstool of the throne of grace, 'Teach me thy ways, O Lord—unite my heart to fear thy name.' Come and let us plead with God in the name of Him whom he loveth and heareth always, 'For Christ's sake, lift on us the light of thy countenance—take not thy Holy Spirit from us.' And with prayer let us join firm and resolute purpose of heart. 'I will meditate, O Lord, in thy fear, and follow on to know thy ways—I will delight myself in thy statutes—I will not forget thy word—O Lord, I will walk in thy truth.'

SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.*

THE day of judgment will be a great and terrible day. And there is no doubt that its terrors must be enhanced by the outward sublimity of the scene. The trumpet will peal—the dead will gather from the sea, and the grave, and hell at the sound—the Judge will descend in the air with his chariot of flame, and its wheels as fire—myriads of angels will wheel their glittering hosts around him as he descends—on a great white throne erected will he sit with the beam of justice in his hand, and the assembled universe at his feet!

All this must constitute an august spectacle. And yet I believe that the chief terrors of the last day will not be outward but spiritual terrors. Far more intensely than by all that is around him will the poor sinner be awed by the consciousness of guilt within, by the burning conviction that surely, surely, his iniquity will find him out. Amid the countless thousands around the throne, each soul shall stand apart—in fearful solitariness—because according to what each has thought, and said, and done, will the issues of the great day to it be rendered. O! that is a solemn admonition in the word, enforced by a most weighty argument, 'let every man prove his own work—for every man shall bear his own burden!'

'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire.' For what purpose? 'To take vengeance.' Ah! how little do wicked men dream of retribution beyond? They do not believe, but they shall see—

and however they may escape on earth, deriding the threats of the law, the condemnation that awaits them is as sure as God's truth is sure. And on whom is he to take vengeance? 'On them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel.' Some, indeed, on the earth have but slender means of attaining to the true knowledge of their Creator: to many the glad tidings of salvation have never come. With all such the just Judge will deal justly. 'They that have sinned without law shall be punished without law—and they that have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.' The persons referred to here are such as are wilfully ignorant—such as are impenitent and disobedient in the midst of much long-suffering and many, many, gracious invitations and precious privileges. To them 'much has been given,' and 'much will be required' at their hand.

And let no one think that there can be any lack of evidence to condemn the sinner at the bar of the Lord when he is revealed in glory. Lack of evidence! The messengers of Christ whose admonitions, sabbath after sabbath, for years, he disregarded, shall testify against him; the blessed example, and advices, and prayers, and tears of the godly around his dwelling-place, shall testify against him; the godless companion who lured, or laughed, or jibed him into sin, shall testify against him, unavailing mutual shame and secret abominations; the Holy Spirit of God shall testify against him, telling of vexings, and grievings, and idle strivings, of grace resisted, of remonstrances stifled, of invitations spurned! His own heart, his own conscience will convict him: self-convicted, self-condemned, he will blench from the tribunal, and try to hide in dens and caves from the wrath of the avenger.

God only knows when the day of vengeance shall come. He has not revealed the date of it to any; no good purpose would have been served by the revelation. But this we know assuredly that as men die so they shall be judged. To every man the day of his death may be regarded as just the day of judgment. When once the dark valley is trodden, the fate of his eternity is sealed; beyond it the blood of the everlasting covenant is powerless to save. Ah! with what crying earnestness might the cast-away spirit cry in hell—if it could cry in hope, 'Lord, try me yet again.' As the tree falleth so shall it lie.' 'He that is unjust shall be unjust still, and he that is filthy shall be filthy still, and he that is righteous shall be righteous still, and he that is holy shall be holy still. O then how doth it become me every day to practise secret and searching self-examination! Am I ready to

die? Am I prepared for the judgment? If this night my soul shall be required of me, shall I go to heaven or to hell? O Lord God, thou knowest; my hope is in thee.

SEVENTEENTH DAY—MORNING.

'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,' John xvii. 3.

Of all attainments, the first and the highest is the knowledge of God. Without this all other knowledge is worthless—not the less worthless utterly, that the proud and the learned boast of it. 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth the Lord.' But how can weak blind nature attain unto such understanding? Never, never by its own strength. The poor heathen lived in darkness, and in darkness died. With all his toiling, with all his painful incessant searchings, his natural eye could not penetrate the thick mists—thick as midnight—that hung between him and the throne of heaven. He was as a prisoner groping wearily round and round his dungeon wall, but incapable of catching anything more than a dim and scattered glimpse of day. Yea, the more he thought of God—as himself sadly confessed—the darker, the more incomprehensible, God appeared. Ah! but thanks be unto Jesus Christ that the Almighty is now clearly revealed in his word to man. The simplest child in a Christian land knows more of him than the wisest wits of old Greece or Rome!

Come and let us meditate on God in the gospel: would that we felt aright what a privilege it is to be able to look up to heaven, and say, 'Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer!'

I have been taught in the bible to know God as the *Creator* of all things. The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handywork—by his wisdom he founded the earth, and settled the mountains, and strengthened the fountains of the deep. The gods of the heathen are idols: He alone is from everlasting to everlasting—the only living and true God.

I have been taught in the bible to know God as the *Preserver* of all things. He sits at the helm of the universe which he made, and directs it at his will. No one can stay his hand from working—or say unto him, What doest thou?

The eyes of all wait upon him—and he gives them their meat in due season. He opens his liberal hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing. Specially he is the Shepherd of his *people*, and they never want. All the circumstances of their lot most graciously and wisely he orders: yea, he makes their very troubles work together for their good.

Now, it is indeed possible that to some measure of such knowledge as this—to some such knowledge of God as my Creator and Preserver, I might rise by my own native energies. In the book of nature the blindest may trace him: in providence his love and bounty are daily felt by all. Ah! but the grand question is, How may God, as a just God and righteous, deal mercifully with sinners? I know that he hath made me, and that he upholds me—but how can I know him as a *Saviour*—how can I be brought to know him, and to confide in him as at once vindicating his law and extending forgiveness to a guilty world? This knowledge unaided nature never in all time could have reached. It is derived solely from revelation; it comes exclusively through Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. Out of Christ God is either looked upon as an inexorable Judge, taking sure vengeance on every transgressor, or more falsely still, as a vacillating Judge, exercising his pity at the expense of his truth and to the confusion of his government. It is only in the gospel of his Son that his Godhead is fully exhibited to the world: no where else than in the gospel can we know God as a Father, a reconciled Father—just, yet justifying the ungodly—with all his attributes united, and harmonised, and glorified in the salvation of men. 'He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,' says Paul, 'hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father,' said Jesus himself, 'and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, and he to whom the Father will reveal him.'

This knowledge of God, revealed in the face of his Son, is called by John '*eternal life*'—and well may it be so. It is the way to eternal life—'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me.' It is the earnest of eternal life—'We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' The full fruition of it hereafter constitutes the essential glory of heaven—'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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.' O that the saving knowledge of God were vouchsafed to us, that we might worship him and serve him aright—yea, love him too with our whole heart! Blessed Jesus, do thou teach us! Show us the Father—and it sufficeth us. 'Whoso hath seen me hath seen the Father.' Reveal thyself therefore to us—and help us with Thomas to cast ourselves down at the foot of thy cross, and cry, 'My Lord and my God.' Here we are but pilgrims and strangers—our best days are but vanity—few and evil, and soon gone. Ah! but the life begun on earth of thy believing followers never ends: the life of faith issues in a life of glory. Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief. Deliver us from the power of the grave: ransom us from death.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,' Hab. ii. 14.*

WHEN these glorious words are realized, how beautiful will the earth be—how beautiful and blessed! A seraph's pen were required to describe it; no human fancy can worthily conceive it, or language of man picture the wondrous transformation. Eden will be restored again; earth will reflect as in a mirror the fairest hues of paradise. And is it so that this can ever be? Yea, verily it shall be—it must be—for the Lord God hath willed it and predicted it. Jehovah is truth itself: our God is the Lord omnipotent, and he cannot be withstood. Whatever he hath spoken must come to pass; heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle of his word shall fail. Come then, and amid the ridicule of the infidel, and the sneering of the world's wise men, and the despondency of our own fainting and faithless hearts, let us solace ourselves with the promises of the King of Zion. 'It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flock unto it.' And again, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.' And again, 'The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Blessed be God, many tokens

have already been vouchsafed to us that he has not forgotten his promises. Even now there are green spots in the wilderness. The plant of renown is budding beautifully, and spreading abroad its branches. Already the Sun of righteousness has arisen on the horizon of heathenism—and many a dark heart and rocky, on many a distant shore, has been melted and enlightened by his rays. We will rejoice in what has been done—and take it as a pledge of the more abundant glory that yet remaineth to be fulfilled. That little cloud not bigger than a man's hand shall yet cover the heavens. Yonder stone cast out of the mountain without hands, shall yet become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. And let us not forget that it is by human agency that the wondrous work is to be wrought. Not to angels but to men has the commission been given to extend and to perpetuate the gospel kingdom. 'How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed: and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard: and how shall they hear without a preacher: and how shall they preach except they be sent?' And let no one say that it is idle to expect a few such weak human agents to achieve the conversion of the world. It is not in their own strength that they labour—but in the strength and through the grace of Jehovah. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might manifestly be of God. When it seemeth good unto him he may cause whole nations to be born in a day. And surely it were grievous sin in us to keep back in unbelief or despondency from this work. It is a general law of the gospel, that those who have experienced its power themselves will not and cannot rest till they have sought to bring others to experience it also. There never lived a single sincere follower of the Lord Jesus Christ who did not desire earnestly to have as many as he could united with him in the faith. Christianity is essentially communicative and diffusive—it grows by means of free distribution. Look to the dark ages of the church, when no efforts were made to dispel the torpor that hung over the nations. She grew cold, and torpid, and inert, and poor. How emphatically were the words verified in her history, 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth, but it tendeth to poverty!' And it holds exactly so with individuals. 'The liberal soul shall be made fat—and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' I look to the state of those to whom the gospel has never come—and I prize the more my own privileges—I am filled with deeper gratitude

to Him whose grace alone hath made me to differ. Ay, and it is impossible to contemplate the labours of patient and devoted missionaries without being made better myself. How can I read of them without feeling keenly how weak in comparison has been my zeal in my Master's cause! How can I look to the lives and deaths of such men as Schwartz, and Elliott, and Carey, and Martyn, without desiring to catch somewhat of that holy flame which burned so brightly in their bosoms?

And in what way may I aid in the missionary work? I may contribute of my money towards it. I may unite in social meetings with those who seek to stir each other up in its cause. Specially I can pray. It is by petitioning that the windows of heaven are opened; prayer moves the hand that moves the universe. And that I may be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, and more zealous in prayer, let me cast my eyes abroad and survey what yet is to be done. Let me look to whole continents, over which the shadow of death is hanging. If this be too vast and too general a prospect, let me take a single solitary soul—without one ray of light from the gospel of Christ to irradiate the gloom in which it is shrouded—in life and death. Having contemplated this single soul, let me multiply it ten thousand thousand thousand times, and try to sum up the arithmetic of such misery. And O surely hard, hard as adamant will my heart be, if it be not touched with pity for the poor heathens, plunging race after race, generation after generation, into a dark and unknown eternity at a venture! Blessed Jesus, take unto thyself thy glorious power and reign. See of the travail of thy soul and be satisfied. Let thy kingdom come; let thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn,' Luke ii. 7.*

DRAW near, O my soul, and behold this great sight! The Lord of heaven and earth hath descended from the height of his sanctuary and tabernacled with dust and ashes! See the 'everlasting Father' a weeping babe—the 'Holy One and Blessed' a man of sorrows in the likeness of sinful flesh—the Lord of glory the despised and rejected of men! There is mystery here which

I cannot penetrate; the more I meditate on it the more mysterious it appears!

Mary came up from Nazareth to Bethlehem, great with child—she sought admission to an inn but was repulsed from it—wearing and sad she betook herself to the stable—and as the days were accomplished that she should be delivered, there she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger.

And so was born the Lord Jesus Christ! So poor, so mean was the nativity of the Son of God!

The town was full of strangers from all quarters of Judah—but neither rich nor poor took any interest in this event, the strangest, the most astonishing which the world ever saw. The birth, like the character of Immanuel, was humble and lowly—his entrance into the world was a fitting emblem of the reception which awaited him in it—too true an earnest of the humiliation manifold in which his days in it were passed!

And this was He—lying down with the beasts of the stall, on whose vesture and thigh the name is now written, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' This was He without a place where he might lay his head, whom nations now delight to honour, at whose altar every knee through all the earth shall yet bow, and every tongue confess! Who can declare the end from the beginning? From how small beginnings do the mightiest and most magnificent results issue! 'Unto what is the kingdom of God like, and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and cast into his garden—and it grew and waxed a great tree, and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.'

*Jesus was born in a stable, and laid in a manger!*

Let us contemplate, with adoring reverence, his marvellous love to men. All this strange humiliation he underwent for us—poor miserable sinners. That we might be forgiven—that we might be reconciled to offended justice, who were aliens and rebels—that we might be raised from death to life, and instead of heirs of wrath should become partakers of the blessedness of heaven, Jesus took on him our nature, and submitted to a degrading birth, and lived a life of poverty, and died an accursed death: 'ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.' And can we think of his love 'passing knowledge' without in return being filled with love towards him? Is it possible to survey with careless and cold hearts the manger of Bethlehem, and the cross of Calvary?

O no! our hope is in thee, gracious Jesus, who hast done so great things for us. Thou art all our salvation, and all our desire. To the blessed purposes for which thou camest into the world, our earnest prayer ever is to be conformed. 'If we forget thee, let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth, and our right hand forget its cunning.'

*Jesus was born in a stable, and laid in a manger!*

Let us be convinced of the vanity of earthly distinctions. We are strongly tempted to give too much of our thoughts to the riches of this world. Its greatness and glory fascinate the carnal eye. As we gaze on them from afar we envy and repine. Ah! but how insignificant they appear in the light of the manger of Bethlehem! What contempt does it cast upon them! How can we stand beside it in faith, and court them any more? If it had seemed good to Jesus he might have invested himself with all the trappings of outward magnificence which the weak and vain idolize; but he rejected them—he cast them from him. And does not this strikingly manifest their worthlessness in his eye? How can we call ourselves the followers of Christ, and yet seek great things?

*Jesus was born in a stable, and laid in a manger!*

Let the proud man, therefore, humble himself. O why should pride dwell in any of our hearts! How inexcusable is it especially in the disciples of the Son of Mary! He condescended to men of low estate. Yea, though in the form of God, and counting it no robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And shall we be puffed up who have nothing save what he has given us? How dare we count any one as too mean for our regard, or any service too humble, by which we can benefit the poorest brother, and glorify our God?

*Jesus was born in a stable, and laid in a manger!*

Let the poor man, therefore, be patient, and contented, and resigned. The low condition in which our Saviour appeared, was intended to sanctify poverty to his followers in every age, and to ennoble it, even amid its worst humiliations. To the poor the gospel is preached—out of the ranks of the poor most have been chosen to paradise. And who can murmur or despond in the memory of these most touching words: 'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head?'

### EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him,' Mat. ii. 2.*

SAD as was the humiliation of the Lord Jesus in his early years, there were ever some scattered rays that broke forth from the cloud, betokening his inherent glory. Angels heralded his birth,—Simeon and Anna, in the Spirit, testified of him while yet a babe in his mother's arms,—and as we read here, a preternatural star shone over the place of his nativity, and guided philosophers from afar to do him homage.

It is interesting to inquire into the motive which led these men to undertake such a journey.

It is well known that, about this time, over all the East the expectation of Messiah's speedy coming prevailed: in this expectation doubtless the sages shared, and it might have been strengthened by a partial acquaintance with the writings of the ancient prophets, or with some of the dispersed Jews. But it was a *star* which more particularly attracted them; 'we have seen his star in the east.' What this star was we cannot tell. Probably it was a meteor hovering over Judea. But how came they to connect it with the birth of Christ,—to pronounce it 'his star?' Some have thought that, as it was a common opinion among the ancients that great events, such as the birth or death of princes were betokened by strange sights in the sky, they were induced to consider this meteor as referring in some way or other to that glorious person of whose coming there were so many rumours throughout the world. But this plainly cannot account for their conduct. Some have thought that they were influenced by the prediction of Balaam, a prophet of the East; 'There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel.' But neither can this account for the strength of conviction which they manifested. The true explanation of the secret is, that they were brought to associate the star with Jesus, by the very same influence which leads still every sinner to his Lord,—the influence of the Spirit of God. God kindled a meteor in their sight to testify to them of his Son,—and himself revealed to them in some way or other, about which it were idle to speculate, what it meant.

These wise men then, on the appearance of the star, left their native land,—and after the expense and fatigue of a long journey reached Jerusalem; and then not in doubt, not in conjecture, but with the fullest conviction of the truth, they put the question, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have come to worship him.'

And we read in the remainder of the narrative

how Herod the king was troubled at the inquiry, —how he gathered the chief priests together, and found from them that Bethlehem was predicted as the birth-place of Messiah,—how he sent the strangers to Bethlehem with a treacherous injunction to return and tell him what they saw,—how they went to Bethlehem and worshipped Jesus in his mother's house, and presented to him gifts, gold, and frankincense and myrrh,—and how being warned of God in a dream, they disregarded Herod's injunction, and in faith, and hope, and joy, departed into their own country.

1. Let us see in this little history a proof that Jesus was the light of the Gentiles as well as the glory of Israel.

In old prophecy he was sung of as the Shiloh unto whom the gathering of the nations should be,—the root of Jesse which was to stand for an ensign of the people,—the star to whose light the heathen should come, and kings to the brightness of its rising. And scarcely is it known that he is born than prophecy hastens to its fulfilment. See from the far east,—the land of idols,—a company of heralds seeking Messiah,—proclaiming him in the very streets of Jerusalem,—worshipping at his feet! Are not these witnesses before all men of the truth and faithfulness of God's promises? These are the first-fruits of the Gentiles, the tokens and earnest of that plentiful harvest which the Lord shall go on gathering, till the whole earth be one vast field resplendent with his glory.

2. These wise men opened out their choicest treasures to Jesus. O how doth it become each one of us to put the question to ourselves, 'what have we given to the Lord?' If we must answer, nothing,—vain are our professions,—vain utterly. Even now he is saying, 'son, daughter, I died for thee, give me thy heart.' O God put it into our hearts to respond to the touching appeal. Blessed Jesus I will present thee with gifts of the goodliest things I possess,—'the gold of faith, the frankincense of devotion, the myrrh of humble obedience;' whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth whom my soul desires besides thee.

3. Let us remember how far more highly favoured we are than these strangers. They were guided by a flickering star to Bethlehem,—we live in the full light of gospel day. They saw him but as a babe,—we can look to him now as he that is gone to his kingdom,—with the name on his vesture and his thigh, 'King of kings and Lord of lords.' They undertook a long and weary journey to find him, and with difficulty

succeeded: he is now at our doors,—his word is in our hands;—sabbath after sabbath in our sanctuaries his gospel message has been ringing in our ears. Ah, unto whom much is given, of them much shall be required! I fear that against many of us,—glorious as our privileges are,—these eastern pilgrims will rise up and testify in the day of judgment.

#### NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,'* Matt. viii. 20.

A CERTAIN scribe one day came up to our Lord and said, 'Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest!' It was an excellent salutation; no words could betoken a better spirit. But instead of accepting his offer—instead of encouraging the man—Jesus replied, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.'

There are two views which may be taken of the scribe's character.

1. *We may suppose that his determination to follow Christ was hasty and inconsiderate.* He was charmed by what he had seen and heard of the wonderful works, and blessed lessons, and holy, benevolent life of Jesus—and grew suddenly in love with his religion. Without inquiry, without contrition, without humble prayer—in a moment of excitement and enthusiasm—he cried, 'Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.' Jesus knew that he had not counted the cost—that he was looking only at the fair side of the Christian life—that he was influenced by a temporary impulse, and not by deep settled conviction. Jesus saw the disease of his heart—and instantly stirred it and laid it bare. In the simplest and most affecting language he spake of his poverty and humiliation, leaving him to infer how hard a lot all must expect to lead who would follow a Master so lowly; and it is likely that the scribe's hasty resolution melted away. There are many such scribes in the world still. At some period or other of their lives the most careless and godless are occasionally awakened, aroused, alarmed, driven into confessions, and prayers, and most serious purposes. Ah! but they are merely *touched*, not *changed*! They think not of the toils of the warfare which the believer is called to wage. They think not of the deceitfulness of their own hearts. They never deliberately weigh the

troubles manifold that beset the path of duty, and as a breath begat their religion, a breath scatters it.

2. Or we may suppose that the scribe's determination to follow Christ sprung from covetousness and worldly-mindedness. He fancied that Christ would soon become a mighty temporal prince—and with the ambitious hope of receiving preferment by joining him early, he offered to devote himself to the service of his kingdom. But the Lord dissipated speedily the idle dream. And who can read his reply without being melted and subdued: 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.'

The Saviour of men, while he tabernacled on the earth which he came to save, had no habitation which he might call his own! Certain devout persons received him under their roof, and ministered to him of their substance! And why was he so sorely humbled? It was that he might fulfil the scriptures, as 'the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' Why? It was that he might show the vanity of this world's wealth—that he might sanctify and sweeten penury to his followers. Why? He humbled himself, that we might be exalted—for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. And verily Jesus will accept of none as his followers who would make a gain of godliness. We fear that there are some still who run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. We fear that there are some still who assume the mask of sanctity to advance their temporal interests—some who intermingle scripture with their conversation, and are minutely observant of the punctilios of religious form and ceremony, that they may the more successfully rise in the world. 'Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; ye shall receive the greater damnation.' O may grace be given us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness! And remembering our Master's humiliation, let us not pant after great things for ourselves. Remembering Him who 'had not where to lay his head,' let us not envy the rich man for his riches, nor despise the poor brother, nor ever repine amid the worst privations. 'If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up the cross and follow me.' Looking to Jesus, and casting in our lot with his followers, let us take up the song of Ruth: 'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and

there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.'

NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy,' 1 Tim. vi. 17.*

THE Lord Jesus once uttered these terrible words, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' The evil, indeed, cannot attach to wealth in itself. It is a gift of God, and may be sanctified—and many examples there are on record of the union of great possessions with simplicity, and humility, and Christian philanthropy. Still it is very difficult to have wealth without abusing it—and it is its abuse which Jesus denounces. Alas! the temptations which it casts in a man's way are manifold and grievous: in every age of the church their fatal effects have been too manifest. It exposes him to pride and self-indulgence—it tends to chain down his affections utterly to the earth—it lays him open to basest flattery, and excludes from him faithful reproof and admonition—it prejudices him against the humbling salvation of the gospel—it disposes him to practical infidelity and atheism. '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.' 'They that will be rich fall into temptations and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.' The young man whom Jesus loved went away in tears from his feet, an outcast, 'because he had great possessions.' And what pathos is there in these simple words of the great apostle of the Gentiles, 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.'

Now Timothy was strictly charged to deal faithfully with the souls of the rich among his flock—and it well becometh all to whose lot much of the good things of earth has fallen, to give heed to the admonition.

How foolish is pride in such persons! What they have is not their own, and it is altogether undeserved. Doth God love them more than others because of their wealth? No. He hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. Then are they wiser than others? No. 'The race is not to the swift, nor

the battle to the strong, neither riches to men of understanding.' Then are their souls of more value than others? No. On the scale of eternity the meanest and mightiest stand equal. Then are they happier than others? No. Those only who have laid up treasures in heaven are called to rejoice, yea, even to rejoice always. Then doth the church invest them with more authority than others? No. 'If there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect unto him that hath the gay clothing—are ye not partial in yourselves and become judges of evil thoughts.'

Not more foolish is it to be *elated* by affluence than to *trust* in it. Can a man with all the multitude of his possessions ransom his own soul, or his poorest brother? No. Is a man sure to retain the riches he has won? No. Scripture calls them with emphasis 'uncertain'—they take to themselves wings and flee away. Does wealth exempt from the grave? Alas! the small and the great lie down together in the dust: death cannot be bribed by the costliest offerings to stay one moment his resistless, relentless arrow. We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out: what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he be a castaway in the end?

Let all then cease from vain boasting. Let all renounce their sinful reliance on the creature which perisheth. O that through the Spirit of grace we were enabled rather humbly to trust in the living God, and to glory in him! From him cometh down every good and perfect gift—he giveth us richly all things to enjoy—he too taketh away, and when he takes, he takes but what he gave. Surely then our duty is to acknowledge the gracious Author of our mercies—our privilege ought to be to use what he hath conferred for his glory. The scripture teaches us in all estates of life to consider ourselves as stewards of God. Whenever, therefore, we act as our own masters, or employ what we possess for our own selfish purposes, we are embezzling the property of another. God forbid that any of us should be tempted of satan to hoard up our money, or to squander it on our lusts, while multitudes around us are pining in penury, or perishing for lack of knowledge, and we lift not a hand to relieve them! Otherwise we will subject ourselves to the curse, 'Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you.'

TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself,' Heb. xii. 3.

BITTER was the opposition which the Lord Jesus encountered on the earth in accomplishing the salvation of men. 'He came unto his own—but his own received him not.' He wrought miracles in their presence in attestation of his divine mission, such as divine power alone could have achieved; they imputed them to devils, or idly demanded more. A life of holiness and meekness, and love celestial, such as the world never saw before, he exhibited to their eye; they laboured strenuously to traduce it and to revile it. Lessons of wisdom such as man never spake, he taught in their synagogues, and by their way-sides; they listened but to mock, and cavil, and blaspheme. From his birth to his death he was a man of sorrows—despised and rejected of men—stricken, smitten, afflicted, oppressed. And how did the Saviour bear himself under the cruel treatment which he experienced. Patiently he *endured* all;—as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth. Had he chosen he could have confounded his enemies by an interposition of miraculous power,—he could have summoned legions of angels from heaven to protect and defend him. But it behoved him to submit to whatever the Father sent,—and his own love to men prompted him to undertake. And so he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself;—when he suffered he threatened not—for the joy that was set before him he bore the cross, despising the shame. Now this blessed example of humility, and gentleness, and patience unparalleled, it is the duty of every follower of the cross to look unto—well and seriously to *consider*. Alas, it is too seldom the theme of our prayerful meditations—too seldom the model after which we strive to regulate our life!

How striking an argument does the survey of it furnish against pride!

Who will presume to cherish a single 'high imagination' in the presence of the meek and lowly Jesus? The disciple is not above his master, neither the servant above his lord.

How striking an argument does the survey of it furnish against revenge?

All hatred, and malice, and ill will, are rebuked by the spectacle. O how can I look to my Saviour loving his enemies, praying for them, in life and death, yea weeping over them, without casting away from me, as the poison of the soul, every malignant thought which satan may prompt against my brother!

How beautifully calculated is the consideration of it also to quiet and compose amid the distractions of life!

None of our sufferings can once be compared with the sufferings of Jesus. No anguish of our spirits can at all approach to the intensity of his, when with men and devils leagued against him, and the burden of a world's guilt on his head, and the light even of God's face hidden, he cried, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;' yet hear his prayer in the midst of his agony, 'not my will, but thine be done.' O that the same mind was in us which was in him! Sinless himself, he endured all the contradiction of sinners without a murmur. And why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins;—what are our sufferings compared with our sins?

Patience is one of the fairest jewels in the Christian's crown. There are men who brand us as dastardly and faint-hearted when we render not back railing for railing. The fantastic honour of the world—fantastic in its murder—arms itself at all points with daggers, and demands a brother's blood in compensation for his hasty word! O it is nobler far to bear, and to forgive—to fear to break God's law more than to fear the reproach of men! Our Master, when he was reviled, reviled not again;—when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously. O that the same mind was in us which was in him! I will look to Jesus—and be patient of injury—gentle and resigned under reproaches. I will look to Jesus—and never in the evil hour charge my God foolishly, nor ever suspect his love, nor ever question the truth of his promises. I will look to Jesus, and faint not at hope deferred, or hope blighted. I will look to Jesus—and though he should slay me, yet will I trust in him. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

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TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake,'* Matt. v. 11.

THE world cannot tolerate the true believer. In his warfare with it there is no discharge—and vain it is to try to woo or conciliate such an enemy. 'If ye were of the world,' said Christ to his first disciples, 'the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the

world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' 'Yea,' says Paul to Timothy, after recounting the troubles himself had encountered in the service of his Master, 'yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' This persecution is of various sorts: it suits itself generally to the temper and spirit of the age. In former times it manifested itself by stripes, and imprisonments, and spoiling of goods, and torturings, and murders. Of late it has assumed a milder appearance—but its hostility is not the less inveterate, and it may be even more dangerous than of old. Now, the chief weapons it wields are ridicule and reproach—feeble in themselves indeed—but deadly when dexterously applied. It catches at the failings of the weak brother, and the life of the formalist belying utterly his profession, that alike on both and on all it may fasten the brand of hypocrisy. Our prejudices, and indiscretions, and infirmities, and inconsistencies, all furnish fuel for its satire—and the paltriest misrepresentation, when pointed with a sarcasm, will always find minds silly enough to laugh. It sets itself to invent all kinds of calumnies and nicknames against us. It calls us bigots and fanatics. It accuses us of spiritual pride and all uncharitableness. It affects to deride us as weak in intellect, and sour, and gloomy, and morose of heart. Every possible evil report it delights to retail—and believes every one. Sedition, deceit, dishonesty, treachery—there is no charge so odious which it is ashamed to forge and to apply.

Now, it is hard to be evil spoken of. It is very hard to be reviled and despised. No man likes to be laughed at. Alas! how many have refused to take up the cross lest it should subject them to the reproach of the godless and profane. How many have fallen from the faith of their fathers, that they might avoid the rallery of dis-solute wits!

Ah! but Jesus hath said, 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you.' *Blessed* are ye—and surely those whom he calls blessed are blessed indeed; he who calls them blessed can make them so.

'Fear not then the reproach of the scoffer, neither be afraid of his revilings.' Why should we fear? His evil words are false—and if we do not live down the slander on earth, the judgment-day will surely vindicate our name before the universe. Why should we fear? Similar treatment have all the saints of God in times past encountered—and with so large and so

bright a company, it is our privilege to be fellow-sufferers as well as fellow-heirs. Why should we fear? It is the image of Jesus the Christian martyr bears, which the persecutor hates—and can the servant be greater than his Master? It is for Jesus' sake we are troubled—and who would grudge to endure in such a cause.

Yea, the more we are tried—the more we suffer—the more bitterly we are maligned—just the more sweetly will the Lord lift his face on us, the more of his grace and strength will he vouchsafe to us. He remembers what himself was called to endure at the hand of a gainsaying world—and he cannot fail to sympathize with his people. 'I will glory therefore in infirmities, in reproaches, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake—for when I am weak, then am I strong.' O there is no possible situation on earth—not even the one of bitterest calumny and sorest pain—which may not be made 'blessed' to the followers of the cross! How often has the furnace of affliction, seven times heated—how often have the fire, and the wheel, and the rack, and the dungeon's gloom, testified of the glorious consolations of the everlasting gospel, of the sweet fellowship which the Lord holds with his own in the evil hour? The blasphemer has been awed into silence—the persecutor has gnashed his teeth at the sight!

'Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me; say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even to my cause, my God and my Lord—and my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, and of thy praise, all the day long.'

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 TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me,'* Mat. iv. 8, 9.

How splendid must the vision have been which satan spread out before our Lord! Who could have gazed on it unmoved. He showed him all the gorgeousness of wealth, and all the magnifi-

cence of regal luxury, and all the pomp and circumstance of war, and, more captivating still to a noble spirit, all the pride of human wit and genius—and while his eye was feasting on the spectacle, he said, 'All these things will I give thee.'

Now, it is true, that the devil is called the 'prince of this world,' and that he is permitted to employ the vanities and honours of the world as baits, wherewith to lure his votaries to perdition. But to pretend that God has handed over absolutely to him the government of the world, that he may dispose of it as he pleases, is a vile and impudent falsehood.

'All these things will I give thee,' said he, 'if thou wilt fall down and worship me.'

It was an awful condition: and yet many, many, do not shrink from taking him at his word.

Nakedly and literally stated, indeed, all repudiate his proposal. We have heard in story of men who sold themselves to satan at a price—and after their bartered round of rioting had run, were caught down to hell. There were no such men. Were the devil to say to the proudest and most reckless sinner of the race, 'Come and enlist under my banner, and you shall have as much of wealth, and honour, and feasting as you like for a specified time, and then you shall take up your abode with me for ever;' at the offer the proudest and most reckless sinner would recoil in horror. Ah! but the tempter is too cunning to *avow* such conditions of entering into his service—and they are often accepted without a paction! As Esau sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage, how many a man barter away the peace of his eternity for a little, a very little portion of this world's good things! As the zeal of many a flaming patriot has been strangled by a ribbon—how many are there who sacrifice every hope of the inheritance of the saints, to the glittering bribes—the poor and worthless but glittering bribes—which pleasure or ambition holds out to them! Satan shows them the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them—he holds out to them the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—and he says to them, 'fall down and worship me,' and they straightway fall down and worship him. It is well to remind all such fools that they are hearkening to a deceiver and a liar. He cannot give them even what he promises—and he is misleading them into ruin. It is not in his power even to bestow money on them; if he do so for a time, it will be taken away just when they most need it. He cannot give health

to enjoy it—or one hour's longer life—or one moment's peace of mind. Ay, though he were faithful to his promise—though he performed exactly all which he engaged to do—still, still, these solemn words of scripture would apply: 'What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, if he lose his soul?'

Let us contemplate, in the temptation of Jesus, a most affecting instance of his humiliation. O! how revolting it must have been to his holy soul to have submitted to be dragged from place to place by the fiend, listening to his foul suggestions and blaspheming words!

Let us learn from the temptation of Jesus that it may be the lot of those whom God loves most to be severely tried. He was solicited to distrust and to renounce God—and is the disciple above his Master? There is nothing too bad for the wicked one to propose—or the carnal heart to conceive.

Let us contemplate, in the temptation of Christ, an example of complete and victorious virtue. We too have to contend not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Setting before us ever the conduct of the great Captain of our salvation, let us learn to resist the devil and he will flee from us.

Finally, let us extract from the temptation of Christ a lesson of consolation under our worst trials. Why was he tempted? Why? That he might have a fellow-feeling with us—that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in the house of his God. 'In that he suffered, being tempted, he is able also to succour them that are tempted.'

'To human weakness not severe  
Is our High Priest above;  
His heart o'erflows with tenderness,  
His bowels melt with love.

'With sympathetic feelings touch'd  
He knows our feeble frame;  
He knows what sore temptations are,  
For he has felt the same.'

#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

'And ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,'  
Gen. iii. 5

THE tempter attacked our first parents with consummate cunning. Step by step he advanced stealthily toward his purpose,—and did not discover it till he was sure of victory. And see how skilfully he adapted his temptation to the

state in which they were placed. He did not offer them release from misery. Of any of its forms they had no experience: even in fancy they were utter strangers to it. He did not lure them with a picture of sensual enjoyment. In Eden's happy garden they wanted nothing; whatever could minister music to the ear, or beauty to the eye, or gratification to the palate, was theirs already in profusion. It was with intellectual good that he baited his hook. He promised them an enlargement of mental vision: he flattered them with the proud ambition of equaling Deity in knowledge and wisdom. 'In the day ye eat thereof'—was the fiendish bribe—'your eyes shall be opened—and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' Alas, they fell into the snare so artfully laid—and so death came into the world, and all our woe! When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise—she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat.'

And indeed, in a certain sense, satan's words literally held good. Like many ambiguous oracles of the heathen priesthood in later times, there is a lying equivocation in them. It did happen—that when Adam and Eve fell, they became as gods. Ah, but it was by renouncing the authority of the God of heaven, and becoming lords unto themselves! It did happen—that when Adam and Eve fell they knew good and evil. Ah, but it was by bitterly finding evil after forfeiting the good!

And in every age, too true it is, that the wicked one slays multitudes with the same weapon which proved so fatal of old!

Still he fills men's hearts with high thoughts and aspiring imaginations. Still he seduces them with the glittering vision of intellectual pre-eminence—and the affectation of liberality, and superior independence of soul. How many have fallen in the pride of knowledge and vain philosophy! How many have been entangled in error, and snared into scepticism and infidelity by trusting to their own hearts, and leaning on their own understandings! 'Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit—there is more hope of a fool than of him.' O far be from us all presumption of learning—all vain self-confidence! Far be from us the foolish spirit which leads so many witlings and sciolists, and sophists, to renounce the plain beaten track of truth in the wretched ambition of appearing wiser and cleverer than the herd! The most highly gifted are always the humblest. To know much is just to know how little can be

known. The temper of true philosophy is ever meek, and gentle, and docile. With the simplicity of little children, it teaches us to sit down to the bible, and read, and believe.

Now just as satan tried the first, he tried the second Adam: having first conquered man he assailed Immanuel too, because he appeared in man's likeness.

Let us rejoice that Jesus was tempted in all things as we, yet without sin. He is the wisdom of God and the power of God—and well may we trust in him. Directed by his Spirit, and strengthened by his arm, we shall be conquerors, and more than conquerors over every foe.

Let us rejoice that Jesus was tempted in all things as we, yet without sin. Like him let us resist the devil, and he will flee from us. He is our enemy still: he goes to and fro over the earth, seeking whom he may devour. But he is a conquered enemy. Jesus defied and disarmed him; so may we if we believe in Jesus. Let us equip ourselves then for the combat; and if, as in the wilderness, he draw his artillery at any time from the word of God, let us be ready ever to answer the texts which he perverts by others more justly applied. O that grace were given us to stand fast in the faith—to quit us like men, and be strong! It is a quaint yet sage advice, 'If you would escape sin, parley not with temptation.' When an attempt is made to lure us, or laugh us, or frighten us into sin—and we know it manifestly to be sin—we may not stand and muse—we may not wait to argue with ourselves what course we ought to follow. Jesus turned round and cried, 'Get thee behind me, satan.' 'He that doubteth is damned if he eat:' so saith the apostle, in reference to eating without faith. And it too often happens that the man who is 'careful to answer in the matter'—the man who continues hesitating, and considering, and perplexing himself about an answer, when he is tempted to violate a plain precept, is sure to fall. The principles of the worldling bend to his convenience: they can neither stand against clamour nor favour, smile nor frown. The Christian has the words engraven on his heart, 'my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go—though an host encamp against me I shall not fear.'

#### TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross,' Col. ii. 15.*

ONE of the chief objects of Messiah's mission was to destroy the works of the devil. And this he consummated on the cross.

As by sin the power of the law was against us, so through sin the power of satan was over us. But when Jesus made atonement to the divine justice for sin, we were redeemed from the usurped dominion of hell. By being lifted up on the tree he fought and overcame all the powers of darkness—openly, publicly, he made a show of his victory over them, and put them to shame before the universe. And thus was verified the first promise, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.'

And who can fail to wonder at the strange way in which the Lord accomplished his mighty-work?

Other conquerors by all the pomp and pride of war achieve their victories, and win for themselves an undying name. But it was by ignominy and humiliation that Jesus was glorified: it was by weakness that he subdued the mighty: it was by suffering that he overcame. Yea, his very death it was that formed his crowning triumph? Satan the adversary thought that he had foiled him, and the world thought so too, when, in bitter agony, and amid scorn and shame, he expired on Calvary. But satan's seeming triumph was in truth an irrecoverable overthrow: the hour in which the powers of darkness were mightiest was the very hour in which they were subverted: when Jesus cried, 'It is finished,' and gave up the ghost, the kingdom of hell was shattered to its centre, and through all its abyss the howlings of defeat and despair rang.

And see how after Messiah ascended to heaven, and commissioned his messengers to go and preach the gospel of his kingdom, stronghold after stronghold of satan fell under them, and his poorest bond-slaves were set free.

Little aided by human learning, strangers to fame, or wealth, or power of men, sometimes hated, sometimes despised, sometimes persecuted unto the death—the humble, defenceless disciples went forth among unknown nations in the name of their crucified Master. Yet no conqueror ever triumphed as they. Though the truths they taught were bitter and unpalatable—though they proclaimed open and uncompromising war

against what was dearest to the pride of nature—the proudest were humbled at their word, the vilest were reclaimed, the most inveterate foes were converted into friends and champions of their cause. Philosophy was baffled in her very citadels—the false god left his falling temple—the lying oracles were silenced—courts and governments followed in the train of conquest—kings of the earth brought in their glory and their honour to Jesus. Thus it was that in the magnificent language of prophecy, ‘the thirsty land became springs of water, the solitary place was gladdened, the desert blossomed as the rose.’ Thus it was that the principalities and powers of hell were spoiled, and made a show of openly. And what was the weapon which wrought so mighty a revolution as this? It was the cross of Christ—it was the preaching of Christ crucified. The history of the faith, the very history of the world—for ages—was but the history of the triumphs of the cross.

Ay, and still unto the end of time the words are true, ‘I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.’

There is nothing that can shake satan's kingdom in the heart of the sinner—nothing that can crush it in the world—save this. Discourse to the inveterate profligate of the beauty and utility of virtue, of the consistency of a good life with the nature of man and the place which he occupies in creation: tell him that even in this world a fearful portion of the wages of iniquity is sometimes paid down in the diseased frame, in the lothesome name, in blighted hopes and blasted faculties: tell him of an angry God, and of the awful immutable sanctions of his law: tell him of death, and judgment, and the penal fire, and the undying worm. Your terrors will only harden the man in obstinacy, or plunge him into despair. Ah! but let him be taught that Jesus, for the sake of sinful men, left the glories of his Father's house, and tabernacled on the earth a man of cares and sorrows, and submitted to the accursed death of the cross: let him be taught that the same Jesus whose tears in the days of his flesh fell over perishing Jerusalem, is even now from the right hand of the throne beseeching him to flee for refuge to the hope of the gospel: let him be taught that even to him, as to the worst and most reckless outcast, the invitations of love are sent, ‘Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die.—Look unto me, and be saved.—Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.—Let whosoever will, come.’ Let such truths as these be brought home to him by the grace of God, and there is no coldness, nor deadness, nor in-

veteracy of vice which they will not subdue. These are the truths which melt, and break, and penetrate, and enlighten, and reclaim. They arrest the worldling even amid the bustle of his cares, and the swellings of his tumultuous joys—they fall on the weary penitent as the dew on the mountains of Zion.

Blessed Jesus, by the power of thy cross let my heart be won unto thee, and every evil imagination in it and proud, cast down utterly! ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’

#### TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*‘Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,’*  
James iv. 7.

THERE exist persons who think little of the warfare which believers are called to wage with the prince of darkness. There are persons who ridicule us when we speak of the activity and wiles of the great enemy of man, as if we spoke idle tales. And it is true that they dwell in peace—that they are not troubled with the watchings, and strugglings, and fightings of the Christian soldier. But why is this? It is because satan has taken up his dwelling in their hearts—and of course if they seek not to disturb him he will never care to disturb them. It matters not to him one jot that we deride his power, or deny his very existence, if we *do his work!* And yet what shouts of laughter must the story raise among the spirits of hell, that there are men on the earth—wise men, too, as they reckon themselves—led captive at the will of their chief, who denounce him a nonentity! If it be true, as the bible declares, that Jesus died to redeem men from death, it is not less true, for the same bible tells it, that there is a wicked one employing incessantly all the powers of a mighty yet malignant nature to keep men in death. ‘Be sober, be vigilant,’ saith Peter, ‘because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.’ ‘You hath Jesus quickened,’ writes Paul to the Ephesian converts, ‘who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.’

Now we are taught that ‘if we resist the devil, he will flee from us.’ And how is he to be resisted? Simply and solely through Christ Jesus.

Let us see how the Captain of our salvation conquered—that after him we may fight too.

Thrice satan openly attacked the Lord—thrice the Lord replied to the tempter, 'It is written;' and thrice with a text of holy writ he repelled him.

And Jesus wielded this weapon in his warfare that we might wield it in ours. This is a weapon that has been forged in the armoury of heaven; it is of celestial proof and temper, and nothing may prevail against it. It is worthy of notice that all the other armour of the follower of the cross is defensive. His loins are girt about with truth—and his breastplate is righteousness—and his feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace—and faith is his shield—and the hope of salvation is his helmet. But the word of God is the sword of the Spirit—and with it must he go forth to the battle field—with it, despite all the confederacy of hell, he is sure of victory. Ay, but it must never be ungirt from his side! His enemies are many; they are strong and keen—and manifold are their wiles. Every step he is called to contest. The peace he may obtain on earth is but an 'armed truce.' It is only in heaven that there are no weapons of war needed. It is only in that holy mountain whither death leads the persevering pilgrim of faith, that there is nothing to hurt or destroy.

Let us ever then, and diligently, 'search the scriptures.'

Here will we find something to soothe in every sorrow—to animate in every difficulty—to solace under every disappointment—to strengthen and sustain in every temptation. Here will we find a word in season to the worldling—to the formalist—to the mourner in Zion—to the troubled in spirit—to the penitent—to the saint. In this page it speaks to the young with all the solemnity and sweetness of a father's voice—in that page, to the old and gray-headed, gilding and gladdening their decline. It is a light unto the feet, and a lamp unto the path; the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.

And along with the diligent reading of the word, that we may stand in the evil day, let us unite earnest and fervent prayer.

Thus we will be best prepared either for active conflict, or patient endurance, or persevering service in the cause of truth. When we awake, ere we enter the busy perilous scene, we may not forget to bless the God who has preserved us during the watches of the night, and mercifully prolonged our time of visitation; we may not forget to implore that he would still continue to guide us and protect us, to prosper our honest industry,

to shelter us from mishap, to fortify us against temptation. And when the lengthening shadows summon us to repose, it were surely meet to confess the manifold sins of the day, and to entreat forgiveness through the blood of Jesus; it were surely meet to commend ourselves to him who never slumbers, under whose pavilion alone is quiet rest found. Delays, and difficulties, and discouragements, and disappointments may come—trials hard to bear—conflicts from which the Christian has often to retire foiled, or discomfited. But Jesus spake a parable to this end, that men should pray always and not faint. We are called to go on wrestling—to persevere in patient waiting upon God. And the promise of Him who cannot lie is ours, that at some time or other, in some way or other, though not in our time, nor in our way, an answer will be sent. There is not, on record, a single petition offered up in faith and rejected. Neither since the world began do we read of a single prayerless sinner that was saved. O that God would impress on us his own words, 'Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.'

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'  
Matt. xxvii. 46.

THESE words were quoted from the xxxiii Psalm—which contains many direct references to Messiah. And indeed they are strange words. Who can explain—who can comprehend them?

Could it be that the divine nature of the Saviour deserted for a time his human nature, and left it helpless? This would have taken away from his obedience unto death all its virtue as an atonement;—for how could the obedience of a mere man in the room of men have in ought propitiated eternal justice? It was not certainly his Godhead which was agonized—but it was from its union with Godhead that the agonies of his humanity were meritorious. We confide in his sacrifice—because we see united in him, as the surety for sinners, the nature that owed the debt and the nature that could pay it to the uttermost—the nature that could suffer and the nature that could give to these sufferings an infinite value.

Could it be that the dying Jesus ceased to be dear to his Father in heaven? O no! The love of the Father was inseparable from his Elect—and never, never was he so intensely the object of that love as when he hung on the cross of

Calvary. 'Therefore doth my Father love me,' were his own words in the prospect of dissolution, 'because I lay down my life that I might take it again.'

Why then did the Lord utter that mysterious cry? It was because the wrath of God was resting on him as the Saviour of men. It was the cry of him who was 'wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.' As his Son, his only-begotten Son, the soul of Jehovah ever delighted in him—but as the surety of sinners, bearing a load of imputed sin, it pleased Jehovah to smite him, and bruise him, and put him to grief—yea, to cause him to feel in all its bitterness what it was to be 'made a curse' for the accursed.

And who may estimate the anguish which he bore then! All the powers of darkness were assailing him in the fury of despair—cruel men and godless were heaping scorn, and insult, and blasphemy on his head—his frame was racking with excruciating pain—a weight of guilt, inexpressible, inconceivable, sufficient to have weighed down the world to hell, was on his soul:—and in the midst of all this he was not only without consolation, but actually forsaken, abandoned of his Father in heaven! These scriptures faintly represent his feelings: 'Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps—thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.' 'Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion—I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint—my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.' And yet how meekly did the Saviour suffer! The question, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' only expresses in the most emphatic way possible, the intensity of what he endured. And see how he manifests his unshaken confidence in God! Even under the hiding of his face, he still addresses him as his God, 'My God, my God!'

The lessons which this subject teaches no one can misapprehend.

1. Let me adore the wondrous love of my Redeemer. How can I survey ever so carelessly the woe to which it subjected him, without weeping over the weakness of my faith, and the coldness of my zeal in his service?

2. How dreadful a thing it must be to be eternally forsaken of God! Jesus—the gentle, patient Jesus—who uttered not a murmur when the fury of his enemies was fiercest—who opened not his mouth amid shame and cursing—cried

out in agony when his Father even for one short hour took from him a sense of his presence. Who then can lie down with the outcast in hell?

3. Ay, and like as Jesus suffered, let not his followers complain though they suffer too. God sometimes hides his face from his saints in his anger; the sun goes down on them in their way to Immanuel's land; they cannot sing Zion's songs by the rivers of Babel; they smite upon their breasts and dare not look upwards. The promises of the bible cannot soothe them—its denunciations are cutting as a sharp two-edged sword: their bitter prayer is, as they wander on without a guide, almost without hope, 'How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord—will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone—doth his promise fail for evermore?' Ah! but Jehovah hides often his love under a frowning face. Better far is their worst sorrow than the mirth of the men of the world. He visits them thus to convince them that there must be a difference between the peace of their pilgrimage and the peace of their eternal rest. Let us never forget that it is sin which causes the Lord to depart from us—and that if we confess the sin, and deplore it, and forsake it, he has pledged his truth to return. Wherefore let us be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, and search out the cause of the Lord's controversy with us. While there be many that say, 'Who will show us any good?' let this be our heart's desire—our fervent and constant prayer, 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'

#### TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?'  
Rom. viii. 35.

It was love to men that brought down the Lord Jesus from heaven—it was in love that he tabernacled on the earth, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—it was in love that he went about continually doing good. Who can forget the kindly sympathy which he manifested so often towards human misery wherever he met it? See him touched with compassion for the childless widow of Nain, and weeping with the weeping sisters by their brother's grave. See him speaking celestial consolations to yonder woman who was a sinner, as she lay in contrition at his feet. See him on the height of Olives surveying impenitent Jerusalem, and in the prospect of its impending doom, mourning over it. See him on the night in which he was

betrayed forgetting his own sorrows, and making provision in the sacrament of the supper for the future consolation of his disciples in every age, amid the temptations of life. See him turning to poor fallen Peter, and subduing him with a look of love. See him on his way to Calvary meeting the weeping women and saying to them, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me.' But it was towards those for whom he suffered—it was on the cross—that the love of Jesus was emphatically exhibited. Behold the Lamb of God bleeding, groaning, dying! Why that marred form, and scarred visage? Whence those wounds? Why that cry of agony? Why that streaming blood down his sacred frame? It was FOR US; in love to us who believe in him it was all. He bore all and more, infinitely more, than human eye saw, or human tongue can tell, because there was in his heart a love to us which many waters could not quench, nor floods drown. 'Scarcely for a righteous man will one die—peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die—but God hath commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!' From that cross suspended, Jesus the Lord is looking down—and in that look there is love unconquerable, irresistible—its language is, 'Son, daughter, I died for thee, give me thy heart.' And can we look unmoved; unmoved can we listen to such an appeal? Will there be no response from us—not one of us to echo back the sound? Will it be suffered to waste itself away as over a land of graves? God forbid!

The manifold obstacles which lay in the way of the flowing forth of Christ's love on men, served but to endear him to us the more. In despite of our apathy it was kindled within him—our guilt did not avert it—our ingratitude could not extinguish it—our misery in life and death only drew forth its tenderness—the agonies which it prompted him to endure in our room, only demonstrate before the universe its intensity and its strength. O the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ: it passeth knowledge.

Ay, and this love is enduring as it is strong! Who shall separate us from it? Shall tribulations, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Can death, or life, or angels, or principalities, or powers, or things present, or things to come? O no. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; he loves his people with an everlasting love; having loved his own, he loves them to the end. The mountains

shall depart, and the hills be removed, but his kindness shall not depart from us, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed.

Let none of us then fear who believe in Christ crucified—none of us whom Jesus loves! Are we afflicted? He chastens his people in mercy—in all their afflictions he is afflicted. Are we in danger of falling into temptations? 'My grace, saith the Lord, will be sufficient for thee—as thy day so will thy strength be.' Do enemies many and strong compass us about. Unto our God the shields of the earth belong—greater is he that is for us than all that can be against us—he who hath delivered and doth deliver will yet deliver. Do we recoil from the thoughts of death, and of that dark world into which death will carry us? Jesus is the rod and staff of his people, as they tread the valley of shadows—in the midst of it, to the eye of faith, he causes green pastures to rise—beyond it, under the light of his countenance, we see the Father's house whither he has gone to prepare a place for us. And let no one suspect, that amid the glories of his mediatorial sway he may forget even the poorest and meanest for whom he died. Just as he was of old is he now, with a heart as tender, and a love as strong. The grace and tenderness which shone so sweetly on Calvary, still form the fairest jewels in his crown. Zion said in her despondency, 'The Lord has forsaken me; and my Lord hath forgotten me.' But what was the reply of heaven: '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 I not forget thee.'

#### TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly,'* Luke xxii. 44.

So deep—so intense was the mental anguish of the Redeemer in the garden of Gethsemane, that 'his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground!'

And why was he so agonized? It could not be from fear of dying. This were to arraign his fortitude, and to degrade him below the level of many of his own martyred followers, who endured without a groan much more lingering tortures in the dungeon and at the stake. It could not be from the ingratitude and opposition of the world. From the very first it was his enemy: he cared little for its smile or frown. It could not be from the desertion and treachery of his chosen friends. He knew well long before that

this would take place—he predicted it—he forewarned them of it. It could not be from the humiliation of crucifixion with the brand of a criminal on his head. Though it was the meanest and most ignominious of deaths, he despised the shame of it in the prospect of his mediatorial crown: it was a small thing to him to be judged of men's judgment. O it could not be because a guilty conscience was torturing him on the eve of dissolution! His meat and drink, all his life long, was to do the will of his Father in heaven; he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Neither could it be because he feared the beyond—the dark unknown eternity which fills so many poor dying souls with horrors. 'My Father loveth me,' he cried, 'because I lay down my life that I might take it up again.'

Whence then that mysterious anguish? He was agonized as the *surety for sinners*. The hand of the Lord, the Judge and Avenger, was upon him then as the Redeemer of a lost world: it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief for us. He saw the immensity of guilt—heaped up to the heavens—which he had undertaken to expiate; he saw the terrible vengeance which this guilt deserved and demanded; he heard the cry of eternal justice, 'Pay me that thou owest;' and then, while the wrath of God entered his soul and oppressed him with its weight beyond all conception of men, satan let loose on him his fiercest fury, and drove him almost into despair. It was a terrible hour—the hour and power of darkness. 'All that was hateful in sin, and all that was fearful in avenging justice, and all that was horrible in satanic malice, were combined to put to the test his uttermost power of endurance.'

And to what refuge did he betake himself in his extremity? To prayer—to importunate prayer. These are touching words, 'being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly.' Would that all of us were convinced that this is the best—and the only refuge in the evil hour! The bitterer the cup which we have to drink—the more darkly our troubles swell and thicken around us—after the example of Jesus, the more fervent ought our supplications to be. 'Is any among you afflicted?—let him pray,' saith the scripture. Prayer moves the hand that moves the universe. This is an eternal promise, and the truth of heaven is pledged to it, 'Ye shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart.'

1. If God spared not his own Son, will he pass by the rebel and the alien? It cannot be. If God poured out the full vials of his wrath on

Him whom he loved so well, how may I expect to be miserable on my deathbed and throughout a long eternity, who have for years and years been living at enmity with him! God help me or I perish!

2. Jesus had no sins of his own. The load he bore was a load of imputed guilt; and yet it was so grievous as almost to weigh him down to hell. O if the imputation was so intolerable—what must the burden of actual guilt be! If I have no part with Christ, how shall I be able to stand the stings of an awakened conscience, and the terrors of the law arrayed against me, and the arrows of the Almighty within me! My God, my God, leave me not alone to such misery. O that I may win Christ and be found in him, having my iniquities laid to his account, and his merits to mine!

3. How sad it is to think that Jesus, who loved us so dearly, and endured for us such anguish of soul, is so neglected on the earth which he came to redeem! Can it be that that gracious One—who spent such a terrible night of old in Gethsemane, tortured and rent, forsaken so of God, and beset so bitterly of the devil, because he bore our iniquities on his own head—is the same Jesus to whose words many are lending a deaf ear, of whose gospel many are ashamed, of whose salvation many never think or speak, in whose name so few pray and plead at the footstool of the throne of grace! Alas, alas, it is too true! And yet, methinks, the angels who came to minister to him in his agony will scarcely credit it—the very devils of hell cannot hear of it without wonder! 'Good Lord, cast me not away from thy presence—take not thy Holy Spirit from me.'

#### TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth,'*  
Psal. lxxi. 20.

THE people of God cannot claim exemption from the ills of human life. They are exposed to the same dangers, and subject to the same privations as other men. Often do they mourn blighted hopes and lowering fortune; often on the bed of languishing they pine away weary days and nights of pain; often are they called to stand round the death-beds of dearest friends, and to build their tombs, and weep over them. Ah! but this is their consolation: 'If ye endure cha-

tening, God dealeth with you as with sons—for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not.' In all their afflictions their Saviour is afflicted—with all he sympathises—out of all, in his own good time and way, he has promised to deliver them.

Let us consider how the sorest trials, by the grace of God, are made to work together for our good.

We might say that affliction tends to moderate our attachment to the things of time. Under it the world loses its hold on our hearts—we lift our eyes upwards, and seek in heaven surer and more enduring treasures than earth can give. We might say that it is in the school of affliction that many of the fairest graces of the Christian character are taught and fostered. There best we learn patience, and fortitude, and humility, and sympathy with the woes of each other. We might say that affliction is often a means of awakening into fervour the spirit of prayer, and bringing down in more plentiful effusion the grace of God. There are few, even of the most hardened and reckless men, who, in the hour of severe trials, are not brought down upon their knees. 'As thy day,' saith the scripture, 'so shall thy strength be.' The more I am troubled, the more I feel my own weakness—the deeper the conviction of my own weakness, the more earnestly am I constrained to seek the divine assistance—and the more I seek and need, the more I find. Wherefore 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. We might say that affliction helps us to see, in their fullest beauty, the promises and consolations of the gospel. O! it is not till the hour of hard things comes that we truly feel the value of faith! When the world has cast us off, and friends are weeping around us, and eternity is opening before us, the most careless of us all will be compelled to confess that there is one thing needful—that a poor, distressed, dying sinner needs comfort, and that nothing can smooth the pillow of death like the hope of eternal life through Christ crucified. How happy the man who under the shinings of heaven's countenance, however bitter be the cup that is given him to drink, can take up the scripture—'Though heart and flesh fail, God is the strength of my heart, and portion for ever!' Might we not add, also, that it is through affliction we learn most nearly to be conformed to the image of Jesus our Saviour. He was emphatically a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. And how can we resemble him

more than when we take up his *cross*—when, in calm and cordial submission to trouble, we say with him, 'Lord, not our will, but thine be done?'

O! whether I look to earth or heaven, I find abundant proof of the truth, 'it is good to be afflicted.'

Who are those so meek and so gentle amid the world's buffetings—patient of evil and of provocation—on whose wrath, or fretfulness, or discontent the sun never descends? These are they whom affliction has taught to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of their God. Who are those that never quail in the day of danger—fearless and foremost in the battles of the faith—cleaving to their Master most when the world frowns on him? These are they who have been trained to independence in the school of affliction—unto whom it has been given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe in his name, but also to suffer for his sake. Who are those humble contrite ones—of the chastened spirit, weaned utterly from vain glory, and from pride? These are they whom affliction has tutored in self-knowledge—who have looked inwards, and felt and confessed that they suffered far less than they deserved. Who are those whose tear ever starts forth at the tale of woe—they of the kindly and affectionate heart, with feet ever swift to run on the errand of mercy, with hands open as day to melting charity? These are they who have known well grief themselves, and care, and penury—who have wept by a mother's or sister's grave. Yea, who are those spirits in paradise, arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. O not till I join their happy choirs will I fully appropriate the words, 'Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and bring me from the depths of the earth.'

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him,'* John xix. 15.

It was the foolish fancy of an old moralist, that the very sight of a perfect man would charm the world into virtue. The fate of Jesus Christ on the earth has dissipated the delusion for ever. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; he went about continually doing good; his meat and drink it was to do the will of his

Father in heaven; and yet he was despised, and reviled, and scourged, and murdered. These are terrible words, 'The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life.' Alas! there is no beauty in holiness to attract the carnal eye. Still, as of old, the judgment of the men of the world is blind and perverse; they hate the truth and persecute it.

'Away with him, away with him'—cried the Jews. O how shall the authors of that mad cry stand before the Lord the Judge! My soul enter not thou into their secrets; unto their assembly mine honour be not thou united. And yet let me not forget my own guilt in theirs. By my ingratitude and disobedience, by my rejection of the gospel offers, and my grieving, and vexing, and quenching the Spirit of Christ, have not I joined often in their cry? O Lord God, thou knowest! Lord, have mercy upon me. Deliver me from the fate of those who crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

'Away with him, away with him, crucify him,'—cried the Jews. The wild cry was obeyed. Jesus was led away as a lamb to the slaughter—and on the tree of Calvary he died. Let me think of the *bitterness* of that death. How agonizing must have been the tearing and piercing of his hands and feet, as the iron spikes were driven through them! Let me think of the *lingering torture* of that death. For at least six hours he hung suspended, ere his frame was exhausted and the travail of his soul done. Let me think of the *shame* of that death. It was a punishment to which only the vilest criminals and slaves were subjected; yea, by the law of God it was held accursed! Blessed Jesus, all that humiliation—all the slow wasting agony of the cross thou didst endure without a murmur for me, that I might believe and live. For my sake thou wast made 'a curse,' that I might inherit the blessing: for me thou wast 'made sin'—for me the wrath of an angry God entered thy soul, that I might be forgiven and saved.

O the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Jesus! It transcends all thought—it passeth knowledge. It was love that brought down Immanuel from glory—it was love that sustained his spirit amid the pains of Calvary—engraven on his person, engraven on his life, engraven indelibly on his death are the words,

'Love to sinners of men.' In the gospel scheme there is indeed wisdom infinite—far more gloriously manifested than in all the wondrous harmonies and adaptations of nature; but it was love that prompted that wisdom to devise good things for sinners. In the gospel scheme there is indeed eternal and immutable justice—more strikingly vindicated far than it could have been by the damnation of every single soul which had ever transgressed the law; but it was love that turned away the sword of avenging justice from the sinner, and caused it to fall with all its weight on the Surety. In the gospel scheme there is indeed omnipotent power—ay, and far more majestically exercised than it ever has been in the thunder, and the earthquake, and the hurricane; but without love that power would have been employed to destroy not to save. O the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ Jesus! If I forget thee, my crucified Lord, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth—let my right hand forget its cunning.

'Crucify him, crucify him,'—cried the Jews. And behold the man!—behold the Lamb of God bleeding, groaning, dying! Ah! to the stubborn, to the hard-hearted, to the unbelieving and impenitent man, there is no more terrible spectacle than that in God's universe! Is it possible to look to it, and to consider ever so lightly what it behoved Jesus to suffer ere he could make atonement to the divine justice for sin, without trembling over the words, 'Our God is a consuming fire.' If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? The long, deep silence of ages shall again be broken by another communication from heaven. That same crucified one shall descend again in like manner as he ascended; and all who are not drawn to his cross shall be driven to his judgment-seat. 'Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.' And then when the stars fall down from heaven, and the moon becomes as blood, and the angels of God range their glittering lists along a burning world—when the great white throne is set up, and the books are opened, and the eternal doom is to be read—neither wealth, nor power, nor knowledge—neither name, nor vow, nor keenest prayer will avail—nothing, nothing, save an interest in the death of the Son of Mary. O Lord, even now at the foot of thy cross give me grace to kneel and cry, 'My Lord and my God.'

## TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

'And he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors,' Isa. liii. 12.

ON one occasion a curious disciple put the question to Christ, 'Lord, are there many that be saved?' But Christ, in reply, bade the man look to himself: 'Enter ye in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.' Secret things belong unto God—and he has not chosen to reveal the number of his elect. But we know that when they are all gathered in, they will form a goodly company. They are spoken of in the scriptures as a 'multitude which no man can number.'

Now, as the Redeemer bare the sins of every one on his own body on the tree, for every one also he intercedes in paradise. '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.' There is no more precious truth in the word than this. Many a fainting heart has it cheered—many a weary and heavy laden penitent has it restored to peace and joy. In the far distant heavens—the temple unseen, not made with hands—there is one pleading for me, who am but dust and ashes. He bears my name upon his breastplate, he takes my prayers and presents them mingled with much incense on the golden altar before the throne. He had, indeed, no taint of sin—yet was he, while upon earth, compassed about with infirmities, and he can be touched with mine. 'Though he knew not what it was to fall, he knew well what it was to struggle and to fight.' He can sympathise with me in poverty, and sorrow, and sickness; he can sympathise with me amid all the scorn, and hatred, and persecution of the world; he can sympathise with me in the anguish and perplexity of my innermost spirit; he can sympathise with me under the worst temptations of satan; he can sympathise with me amid the gathering shadows of the dark valley; he can sympathise with me even under the hidings of my God's face. All these things himself felt—and in all he has a fellow-feeling with me. Ay, and whereas the sons of Aaron's race were not suffered to continue by reason of death, this Man hath an unchangeable priesthood—he liveth for ever.'

O! who can fail to rejoice over the blessed words: 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous!'

The qualifications of Jesus for this office who will dispute? His intercession is founded on *righteousness*; it is the intercession of one who has

purchased whatever he seeks, and has a right to it. As a *just* God, Jehovah cannot refuse a single one of the blessings which he pleads from him for his people—for he died to procure them, and eternal truth is pledged to dispense them as the fruits of his death. Our advocate is the *Son of God*—his well-beloved Son—his only begotten Son; on his vesture and his thigh the name is written, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Our advocate is the *Son of man*—and just as he was of old is he still, with a heart as tender, and a love as strong; in that he suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. O! no one poor sinner ever confided in him in vain! How came those spirits to heaven? All, all committed their cause to his keeping—and through his advocacy they won their places by the throne.

And for what does the Lord Jesus intercede?

He pleads that we may be preserved from evil and temptation. 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.'

He pleads for the persevering sanctification of his people. 'Holy Father, keep through thine own truth those whom thou hast given me—Lord, sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.'

He pleads for the union of his people in peace and charity. 'Neither pray I for these alone—but for them which believe in me through their word, that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they all may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' O! if there are any who care not for a torn, and mangled, and bleeding church—any who care not for the miserable spectacle which their jealousies and divisions, as Christians, exhibit to the world—surely this voice of the Mediator within the veil might touch them!

Finally, Jesus pleads for the eternal blessedness of all his people in heaven. These are the very words of his intercession, and at this moment they are ascending in sweet memorial before the throne. 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' Let none fret therefore, let none despond at the death of the saints. Their death was but the answer to the prayers of Immanuel; he desired their presence in heaven; and he sent his angels to conduct them to the place which himself had gone before to prepare.

## TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

'And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required,' Luke xxiii. 24.

WE must have pronounced the *guilt of Pilate* very great, though the person brought before him had been undistinguished in any respect from the many thousands of Israel. Pilate had been sent into this province by the Roman emperor, and by a law written by the finger of God even on the heathen heart, he could not but know, that as judge, he was bound to act with the strictest justice. How sinful then was his conduct, when it appears that he was thoroughly convinced that this person whom he condemned was perfectly innocent! Expressly is it recorded by more than one evangelist, that 'he knew that for envy they had delivered him;' and his own explicit declaration was, 'Behold I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him.' How base and infamous was it then after this, to give him into the hands of those who were thirsting for his blood. His guilt was increased by his having had a preternatural warning. When he was set down on his judgment-seat, his wife sent to him, saying, 'Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream, because of him.' The meek yet noble bearing of the prisoner had already inspired him with awe; and hearing that he had declared himself to be the Son of God, he became more afraid to condemn him. But the Jews knew how to assail him, and they cried, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.' Knowing the malice of those who importuned him, and dreading the wrath of an earthly prince more than HIS by whom princes reign, he meanly and wickedly 'gave sentence that it should be as they required.' 'And he released unto them Barabbas, who, for sedition and murder, was cast into prison; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.'

Still greater, however, was the *guilt of the Jews*. They were 'Israelites, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.' The coming of Christ, to be a light to the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel, was the most precious promise of God to their nation. And though, when he came, 'he grew up,' as had been predicted, 'as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground;' yet, in the midst of his humiliation,

there were sufficient proofs of his heavenly origin. His birth, which had been foretold by the angel Gabriel to the virgin mother, was celebrated by a multitude of the heavenly host. At his baptism, and on the mount of transfiguration, was the voice from heaven heard, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.' The holiness of his life, and the wisdom, purity, and sublimity of his doctrine confirmed by countless miracles, gave the strongest possible proof that he was indeed the Son of God.

Had he been a noisy demagogue, promising them victory, and riches, and political power, the people in general would have followed him. Had he been of lax morality, and ready to wink at hypocrisy, oppression, and worldly-mindedness, the world would have loved its own, and he would have been welcomed by many. But because he was meek and lowly, and came to establish a spiritual kingdom, and to wean his followers from the present world, and to render them meet for the heavenly inheritance, he was rejected and despised by those whom he sought to enlighten and sanctify. Because he was not only holy himself, but inculcated the necessity of holiness; because he rebuked pride, and hypocrisy, and worldly-mindedness, the scribes and Pharisees hated him, and sought to destroy him. In seeking his destruction they sinned against far clearer light than did Pilate the heathen governor. And because they hated this light, when Pilate, unprincipled though he was, sought to deliver him, being full of envy, they became the more inveterate, and cried, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him.' And they did crucify him with two malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Great was the guilt of Pilate, and of the unbelieving Jews, but what must we think of ourselves if we neglect this Saviour? How aggravated must be our guilt, who have had much clearer light, and who have not had the same prejudices to contend with! How great have been our advantages! What could the Lord have done for us that he hath not done? And what returns have we made? Are we living in his service, or are we in a state of rebellion against our sovereign Lord and bountiful Benefactor? Were we to say to the unrenewed man, 'Do you hate Christ?' unless he were a thorough infidel, he would regard the question as an insult; and yet his mind is enmity against God. Do you restrain prayer? Do you forsake, or nearly forsake, his ordinances? Do you hate those who are remarkable for their piety? Are you disposed to sneer at them, and to listen with pleasure

to anything which you think renders their sincerity questionable? If you hate his ordinances, you have much reason to fear that you hate the God of ordinances. If you hate the members of Christ's mystical body, you cannot but hate Christ the living Head.

But, O my soul, is it enough that thou shouldst be able to say, I do not hate Christ? Art thou satisfied with the mere absence of hostility? Do not deceive thyself: for if this be the case, thou dost hate him. At the best thou canst but rank among the lukewarm, whom 'he will spue out of his mouth.' Has he not said, 'He who is not for me is against me, and he who gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.' O Holy Spirit, breathe on my cold heart, and inspire devout affections, if not already communicated; and fan the spark of heavenly love if already kindled; that it may mount up into a brightening flame. Stir up all that is within me to praise and magnify thy holy name; and, in the spirit of heaven-born love, may I be able to say, 'My Beloved is mine, and I am his;' 'he is the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely.'

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ,'* Rom. xiv. 10.

JESUS died, and rose, and ascended; and he whom the heavens have received is to come again in glory; he who was unjustly judged is to be the sovereign Judge of all who have ever lived; 'for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.'

There is something solemn in standing even before an earthly tribunal. If we were taken from our solitary cell, and had every eye in the crowded judgment-hall fixed on us;—when life or death, honour or infamy, would be the result of the trial, as it drew towards a close would not our feelings be wound up to the highest pitch? How much more awful, however, to stand before a heavenly tribunal; to be judged by him whose servants are glorious seraphs, whose ministers are a flame of fire, whose chariots are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, whose voice can shake the heavens, and 'who will by no means clear the guilty!'

But who is this Judge? *It is Christ the Son of God.* How august the Judge! How sublime what is written by him who, in prophetic vision, beheld the judgment! 'And I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face

the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was no place for them.' He is to come with all the glory of the Father and the holy angels; and he will judge righteous judgment, for he cannot be awed, he cannot be bribed, he cannot be deceived; and his decision is final, there is no appeal.

And who are *to be judged?* *All;* 'we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.' At the sound of the last trumpet the dead shall arise; they who are alive shall be changed, and *all* shall come to the judgment. Behold this vast assembly! 'Who are they arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God;' therefore do they shine as the stars in the firmament; therefore they who had once lain among the pots, are now as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold; while in their song of praise they with rapture say, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.'

But are glory, and honour, and immortality to be bestowed on *all?* Where at that great day shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? Not with that happy throng on the right hand of the throne, who, with beaming countenances and enraptured hearts, are crying out, 'Alleluia, alleluia;' but with that trembling crowd on the left hand of the throne, about to hear that dreadful and irreversible sentence, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' In vain do they cry to the mountains and the rocks to hide them; the elements melt with fervent heat, and the mountains and rocks have perished in the flame. The great day of his wrath is come, and who of them is able to stand!

How wonderful that the certainty of such events as death and judgment should not more deeply affect the hearts and lives of the children of men! 'All men think all men mortal but themselves.' How apt are we to forget that we, as well as others, shall appear before his judgment-seat; that every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and shall wail for their aggravated sins!

Should we forget that there is an event fast coming which brings us individually to judgment? That event cannot be far distant, for here we cannot abide long. Every thing around us is subject to decay. The flowers bloom and wither; the verdant foliage of the forest soon

shrivels, and by the first rude blast is strewed on the ground. Man, the child of mortality, withers as the green herb. With his first breath he inhales a poison, which continues to rankle till it brings the goodly fabric to the grave. Friends and neighbours die; and God is saying to us by their departure, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.' 'Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.' Should not we each say, Art thou ready, O my soul? Art thou prepared to meet thy God? Hast thou fled to the only refuge? Hast thou laid hold of the horns of the altar? Hast thou cast thyself at the feet of the great High Priest? Hast thou sought pardon through the covenanted mercy of God? Hast thou applied to the blood of sprinkling? Hast thou washed in the fountain opened? Hast thou been renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit? And art thou living by the faith of the Son of God? If we can give no satisfactory answer to such questions; and if we have reason to fear that we are yet in our sins, would it not be the height of madness to continue in this perilous state, suspended by a frail thread over the dread abyss, when next moment it may be snapt asunder? Should we not with prayers, and tears, and groanings that cannot be uttered, implore mercy to pardon and grace to help? If, on the contrary, we think that we have passed from death to life, and that there has been an outpouring of grace on our souls;—then let us remember that grace is not shed abroad in the heart that it may remain dormant, but that it may stir us up to live more and more to the praise and glory of God. That if we are Christians, then are we the lights of the world; the salt of the earth; the good leaven to leaven the lump. 'Whatever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with our might;' 'for the night cometh when no man can work;' 'and after death, the judgment.'

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 TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head,' Matt. xxvii. 29.

How bitter were the ingredients mingled in that cup which the Redeemer drank for the guilty sons of men! Jews and Gentiles combined in loading him with ignominy and insult. Pilate, though he declared that he found no fault in him, commanded him to be cruelly scourged; and it was scarcely a palliation that he did it to gratify the hatred of the Jews, and to move them to pity; for

he was thus setting them an example of injustice and cruelty which they were too much disposed to follow. Accordingly when he brought him forth, and set him before them, and said, 'Behold the man!' their relentless cry was, 'crucify him, crucify him.'

Not less cruel was the conduct of the soldiers, unto whom, when he was scourged and condemned, he was delivered. Though bleeding from the cruel scourging, to which, though innocent, he had been subjected, their rugged hearts were not softened. Scourging was both a painful, and an ignominious punishment. It dwelt upon the Saviour's mind; for in foretelling his last sufferings he always mentions the *scourging* to his disciples. We may learn the severity with which it was executed from the prophetic words of scripture, 'the plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows.' Unmoved by his meekness, or by his unmerited sufferings, the ruffian soldiers, with wanton and deliberate cruelty, sought to add to the sufferings of his body, and of his mind. They stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. 'And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews! And they spat upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after they had mocked him, they led him away to crucify him.' With what studied contempt and cruelty was he treated! The crown, we doubt not, was intentionally of *thorns*, that its spikes might pierce his temples, when they pressed it on his head. These soldiers were the subjects of a state in which honorary crowns were often bestowed as the reward of some distinguished action, such as the saving of the life of a Roman citizen, or being the first to scale the walls of an enemy's city. How glorious the crown which He deserved to wear, whom they insultingly crowned in cruel mockery! He came to pull down the strongholds of Satan; and he will lay the loftiest of them at last in the dust. He was engaged in a work which was to save the life, not of one, but of many; of a multitude whom no man can number, whom he is to rescue from misery, to raise from earth to heaven, and to crown with eternal blessedness. How resplendent the crown he now wears! 'We see Jesus,' saith the apostle, 'who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.' 'For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

In contemplating such heinous wickedness, can we fail to be struck with the wonderful forbearance of God? The Jews had been highly favoured by him of old, and often had they tried his long-suffering. He had sent to them his servants the prophets; but they beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Last of all he sent to them his Son, saying, 'They will reverence my Son.' But in the language of the parable, 'when they saw his son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize on the inheritance; and they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.' What forbearance was it that he did not instantly miserably destroy these cruel murderers!

But let us consider how often we ourselves have tried his long-suffering. He has raised from the dead this crucified Redeemer, and has exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And yet, are there not thousands in a land of light who are not only unthankful, but with all the malice and hatred of the Jews, 'set themselves against the Lord and his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us?' Though God may for a time spare, is he not saying to every one who acts thus impiously, 'Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.'

And should we not, from the patience and forbearance of the Son of God, learn patience and humility in the day of trial? 'He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.' When visited with unmerited reproach or injury, let us look unto Jesus, and learn patience and humility. 'Forasmuch as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, let us arm ourselves likewise with the same mind.' 'For even hereunto were we called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, but

committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously.' Let us 'consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied, and faint in our minds.' Let us 'humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time; casting all our care on him, for he careth for us.' 'If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.' If we seek to bear up under the trials of life in such a manner as shall redound to the glory of God, then the God of all grace, after we have suffered a while, will call us to his kingdom and glory, and will bestow on us that crown of righteousness which fadeth not away. Let us put on then as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. Let us seek so to live that when the end of our warfare is near, we may, like the apostle, say, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.'

#### TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,' Rev. ii. 10.*

THIS exhortation is given by the first, and the last, and the living One, to those who had already shown themselves faithful in his service. Neither the exhortation nor the promise were intended to be limited to the saints at Smyrna; but may be considered as addressed to believers in every age. 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' We are left in no doubt as to the person giving this exhortation to be faithful; for who could give a crown of life but the Son of the Eternal, who alone could say, 'I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death?' And what is it to be faithful? Would we be faithful were we to be ashamed of him in the company of the ungodly? Would we be faithful were we to put our hand to the plough, and then to turn back? Would we be faithful were the dread of suffering to induce us to deny him, and to swerve from the path of duty? Would we be faithful to him as the Captain of our salvation, were we to hold treacherous communication with those of the

enemy's camp? Would we be faithful were we to spend in idleness, or folly, or riot, the time he has challenged as his own? Would we be faithful were we to spend the talents he has committed to us for our own selfish purposes, or in the service of the enemy? No! to be faithful we must love him, and cleave to him, and serve him; enduring hardness as good soldiers, and living to him through whose goodness and mercy we live.

It is Christ's voice that says to us, 'Be ye faithful.' Then whatever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with our might, as there is neither work, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, nor device in the grave to which we are hastening. It is the voice of the blessed Bridegroom that saith, 'Be thou faithful;' and should we not give him the first place in our heart, that we may say with joy, 'My Beloved is mine, and I am his?' 'Be thou faithful,' saith he; and O my soul, what cause hast thou to be faithful! Is he not the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely? Has he not done every thing for thee? His was love that many waters could not quench, neither floods drown, nor death destroy. And wilt thou not yield to him the love of thy heart, the obedience of thy life, and the praises of thy tongue?

What encouragement hast thou, O believer, to be faithful! What precious promises he gives! 'He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.' Thou art engaged in a warfare then; and from this warfare there is no discharge, for thou must be faithful *unto death*. 'If any man draw back, my soul,' saith the Lord, 'shall have no pleasure in him.' But the first death shall soon come disarmed of its sting, and thou shalt never taste of the second death. What a blessing! To be saved from the lake of fire, and from lying down in everlasting burnings!

But deliverance from hell would not satisfy him who had loved Christ, and had endured poverty, and reproach, and tribulation for his name's sake. But listen to his voice, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' How delightful the words: *I will give thee a crown of life!* I wore the crown of thorns, yea, I suffered death, that I might give thee a crown of life. *I will give it.* I, the faithful and true witness, whose promises are all yea and amen, not one failing. How animating this promise! What interest was excited, and what energies put forth at the games of ancient Greece; and when the victor was crowned before the assembled multitude, he seemed at the height of earthly happiness; though the crown was but of leaves, and though the wearer of it might die al-

most as soon as the fading leaves of his crown. But here is a crown given by the Son of the Eternal, along with a kingdom that cannot be moved, and everlasting life, and glory, and happiness in the presence of God, and of his Christ.

It is the King of Zion who saith, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' Thou art fighting under his eye; and dost thou require more to encourage thee? Yes, more is needed, and it is not withheld. Thou needest strength for the conflict, and asking the aid thou needest, it will be freely bestowed. He will make his grace sufficient for thee, and perfect his strength in thy weakness. Without this thy heart would sink within thee before the seen array of earthly enemies; and the more dreadful, though unseen, array of spiritual foes. Clothed in the armour of God, and going in the strength of the Captain of thy salvation, he who gave the stripling David the victory over the uncircumcised Philistine, will make thee conqueror over all that can rise up against thee. The enemy may be allowed for a little to prevail; but fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Though Satan, by his emissaries, may spoil thee of thy goods, he cannot prevent thee from being rich towards God. Though he may try thee, he cannot torment thee; though he may cast thee into a prison, he cannot shut thee up in hell; he cannot shut thee out from the favour of the Lord. Many may rise up against thee, speaking great swelling words of wrath and vanity; but he who is for thee is more powerful than all who are against thee. He will make his grace sufficient for thee, for he has promised that as thy day is, so shall thy strength be. He may call thee to the field of conflict; but he will be thy shield in the hour of danger. He may suffer thee to be cast into the fiery furnace; but it is that the trial of thy faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found with praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Beloved, examine yourselves then whether ye be in the faith, remembering that true faith purifieth the heart, and worketh by love, leading those who are possessed of it to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. Think of the enemies with whom you have to contend; of their fiery darts, of their countless wiles, and of their cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive and to destroy. But think also of the Master whom you serve; on the aid, which in answer to your prayers, he has promised; and on the rich reward of grace which he assures you he will bestow. Splendid may

be an earthly crown; but little to be envied is he that wears it. Cares lurk amidst its brightest ornaments; and the power of royalty cannot banish them. It brings no comfort in the hour of sorrow; it cannot ward off sickness and trouble; it cannot save from the agonies of death; it cannot justify in the day of judgment. But from the midst of the seven golden candlesticks a voice is heard, 'Be ye faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.' It is the faithful and the true Witness who speaks, and his promises are all yea and amen; and the crown is a diadem of beauty which he bestows on those who are to live, and reign, and rejoice with him for evermore. 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

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 TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,'* Phil. ii. 8.

WELL-fitted are the sublime doctrines of our most holy faith to have a practical influence on the hearts and lives of believers; and therefore does the apostle say, 'Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.' 'Stand fast, in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; in nothing terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.' Does he wish them cheerfully to bear up under those trials to which they were called, 'for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ?' He teaches them to regard tribulation endured on this account as an honour, and a privilege, and a cause of thankfulness; 'for unto you,' says he, 'it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake.' Does he wish them to avoid strife and vain-glory, and to cultivate peace, and brotherly-kindness, and lowliness of mind? He points to Him who said, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart;' and he says, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 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, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'

How astonishing this humiliation! 'Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.' To have some faint idea of the depth of the Saviour's humiliation, it is necessary to bear in mind his original dignity and glory, even the glory which he had with God his Father before the world began, 'when he was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before Him.' 'He was in the form of God;' and, as his 'taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men,' means that he really became man, and appeared in a humble station as the servant of all; so, his 'being in the form of God,' means that he was really God:—and that no doubt might remain, it is added, and 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' 'I am the Lord,' saith the Almighty, 'and my glory I will not give unto another;' and yet it is declared respecting the Redeemer, that he was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. 'In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God.' He is very God of very God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; so that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. How incomprehensibly great his glory! Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? 'What is man,' might we say, 'that He should be mindful of him, or the children of men that he should visit them?' Or if he did visit them, we might have expected that it would be in wrath, to overwhelm by his mighty power his enemies in a rebellious province of his empire. But he beheld them with mercy; he said, 'How shall I make thee as Admah, how shall I set thee as Zeboim?' He veiled his glory, and he came to save.

Great had been his humiliation, had he stooped to take on himself the nature of the brightest of the angels of God. But 'though rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich.' It is a principle of our nature, that we feel more acutely for those who, from exalted stations, are plunged into the depths of distress. The very same afflictions are in reality more grievous to them than to those in humbler life. How trying is poverty to those who have known nothing but affluence! And how grievous are neglect, and scorn, and insult, to them who have long been accustomed to honour, and who have ever been treated with deference, and regarded with respect! And yet what is their humiliation to that of the Son of

God? 'He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' He was made under the law, and he fulfilled all righteousness by doing and suffering his heavenly Father's will; and as we had broken the law;—by becoming obedient unto death in our room, and enduring the penalty, he magnified the law and made it honourable by his perfect, passive obedience in our stead upon the cross. And let us bear in mind that he was not compulsorily humbled; that he voluntarily 'humbled himself,' laying down his life as a ransom for many.

Had he laid down his life in any form, well might we have said, 'Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, Messiah suffers! the Prince of life dies! Still more wonderful is it that he should humble himself even unto the *death of the cross*,—a painful, lingering, ignominious, accursed death; the death of slaves, or of the most wicked malefactors. And let us remember that in dying he really bore the curse, suffering not only in his body, but still more in his soul; for 'his soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death;' 'it pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin.' How great those agonies that constrained him to say, 'Is it nothing to you all ye who pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done to me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger!'

How consistent was this plan of salvation with all the attributes of God. Not one of them was compromised. 'It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect (to consecrate him) through sufferings.' Yes; through sufferings alone, and awful sufferings, could our salvation be accomplished, and perfect atonement made. 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience from the things he suffered.' He thus, as Mediator, experimentally learned what it was to obey; and having obeyed even unto death, he can sympathize with his followers in the most painful parts of their duty.

How perfect the sacrifice! He died for our sins, and rose again for (in proof of) our justification. Had he not risen, if we had believed him sincere, we could only have talked of him, and been sad, saying, 'We hoped that it had been he who was to redeem Israel.' Our faith would have been vain, without foundation. But now

that he is risen, and returned to glory, we have proof that the sacrifice was accepted, and the debt paid; and we may say, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

#### TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple,' Luke xiv. 27.

ONE might think that to live as a Christian should be a very easy matter, when it is only to be guided by Christ, and to advance in the path which leadeth to heaven. And it would be easy, were there no corruption within, and no enemies from without. But a warfare must be carried on, as the believer has to go up through an enemy's country; and from the remains of corruption in the heart; he is as one who struggles with the current, and swims against the stream. Our blessed Master never sought to entice any to be his disciples, by concealing the difficulties to be encountered. On the contrary, most expressly does he here say, 'Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' And not less explicitly does he elsewhere say, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.'

To be Christ's disciple, a person must *deny himself*. Religion does impose restraints, and though they are all salutary, they are often painful to flesh and blood. Religion forbids every undue indulgence of the appetites and passions. It teaches us to be moderate in eating and drinking; to be temperate in all things; using, but not abusing the gifts of God's providence. We fear there are now, as in the days of the apostle, those who profess to be Christians, but who in very truth are of the synagogue of Satan. 'Many walk,' said he, 'of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.' And a similar sentence is recorded respecting those who indulged in any filthiness of the flesh or of the spirit. 'Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.'

We must be ready, if called on, to part with our earthly comforts and temporal enjoyments; nay, with everything dear to us rather than forsake Christ. Painful as it would naturally be to flesh and blood, it is recorded of the early Christians that they took willingly the spoiling of their goods, regarding it as an honour to suffer loss for his name's sake. Great violence also was often done to the feelings of their heart, when they were required to *hate*—not literally—but in comparison with their greater love to Christ, the dearest of their friends: the same thing, let us remember, is necessary still. If the authority of superiors, whether civil, ecclesiastical, or natural, should require us to act contrary to what conscience and the word of God assure us is our duty, however painful the self-denial may be, we are forbidden to yield. We must be very sure that we are guided by the word and will of God, ere we venture to disobey either civil or natural superiors; but when we have the thorough conviction of this, though the tears of a tender mother, or the entreaties of an indulgent father, or the commands of those who can punish us for disobedience, should be employed to move us,—we must set our face like a flint, and at all hazards obey Christ rather than man.

To be Christ's disciples we must *bear our cross*. This is in allusion to the custom of causing the condemned malefactor to bear his cross to the place of execution. And can we refuse to bear it for the sake of Christ, when we look at him going up the hill of Calvary, and bearing his cross, and when we remember that for our sins 'he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross?' By this figurative expression of bearing our cross, is meant that, from love to Christ, we should patiently, yea cheerfully, endure everything, even death itself, rather than forsake him whose 'favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life.' The cross is whatever is distressing in our lot; not of our own making or finding, but of God's appointment; and receiving it as from God's hand as a trial of our faith and love, and for the improvement of our Christian graces, we are required to bear it meekly, and patiently, and, as far as we are enabled, cheerfully. Is it the reproach of the world because of our religion that we are required to bear? 'As Jesus suffered without the gate, so must we go forth to him without the camp bearing his reproach,' like Moses 'esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.' Are we visited with personal affliction? Let us hear the voice of the rod, and him who hath appointed it, and seek to

bear it in the spirit of resignation. Are we tried with domestic bereavement? Let us remember that all we have is but a loan, that when it is reclaimed we may be ready to say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' Are we tried with poverty? Let us remember that 'Jesus, though rich, for our sakes became poor;' 'that the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests, but that the Son of man had not where to lay his head.'

To be Christ's disciples, we must *come after him—follow him*. We must imitate his example, and obey his commands. We must not pick and choose those commandments least disagreeable to us, but in all things we must seek to do his will. We must learn of him who was meek and lowly; we must learn of him who was constantly doing good, consulting not merely the good of the body, but still more the good of the soul. We must imitate him in his piety; and when we consider that it is by prayer that we obtain grace, by which alone we can be enabled to follow him either in doing or in suffering according to his will; what an incitement have we to pray with all manner of prayer and supplication, that 'the very God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, would make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.'

'No cross then—no crown,' since it is written, 'Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' We need not go out of our way to seek a cross: it will be found in the direct path, in some form, by every traveller towards Zion;—and daily found; otherwise Christ would not have said, 'If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily, and follow me.' If we find no cross from the hatred of the world, may it not be because we are walking according to the course of this world; and that the world loves its own? If there is no cross arising from the workings of the heart, is there not reason to fear that the heart is yet unrenewed, and that the crucifixion of the old man has not yet been begun? When the inspired apostle, in his spiritual warfare, was constrained to cry out, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'—if we know nothing of this inward warring, can we be fighting a good fight?—can we be bearing our cross, and following Christ? If we feel the cross, and are groaning under it, let us seek strength from him that we may be

enabled to bear it; and he will make his grace sufficient for us; and having borne the cross, he will in due season give us the crown, exalting us to glory and blessedness at his right hand in the heavens.

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 TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted,'* Heb ii. 18.

WHAT believer is there who does not know, from experience, that this life is a state of temptation? God tempteth no man with evil, but He sends temptations, as trials of the believer's faith. Temptations arise also from the remains of corruption in the renewed heart; from the allurements of the world; from the enticements, or from the threatenings of the ungodly; from the wiles, or from the fiery darts of the wicked one. If fallen man were left to himself, how hopeless would be his condition; but the believer is not sent a warring at his own charges; nor required to carry on the combat in his own strength. He can look unto the Captain of his salvation, and derive courage from knowing that, 'in that He himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.'

'He suffered being tempted.' His whole life here below, and particularly during his public ministry, was a scene of temptation, and sorrow, and suffering. How grievous, at the very outset of his ministry, to be tempted of the devil during forty days in the wilderness! How distressing to his holy heart, how humbling and afflicting to his pure nature, to hear, for so long a period, his unholy suggestions and blasphemous proposals!

Though Satan, being foiled, left him, his temptations were still grievous, arising from the impenitence, and ingratitude, and malice of those whom he addressed. 'He came to his own, but his own received him not.' He came from heaven to earth; from the height of glory, to the depth of humiliation; he spake as never man spoke, and proved by his miracles that he came from God; he came to seek and to save that which was lost; and what a trial, when in mournful accents he was constrained to say, 'ye will not come unto me that ye may have life!' When he spake to them with so much fervour and affection; when he wrought so many miracles of mercy; and could call on them to believe on him for his work's sake, mere callousness and indifference would have been grievous; but how much greater his trial

when there were added hatred, and malice, and bitter hostility; when they came to hear him, 'that they might entangle him in his talk;' when they watched his wonderful works, 'that they might find an accusation against him!' How deeply he felt under such a temptation is evident from its being recorded that he 'looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.'

Time would fail us were we to attempt to enumerate all the temptations he experienced, when he had to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; when they accused him of being in league with accursed spirits; and took up stones to stone the Holy One and the Just. But to know that he 'suffered, being tempted,' it is enough to touch on some of those grievous temptations which cluster around him at the close. How great the trial in Gethsemane, when in sore amazement and agony of soul he fell on the ground and prayed; and when in the writhings of his spiritual conflict, his sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground! Was it nothing to be betrayed by one of his disciples, yea, and betrayed with a kiss? Was it nothing to be denied by another of his disciples, and to be forsaken by all? Was it nothing to be condemned, and scourged, and crucified amidst the cruel mockings and insults of his murderous foes? Was it nothing that hell should send forth her legions, to vent all their malice, and to pour all their wrath on his devoted head? Oppressed and afflicted though he was, he endured in silence, 'and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' But when the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all, when he hid from him that countenance whose smile is heaven, and whose frown is the bitterness of the deepest woe; then burst forth the mournful exclamation, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?'

When he himself thus suffered being tempted, is he not able to succour them that are tempted? By these sore temptations, he has acquired, for the relief of others when tempted, a qualification and meetness he could not otherwise have possessed. He is willing to help them, for 'he is a High Priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.' He is able to succour them; for overcoming temptations far greater than his followers can be exposed to, he has proved the all-sufficiency of his power. He has acquired a right to succour them; for they are his purchased possession, the sheep of his pasture; and none shall pluck one of them out of his hand.

He has the right, and the power, and the will to defend them from the cunning fox, and the ravening wolf; and to deliver them in the hour of jeopardy from the paw of the lion and of the bear.

What excuse have we then if we flee not to him for succour? Do we walk in darkness? What is that, to what he endured in the hour and power of darkness, and under the hidings of his Father's face? Do we groan under the burden of our iniquities? Did he not come to bear them all? And does he not say, 'Come unto me all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?' Do our temptations arise from the remains of corruption? He never, indeed, had any struggle from sinful propensities, but it is from this very sinlessness that we can look to him with confidence, for otherwise he could not have succoured us in the time of need. Are we assailed by the fiery darts of Satan? Let us take the shield of faith, which will quench those fiery darts; and the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit; and clothed in the armour of God, and guided by the Captain of our salvation, let us resist the devil, and he will flee from us. Going in the strength of the Lord, we shall find, by blessed experience, that he can give us the victory.

'Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;' and our great High Priest will cause us to see, 'that having suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.'

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TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,'* 2 Tim. ii. 12.

THE apostle in exhorting Timothy, exhorts all believers to 'be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,' and to 'endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.' In various forms does he teach that the Christian life is a state of warfare, and of zealous and strenuous exertion. He reminds us that, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we should be willing to endure hardness, because every good soldier seeks the approbation

of his commander. By referring also to the celebrated games of ancient times, he teaches that we should not only be zealous in Christ's service, but that our zeal must be under the guidance of prescribed laws. 'If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully.' We must seek then not only to be zealously affected in a good thing, but in a right way; our zeal being according to knowledge. He draws a lesson also of patient labour from the practice of the husbandman, who industriously labours that he may be made partaker of the fruits. And when he sought to encourage Timothy to suffer patiently in the cause of Christ, he could teach him not only by precept, but also by his own example. 'Remember,' said he, 'that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore, I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 'It is a faithful saying; for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us.'

'Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards;' and as suffering is the lot of humanity, the alternative is—shall we suffer in the service of Christ, or in the service of Satan? It is well to bear in mind that this is the true state of the case; for it is a common and ruinous mistake, especially in the days of our youth, that by casting off the restraints of religion, and living as we list, walking in the sight of our own eyes, and in the way of our own heart, we may escape trouble, and secure a large amount of happiness. We may say to Christ, 'we will not have thee to reign over us;' but is the rule of corrupt appetites, and passions a gentle sway? Is Satan's yoke not galling? Are his wages always pleasant and satisfying to the soul? Does not unquestionable authority assure us that the wages of sin is death? Bitter, bitter often is the cup which the slave of sin must drink, ere his service in this world comes to a close. The heart may become hardened, and the conscience seared, but for a time conscience fails not to perform her office; and the lash of an evil conscience is often worse than a scourge of venomous scorpions. The sons of riot, for instance, may pretend to be happy, but even in laughter their heart is sorrowful, and their mirth is compared in scripture to a blaze of crackling thorns, only rendering more dismal the gloom by which it is immediately succeeded. And what

consolation have they in the time of trouble? To seek for sympathy would be to proclaim their shame. Their grief then is concealed from the eye of the world; but like the liquid fire in a burning mountain it is not the less consuming, because it is hid. And as they are without comfort, so are they without hope; for continuing impenitent every hope must perish. Christ is faithful to his threatenings, as well as to his promises; and he has declared that 'if we deny him he also will deny us.' And when will he deny the ungodly? In that great day when he comes with all the glory of the Father, and the holy angels; when he appears in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; coming in flaming fire to punish with everlasting destruction, from his presence and from the glory of his power, those who have not honoured God, and have not obeyed the gospel of his Son.

Our blessed Master never sought to induce any to follow him by promising exemption from sufferings. On the contrary he has declared, that 'if any man would come after him, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow him.' 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.' 'In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' 'Fear not, for I am with you.' 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you.' Their very trials are converted into blessings. Leaving friends and possessions for his sake and the gospel's, they were promised a hundred-fold more now, and in the world to come eternal life. Not that the hundred-fold was to be in kind; but in value. They would enjoy *that* in God, which all creatures a hundred times multiplied would not have been to them; and the gifts, and graces, and consolations of his Holy Spirit would be a hundred times better portion, than all that could be parted with for the sake of Christ.

And then what are all, even the spiritual blessings of time, compared with life everlasting. 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.' Is there not something exceedingly animating in being called to suffer for Christ? The apostle counted it all honour that he was thought worthy to suffer for him. The brave soldier, in the day of battle, is stirred up to deeds of more noble daring, when having his commander's glory at heart, he has an opportunity of promoting it, and of proving the sincerity of his attachment. Christ can no longer be assailed by his enemies in person, but his cause is assailed; and when we are called to 'come to the help of the Lord against the mighty;' and when it is said, 'Who is on the Lord's side, who?' ought we not to come forward boldly

on the Lord's side, though we should expose ourselves thereby to danger and suffering? It is in the face of danger and suffering that we best prove our attachment. And if our sufferings in Christ abound, our consolations also shall abound by Christ. Let us persevere then in the path of duty, though it should be the path of suffering. Animated by the assurance that, 'if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him,' let us press onward. Then, ere long, as the ransomed of the Lord we shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads; we shall receive joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away.

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#### THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst,'* John xix. 28.

HE was tried in every point like as we are, yet without sin. By suffering under hunger, and thirst, and weariness, and other sinless infirmities of our nature, he at once gave evidence of his great humiliation, and proof that he was in truth man. As he returned to Jerusalem from Bethany, where he had lodged during the night, he hungered; and the barren fig-tree to which he sent his disciples supplied him with no food. On his way from Judea to Galilee, he was wearied with his journey, and in the heat of the day he sat down on Jacob's well; and there said to a woman of Samaria, 'Give me to drink.' Very different was the treatment he experienced from this female Samaritan, unprincipled though she had formerly been, from that which now in a time of much greater need he experienced from the assembled Jews. Most acutely, we doubt not, had he felt the pain inflicted by the scourge, and the thorns, and the nails; and worn out with lingering suffering, he cried, 'I thirst.' O the depth of humiliation of which this cry gave evidence! As God, he had made the dew, and the rain, and the rivers, and springs; and as God-man, he was the fountain of living waters—the stricken rock from which streams of consolation and refreshment were to flow; and yet so deeply had he humbled himself, that now, under his agonizing sufferings, he needed to cry, 'I thirst.' Now, according to recorded prophecy, 'his strength was dried up like a potsherd, and his tongue clave to his jaws;' and not wonderful was it, that from long suffering and loss of blood, he should then cry

out, 'I thirst.' In his humiliation this cry may be regarded as an appeal to his enemies; but they were dead to all compassion; and the appeal was made in vain: and yet not in vain, seeing that by their very cruelty, though they meant it not, a prophecy was fulfilled. The holy Sufferer knew the hardness of their hearts, and it was that the scripture might be fulfilled that he said, 'I thirst.' How precious would a cupful of cold water then have been to the suffering Saviour! Instead, however, of giving water, they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it on hyssop, and put it to his mouth. That this was done in the spirit of cruel mockery appears from the prophecy respecting it. After saying, 'Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness, and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none;' he immediately subjoins as part of the complaint, 'They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.' The gall had already been given to him; 'and Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it on hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, 'Tis finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.' 'He shall drink of the brook by the way, therefore shall he lift up the head.'

'I thirst!' How often have we read this without thinking of what, even from thirst, the Redeemer suffered when he thus gave utterance to his sufferings! We grieve when we think of his being torn by the scourge, and pierced by the nails; but do we deeply sympathize when, at the close of his sufferings, he cries, 'I thirst?' And yet this very thirst may have added more to his distress than all that he suffered from the thorns, and the scourge, and the nails. We have read of a number of British subjects being immured by a despot's power, in a crowded dungeon, in a sultry clime; and while many died, others were driven to utter frenzy, and to raving madness, by the agonies of thirst. How unspeakably precious, in some circumstances, may a single drop of water be! 'In hell, the rich man in the parable 'lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.' How inconceivably precious would a spongeful of water have been to Christ when, in the agonies of crucifixion, he

said, 'I thirst!' Then was fulfilled what had been uttered in prophecy ages before: 'From above he sent fire into my bones, and it prevailed against them; he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back, he hath made me desolate and faint all the day.' 'Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress; my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me.' 'They have heard that I sigh; there is none to comfort me: all my enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done it.' Think then, O my soul, on the sufferings of thy Saviour, when laden, and desolate, and forsaken, he said, 'I thirst.'

'I thirst!' O should we not, in meditating on this, learn resignation? His sufferings were unmerited, for he was altogether without sin. Our sufferings are all merited, and are always less than we deserve. Should we not be resigned then in the day of trial, when we may sing of mercy as well as of judgment? Should we not hear the voice of the rod, and Him who hath appointed it, when, if we receive chastening as from a Father's hand, he will sanctify the affliction, and cause it to be one of the 'all things' that work together for our good?

'I thirst!' said the suffering Saviour. 'And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it on hyssop, and put it to his mouth.' Alas, alas! did no eye pity? Did no hard heart relent? Must the dying Redeemer say, I was thirsty, and they gave me no drink? Nay, what is worse, must his complaint be, 'In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink?' In what circumstances of trial then can the believer be placed, in which he has not cause to be, not only resigned, but thankful? Is he visited with bodily trouble? How often are there affectionate friends tenderly to sympathize; and to do all that earthly friends can do, to comfort, and to soothe! But though it should be otherwise; though earthly friends should either turn their back, or prove miserable comforters all; what a happiness is it, that there is one friend who sticketh closer than a brother, who knows what it is to suffer, and who is both able and willing to comfort and to sustain! That friend is the Saviour of sinners, who said on the cross, 'I thirst.' O let us love him: let us serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind, saying, Lord, we are thy servants, we are thy servants, the sons of thy handmaiden: thou hast loosed our bonds!

## THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

'And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,' Rev. xxii. 17.

THE SON of God, exhausted with sufferings of body and soul, said, 'I thirst.' O what an opportunity of doing what never would have been forgotten through time or through eternity! And did many rush forward to quench the Redeemer's thirst? Alas, alas! they made haste, but it was to add bitterness to his bitter cup, 'In his thirst they gave him vinegar to drink.' And yet, instead of visiting them with vengeance, either immediately, or when he came to his kingdom, from his throne of glory he said of old, and he says now, 'If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink;' 'let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

*How precious the offer!* How precious even the common element of water! Withhold it even a few days from man, and he dies in agony. What water is to the body, grace is to the soul;—indispensably necessary to its life and welfare. Grace is here figuratively spoken of as living water, 'the water of life.' Grace was typified by the refreshing streams that flowed from the smitten rock in the wilderness. Rich are the blessings of grace that flow from Christ this smitten rock, such as pardon of sin, and consequently deliverance from the punishment of iniquity; sanctification of body and spirit, and consequently deliverance from the power of sin; meekness for the inheritance, and at last possession of the 'kingdom that cannot be moved.' The pure river of water of life is of heavenly origin; it proceeds 'out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.' *It is life-giving;* and the life imparted is life everlasting. *It purifies;* 'I will sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean.' *It refreshes;* it is 'as rivers of water in a dry place;' or as 'a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.' How precious the invitation then, 'Let him that is athirst come!'

*How general the invitation!* 'Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life.' This invitation, without doubt, extends to all those who have tasted of the water of life; who have had experience of its virtue, and earnestly desire fresh supplies, saying, 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.' It extends also to those who as yet know nothing of the

joys of God's salvation, but who have been made to feel their need of mercy to pardon and grace to help. For them the fountain is open, and to them the invitation is given, 'Come ye unto the wells of salvation, and draw, and drink with joy.' But extends it no farther? Yes: it is to those also who are labouring in the fire, compassed about with sparks of their own kindling; thirsting—but coming to broken cisterns—wells without water, or to empoisoned streams which only feed the burning thirst that consumes them;—searching eagerly after happiness, saying, 'Who will show us any good?' and yet utterly ignorant where this true good is to be found. How merciful is it to say to such, 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come unto the waters.' 'Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' And lest they should still fear that the invitation extends not to them, because they thirst not aright, it is subjoined, 'and whosoever will, let him take the water of life.'

*How free is the invitation!* It is not only, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life,' but let him take it *freely*. The unrenewed man is a stranger to the riches of the glory of divine grace; and he concludes that he must have some righteousness of his own to entitle him to apply for grace; and Satan seeks to keep him in this belief, that without some merit of his own, application would be fruitless. But Christ says, 'By grace ye are saved through faith;' 'take the water of life freely.' 'The water of life' is saving grace; and saving grace is free grace, unmerited kindness; for were it merited, it could not be free grace. He who died for sinners offers it freely, without money and without price; and what he offers liberally and ungrudgingly, he wishes you to take unsparingly, saying, 'Drink, yea, drink abundantly' of the water of life.

It is the Prince of life that offers it. 'In his thirst they gave him vinegar to drink;' but he holds out to you the cup of salvation. 'To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.' Do you hesitate? To-day he says, 'Come;' to-morrow he may say, 'Depart from me ye cursed.' To-day he says, Drink—drink of the living water. To-morrow he may say, Drink—but drink of the cup of trembling; and drink of it for evermore.

What love is manifested in the earnestness of the invitation! When the need is so great, it had been enough, one might have thought, to give the most distant hint, that all our wants might be supplied. But wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, at the condescending

kindness of the Lord, when all we need is not only offered, and freely offered, but with the utmost urgency, and earnestness pressed on our acceptance! 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.' To rouse the careless sons of men, and to attract their special attention, the cry is raised aloud, 'Ho!' How precious is water to the exhausted traveller! Were we in the wilderness, almost perishing of thirst, and were the smallest fountain of water discovered, with what speed would we rush to it! How eagerly would we drink of it, muddy and polluted though it might be, even amidst the thirsty camels' feet! And when we are in the moral wilderness, and when our soul fainteth in us, how wonderful, when the fountain of life has been pointed out, that we should need to be urged to drink of it! He who freely offers the living water, knows that we must perish if we drink not; and therefore his compassionate and urgent cry is, Come, come, come! Come, and take freely, not only water, but wine, and milk, without money, and without price;—water, to save from death; milk, to nourish and strengthen; and wine, to cheer and gladden the fainting soul. 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished,'* John xix. 30.

An angel's tongue could not tell the full import of these words, 'It is finished.' But yet, though we cannot fathom the depth of their meaning, we may with profit consider, that—

Christ's sufferings were then finished. In assuming our nature, he became subject to its sinless sufferings of body and of mind. How great would be his heart-griefs during the whole of his ministry arising from the impenitence, malice, and hatred of the Jews to whom he addressed himself, offering them life, and warning them to flee from the wrath to come! But his sufferings at the close of his ministry were above what we can form any conception of, strong as the language is which the evangelists employ in describing them. 'He began to be sore amazed,' to be in consternation, to be laden with grief, saying, 'my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' 'This

was the hour and power of darkness,' and being in agony he fell on his face, and prayed most earnestly, and in the mental struggle, 'his sweat was it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' And soon was the blood to flow in streams from his sacred body, when he gave his back to the smiters, his hands and his feet to be nailed on the accursed tree; when his head was torn by the thorns, and his side pierced by the spear. And yet all that fiends from hell, and all that foes on earth could do, was but as a drop to the bitter waters of a full cup which was wrung out for him, when his Father hid from him his face. Then the waters came in unto his soul, and in the anguish of his heart he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.'

The tempest, however, had now done its worst. The lurid cloud, having exhausted its thunders, and launched its fierce fires against his head, had vanished. His Father's benignant countenance again beamed on him in all its brightness, and with the triumphant voice of a conqueror he cried, 'It is finished.' Can we conceive the feelings of a great commander when for a whole day he has witnessed the bloody strife betwixt two mighty armies, when victory, for hours, has hung trembling in the balance, now inclining to this side, and now to that; when the fate of empires depended on the result—can we conceive his feelings, when the long wished-for moment at last comes when he can lead to the decisive charge his noble troops, when he hears them raise the shout of triumph; when he sees the proud array of the enemy's host utterly broken and routed, and changed into a mingled mass of flight, and carnage, and consternation? O! how much less then can we conceive the full import of the words of the Son of God, when all his spiritual foes were discomfited, when the deadly struggle was brought to a close, and when with the shout of a conqueror he cried, 'It is finished!'

'It is finished;' types and prophecies were fulfilled. The true paschal Lamb was then slain when Christ our Passover had been sacrificed for us. The true Rock was now smitten, when he who is indeed our Rock, was stricken, smitten, and afflicted. Then it was seen why the red heifer, whose ashes were to be mingled with the waters of purification, was an unclean thing to be burnt without the camp, when Christ, bearing our sins, as the worst of malefactors, had suffered without the gates. Then the typical meaning of the brazen serpent could be understood, when Christ had been lifted up on the cross, that those who looked to him might be healed; that they who

believed on him should not perish, but should have eternal life.

Time would fail us were we to attempt to enumerate the prophecies which were fulfilled when Christ said, 'It is finished.' The treachery of Judas; the injustice of Pilate; the cruelty of the Jews; the impious taunts of the rulers; the insulting mockery of the soldiers; the parting of his raiment, the casting of lots for his vesture; and many other prophecies, had been accomplished; and Jesus knowing that one yet remained—that the scriptures might be fulfilled, he said, 'I thirst.' 'And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it on hyssop, and put it to his mouth, and when he had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished, and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.'

'It is finished;' the atonement had been completed. The great God who made us had a right to give us laws, and to vindicate the authority of these laws when we had broken them. Had the punishment been inflicted on us, we must have everlastingly perished. In the great plan of redemption, mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other. It was to save sinners, and yet to magnify the law of God, that the Redeemer came. It was to make atonement for sin, by bearing our sins—by dying in our room and stead, thus satisfying divine justice, and reconciling us to God—that the Son of the Eternal appeared in the flesh. It was to destroy death, and him who had the power of death, that he suffered on the cross. It was to save a multitude, whom no man can number, that he endured the cross, despising the shame. And now that the work was complete; now that he had torn the prey from the dragon's teeth, and saw the gates of heaven opened for himself and his followers—with what transport would he exclaim, 'It is finished!' and with what rapture would it be re-echoed by those who through the merits of this sacrifice had already entered, who, beholding the overthrow of Satan in the triumphant victory of the Son of God, would strike their golden harps to a louder song, saying, 'Alleluia, Alleluia! Salvation to our God who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.' 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.'

'It is finished.' Legal worship ends; the Mosaical dispensation is brought to a close; and gospel ages begin to run. Though well-fitted to answer the purpose intended by infinite wisdom, the dispensation under which the Jews had

hitherto lived, was one of distance, and darkness, and fear. 'For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with 'those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.' 'But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.' But 'what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' How delightful the blessed gospel truth, that 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons!' Darkness, and distance, and dread were now at an end, and the followers of Christ might draw near unto God as children unto a father who was both able and willing to help them. And this privilege was not to be granted to the Jews only; but to those also who in time past had been Gentiles in the flesh, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, without God, without Christ, and without hope. But the veil had now been rent, the partition wall had been broken down, that they who had been far off, might be made nigh by the blood of Christ; and that through faith in his name Jews and Gentiles might both have access by one Spirit unto the Father; and be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

'Tis finish'd—The Messiah dies  
For sins, but not his own;  
The great redemption is complete,  
And Satan's pow'r o'erthrown.

'Tis finish'd—All his groans are past;  
His blood, his pains, and toils,  
Have fully vanquished our foes,  
And crown'd him with their spoils.

'Tis finish'd—Legal worship ends,  
And gospel ages run,  
All old things now are past away,  
And a new world begun.'

#### THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

'I have finished my course,' 2 Tim. iv. 7.

'It is finished,' said the Saviour; and when all his sufferings were finished, and types and prophecies fulfilled, and complete atonement made,

with what joy would he say, 'It is finished!' Though the apostle's sufferings were not propitiatory, neither light, nor few, had the afflictions been which for Christ's sake he had endured; and though he was about to suffer martyrdom, and to seal his testimony with his blood, he could look death in the face, not only without dismay, but with complacency and delight. At an earlier period he could say, 'Behold I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.' He had obtained his wish; he had fulfilled his ministry; he had been found faithful; he had rejoiced to spend and to be spent in the service of the best of Masters; and with holy joy he now could say, 'I have finished my course.' Soon, very soon, will it be the lot of every one of us to say, 'I have finished my course.' O! what will these words imply when they are uttered on the brink of the grave; when all life's interests are crowded into a moment; when that moment is the last of time, and the next the beginning of eternity—that dread moment which is to seal our doom—to determine whether it is to be well with us for ever; or whether it had been better—far, far better that we had never been born!

What then is this *course*? The apostle speaks figuratively; but the figure is easily understood. In Greece of old there were periodical assemblies, in which all had an opportunity of competing for prizes, and the much-wished prize was often an honorary, ornamental, but a fading crown. The contests were often trials of bodily strength or agility, such as running or wrestling. Rules were laid down by which the competitors were to be regulated; and none could be crowned who did not strive according to these rules. Regarding life as a race then, rules are given in the holy scriptures; the course is prescribed; the goal is heaven; and the prize is a crown of glory. The prophets, apostles, and martyrs, are held up to us as patterns: Christ himself has left us an example that we should walk in his steps. Grace also is freely offered to us by him who giveth power unto the faint, who strengtheneth the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees. When Christ from his throne says, Look unto me, and I will guide you to the victory; if we forget the prize, and pant after the dust, what can await us but disgrace and discomfiture? When the Lord

from heaven says, Be strong, fear not, quit you like men, onward, onward; and when Satan says, Soul! take thine ease; crown thyself with rose-buds before they wither; walk in the ways of thine own heart, and in the sight of thine own eyes, that thy heart may cheer thee all the days of thy life; if we believe the tempter, and forsake the way of the Lord God, soon shall we find that our path is covered with darkness; that it taketh fast hold on hell; and leadeth down to the chambers of everlasting death.

Think on the blessedness of running in the right course. Is there not a happiness in tracing the footsteps of prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, yea, and of the Redeemer of souls? Is there not sweet satisfaction in serving him who has bought us with a price? in esteeming, like Moses, the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, having respect unto the recompence of the reward? Is there not a foretaste of the reward of grace, even in this world; an earnest of the inheritance? And how great the consolation when life is closing, when the course is finished, and when death is at hand! At that dread moment what would it avail though we could say that we have been rich, and prosperous, and honoured of men, if we have no treasure laid up in heaven, and if we have not, through Christ, sought the favour of God? When the night cometh when no man can work, O how much worse than frivolous shall this world's affairs appear to us, if they have been our chief concern; and have weaned our hearts from the Redeemer of souls! When every day tells, in some degree, on our future destiny, how sinful to trifle—how dreadful to live in guilt! How great the wisdom, and how exquisite the happiness in 'laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;' then when the time of our departure is at hand, each, like the apostle, may say, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also who love his appearing.'

How awful, on the other hand, is the state of those, who instead of fighting the good fight, fight against God; against Christ; against the Holy Spirit; against the best wishes of good men; against the richest mercies; against their own souls! They are finishing their course, but they are advancing in the broad way which leadeth to destruction; in the downward path which taketh hold on hell. As instead of keeping the faith,

they have continued strangers to repentance towards God, and to faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, there awaits them—not the crown of righteousness, but the cup of trembling. To as many as receive him Christ gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. But what is to be the final doom of those who do not receive him, who do not live by the faith of the Son of God? 'He that believeth not, is con-

demned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' While we rejoice that it is written, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,' O let us never forget the no less truthful record, that 'he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

## A P R I L.

### FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;  
and having said thus, he gave up the ghost,'  
Luke xxiii. 46.*

HE died. How wonderful! The Prince of life groaned, and bled, and died. All of him that could die, died. He assumed our nature that he might be capable of dying. Sin brought death into the world; and death passes on all, for that all have sinned. But behold the wonder! here death passed with far more than his usual terrors on one who had never sinned. But he was made sin—a sin-offering for us: on him was laid the iniquities of us all. Every sinner deserves to be forsaken of God. That he might feel the heavy load of our sins which he had undertaken to bear, he was deprived for a time of a sense of his Father's support, while the vials of wrath which we had merited were poured on his head. But the Father's love, which was ever the same—now that our debt was paid—shone forth in unclouded brightness. And the love of the Son, which the bruising of his soul could not abate, now rose into re-assured confidence; and having cried with a loud voice, to show that life was yet strong in him, and that his enemies could not have taken it away; but that he willingly laid it down; his work being finished, he said, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said this, he gave up the ghost,'—gave up, or sent away his spirit, yielding a willing victory, that by dying he might conquer death; 'and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.'

Naturally, there is something almost overwhelming in the thought of death. It is an un-

tried work, which has never been described by any who have accomplished it, for none ever returns to tell us what it is to die. It makes us shudder to think that this body, which we have so carefully cherished, is to become the prey of corruption—the food of worms. Death breaks asunder the dearest ties; it brings to a close every earthly pursuit; it ushers us into the presence of God, and it fixes our doom through eternity.

O what a privilege, through faith in Christ, to have death unstinged; and to have 'a strong consolation' in these trying circumstances. How encouraging to remember that Christ said, 'I go to my God and your God, to my Father and your Father;' that, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, we may say to this reconciled God, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' in the full persuasion that he will save those that trust in Him.

Meditation on this wonderful decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem would be of little avail, were we not led daily to commit the keeping of our souls to God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator;—and unless we keep constantly in view that he was thus 'lifted up from the earth' on the cross 'that he might draw all men to him.' O should it not be our desire that we may 'be drawn with cords of a man, and with bands of love?' And when we pray, 'Draw us, and we will run after thee,' should we not strive unflinchingly to follow him ourselves, and to be instrumental in inducing others to follow him? Should we not say to those advancing in the path of ruin, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die; turn to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope, turn ye, turn ye, that your souls may live? Should we not beseechingly say to those over

whom we may have influence, 'We are journeying to the place, of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come with us, and we will do you good?' Then, when our hour cometh, may each of us say, 'Into thy hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.'

What a beautiful example is here set us of ejaculatory prayer! The term *ejaculatory* is derived from a word which signifies to dart, or to shoot out suddenly, and is well-fitted to describe that kind of prayer which consists in short unpremeditated sentences, on sudden emergencies, often raised from the heart of man! The language of ejaculation is indeed often used by thoughtless and ungodly persons, when it is not the language of the heart; and not an address unto God, but a profane exclamation, as if they were invoking his help, or his protection, or his mercy, when God is not in all their thoughts; and when, instead of praying to God, they are taking his name in vain, and breaking one of his holy commandments! This is one of the marks by which the ungodly may be known. The children of God will not speak irreverently of their heavenly Father. An ejaculation may also be the cry of nature in the time of great and sudden jeopardy. He who had never prayed before,—when the ship in which he sailed is sinking amidst the billows,—will, in all likelihood, in that dread moment cry out, 'Lord, have mercy on my soul!' Some are so foolish as to restrain prayer in the day of health, trusting to such a cry as this in their last moments. And yet it is questionable whether, in any such case, it is the prayer of faith; whether, in any such case, there is even the remembrance of Christ, or anything more than the cry of nature in the hour of impending danger.

Very, very different is the ejaculatory prayer of the believer. His prayer is the aspiration of the renewed heart under the influence of the Holy Spirit: and when the cry for mercy is raised, the eye of faith is also lifted up to the heavenly Intercessor at the right hand of the throne. Short though such ejaculations be, they are often more acceptable and more effectual than longer prayers. They rise fresh and warm from the heart, with less mixture of impurity than often is found in longer addresses to the Almighty. A child of God, at the footstool of the throne of the Eternal, is a spectacle which the brightest cherub may behold with delight. But when it is said, 'Behold he prayeth!' do only holy eyes behold? No. The malignant eye of the adversary is upon him also, and he strives to mar the

work by unholy suggestions. His fiery darts can be shot unseen; and their venom, when felt, should speedily be counteracted by fervent ejaculations.

One advantage of ejaculatory prayer is, that it can be employed at all times, and in all places. It can be raised amidst the world's busiest scenes; and if circumstances do not admit of its being uttered aloud, the Lord of Sabaoth listeneth to the lowest whisper, and he can interpret the pious breathings of the heart. The sons of Reuben cried to the Lord in the midst of the battle, and he was entreated of them, because they put their trust in him, and he delivered their enemies into their hands. The Syro-phenician woman cried unto Jesus from the bottom of her heart, 'Lord, help me!' And he granted her heart's desire. Blind Bartimeus cried to him, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, 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.' Peter, beginning to sink in the sea, cried, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and saved him. The disciples, when a great tempest in the sea had arisen, awoke their Master, saying, 'Lord, save us: we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea: and there was a great calm.'

In what lawful undertaking can we engage which may not with advantage be preceded by some pious ejaculation? In the day of health and prosperity is not ejaculatory prayer needed that we may not be entangled by the world? And in the time of sickness and sorrow, how much would sorrow be soothed, and affliction softened, by frequent ejaculations raised to the Lord! As our times are in his hand; as we are surrounded by dangers seen, and dangers unseen; as in the midst of life we are in death, O let us habitually commit ourselves to the Lord in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator; then, when our last hour comes, we may, like Stephen, say, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Or like Him to whom Stephen prayed, we may say, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;' and we shall assuredly find that he will keep that which we have committed to him against that day.'

'I come, I come, at thy command,  
I give my spirit to thy hand;  
Stretch forth thine everlasting arms,  
And shield me in the last alarms.

'The hour of my departure's come,  
I hear the voice that calls me home;  
Now, O my God! let trouble cease;  
Now let thy servant die in peace.'

FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

'I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living,' Job xxx. 23.

NOTHING is more certain than that we shall all descend into the grave. Adam was doomed to it for his transgression; and his descendants having inherited his nature, and walked in his steps, have been involved in his sentence; for it is written, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death has passed upon all, for that all have sinned.' Our fathers, where are they? Of the thousands who occupied our places a century ago, not one remains; 'they have been brought to the house appointed for all living,' and 'the place that once knew them, knows them no more.' When we are surrounded by the trophies of death, and know that ere long we shall be numbered among his victims, how wonderful is it that so many should think lightly of so solemn an event, as if it were a matter in which they were not personally interested. O may we feel its great importance, and consider our latter end, and apply our hearts unto wisdom.

The certainty of death *should wean us from an undue attachment to this world's enjoyments.* Were the good things of this life to continue ours for ever, and were there nothing better on which we could set our hearts, then would we do well to seek them as our chief treasures. But when blessings of far greater value are held out to us, and when the good things of time cannot satisfy an immortal spirit, and when, moreover, they cannot be ours long, how foolish would it be to give them the first place in our hearts! Would the traveller, who is returning from a long sojourn in a distant land, be so delighted with the accommodations of an inn, as to wish to continue there, though a few stages more would bring him to the end of his journey—to the embraces of his kindred, and to the happiness of a long-wished-for home? And should not we then—if amidst the world's allurements we should at any time feel disposed to say, 'This is our rest, and here will we abide, for we do like it well,'—should not we reflect that this cannot be our rest; that there remaineth a rest for the people of God in a far happier country, to which, with alacrity, we should bend our steps? The apostle, to moderate

our joys and our sorrows, and our attachments in this fleeting world, speaks of all as the pageantry of a procession, which, whether joyful or mournful, whether magnificent or the reverse, passes, vanishes, and is seen no more. 'But this I say to you, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that they who have wives be as though they had none; and they who weep as though they wept not; and they who rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they who buy as though they possessed not; and they who use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away.'

The certainty of death should lead us *diligently to prepare to meet the Lord our God.* 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after death the judgment.' O the blessedness of being able to say in faith and hope, when the last moment comes, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!' These were the last words of the dying Saviour, and they can become ours, only when by faith in his name we can look up to God as our reconciled Father through Christ Jesus. Without faith it is impossible to please God;—impossible to live in peace, to die in peace, to appear before him in peace. Jesus is our peace; by him alone the Lord's merited anger can be turned away. If we have laid hold on Christ as he is offered in the gospel, and have experienced the renewing efficacy of the Holy Spirit, then have we passed from death unto life; and being adopted into God's family, it will be our study to walk as the children of God. If the certainty of death has led us to flee to him who has conquered death, and who can give us the victory, then may we regard death as among the blessings of the covenant: and knowing that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ his Son, we may often look forward to death; and welcome its approach without dismay, saying, 'I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he will keep that which I have committed to him against that day.'

Reader! Hearer! Ponder the paths of thy feet. Hast thou not only entered, but continued long to advance in the paths of the wicked? Look back, I beseech thee, on the dark record of departed years, and consider what permanent advantage thou hast ever derived from the practice of iniquity. Has it rendered thee happy, peaceful, respectable? Does the remembrance of it soothe thee in the hour of sorrow? Will it afford any consolation when heart and flesh are beginning to faint and fail? Will it avail thee in that hour, when the silver cord shall be loosed, and the golden bowl broken; when the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit

to God who gave it? Was there ever a person known to rejoice at the hour of death that he had led a life of ungodliness? And has there ever been one, when stretched on his death-bed, known to lament, that 'in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world?' Many, however, through the hope set before them in the gospel, have been enabled to rejoice even amidst the agonies of the last conflict. We have this, among many others, as the dying testimony of a faithful servant of Christ, who, in his journey towards Zion, had not been exempted from the trials of life: 'you have been accustomed,' said he to a friend who was weeping over him, 'to take notice of the sayings of dying men, and this is mine:—That a life spent in the service of God, and in communion with him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life which any man can lead in this world.'

At that awful moment when departing life is glimmering in the socket, when the glazed eye is fixed, when the faltering pulse has almost stopped, and when the pale countenance is beginning to change,—even the infidel might be convinced that the believer has the advantage of him. The believer not only rejoices in hope; but he can say, Though my hope should be ill-founded—though there should be no hereafter, and though life should be but a dream, my faith has rendered that dream unspeakably more delightful. It has guided me through life; it is cheering me at death; and if it be true, as I most firmly believe it is, it shall gladden and bless me through eternity. How different in these circumstances is the state of the infidel! Even though religion were false, he has not been a gainer by rejecting it; for, in doing so, he has rejected what alone could have enlightened the dark stages of his journey; and what alone could have shed a radiance on the clouds that hang over its close. And if it be true, (and the most determined infidel cannot be sure of the contrary) then for less than nothing and vanity he has neglected the great end for which he was created, and has sealed the eternal ruin of his immortal soul.

#### SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'And laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre,'* Mark xv. 46.

NEVER had the grave opened to receive such a victim. Deeply interesting is the affecting record;

may the Holy Spirit teach us to answer, according to his word, the following questions—

*Where did they lay the blessed Saviour when they had taken him down from the cross?* 'They laid him in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock.' Had the sepulchre been less secure, it would not have been so easy to gainsay the enemy, when it was said that the body was stolen away. As the sepulchre was under ground, (for they went down into it), and as it was hewn out of the solid rock, there was neither inlet nor outlet, but by the door, to which a great stone was rolled, and as the stone was sealed by those in authority, there could be no collusion betwixt the guards and his disciples. 'It was a sepulchre wherein never man before was laid; so that it could not be said that it was some other person than Jesus who arose; neither could it be said that he had been quickened by touching some holy prophet's bones.'

*How was he buried?* Openly. There was no secrecy; friends and foes might come. Alas! there were few friends; but they were sufficient to perform this last mournful duty, and to bear witness that he had been committed to his grave. When his disciples had fled, some faithful and affectionate women were found at the cross, and at the grave. There also do we find those who had once been faint-hearted—Nicodemus, who had come to the Saviour by night; and Joseph of Arimathea. Now, however, by strengthening grace, 'the weak were as David, when the strong were as tow.' Now, the lately timid Joseph, went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus; and he and the equally strengthened Nicodemus, having taken their revered Master from the cross, without fear of the consequences, laid him in Joseph's own sepulchre; so that by this, and his suffering as a malefactor, the prophecy was fulfilled that 'he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.' There also his enemies were on the alert, their malice following him even to the grave; and the next day after the preparation, (and as the Jews reckoned their day from sunset to sunset, this was immediately after Jesus was laid in the grave), they went to Pilate, and telling that he had said when he was alive that he would rise again the third day, they sought and obtained a guard, and placed it at the sepulchre, and having sealed the stone, they probably dismissed their fears.

*Why was he buried?* To complete his humiliation. When a monarch dies, great is the descent from the palace to the tomb; but how much greater, when it is from the glory of heaven to the darkness of the grave! It was the

lowest step, and it was taken. It also proved his death;—already proved, indeed, by the soldiers not breaking his legs, because they saw he was dead, and yet plunging the spear into his side, destroying life had one spark remained, and fulfilling the prophecies, 'they shall look on him whom they have pierced;' and a bone of him shall not be broken.' Other prophecies and types were thereby fulfilled. The sign of Jonas was now given when the Son of man was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. And his own prophecy in the words of the psalmist; 'thou wilt bring me into the dust of death;' and his own predictions to his disciples were fulfilled, when he was laid in the grave.

*This has been recorded for encouragement, and for warning.* 1st. *For encouragement.* Our case is never hopeless, if, in faith, we commit ourselves to the Lord. He often causes dark clouds to gather round his people, that in utter hopelessness of human aid, they may look to the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary, and whose hand is never shortened that it cannot save. 'We were pressed,' says the apostle, 'out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.' In times of difficulty, and perplexity, and danger, then let us remember that the darkest hour of the night is that which immediately precedes the dawn, and let us look to him who can cause light to arise. When the affectionate disciples had laid their beloved Master in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and had rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre, how would their hearts sink within them, when they departed from the sepulchre, their mournful duty being performed! And yet from that closed sepulchre what a beam of heavenly light was soon to shine! The Redeemer died, but by dying, and lying in the grave, and rising again, he has unstunged death, and changed its nature; and no less has he changed the nature of the grave. It was a prison; but to those who believe in Christ, it is a hiding-place where the wicked cannot trouble; and a chamber of repose where the weary are at rest. It was a loathsome dungeon; but it has become a bed of spices, a perfumed dormitory, where he gives his beloved sleep. And he will at last say to them, 'Awake and sing, ye that sleep in the dust, for your dew shall be as the dew of herbs.'

2d. *For warning.* For whom has Christ in dying conquered death? For his friends and followers only; for those who under his banners fight the good fight. Without the shield of faith you cannot fight the good fight; you cannot obtain the victory unless you are justified by faith; you cannot live in God's favour; you cannot die in peace. Death will come upon you with ten thousand times greater terrors than if you had never heard that he has been conquered. He will meet you unarmed, and feeble; with triumphant shout he will rush on his prey; and the withering stroke of his relentless hand will render you wretched for ever and ever.

This passage also warns us against being uncharitable in judging of others. Nicodemus at first came to Jesus by night, probably from fear, or from shame; and Joseph, it is written, was a disciple, but secretly for fear of the Jews. Some, on learning this, might be disposed to say, they cannot be true disciples, otherwise they would neither have been ashamed nor afraid to own Christ as their Master. But the trial was a great one to young disciples. They were men of rank, and had they publicly confessed themselves to be followers of Christ, they would probably have been put out of the council, and out of the synagogue. We do not defend their conduct. They ought to have publicly owned him, leaving the issue to providence. But though at first they had not sufficient faith to lead them to bear reproach, and to suffer loss; we find that in the time of need, when bolder men failed, more grace was given to them, so that strong in affectionate regard for their beloved Master, without shame or fear, they asked the body from Pilate; and the one furnishing fine linen, and the other a tomb, they performed every duty which devoted attachment could dictate. Let us not, then, despise in others the day of small things, but rather pray that he who breaks not the bruised reed, and quenches not the smoking flax, would cherish the spark of grace which he has communicated, till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in their hearts.

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SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest,'* Eccl. ix. 10.

MAN was created, not for sloth and idleness, but for a life of activity, both of body and mind. In paradise, there was employment for the mind, in

contemplating the works of God's hand, and in adoring and worshipping the almighty Creator. There was exercise also for the body; for our first parents were placed in the garden of the Lord, and their happy employment was to keep and dress it. In heaven there shall be abundant occupation for the spirits of the just made perfect, in contemplating the wonders of redeeming love, and in celebrating the praises of God and of the Lamb. What shall be the employment of the glorified bodies of the saints in light, we cannot tell: but it shall be the perfection of the happiness of the ransomed, when, after the resurrection, their bodies and their spirits are constantly engaged in the blissful service of the Lord their God. Then there shall be no interruption, for there shall be no remaining weakness to render rest necessary; and there shall be no weariness, for they shall be constantly engaged in those very exercises in which they have the highest delight. Even in our present fallen state, it is only in the faithful discharge of duty that we can enjoy any portion of true happiness here, or can be prepared for the enjoyment of higher happiness beyond the grave. The time given us is limited, therefore the message of the Lord is, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.'

What are we thus urgently called to do? *Our duty* as prescribed by God; and this we should resolve to do 'while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.' We learn from the words of our blessed Master, what is the most essential part of the duty required of us. 'What shall we do,' said the Jews, 'that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. 'But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.' Faith in Christ is the foundation work. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid already, even Jesus Christ; and if we rest not on him, we are building a refuge of lies on the sand, and the first flood will sweep it away. Dost thou believe in Christ? is the first question then to be asked, and it is a most important one. If thou art destitute of faith, thou art destitute of the hand which lays hold on Christ for salvation; thou art without a right to the blessings of the covenant; and wert thou to die in this state, thou wouldst die in thy sins, and the blackness

of darkness would encompass thee. If thou art without faith, the duties to which thou art loudly called are 'repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Hast thou faith? Thou art then God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that thou shouldest walk therein. It is God who has made thee to differ. He has extended towards thee his redeeming love; and thou hast been made nigh to him by the blood of his Son. When thou ponderest on that love which many waters could not quench, and many floods could not drown, surely the language of thy heart will be, I will love the Lord who has delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?'

There is then a work of faith, and there are labours of love, in which the believer is bound to be engaged. He is bound to be diligent to increase in the knowledge of him, whom to know is life everlasting. He is bound to be diligent in cultivating increasing conformity to his beloved Master. He is bound to be diligent in seeking to promote the glory of God, and the welfare of immortal souls. He is bound to fight the good fight, to carry on the warfare against sin and Satan, and to follow the Captain of our salvation, whatever dangers may come in the way. He is bound to be ready, not only to do, but also to suffer according to the will of God;—seeking to glorify the Lord by patient endurance; by unflinching firmness; by cheerful resignation, saying, 'Not my will but thine be done.'

Thy duty, moreover, whatever it be, must be done *speedily*. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it.' When? To-morrow? No; to-morrow may find thee in an eternal world;—but do it *now*—instantly—without delay; thou hast no time to lose: thou hast made no covenant with death and with hell. Up, then, and be doing. 'To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart.'

Do it heartily—'with thy might.' True, thou art of thyself all weakness and insufficiency; yet thou mayest be strong—'strong in the Lord and in the power of his might;' for, 'he giveth power to the faint, to those who have no might he increaseth strength.' 'Whatsoever thy hand' then 'findeth to do, do it,'—not in a cold, listless, lifeless manner, like a reluctant slave:—but 'with thy might,' as one whose heart is in the work, who is devoted to the service of the best of Masters, and who delights to spend and be spent in

promoting the glory of Him who loved him, and gave himself for him.

And do it *perseveringly*. Whilst life continues thou art on the field of battle; and wouldst thou put off the harness, or seek discharge, till the shout of victory is raised? Onward, onward, in the path to glory. 'Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season thou shalt reap abundantly, if thou faint not.'

And how powerful are the motives to diligence. Death is at thy heels; the grave is opening to receive thee; and wert thou to die in the service of the adversary, unchangeable misery would be thy doom. In the grave there shall be found no place of repentance. Grief in that world of spirits there shall be; but no godly sorrow:—woe—woe unutterable, but it shall be from the pangs of remorse and despair. No offer of salvation shall there be made; never shall it again be said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;' never in that dark abyss shall the long-neglected invitation be heard, Come unto me, and I will give you rest. The sentence passed is irreversible. The doom once fixed can neither be escaped, nor softened, nor shortened. It is commensurate with eternity, and it will continue for ever to be unmitigated woe, woe, woe! 'Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we would persuade men.' 'Beloved,' seeing that such is the doom of the ungodly, 'be diligent that ye may be found of Christ in peace, without spot, and blameless.'

### THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,'*  
John ii. 19.

THE occasion on which these words were uttered was a memorable one. It was when he had come up to Jerusalem at the passover, the first that had taken place after he entered on his public ministry. When he went into the temple to worship, 'he found in it those who sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting.' This was a profanation of God's house which had been sanctioned by those in power, under the pretext, no doubt, of accommodation to the worshippers; but, in reality, to make iniquitous gain. Jesus, on beholding it, was filled with holy indignation; and, having made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew

the tables, and said to them that sold doves, 'Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise,' or in still stronger language, 'a den of thieves.' Though the Jews durst not resist, they rendered an unwilling obedience, and seeing him acting like a prophet invested with heavenly authority, they said, 'What sign showest thou, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said to them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

They asked a sign. A sign means often in scripture, as in this place, a proof of the truth of anything: thus, 'What shall be the sign (i. e. proof) that the Lord will heal me?' Did they wish a miracle to prove that he was possessed of heavenly authority? Had they made inquiry at those who had come up from Galilee to the feast, they would have found that he had lately wrought a very wonderful miracle in changing twelve firkins of water into wine. But had he not already given them the strongest practical proof of his authority? One might have thought that it would have required a strong armed force to drive out traders of so many kinds, especially as their iniquitous trade had been sanctioned by high authority. But when this was effected by himself, and when, though in his holy zeal and indignation, by pouring out their money, and overthrowing their tables, he had done what was calculated to irritate worldly-minded men, they nevertheless fled in dismay before him, what more could reasonably have been asked in proof that he had a right to exercise the authority which he had now assumed, in driving those who profaned it out of the temple.

But did he give them any other sign? Had they asked in humility and in confirmation of their faith, a sign would immediately have been granted to them. But as they asked in the spirit of unbelief and hatred, he referred them to a distant proof in figurative language, saying, 'Destroy this temple, (meaning the temple of his body,) and in three days I will raise it up.' This was in conformity with his practice on other occasions of addressing himself to his malignant enemies in parables, that as they did not wish instruction, hearing they might hear, and might not understand. Thus, the same word, according to the disposition of the hearers, proves to some the savour of death unto death, and to others the savour of life unto life. They heard it in the spirit of hostility; they did not seek to be instructed in the meaning of it; and though they remembered it, they wrested it, and sought to work his ruin by a false statement of it when

he was accused before Pilate. The disciples understood it not at the time; but they laid it up in their hearts, and pondered on it, and after his resurrection, had their faith by the remembrance of it confirmed.

His resurrection from the dead, to which he referred as the sign, was a complete proof of his divine authority, for he was thus declared to be the Son of God with power.

1. Had he been an impostor, he would never have appealed to such a proof; for his claims might have been put to the test, which would have proved his ruin. Such an appeal, had he been an impostor, would have shown that he was as foolish as he was wicked.

2. Though an impostor had been so foolish as to appeal to his resurrection on the third day, God would not have wrought a miracle to sanction the claims of an impostor. His resurrection from the dead is ascribed to the power of God the Father; and what better proof can we have that divine justice was satisfied, and the debt paid, than the deliverance of our Surety from the prison of the grave?

3. His resurrection on the third day, according to his well-known prediction, mentioned by his bitter enemies when they obtained a guard from Pilate, is a complete proof of his divine authority. He was man to die for us, and God to overcome death; and therefore does he say, 'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again;' and here does he say, 'In three days I will raise it up.' He raised others: he said, 'Lazarus, come forth,' and he came forth after he had been four days dead. We read of others raising the dead; but where else do we read of a dead person raising himself to life? This could be effected only by divine power. Jesus had predicted his resurrection on the third day; and had appealed to it as the great proof on which he rested his claims. He did rise on the third day, God would not have deceived his people; therefore Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.

Now, is there no practical lesson which the death and resurrection of the Son of God should teach us? If we believe that he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, one might think that our own hearts should tell us what effect such wonderful truths should have on those who have experienced so much goodness and mercy. Had Christ been merely a man, and had he generously laid down his life for us; and by doing so had he been the means of saving us from great temporal calamities, and of obtaining for us great worldly blessings, what bounds

should there have been to the grateful affection with which we cherished the memory of so generous a deliverer and benefactor? But when he was God as well as man, and when by divine power he took up the life which he laid down; and when he lives to bestow those rich blessings which his death purchased, and to intercede for us at the right hand of God, should not all that is within us be stirred up to laud and magnify his name; and should it not be our honour and happiness, as well as our duty, to live to his glory and praise? Had there been any doubt on the subject, the apostle would have removed it, for he says, 'Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.' And another apostle says, 'The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again.' Let us therefore present ourselves unto God, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, which is our reasonable service: being not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

#### THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him,'* Rom. vi. 8.

By nature we were all dead in trespasses and sins, without the power, and without the will to live to God. We were dead, as lying under the sentence of condemnation. Already had we felt the withering blight of the curse of the broken law; and as we could have done nothing to free ourselves from the curse, it must have become heavier, and heavier, and heavier, for ever and ever. 'But when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.' He came to redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; bearing in his own body on the cross the curse that we had deserved. He died in our room and stead, and as believers are members of his mystical body, what happened to the Head may be said to have happened to the members. Believers, therefore, may be said to be dead by the law, to be crucified together with Christ, to be 'dead with Christ.'

As Christ died for sin, believers are bound to

die to sin. As many as are baptized, are baptized into his death. Wherever union to Christ has taken place, this death to sin has begun also. 'Knowing this,' says the apostle, 'that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed.' With much propriety is this dying to sin compared to crucifixion, for it is a painful, lingering, and ignominious death. Though the crucifixion is still going on, the old man, even in the throes of death, continues to struggle; though, by the power of divine grace, he has been dethroned and disabled, and so much weakened that he is spoken of as destroyed. 'And the body of sin,' says the apostle, 'is destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.' 'They that are Christ's then have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts;' 'the world is crucified to them, and they are crucified unto the world;' 'they are dead with Christ.'

But if we be dead with Christ, 'we shall also live with him.' Yea, they already live with him, not through any principle of life they have of themselves, but through his Spirit living in them. United to Christ by faith, they are not only justified through the merits of his blood, but sanctified also through the power of his Spirit. 'You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;' and 'quickened,' it is added, 'together with Christ,' to teach that it was in consequence of being united to Christ by faith that they were quickened.

O what a blessed change has taken place on those who, by the power of divine grace, are living by the faith of the Son of God. By his Spirit they have been quickened; it is by his Spirit dwelling in them that they are kept alive, and that the work of sanctification is carried on in their souls. Christ is not only in them the principle of life, but the very end for which they live. 'To them to live is Christ;' it is his glory they have in view; it is his will they consult, and by his word and will they are regulated. 'The love of Christ constraineth them, because they thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again.' At first they may be but as babes in Christ; but will God forsake his own spiritual offspring? '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. 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.' Whom

the Lord loves, he loves unto the end. The bruised reed he will not break, the smoking flax he will not quench; but, by the fostering breath of his Holy Spirit, he will fan the vital spark he has communicated, till it gradually brighten into a gladdening flame.

And yet what is all this to what is promised, when the apostle says, 'If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him.' He looks beyond the present life, with all its blessings, and fixes his enraptured gaze on the life which is to come. 'The gift of God is everlasting life through Jesus Christ his Son.' 'We shall live with Christ;' and oh, the blessedness of living with God, and with his Christ, through an eternity of happy years! Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God has laid up in store for those that love him. 'As the ransomed of the Lord they shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall receive joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away.' 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun smite them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

Believer, art thou not encouraged by this? Thou art in the wilderness, but thou goest up leaning on Christ as thy beloved. Thou art surrounded by enemies; but there is one on thy side more powerful than all that can rise up against thee. Thou goest a warring; but thou art not sent on thine own charges, and thou goest clothed in the whole armour of God.

Believer, art thou not comforted by this? Thou art weak, and hast come far short of thy duty: but with the Lord there is righteousness and strength; with the Lord there is forgiveness and plenteous redemption.

Believer, art thou living with Christ now? Then art thou sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; and what great things mayest thou hope for? A kingdom that cannot be moved; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Art thou not saying, What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? Lord, I am wholly thine. 'My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise; awake up my glory; awake psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early.'

Meditate much, then, O my soul, on the love of Christ; and rejoice that in dying he conquered death, and can make thee more than conqueror.

O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Christ is the resurrection and the life, and he will save from death, and raise to eternal glory, all who believe in him. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.' 'Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.

FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay,'* Matt. xxviii. 6.

'DESTROY this temple,' said Jesus, 'and I will raise it up in three days.' The temple had been destroyed. They had laid the dead body of the Saviour in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock; they had rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre; the chief priests had sealed the stone, and placed a watch. Great would be their triumph, but even the triumph of the enemies of Christ yields nothing deserving of the name of joy. Unspeakably more to be desired was the grief of Nicodemus, and of Joseph of Arimathea, while they affectionately removed the body of Jesus, and laid it in the sepulchre; or the sorrow of the pious and tender-hearted women, who witnessed what was done, sitting over against the sepulchre. Nay, greatly preferable was the heart-felt sorrow of the apostles, though much bitterness mingled with their grief. Not only had their hopes been blasted when their Master had been taken away; but they had the painful feelings of self-reproach; for they had forsaken their beloved Master in the hands of his enemies, in spite of their strong protestations that they would never forsake him. But though the tears they shed were in part the bitter tears of self-reproach, they were also the tears of contrition, and the tears of sincere affection, and the Lord was about to send them consolation. The night of their distress was now at the darkest, and the blessed dawn of gospel light was near at hand.

*Angels first proclaimed the joyful tidings about to gladden them.* The pious women, who had faithfully followed him to the grave, having 'rested the sabbath day according to the commandment,' were now returning early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was yet dark, to discharge, with bleeding hearts, the last duties of

affection to one whom they had so sincerely loved. They were aware of obstacles; and they said, 'Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?' for it was very great; but prompted by warm affection, though aware of the difficulty, they went onward. But when they came they found the stone rolled away; and they entered in, and found not the body of Jesus. 'And as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two men stood by them in shining garments, who said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen; remember how he spake to you when he was yet in Galilee.' Angels, then, first proclaimed the tidings of the resurrection. An angel had proclaimed his birth; an angel had succoured him in the wilderness; an angel had comforted him in the garden of Gethsemane; but the days of his sufferings were over; and the brightest of the angels of light would be ambitious of the honour and happiness of proclaiming, even unto one or two mourners in Zion, that their Lord whom they sought was no longer among the dead: that he was the resurrection and the life; that though lately dead he was alive again: 'He is not here: for he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.'

*To whom were these joyful tidings first proclaimed?* To the pious women who had so faithfully followed him. While this would convey a tacit reproof to the disciples who had forsaken him, it was intended, we doubt not, as a sweet and honourable reward to these devout females, for their superior courage and attachment. They had come with him from Galilee; they had followed him to Calvary; they had stood weeping by his cross; they had followed him to the sepulchre; and having seen where, and how he was laid; and having rested on the sabbath,—with the early dawn of the first day of the week they returned, bringing sweet spices, that they might pay the last tribute of respect and affection to one who had been so dear unto their hearts. When they came to the sepulchre, and saw that the stone was rolled away, and found not the body of Jesus, they were much perplexed: but the angel said to them, 'Fear not ye: I know that ye seek Jesus that was crucified; he is not here: he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.' O how delightful to hear such tidings! To have their doubts in a matter of vital importance removed! to have an answer to impious gainsayers! to be commissioned to proclaim the joyful news of the resurrection to weeping friends! Accordingly, 'they departed from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and ran to bring the

disciples word.' Their own tears had been wiped away, and they hastened to be the messengers of joy to others.

But though the truth of God's word had been so far cleared up as to be the ground of great hope, and of most interesting expectation—still their hearts would desire something more. Many, many thoughts would arise in their minds. Is he indeed risen, would they say? Is it not all a dream? Was it in truth an angel who spake to us? Have we rightly comprehended his meaning? O! that we could once more see our beloved Master! O! that we knew where to find him, that we might cast ourselves at his feet! They had been faithful in little; and they were now to be blessed with much; for as they went according to the injunction of the angel to tell his disciples, 'behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. And he said unto them, Be not afraid; go, tell my brethren,' (blessed words! not my cowardly disciples), 'go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.' Their joy would be full. They had beheld their risen Master; and they would be ready to say, Lord, it is enough, it is enough; our eyes have seen thy salvation.

Mourner in Zion, why weepest thou? Mournest thou an absent Lord? Sayest thou, I have sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not? O! that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even unto his seat! 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.' Weep not, thou contrite mourner; thy beloved, though unseen, is near at hand. Seek him in the closet, and seek him in the sanctuary; seek him when thou risest up, and seek him when thou liest down; seek him when thou art at home in thy house, and seek him when thou goest by the way; his sweet accents will, ere long, be heard; his bright footsteps will, ere long, be seen; his benignant smile will, ere long, beam forth; he will again make himself known to thee, as he does not unto the world; and soon shalt thou say, with delighted heart, I have found him whom my soul loveth; I will hold him, and not let him go; 'my beloved is mine, and I am his;' he is the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely.

#### FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept,'* 1 Cor. xv. 20.

THE doctrine of the resurrection of Christ in connection with his atoning death, forms the very foundation of all our faith and hope. 'If Christ be not risen,' says the apostle, 'then is our preaching vain, and your faith also vain; ye are yet in your sins. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.'

*What proof have we of this?* Abundant proof; numerous witnesses. 1. The two angels who said, 'he is not here: he is risen as he said: come, see the place where the Lord lay.' If the testimony of two respectable men is considered sufficient; can we reject the testimony of two holy angels? 2. The Roman soldiers. They had been placed as a watch by the enemies of our Lord; but an angel descended from heaven, and rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. From their inability to escape, it is probable that they heard the angel declaring to the women that Jesus had risen. Afterwards some of the soldiers came into the city, and showed to the chief priests all the things that were done. The self-destructive lie, which by a bribe of large money they were by the unprincipled chief priests induced to tell, could not shake the belief of any person of the slightest reflection; for how could they possibly tell what was done when they were asleep? 3. Mary Magdalene. When in well-known accents Jesus said to her, Mary; with what delighted heart would she respond unto him, Rabboni, my Master. She was commissioned by him to tell the joyful tidings to his brethren; and though they might regard this, as they had done what had been told them of the vision of angels, as idle tales, their unbelief, till they had superabundant proof, helps to strengthen our faith. It shows that they were not the dupes of their wishes; for instead of being credulous, their Master needed to upbraid them, saying, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that was spoken by the prophets.' 'They believed not for joy, and wondered.' 4. The disciples on various occasions. On that memorable first day of the week, on which he arose, he appeared to ten of the apostles, John xx. 19. And on the succeeding first day of the week, when they were again assembled, and Thomas with them, he appeared and gave such convincing proof to un-

living Thomas, that he cried out, 'My Lord, and my God.' He appeared to two of the disciples as they journeyed to Emmaus, and was made known to them in the breaking of bread. He appeared on another occasion to several of the disciples, and said to them, 'have ye here any meat?' And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and a honey-comb, and he did eat before them.' At the sea of Tiberias he appeared to Peter, and Thomas, and Nathaniel, and the sons of Zebedee, and did sit at meat with them. On another occasion he was seen of above five hundred at once, of whom the greater part were alive at the time the apostle wrote, and were ready to give an answer if questioned by gainsayers. 'And last of all was he seen of me also,' says the apostle Paul, for 'the Lord appeared to him by the way to Damascus,' when he who had been a bitter persecutor was converted to the faith of the gospel.

Of what event in the whole range of history is there more abundant proof? The chosen witnesses were those who had seen him, and known him before his death, and who had the evidence of their senses to convince them that he had indeed risen. At last, in the very act of blessing them, he was parted from them, and taken up into heaven; and two angels said to them, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus whom ye have seen taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven.' And when, on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they were endowed with miraculous power from on high, being thoroughly convinced that their Master had gone into heaven, instead of meeting as they had done, in secret, for fear of the Jews, they in the most public manner proclaimed the truth as it is in Jesus, charging the chief priests with having crucified and slain the Holy One and the Just, whom God had raised from the dead, of which they were witnesses. In doing so they could have no prospect of worldly gain. On the contrary they met with nothing but hatred and persecution, so that the apostle might well say, 'if in this life only we have hope in Jesus, we are of all men the most miserable.' And yet not one of them apostatized: all of them continued steadfast till the end of their lives, and many of them sealed their testimony with their blood. And to what did they unflinchingly leave their dying testimony? It was to their belief of a fact. Many have become martyrs rather than renounce the most absurd opinions. Opinions may be firmly held whether they be right or wrong. But here do we find men of sound judgment, and good character, taking willingly the spoil-

ing of their goods, yea, laying down their life in the flames, or on the cross, in testimony of their firm belief of a fact respecting which they could not be mistaken, and that fact of no less importance than the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

*What profit is there*, then, of the resurrection of Christ? Much every way. The scandal of the cross has passed away for ever. To the unbelieving 'Jews it may be a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them who are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.' Well may the believer say, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.' He is risen! delightful, heart-rejoicing truth! The early Christians felt this, and, therefore, their gladdening congratulation, we are told, when they met, was, He is risen! He is risen! How precious to them; how precious also to us! How deep our interest in the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, for with the apostle we can say, 'now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept!' At a certain time an early sheaf of the ripening crop was brought to the priest who waved it before the Lord, who, by accepting it, made it the earnest and pledge of the coming harvest. 'Christ is risen,' risen by his own power, for he had power to take up his life again, and what an earnest, what a pledge to his followers, in his becoming the first-fruits of the rich harvest of the grave! 'For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.' Others had been raised, to die again; but Jesus is risen never to die, and is become the first-fruits of those to be raised by him to live for ever and ever. He is declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. It is a proof of his divinity. It is a proof that by his atoning death divine justice was satisfied, as God sent his angel to open the prison door to set our Surety free. 'He died for our sins; he rose again for our justification;' in proof that the debt was paid, the penalty endured, and our justification, through his merits, completed. It is a proof, 'that as many as believe in him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.'

Believer! has Christ risen as the first-fruits, and wilt thou grieve above measure for those who have fallen asleep in Jesus? Their souls are made perfect in holiness, and have passed into glory. Their flesh also doth rest in hope, and at his life-giving voice shall come forth, in ten thousand times greater loveliness than was

ever possessed by the most lovely on earth. Dry up thy tears, thou affectionate mourner. 'Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, rejoice.'

Unbeliever! has Christ risen from the dead, and hast thou not by faith laid hold on him as thy Saviour? Canst thou make a covenant with death, and with hell? Out of Christ thou must perish in thy sins; for to thine other unexpiated sins, thou hast added this, which is unpardonable, 'thou hast not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' Up then while it is called to-day. 'The night cometh when no man can work.'

#### FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God,'* Mark xvi. 19.

THE Lord's ascension, as well as his resurrection, had been the subject of prophecy. The holy men of old, who spake as the Spirit gave them utterance, had 'testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow.' So sure is the fulfilment of prophecy, that coming events are often spoken of by the prophets as having already taken place. Thus, 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,' Psal. lxxviii. 18. And again, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool,' Psal. cx. 1. Before his death, Christ himself foretold his return to heaven, saying to his disciples, 'If ye loved me, ye would rejoice when I said, I go away, because I go to the Father.' And, after his resurrection, his first cheering message to his mourning disciples, whom he kindly calls his brethren, was, 'Say to them that I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' For wise and kind purposes his ascension was for a little delayed. Had he appeared only once to his disciples, and then been taken up into heaven, it would neither have been so satisfactory to them, nor would it have furnished so complete evidence to others, as when 'he showed himself alive, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days.' There were love and wisdom also in his gradually preparing them for his departure, and in fitting them by his instructions for the important duty which devolved on them, of being his chosen witnesses in the world; and of proclaiming

among all nations the doctrines of the cross. What delight and edification would they derive from being permitted to hold converse with their risen Master! How would they hang upon his lips, seeking to profit by every opening of his mouth, and by every word of his tongue! Their instruction was a chief object; for we read that 'he gave commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen, and was seen of them forty days, speaking of the things pertaining unto the kingdom of God.' 'And after he had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.'

*How great the glory to which he was exalted!*

And yet with what beautiful simplicity of language it is expressed, 'He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God!' He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted him. As God he could not be exalted. As the man, Christ Jesus, he humbled himself; as the man, Christ Jesus, he was exalted, his glory shining forth more brightly when contrasted with his great humiliation. He not only entered heaven in holy triumph, but he sat on the right hand of God. God is a spirit, not composed of bodily members, and therefore the language is in accommodation to our ideas. To be seated on the right hand of a king is regarded as the highest earthly honour, and sitting on the right hand of God the King of kings is expressive of the highest heavenly honour.

It was from mount Olivet he ascended. This had been a place of favourite resort. We read that he went to the mount of Olives, *as he was wont*, with his disciples. There had he often spoken to them, as never man spake; there had he often prayed with them, as never man prayed; and there had he also suffered, as never man suffered. What had been the place of sweet converse; the place of fervent prayer; the place of agonizing sufferings; was destined to be the place from which he was to ascend to glory. Should not the home, then, where we meet with our family and friends be, not only the place of sweet converse, but the place where prayer *is wont to be made*? And should not the closet of the believer be a place of converse with Jesus, and a little sanctuary for prayer—that though it should soon become the chamber of sore trouble, yea, and the chamber of death—the chamber of affliction may be gladdened with the Lord's presence, and the bed of death may be the place from which the ransomed spirit rises to the glory of the heavens?

*What encouragement does the ascension of Christ give to his followers!* When the Redeemer became obedient unto death, and was laid in the grave, what gloom would overspread the infant church! Greatly would the disciples fear that their cause was lost, and that the enemy had prevailed. These fears must be for ever dissipated when their Lord not only rose from the dead, but was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. His inveterate enemies might be filled with hatred and rage: but 'He who sitteth in the heavens would laugh; the Lord would have them in derision.' Where he had gone, they could not follow. There was a gulph betwixt, which they could not cross: and a gulph beneath ready to swallow the impenitent.

His followers would then remember that he had said that it was expedient for them that he should go away, 'For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come: but if I depart, I will send him to you.' And the promise of the Holy Ghost was not restricted to his immediate followers, but is given for the encouragement of believers even unto the end of the world.

'Christ,' says the apostle, 'has entered into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us.' Believers are of themselves unworthy of the honour of approaching the footstool of God's throne, and of raising to him their prayers; but what encouragement is it to know that their prayers rise with acceptance, perfumed with the incense of Christ's intercession, who sits as our Mediator at the right hand of God.

How encouraging the consideration that he has gone to prepare a place for his followers! 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also.' Are not all his promises yea and amen? What implicit confidence then may you repose in him. The Forerunner has entered the everlasting gates, and his followers shall all enter also. The Head is already in heaven, and so ere long will be all the members. We follow, in thought, even the earthly friend who has entered within the vail, and we cherish the hope that he still takes an interest in those who were the endeared companions of his pilgrimage while he tabernacled here below. O should not believers then be encouraged to look to Christ, when they are assured that, amidst the glory of the heavens, he is not for a moment unmindful of them; that by his Spirit he is present with them on earth; that he will never leave them;

that he will be their guide even unto death, and at death will receive them into glory?

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FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God,'* Col. iii. 1.

HE is risen indeed, and has appeared unto many. 'Unto the apostles whom he had chosen, he showed 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.' And after he had given commandments unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. What is the practical bearing of this sublime truth? 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.'

*Our duty then is to 'seek those things which are above.'* To be disposed to seek them, the understanding must be enlightened, that we may have some idea of their great value. Naturally, our eyes are blinded, and our understanding darkened. We are quick-sighted as to the supposed value of worldly things; but 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' He only who is taught by the word and the Spirit of God, sees the worth of 'those things which are above.' But he who is enlightened, not only sees their value, he sets his affections on them, and wishes to obtain them. Nor does he merely wish for them, he strives to obtain them, with a vehemence of zeal and energy proportioned to the value he sets on them. 'Work out your salvation,' says the apostle, with fear and trembling; for it is the Lord who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' We may engage in the world's business with zeal and activity; but 'the things which are above' being unspeakably more precious, on them chiefly must our affections be set; them must we most highly prize, and most ardently seek after. The things which are on the earth are temporal, the things which are above are spiritual and eternal.

*What are those things which are above?* They are heavenly blessings, of which no tongue can speak in terms proportioned to their worth. God himself is the chief portion of his people: he is their all in all; and blessed they whose

heritage is the Lord. 'Know then the God of thy father,' said David to his son, Solomon, 'and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind.' To seek God, then, is to seek to enjoy him as our covenanted God; to seek to live in his service, and in communion with him, as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to seek fresh communications from on high; rich outpourings of the Holy Spirit, that we may 'be sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of his glory.' As from him cometh down every good and every perfect gift, among the things which are above, which we are to seek, are those supplies of heavenly grace which transform us more and more into the image of Christ, and render us meet for being partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Our being risen with Christ is a reason why we should seek those things which are above. And what is meant by being risen with Christ? We must bear in mind that without Christ we were dead. The natural man is dead, because condemned by the broken law. He is dead—not to natural actions;—he can eat, and drink, and walk. Not to rational acts;—he can think, and reason, and argue. Not to civil acts;—he can buy and sell. Not altogether to moral acts;—he can be honourable in his transactions, he can be kind to the poor, and affectionate to his friends. But he is spiritually dead: and till quickened together with Christ, he cannot perform any spiritual service so as to be acceptable unto God: he may have the form—but he is destitute of the power of godliness. Though spiritually dead by the poison of sin, as soon as he believes in Jesus he is quickened; the sentence of the law is blotted out, and there is no condemnation to him as being in Christ Jesus: as it is written, 'You, being dead in your sins, and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he quickened together with him, having forgiven all your trespasses.' Now, then, 'if ye be risen with Christ;' or, if believers, 'since ye are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.' Christ has quickened you for this very purpose, that you might set your affections, not on those things which are on the earth, but on those things which are above; walking by faith, and not by sight; 'living by the faith of the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you.' Let your lives be hid with Christ in God. Seek heavenly things; they are in store for you. Prize spiritual things; they were bought with the blood of the Son of God.

*There are both motive and encouragement* 'to seek those things which are above,' in the words, 'where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.' Is Christ the treasure of your soul? Is he to you the chief among ten thousand? Then, surely, you will desire, when the pilgrimage of life comes to a close, to ascend to heaven where he reigns in glory; and to be for ever with the Lord. Unless, however, you both seek and obtain, through his merits, spiritual blessings from above, while you tabernacle here below, you cannot enter these blessed abodes; for without faith it is impossible to please God; without holiness no man can see his face in peace. But what encouragement have we to ask in his name, when he is seated on the right hand of God, and when he has said, Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full! For the encouragement of his disciples, when about to leave them, and of his followers in every age, he said, 'at that day' when he was at the right hand of God;— 'at that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say to you that I will pray the Father for you. For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.' Will you not seek then those things which are above, when Christ, in whose name you solicit them, has promised that he will pray the Father for you; and when, for the sake of his all-powerful intercession, God will not only fulfil your desires, but will do unto you far more exceedingly above all that you can ask or think? Is it possible that you can contemplate Christ at the right hand of God, and the rich blessings he is ready to shower down on you, and yet cleave unto the dust, and to the things which are on the earth? Open your mouths wide for heavenly grace—for 'the unction of the holy One;' the 'anointing which is received of the Father, and which abideth;' which restamps you with the lost image of God; and seals you for coming glory.

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#### SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,' Acts i. 11.*

THIS is not a solitary statement of this glorious event. We find it thus recorded by the evangelist Mark, 'So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and

sat on the right hand of God.' And in the Gospel according to Luke, 'And he led them as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.' He was received into the heaven of heavens, or in his own words, 'into the place where he was before.' If there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, what joy would there be on the return to heaven of him who gives repentance—and gives, by his atoning sacrifice, efficacy to repentance; and saves a multitude, whom no one can number, from merited misery, and raises them to an eternity of peace and joy. What joy would there be among the ransomed who, through the prospective influence of his atoning blood, had already entered the abodes of bliss. When they saw him seated on the right hand of God, to plead the cause of their brethren in the wilderness below, with what redoubled rapture would they cry, Halleluia, Halleluia; salvation to our God who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises.

As the bodies of the saints who are alive at his second coming are to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, so in all likelihood in a moment would Christ's body be transfigured before his disciples. Perhaps in the very act of blessing them, his countenance would shine like the sun, and his raiment would become white and glistering, and in slow and glorious triumph would they see him ascending, till, while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, a cloud—the bright symbol of the presence of the invisible God—received him out of their sight. 'When behold two men, i. e. angels, 'stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.' Behold an employment worthy of angels; at once serving Christ, in instructing his servants; and being ministering spirits unto those who are the heirs of salvation.

And what were the effects produced by what they heard, and what they saw? 1st. Had the slightest doubt remained on their mind as to the

divinity of their blessed Master, it must have been for ever dissipated. They had beheld the King in his glory, they had seen him ascending to the abodes of everlasting joy; they had heard the testimony of angels that he had gone into heaven, and would in glory return from heaven; every one of them would be ready, like Thomas, to say, 'My Lord, and my God;' and they worshipped him.' 2d. They were filled with great joy. Before his death, when he spoke of his departure, they were very sorrowful. He told them that it was expedient for them that he should go away, as he would send them the Comforter; and that if they loved him, they would rejoice when he said he was going away; because he was going to the Father. Now, they did rejoice; they rejoiced that he had entered the realms of glory; that he had risen superior to all his enemies; that all power was given to him in heaven, and on earth; and that that power would be exercised in behalf of his followers. 'And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy.'

3d. They continued to wait on God in his public ordinances, and in social worship. Not only were they continually in the temple at the hours of prayer, praising and blessing God; but in the upper room where they assembled as the followers of Jesus, 'they all continued, with one accord, in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.' 4th. They continued steadfast to the last in the service of Christ. After the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, they in the boldest and most public manner preached the gospel of the kingdom, proclaiming their once crucified, but now risen, ascended, and glorified Master, as both Lord and Christ. They continued to do so at Jerusalem in the presence of those by whom he had been crucified, and throughout the earth; not one of them flinching from the dangerous undertaking; not one of them renouncing the faith; but taking willingly the spoiling of their goods; enduring reproach, and cruel mockings, and scourgings, and imprisonment, and banishment, and even death itself;—many of them sealing their testimony with their blood.

And what effect has the ascension of Christ produced on us? O! should we not rejoice that he can say, 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, thou hast glorified me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was?' Should we not rejoice in the exaltation of our best friend;—in the victories he has obtained;—in the blessings he has purchased;—in the redemption he has

wrought out;—in our having in him at the right hand of God, an Intercessor, 'whom the Father heareth always;' and is ready to supply all our wants, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ?

How consolatory is it, in troublous times, for the church to look up to her glorious Head, and to remember the love which he bears to Zion! 'He has graven Zion on the palms of his hands, and her walls are continually before him;' and neither the powers of the world, nor the gates of hell, shall ever prevail against her. Chastenings and judgments may be sent, but it is in mercy and in faithfulness. Enemies may increase against her, and dangers may rise around; but the Lord reigneth over Zion, and let 'Zion's children be joyful in their King,' 'In six troubles he will deliver her; yea in seven no evil shall touch her.' 'The Lord of hosts is with her; the God of Jacob is her refuge.'

Look up, then, believer to Zion's King. Daily learn of this glorified Master. Diligently prepare for his glorious appearing;—then, when the sudden shout is raised, *He cometh! He cometh!* the Bridegroom cometh! Your glad response will be, *Welcome! Welcome! Welcome Christ, Welcome heaven, Welcome eternal glory!*

#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,' 2 Cor. v. 10.*

WHAT great events come under our notice in reading the New Testament scriptures; the birth,—the death,—the resurrection,—the ascension of Christ, are events that are *past*. Another wonderful one *to come* is the judgment. That coming event is most certain. We have it here declared by the inspired apostle, and it elsewhere rests on the authority of Christ himself. 'When the Son of Man,' says he, 'shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.' It is the certainty of this day of final doom that vindicates the ways of God to man, and which will show that verily there is a reward for the righteous. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ his Son.

Before his judgment-seat we must all appear. When he shall come in his own glory, and with the Father's glory, and with attending angels, how striking will be the counterpart to that state of humiliation when no man stood by him; when his very friends forsook him and fled! How fitting that he should appear invested with all glory and power, to those who mocked, and despised, and crucified him in the exercise of their little, brief, tyrannical power; and that he should return to be the sovereign Judge of those by whom in the days of his flesh he was so iniquitously judged!

When he cometh he will judge righteous judgment; he will render to every man according to his works. Lest any, however, should think that they who are saved, shall be saved by the deeds of the law, let us not forget that Christ has said, 'this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' 'He that believeth on him shall not be condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' God has given us his Son, and the gospel of his Son, and he has given us sufficient evidence, yea 'infallible proofs,' that he is his Son; our destiny, then, on the last day will hinge on this. Have we believed in him as the Son of God, and have we received him as the only Saviour? If we *have*,—then we shall have lived by the faith of the Son of God; and the sentence shall be, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' If we *have not*, then the fruits of faith not having been exhibited, the dreadful sentence shall be, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' They who have not fled to Christ, and by faith laid hold on him, are still under the law; and by the law they shall be judged. The law is holy, and just, and good, and it requires perfect obedience, and it denounces an everlasting curse on every one that transgresseth, or that cometh short of its requirements. There is none that liveth and sinneth not, so that by the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified; and he who has not faith in the offered Saviour, shall be judged without mercy; for he has despised the offered mercy; he has spurned at the sceptre of grace; he has rejected the only remedy; and he must, therefore, reap the fruit of his unbelief and ungodliness. 'If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment will he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the

covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace! 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

As Jesus has said that they only who do the will of our Father in heaven shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;—are they admitted because of the merit of their works? No! so imperfect are their services, and so numerous are their omissions and transgressions, that if the Lord were to mark iniquity, and in strict justice to deal with them, according to the merit of their deeds, they could not stand in judgment; their thoughts, and words, and works must condemn them. But they have been made acquainted with him who came to be a propitiation for sins. They have laid hold on Christ, who is made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. 'By grace they are saved through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast;—and yet every one shall receive according as his works shall be.

The wicked shall receive according as his works have been. He who *has not* faith is under the law; and as he must bear the penalty of the broken law, his lot must be perdition; for his deeds have been evil. He, on the other hand, who *has* faith,—having the righteousness thereof, and having brought forth its fruits, shall stand rejoicing in that day. For the gospel tells him, that if in faith and contrition 'we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' By believing, Christ becomes the Lord our righteousness, our substitute, and surety; and his righteousness is imputed to us, *i. e.* is placed to our account. The blood of Christ can cleanse from all unrighteousness; and therefore the Lord has said, 'I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more.'

Not only is Christ made unto the believer righteousness, but also sanctification and redemption; so that not only has he redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;—not only is he clothed in the robe of his righteousness, but being renewed in the spirit of his mind, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, he seeks to live to the glory, and in the enjoyment of God; for he 'is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that he should walk in them.' Good works then, though not in any degree the meritorious cause of salvation, are the unailing fruits of faith;—the natural consequences of being in a

state of grace. Far, indeed, does the believer come short, and often does he offend, and far is he from having as yet attained perfection; but his treasure is in heaven;—his face is Zion-ward; and though powerful enemies oppose his progress, by whom he may at times be discomfited, he returns to the charge, knowing that in the end he shall be made even more than conqueror. He is weak in himself; but in the Lord he is strong; and he is incited to diligent exertion in the Lord's cause, by the remembrance that his person and services are accepted in the Beloved; and that there is a rich reward of grace awaiting his sincere though imperfect obedience.

It is a serious consideration also, that every thought, and word, and deed, is not only remembered, but goes to the formation of character. The believer is like the gifted artist set zealously to work on the marble statue, newly blocked out of the native rock. As yet the outline is rude, and the features rugged; but he has a standard of ideal excellence in his mind's eye, and in seeking conformity to it, he assiduously labours. Day after day, and month after month, he plies his task, and amidst numerous discouragements he perseveringly proceeds, for he toils for immortality; and he thinks himself amply rewarded, if at last his work stand forth, almost instinct with life, and of surpassing beauty,—and be beheld with universal admiration. O! believer canst thou grudge labour, when thou seekest a better immortality; when thy model is the Son of the Eternal,—when something better than genius directs thee;—when thy hand is guided by the Spirit of God? He can soften the more than marble-hardness of the natural heart, and mould it to his will. He can carry on the work towards the measure of the perfect stature of the fullness of Christ, and can reward thee,—not with the applause of a fickle world, but with the approbation of God, when before assembled worlds thou shalt hear,—with a thrill of joy which would be too enrapturing for the body of flesh to endure,—'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!'

Unbeliever! thou also art labouring for eternity;—thou also art laying up in store;—thou also art completing a likeness;—but thou art working blindfold, and thou shalt shudder when thou seest it accomplished; for thou art fashioning thyself after the image of Satan, the murderer from the beginning; yea, thou already resemblest him, for thou art murdering thine own soul, and seeking to murder the souls of others. A little longer and the work is finished, and thy damnation is sure; and thou must thyself own the justice of thy

doom, when Christ, thy long insulted Judge, shall say from his throne, Depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire. Thou wouldest not come to me, that thou mightest have life; thou wouldest not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God!

SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead,' Acts xvii. 31.*

'It is appointed for all once to die.' Though we were to sink into nothing at death, this would be a solemn event: but life and death rise into ten thousand times greater importance when 'after death the judgment,' and when the way in which we have spent this brief life is to tell on our destiny through eternity.

*The day is appointed.* It is appointed by God, whose decrees are unchangeable. It is a set time: a set time has limits. Eternity has none; so that, compared with eternity, the intervening time may be said to be short. Every moment also is making it shorter, every step is bringing us nearer the judgment-seat. Therefore the apostle says, 'The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' Behold, the Judge standeth before the door.

*Who is to be the Judge?* The man whom God hath ordained. In these words, '*the man whom he hath ordained,*' there is an obvious allusion to Christ's humiliation: 'who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took on himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.' 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him;' and how right and fitting was it that he who humbled himself to redeem, should be exalted to high honour as Judge! And how much kindness was manifested to the children of men in appointing Christ to be the Judge! Had we been allowed to choose our judge, whom could we have chosen in preference to him, who, 'though rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich;' who, 'though the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person,' became 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh;'

yea, died 'the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God?'

*And in what manner* is he to conduct the judgment? 'In righteousness:' 'shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' There shall be no undue rigour; but every allowance consistent with justice for our infirmities; and for our disadvantages and difficulties. Though invested with high prerogative, there shall be nothing arbitrary in his proceedings; but he will conduct the judgment according to righteous principles previously made known. There shall be no partiality. Earthly judges, even without knowing it, by a natural regard for their friends and connections, and by their party feelings, are at times partial. But with the Lord there is no respect of persons. The rich and the poor shall stand on the same footing before his tribunal. No wealth can bribe him; no power overawe him; no flattery can blind him; no cunning can deceive him. Every decision shall be according to perfect righteousness, so that even those who are consigned to misery shall be constrained to own the justice of their doom. All who have laid hold on Christ by faith shall be regarded as righteous in his sight, for they are arrayed in the spotless robe of his own righteousness. Though their own deeds could not stand scrutiny so as to merit reward in point of law, a reward of grace has been promised; and the rewards of grace shall in that day be apportioned by the Judge according to righteousness. They shall consequently be, not in proportion to the greatness of the services in the eye of the world, but according to the ability of those who performed them; and according to the holiness of the motives from which they flowed. Accordingly, the mite of the widow, given in the richness of her love, and in the depth of her penury, shall receive a more glorious reward of grace from the heart-searching Judge, than the costly donations of the rich who, out of their abundance, gave much. The hope of this reward should stir us up to exertion, and it may influence the noblest minds. Moses 'had respect unto the recompence of the reward.' But it is on Christ's righteousness alone that we can rely for acceptance of either our persons or services. He is all our salvation. Arrayed in the pure robe of his righteousness, we shall be able, amidst the awful splendour of his coming, to 'lift up our heads on high;' for our best Friend is to be our Judge, and he cometh in his glory to save us.

How dreadful must be the judgment to the ungodly, both because Jesus is to be the Judge, and because he is to judge in righteousness!

Christ was offered to them as a Saviour, and they rejected him. They were told of the judgment to come, but they turned away their thoughts from it, as if that would have turned away the judgment from them. 'If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' How deplorable shall be their state when the cry is raised, 'Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and shall wait for' their unpardoned iniquities!

'It is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment.' O! is it not the coming judgment that renders death so awful to sinful men? When a chained prisoner 'reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,' a conscience-stricken Roman governor trembled on his judgment-seat. But though Felix trembled, he stifled his convictions, and perished under much deeper guilt than if he had never heard the convincing reasonings of the inspired apostle. But what is the savour of death unto death to some, may prove the savour of life unto life to others. After having long been listless hearers of the word, the inhabitants of St Kilda were, a few years ago, by God's grace, so much impressed by a discourse addressed to them by their pious minister, on the judgment of the great day, that they could scarcely give sleep to their eyes at night; and the first thing that for several mornings many of them did, was to ascend to their highest ground to see whether there were any appearances of the Lord's coming to judgment. And this, their minister told me, was the beginning of an awakening, the salutary effects of which are still apparent on the simple-hearted inhabitants of that remote isle of the sea.

Because this predicted event has not yet taken place, let not any say in his heart, 'My Lord delayeth his coming,' and begin to act as if he were never to come; as if the judgment were never to be set; and the books never to be opened. 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which 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 burnt up.' The Lord has not only appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained, but he has given assurance of this to all men in that he has raised him from the dead. When our blessed Saviour tabernacled

here below, he declared that he was appointed by God to judge the quick and the dead, and appealed to his resurrection as a proof of this; and when God did raise him from the dead, he thereby set his seal to his commission, and openly proclaimed him as the Son of God with power, by whom the world was to be judged. With this assurance, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation, and godliness, looking for, and hasting to, *i. e.* making diligent preparation for, the coming of the day of God! The times of ignorance have passed; the gospel light has arisen; and God now calls on all men to repent. Nor is repentance all that is required. Mere sorrow for sin would not be sufficient. It might be the sorrow of the world that worketh death. Grief for being deep in debt, can never pay off the debt. Sinner! the most High requires of thee—not only repentance towards God—but faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Flee then to the Saviour. He sweetly invites—he will affectionately welcome thee. But if thou wilt not come to Him for mercy—He will come to thee in judgment:—He will come in flaming fire, to punish thee with everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power. Let the terror of the Lord persuade thee to flee from the wrath to come. The sceptre is still held out. The door is still open. Bow before the sceptre of grace. Turn thee to the stronghold while the gate is unshut. Turn thee, turn thee, why wilt thou die?

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#### SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame,' 1 Cor. xv. 34.*

SIN is compared in scripture to sleep; for as the natural senses are bound up in natural sleep, the sinner's spiritual senses are so locked up that he does not exercise them to discern betwixt good and evil. And as he that is asleep is void of care and fear; the sinner is without fear or care, though in the greatest possible danger. Repentance is spoken of as awaking from sleep. As the aroused sleeper, when told of impending danger, instantly flees from it, so he who was asleep in sin, when the eyes of his understanding are opened to the greatness of his danger, flees from it to the only stronghold. He who is thus aroused, not only flees from sin, but awakes to righteousness, that is, to a holy life and conversa-

tion. Righteousness is the soul's conformity to the rule of the divine law contained in the scriptures; in which we have not only a perfect rule, but a perfect pattern set before us. God has revealed himself to us in the face of his Son, and we should contemplate Christ, that thus 'beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

Precious is the knowledge of God as revealed to us in the gospel of Christ his Son; for where there is the saving knowledge of him, the Spirit of God has enlightened our eyes, and taken of the things that are Christ's, and has shown them to us, and has taught us their value. We cannot have the knowledge of God, as revealed by his word and Spirit, without being constrained to love him, and to seek to live to him. Had he been like the false gods of the heathens, the knowledge of him might have been productive only of hatred, or of fear; or it might have encouraged us to indulge in those sins of which their gods were supposed to set the example. But our God is adorned with every excellence and perfection; and possessed of every attribute that is calculated to command our veneration and love. He made man in his own image, in knowledge, in righteousness, and in holiness; and while he continued holy, he was happy in his delightful service, enjoying the smile of his Creator, and holding blissful communion with the Lord by whom he was made. One might have thought that the sin of our first parents would only have drawn forth some wrathful manifestation of his power in the destruction of his ungrateful and rebellious creatures: but whilst he showed his displeasure, and his hatred of sin, the fall proved the occasion of making us acquainted with the loveliest attribute of the divine character—his mercy towards his fallen creatures. The manner in which this mercy was exercised increases our veneration. Had it been mercy merely—a general act of indemnity—it might have lessened our reverence, and might have emboldened us in the practice of sin, as men are encouraged to disobey, by excessive lenity in their earthly rulers. But in showing compassion to sinners, he has also shown his hatred of sin; he has magnified his law, and made it honourable; for mercy and truth have met together; and he can be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. We had no claim on his mercy; but he gave unsolicited—of his own free will—of his mere good pleasure, from the benignity of his nature, which delights in bestowing blessings. And then, what he gave was

worthy of the heavenly Giver; it was a gift to which an equal could not be found in the whole of his boundless dominions;—it was the greatest gift which even the Almighty could bestow. The redemption of the soul was precious, and had well nigh perished—for where was the ransom? 'The depth said, It is not in me; the sea said, It is not in me:—the topaz of Ethiopia could not equal it, neither could it be valued with pure gold. But the Lord passed by, and saw us in our blood, and he said unto us, Live; yea, he said unto us, Live: and the time was a time of love. 'He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life.' A speculative knowledge of all this we may have, and be strangers to heavenly love, and holy living. But if the knowledge, and the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, *there* love will spring up in return, and we shall seek to serve him whom 'we sincerely love; for 'if any man love me,' saith Christ, 'he will keep my words.'

How many are there, however, who do not keep his words; and where sin is wilful and habitual, is it not to be traced to this, that 'they have not the knowledge of God?' They know that there is a God, but they know not his nature. They either think that he is such a one as themselves, who will wink at sin; or they regard him as a stern and arbitrary master, commanding disagreeable services; shutting up from enjoyment; and prohibiting all that can yield delight. O! they do not know that 'he is love, and dwelleth in love;—that he delights in the happiness of his creatures, and has done more for the salvation of the rebellious sons of men, than any of them could ever have thought of, or durst ever have ventured to ask. They do not know that his laws are good, and wise, and holy; that his commandments are not grievous, that his restraints are salutary, and prohibit only what would prove our ruin. They do not know—do not from the heart believe, that he offers the pardon of all their sins through the blood of his Son; and not only grace and guidance here, but everlasting glory in the world to come. Satan has blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 'They have not the knowledge of God,' and therefore 'they walk in the way of their own heart, and in the sight of their own eyes.'

If ignorance of God was shameful in the Corinthians who had been brought up amidst the darkness of heathenism, how much more shame-

ful and inexcusable is it in the inhabitants of Christian lands! In them it is wilful ignorance; they love darkness rather than light; they will not come unto the light, lest their deeds should be reproved. Great is their guilt, and if they continue impenitent, great ere long must be their condemnation. God, in his mercy, yet cries unto them, 'Awake;' and the original word implies an awaking after a fit of intoxication. O! you have too long been intoxicated by sin; too long imposed on by Satan; too long sunk in deadly lethargy. 'What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call on thy God, if so be that God think on thee, that thou perish not.' God does think on thee. He still waiteth to be gracious. In his great mercy he seeks to rouse thee: he says, Awake, awake: 'awake to righteousness, and sin not.' 'Why wilt thou die?' Why wilt thou perish in thy rebelliousness? 'Awake thou that sleepest; and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light.' O! wilt thou weary out such patience? Wilt thou exhaust such long-suffering? Wilt thou constrain him to say, Sleep on; 'and according to thy hardness, and impenitent heart, treasure up for thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?' The sleep of death is coming; the night of the grave is at hand; but there shall be an awakening; the trump of God shall rouse thee; the voice of Christ shall be heard by thee in the grave, and thou *must* come forth; and alas, alas! to the resurrection of damnation.

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EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous :  
but the way of the ungodly shall perish,'* Psal.  
i. 6.

DIVERSIFIED as the character and conduct of the children of men may appear to mortal eyes, in the sight of God the whole race is comprehended in the two classes here mentioned, *the righteous*, and *the ungodly*. At the great day, the tares shall be separated from the wheat, and the sheep from the goats. 'The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.'

*But who are the righteous?* They who have been convinced that by nature all are unrighteous;—that 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men,—and who have been led, in spiritual alarm, to cry out, How shall we escape from the

wrath to come? What shall we do to be saved?—and who, by the word and Spirit of God, have been led to flee to Christ for salvation; and have obtained not only justification through his blood, but sanctification through his Spirit; and have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Free from sin they are not, for there is none that liveth and sinneth not; but sin has no longer the dominion over them; they live not in sin as their element; they regard it as the plague of the heart which they desire to be thoroughly healed; they are dying unto sin, and it is their desire and endeavour to live by the faith of the Son of God who loved them, and gave himself for them.

*And what profit is there in this?* 'The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.' In scripture, to know, often signifies to approve. 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' 'I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy; for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversity.' 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth,' said God of old to his favoured people. 'I will not know a wicked person,' i. e. I will not approve of him. 'Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you,' (never approved of you, never owned you as my followers), 'depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.' But 'the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.' He approveth of them, and loveth them, 'and spareth them as a man spareth his son that serveth him.' In all their ways they acknowledge him, and he directeth their steps, and bringeth their ways to a happy issue. Even now he causeth goodness and mercy to follow them; and he leadeth them in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. And eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived the blessedness he has laid up in store for them in a better world. Richer shall be their portion of glory and holiness than if they had been the pure and spotless descendants of the unfallen occupants of Eden; free of all original taint, and unstained by any actual transgression. In this case their portion of glory and happiness would have been great, but it would have been proportioned to the righteousness of a sinless creature. But the glory to be bestowed on the ransomed was purchased by the precious blood of the Son of God, and will be proportioned to the transcendent merits of the Lord our righteousness, in whom 'all the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily.' Therefore in scripture it is declared to be 'according to the riches of his glory,' and 'to show the exceeding riches of his glory in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.' When the blight of Eden is far more than remedied—when the malignant venom of the serpent,—though he

meant it not, has afforded occasion for the display of mercy, the loveliest attribute of Deity, and has redounded to the higher glory and happiness of the children of men, must we not exclaim, 'O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!'

But 'the way of the ungodly shall perish.' *Who are the ungodly?* As there are but two classes, and the righteous, or the justified by Christ, are the *friends* of God; the ungodly must be his *enemies*. And yet how many are there of this class who would think it foul scorn to be ranked among the wicked. True, they say, we are not *saints*; and there is nothing they would be more ashamed of than being thought very religious; but as there is nothing that the world highly blames in their conduct, they regard themselves as in a state of safety. Of what consequence would it be that such persons were led to consider that the scriptures declare, that so long as they are in a state of nature, they are ungodly; that so long as they are unrenewed, they are enemies to God in their minds by wicked works! Take the most favourable case of the unrenewed man; let him be amiable, and upright in his dealings, and correct in his moral conduct; yet how much is there lacking! He has not the fear of God before his eyes, he has not the love of God in his heart, he seeks not to live to God's glory—the very name *ungodly* marks him as living without God, and without Christ in the world, without faith, and consequently without any well-founded hope. How dreadful the condition of the ungodly! Has not God declared that, 'the way of the ungodly shall perish?' Shall perish! What is that? What is it for a soul to perish? The inspired apostle could not tell. He says, 'Where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?' 'What shall the end be of them who obey not the gospel of God?' Ask *him* who is now drinking the cup of trembling in hell what it is to perish, and he will answer I cannot tell, for a lower deep is threatening to devour me; the day of judgment is coming, when body and soul are to be again united, that as they were partners in sin, they may be partners in shame and in sorrow. Yea, were we to outstrip time, and to enter the precincts of eternity, and to look through the bars of those adamantine gates, never never to be opened, and to see one who, after his final doom, had made his bed in hell, and lain down in everlasting burnings; and to ask him what it is to perish; with a howl of despair that would make our hair stand on end, and cause our very blood to curdle, he would say to us, I cannot tell, for who can tell the end of

that which is to be endless? Who can measure the depth of woe which is unfathomable? Who knoweth the power of his anger? Who can tell the amount of misery already excruciating, which is ever increasing, and which must continue to increase while eternity rolls on?

Be wise *now*, therefore, ye that fear not God. Be instructed, ye sinful children of men. 'Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his anger is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.'

#### EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

'And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming,'  
1 John ii. 28.

How full of affection is this exhortation! How suitable, when a pious pastor is addressing his flock; or a kind father addressing his beloved family, 'Little children, abide in him!' *To abide in Christ, we must be in him*; and to be in him, we must have faith, we must be born again. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' It is a *real and radical change*: before it takes place, the soul is dead. 'You hath he quickened who *were dead in trespasses and sins*.' It is passing from death to life,—to spiritual life; becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus: being translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. *How important the change!* We celebrate with joy the birth of an earthly prince; but here is one born an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ; an heir of an inheritance which is incorruptible,—of a kingdom that cannot be moved. Here a new branch of the true vine shoots forth. Here a new temple of the Spirit is raised. Here, out of what was baser than dust, a precious gem is formed, to be one of the jewels of Christ's crown, and to shed its bright and ever-increasing lustre through all the ages of eternity. Who but the Spirit of God could accomplish this change? 'The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.' When thus united to Christ, we are living stones of the holiest temple; we are *in Christ* as members of his mystical body.

This is a union that cannot be broken. Scripture assures us that they who *really are in Christ* continue to abide in him. 'Being confident of

this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ.' 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' 'The anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you,'—and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him. If we can prove then that we are now in a state of grace, we at the same time prove that we shall hereafter be in a state of glory; for grace and glory differ not in nature but in degree. Grace is the sweet bud; glory is the magnificent blossom fully expanded to bloom in unfading beauty, and in unceasing fragrance in the paradise above. Grace is the precious seed; glory is the golden harvest: grace is the dawn; glory is the splendour of the perfect day: grace is the foretaste; glory is the delightful banquet: grace is the armour, and the might, and the valour in the day of battle; glory is the shout of victory, the song of triumph, the dividing of the spoil, the crown of the warrior, the rest, and peace, and blessedness that remain for the people of God. Grace is the hidden manna, whereof if a man eat, he shall never die.

Believers persevere in a state of grace, not of any natural necessity, but by the *appointment of God*. Adam fell in paradise; and if believers were left to themselves, they would fall away from God. If when there was no sin in the heart the tempter prevailed, how much more would this be the case when there are traitors within the citadel, ready, if not watched and restrained, to open the gates to the foe. But it is the will and appointment of God that believers shall endure to the end, and be saved. 'Fear not, little flock: it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' 'Father, I will,' saith the unfailing Intercessor, 'that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' 'They are also sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption;' so that believers are safer than if they were the sinless descendants of our fallen first parents. Our first parents were pure, but their salvation was in their own keeping. Their believing descendants have remains of corruption, but their salvation is entrusted to the Shepherd of Israel: he has given grace, and he will give glory; 'for they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.' They are safe in the promises of the covenant;—and safer if possible in vital union with Christ, who cannot die, and who has declared, that because he lives they shall live also.

This doctrine may be abused by those who have

a name to live and are dead; but true believers extract not poison from so sweet a flower. They know that much watchfulness is necessary, and that true grace manifests itself in this watchfulness. They know that though they cannot finally and entirely fall away, they may fall into grievous sins, which may prove injurious to the good cause,—which may open the mouths of scorers, and prove stumblingblocks to those who are asking the way to Zion;—which may darken their own prospects, and bring down temporal judgments, that they may be rendered humble and contrite, and may not be condemned with the world. Believers cannot expect the joy and peace arising from this doctrine, unless they have proof that they are persevering,—giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure;—living near to God;—cleaving to the Saviour, and growing in grace. In the wilderness through which they pass, they have to contend with the lion and the bear, the wolf and the fox. The old serpent also is ever near to their path, at one time alluring them as an angel of light, at another time as a fierce archer, assailing them with a flight of fiery darts. Is there not need then of the utmost vigilance and steadfastness, when their salvation, though sure, must be more wonderful than the deliverance of Daniel from the den of lions, or of the three children from the fiery furnace, or of the people of Israel from the wrath of Pharaoh, and from the divided waters of the Red sea?

How great, however, will be the joy of that deliverance! When shame and confusion of face shall be the portion of hypocrites, and of the self-righteous, and of the openly ungodly; when every refuge of lies shall be swept away; what holy joy and confidence shall be the portion of those, who in an evil world continued to abide in Christ, and now stand before him at last in the pure robe of his own righteousness. Much they had read, and heard, and thought of Christ; but his glory is a thousand fold greater than all that they ever read or heard, or imagined; and their blessedness in beholding him in peace, is far, far above what they had ever conceived. Their joy is now full. They have entered the haven, never again to encounter the storm. The days of their mourning are ended; the clouds return not after the rain. Their sun has risen never to go down, neither shall their moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and their God their glory. 'They have returned and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy on their heads; they have received joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing have for ever fled away.' Amen.

## NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be,'* Matt. xxiv. 27.

WHAT a solemn and glorious event is that spoken of in these words, the coming of the Son of man! His first coming was infinitely wonderful, when He left the bosom of his Father, emptied himself of his glory, and himself bare our sins on his own body on the tree. His second coming will be very different, but still infinitely wonderful. 'Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation,' Heb. ix. 28. May we be among the number of those who 'love his appearing,' who are 'looking for that blessed hope,' and who are 'waiting for his Son from heaven, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.' Surely they have but cold love to Jesus that do not burn with desire to see the fair brow that was crowned with thorns.

1. Christ's coming will be terrible as lightning to his enemies. Nothing is more terrific than the lightning. It is so powerful, so sudden, so deadly in its stroke. The strongest man is like a straw before it. Much more terrible will Christ's appearing be to all unbelievers. To his own dear people it will be like the approach of summer. When they see the signs of his coming, they will say to one another, 'the summer is nigh,' ver. 32. 'He shall come down like rain on the mown grass, as showers that water the earth,' Psal. lxxii. 6. To poor waiting believers 'He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. To those that fear God's name in this dark world, 'The Sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in his wings,' Mal. iv. 2. The cry shall be one of ineffable joy to them, 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh.'

How different that day shall be to unconverted souls! 'Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord. To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light,' Amos v. 18. That day shall burn as an oven to you. 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel,' 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. Then will be fulfilled that awful word, 'All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him,' Rev. i. 7. O! thou that obeyest not the gospel, where wilt thou hide from the lightning of his eye? Thou wilt say, Ah! there he is—the crucified One—whom I lightly esteemed. O! mountains and rocks fall on

me, and hide me from Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

2. Christ's coming shall be sudden as lightning. What can be more awfully sudden than the lightning. A curtain of dark lowering clouds is hung over all nature. A death-like silence reigns over all nature. Not a leaf is stirred by the wind. When suddenly, 'the voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.' 'The lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west.' And the loud pealing thunder shakes the wilderness. So shall the coming of the Son of man be. Whenever that glorious event shall take place, one thing is certain, that it shall be awfully sudden. A thief does not send word what hour he is coming to break up the house. 'The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.' It shall come 'like travail on a woman with child.' 'As a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.' Many will be saying, I think the Saviour will not come at such and such a time. What says the word? 'The Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.' Am I ready to meet him? Would it be a grief and terror to me, if what some Christians think were true, that Christ may come even now? Do I love his appearing? Do I obey that command, Song iii. 11? Am I a wise or foolish virgin? Have I not only a lamp, and wick, and flame, but oil in the lamp? All these are infinitely momentous questions. Happy the soul that can answer, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

3. Christ's coming shall be conspicuous as lightning. Lightning cannot be hid. By all it is seen at the same moment. The labourer in the field, the artizan in the workshop, the servant at the mill—all see the flash; but in a far more perfect manner shall be the coming of the Son of man. 'Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.' Jesus said to the high priest and all his accusers, 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven,' Matt. xxvi. 64. And again it is written, 'they shall look on him whom they pierced.' O amazing truth! Those who will not look to Christ now must look then. Those who will not 'behold the Lamb of God, to be saved by him, must behold the Lamb coming in wrath to destroy them. O happy believer, you shall cry in that day, 'This is our God, we have waited for him.' 'This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend.' 'My Lord and my God.'

## NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer,'* 1 Pet. iv. 7.

I. OBSERVE where a believer stands. He stands within sight of the end of all things. He stands upon a watch-tower, high above the noise and the cares of this present evil world. Things temporal are beneath his feet, things eternal are spread out before him. This is the bible description of a believer, 'We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen,' 2 Cor. iv. 18. Consider how short the whole of a lifetime is. From the cradle to the grave is but a few steps. 'The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.' The half of men die before the age of twenty. Even when men lived many hundred years, it was but a span—a moment, compared to eternity. Methuselah lived 969 years, and he died. 'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. My days are swifter than a post. They are passed away as the swift ships. As the eagle hasteth to the prey.'

The time of this world's continuance is short, 'The end of all things is at hand.' A little while, and the day of grace will be done. Preaching and praying will soon be over. The last sabbath sun will soon set. 'My Spirit shall not always strive with men.' Soon ministers will give over wrestling with the unbelieving world. A little while and the number of believers shall be complete. We shall come 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' The parting cry of Christ was, 'Surely I come quickly.' Soon the sky shall open over our heads, and Christ shall come. A little while, and we shall stand before the great white throne. A little while, and the wicked shall not be. We shall see them going away into everlasting punishment. A little while, and the work of eternity shall be begun. We shall serve him day and night in his temple.

'When this passing world is done,  
When has sunk yon glaring sun,  
When we stand with Christ in glory,  
Looking o'er life's finished story,  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
Not till then, how much I owe.'

II. Observe the duties of a believer. 'Be sober, and watch unto prayer.' 1. *Be sober.* Let nothing dim the eye that is looking on eternal realities. Let nothing engross the heart that

is already given away to Christ. Sit loose to the dearest objects in this world. Brainerd mentions an instance of a poor Indian woman who, after her conversion, was resigned to the divine will in the most tender points. She was asked, 'What if God should take away your husband from you, how do you think you could bear that?' She replied, 'He belongs to God and not to me. He may do with him just as he pleases.' An old divine says, 'Build your nest upon no tree here; for you see God hath sold the forest to death, and every tree whereon we would rest is ready to be cut down, to the end we may flee, and mount up, and build upon the rock, and dwell in the holes of the rock.'

Be sober in the griefs of this world. Weep as though you wept not. This world is the vale of tears. It is a Bochim. There are always some mourning. No sooner is the tear dried up on one cheek than it trickles down another. Still the believer should be sober and chastened in his grief. Weep not for those that died in the Lord; they are not lost, but gone before. The sun, when it sets, is not lost; it is gone to shine in another hemisphere. And so have they gone to 'shine like the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.' Weep not for those who died out of the Lord. When Aaron lost his two sons, 'Aaron held his peace.' Weep not over bodily pains and losses. Murnur not. Be sober. If you are in Christ, these are all the hell you will ever bear. When we win to the presence of Jesus, all our griefs shall look like children's griefs. A day in his banqueting house will make you 'forget your poverty, and remember your misery no more.'

Sit loose to this world's enjoyments. Be sober. In a little while you will be at your Father's table above, drinking the wine new with Christ, you will meet with all your brothers and sisters in the Lord, you will have pure joy in God through ceaseless ages. Do not be much taken with the joys that are here. If ever you are so much engrossed with any enjoyment here that it takes away your love for prayer, or for your bible, or that it would frighten you to hear the cry, Behold the Bridegroom cometh—then your heart is 'overcharged.' You are abusing this world.

2. *Watch.* 'Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' Nothing is more difficult than to watch. We are naturally like him who said, 'a little more sleep, and a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.' One thing is essential to all true watching—the gift of the Holy Spirit. 'Anoint

thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see,' Rev. iii. 18. Take out the beam that is thine own eye. Not only abstain from dimming the spiritual eye, but clear it. What shall I watch? Watch the work of grace in thine own soul. Has God cast the seed into the field of thine heart? Then see if the blade appear, or the ear, or the full corn in the ear. Has your soul been made a vineyard of red wine? Then say often to your Beloved, 'Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appears, and the pomegranates bud forth,' Song vii. 12. Watch thine enemies. You have enemies within, and enemies without. Many seek to take thy crown. 'Cast all your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' Watch the Redeemer's cause. The disciples slept while Jesus' body sweated drops of blood. Many disciples do the same in our day. Lie not on a bed of ivory while Joseph is in affliction. Be one of the 'watchmen over the walls of Jerusalem,' Isa. lxii. Be one of those who watch for the morning.

3. *Watch unto prayer.* Some watch and pray not. Right watching quickens prayer. Seest thou the wants, corruptions, infirmities, backslidings, temptations of thine own spirit, the heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, yea, unsearchably wicked to human eye. Watch unto prayer. Let the eye look within, and then above. Seest thou the cause of Jesus bleeding, Israel turning back before their enemies, plants of the Lord's planting withering, many walking no more with Jesus, Ephesus losing her first love, Laodicea turning lukewarm, ministers fainting in the day of adversity, Jonah fleeing from the presence of the Lord, the hands of Moses weary, Amalek prevailing against Israel? 'Watch unto prayer.'

Seest thou a spring-time of love, Immanuel coming over the mountains of Bether, winter departing, flowers appearing, showers of blessing falling? 'Watch unto prayer.' Soon Scotland's day of grace will be ended. 'Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain.' Hearst thou Ephraim bemoaning himself, the dry bones of Israel shaking, saints loving her stones? Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; never hold thy peace day nor night, give him no rest—'Watch unto prayer.'

## TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be,' Rev. xxii. 12.

THERE is something peculiarly sacred about a parting word. When a father assembles his children round his dying bed, and gives them his last affectionate counsels; you may be quite sure that as long as they have hearts to feel they will remember and often ponder over his parting words. Here are the parting words of the Lord Jesus. Here are the latest accents that fell from the blessed lips of Immanuel. They fell on the ear of the beloved John as he lay entranced on the shore of sea-girt Patmos, 'Behold, I come quickly.'

I. *Observe the person who comes.* 'Behold, I come.' We may say, like the disciples on the lake of Galilee, 'It is the Lord.' It is the First, and the Last, and the living One, who was dead, and, behold, he is alive for evermore. Jehovah-Jesus is the person who comes. He whose name is 'Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.' He who is the image of the invisible God, by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible.

It is Jesus that comes. He that walked on the sea of Galilee, sat wearied on the well of Sychar, and wept beside the rocky sepulchre of Bethany. He that was surety for sinners, who sweated blood in Gethsemane, who was silent before Pilate, and who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God on Calvary. 'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.'

It is He who is the righteousness and strength of all his people. He who is our life, He on whom we lean coming up from the wilderness, He who is afflicted in all our afflictions; our tender Shepherd, our elder Brother; He whom, having not seen, we love. It is He that comes. Surely every believer will love his appearing. You may tremble who know not God, and obey not the gospel. This is He whom you have lightly esteemed. He stood at your door till his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night. You despised him and neglected his great salvation. How will you bear to see him coming in the clouds of heaven!

II. *Observe the time when he comes.* 'I come quickly.' Christians differ widely as to the time when Christ shall come. This diversity is not to be wondered at. 'Of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are

in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father,' Mark xiii. 32. 'Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you; for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night,' 1 Thess. v. 1, 2. Take it at the longest calculation, it will soon be here. He said, I come quickly, 1800 years ago. Much more now may we say, He comes quickly. A few days, and every eye shall see him. The sun is waxing old—weary of shining on a Christ-despising world. The whole creation groans under the ever-increasing load of guilt and woe. The lines of prophecy are converging to a point. The cup of Popery is nearly full. The time, times, and half a time, are hastening to a close. The souls below the altar are crying with a loud voice, 'How long, O Lord.' The Euphrates is drying up, that the way of the kings of the East may be prepared. There is a noise and a shaking among the dry bones of Israel. 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye' the once crucified, now exalted, but long-despised Jesus shall come. 'Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.' Oh! believer, let this solemn truth make thee patient under the frown and contumely of an unbelieving world. Hold thy possessions with a slack hand. 'Take heed, lest at any time your heart be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.' Behold, I come quickly!

III. *Observe what he brings with him.* 'My reward is with me.' Christ himself shall be the greatest reward of his people. 'Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.' Any place would be heaven if we were with Christ. No place would be heaven without Him. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' Oh to talk with him as Moses and Elijah did on the mount of transfiguration, to hear Him speak gracious words, to lean our head where John leaned his, to hold Him, and not to let him go, to behold that countenance which is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars, to have him turning upon us his eyes of divine tenderness and holy love—that will be a reward.

He has many crowns of righteousness to give to them that love his appearing. He has 'the harps of God'—

'Lord, I believe thou hast prepared,  
(Unworthy though I be,)  
For me a blood-bought free reward,  
A golden harp for me.

'Thy strings and tuned for endless years,  
And formed by power divine,  
To sound in God the Father's ears  
No other name but thine.'

He has 'authority over ten cities' to give to his own. He has a kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world. He has a place beside him on his throne. But He himself will be our greatest reward, 'I will give him the morning star.'

IV. *Observe what he will do.* He will give every man according as his work shall be. Christ is to be Judge of all. 'For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son,' John v. 22. This is part of Christ's reward, that every knee shall bow to him. It is fitting that He that stood silent before the Jews, and at the bar of Pilate, and was buffeted, spit upon, and condemned, should sit on the throne and judge his enemies. It will be greatly to the joy of Christ's people in that awful day, when they receive their reward from the hand that was pierced for them. It will make all unbelievers stand speechless when he to whom they have always said, Depart from us, shall say to them, Depart from me, ye cursed. Oh! that we may obtain mercy of the Lord in that day.

'See the Judge our nature wearing,  
Clothed in majesty divine;  
You who long for his appearing,  
Then shall say, This God is mine;  
Gracious Saviour, own me in that day for thine.'

#### TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'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,' Rev. xxii. 14.

I. *Let us meditate on the character of the saved.* 'They that do his commandments.' All that are on the road to heaven, are not only a justified people, but a sanctified people. This was God's end in choosing us. 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' If any man be chosen to salvation, it is through sanctification of the Spirit. He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy. This was Christ's great end in dying for us, that he might make us a holy nation. 'Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word.' He laid down the unspeakable price for this. He became a man, he became a curse for this. He groaned, sweated blood, was bruised, bowed his head, gave up the ghost for this; that He might have liberty to make us free, humble, self-denied, loving, pure as he himself

is pure. This is the Holy Spirit's end in dealing with us. It would not be righteous in Him to dwell in an unjustified soul. It is no rest for the dove of heaven. He therefore awakens the soul—discovers to the man his guilt, depravity, lothesomeness. He glorifies Christ in the man's soul—destroys the face of the covering that is over the carnal heart. He softens the rocky heart, and inclines and engages the will to cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ alone for righteousness. Then He sees no iniquity in that man. He says of that soul, This is my rest; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. He writes all the law in that heart, Jer. xxxi. 33. He does not omit one of the commandments. The man cries out, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man,' Rom. vii. 22. And not only does He give him the will, but the ability, to serve God; 'It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure,' Phil. ii. 13.

'I have now made a new question,' says Rutherford, 'whether Christ be more to be loved for giving sanctification, or for free justification? And I hold he is more and most to be loved for sanctification. It is in some respect greater love in Him to sanctify than to justify; for he maketh us most like himself, in his own essential portraiture and image, in sanctifying us; justification doth but make us happy, which is to be like the angels only. God be thanked for ever that Christ was a told down price for sanctification. Let a sinner, if possible, lie in hell for ever, if He make him truly holy, and let him lie there burning in love to God, rejoicing in the Holy Ghost, hanging on Christ by faith and hope; that is heaven in the heart and bottom of hell.'

O my soul, art thou one of those that do His commandments? Have I come into the bonds of the new covenant, and got the law put in my inward parts, and written on my heart? Does Christ stretch forth his hand to me, saying, 'Behold, my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,' Matt. xii. 50. On this my eternity hangs. If I receive an unholy gospel I shall perish. They are ungodly men who 'turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.' The branches that bear no fruit He taketh away. They that are saved are they that do his commandments.

'Had I a throne above the rest,  
Where angels and archangels dwell,  
One sin unsain within my breast,  
Would make that heaven as dark as hell.'

II. *Let us meditate on the blessedness of the saved.* 'Blessed are they that do his command-

ments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Holiness is its own reward. To be holy is to be happy. God is happy because he is infinitely holy. The devil never can be happy because he has lost every spark of holiness. The first rest of the believing soul is when he comes to Christ and finds pardon. But there is a further and sweeter rest when he learns of Christ, who is meek and lowly in heart, Matt. xi. 28, 29. Holiness is the river of God's pleasure, and therefore it fills the soul that drinks of it with divine joy. But it has a further reward.

1. *They have right to the tree of life.* Adam lost us that right when he fell. 'God drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.' In vain did Adam strive to find a secret entrance. Perhaps he tried to creep through the embowering thickets, or through some wooded pass. Perhaps he tried to enter under cloud of midnight, or by morning's early dawn, before the birds began their matin praise. But all in vain; that flaming sword 'turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.' Adam's children, up to this day, have spent their strength and ingenuity in the same vain attempt. They have gone about to establish their own righteousness. But all have found—a few on this side of eternity, and some, by fearful experience, on the other side—that the flaming sword of divine justice still turns every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. No—not every way. There is 'a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.' A second Adam came, the Lord from heaven. He gave himself to the flaming sword of justice. A voice was heard, 'Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.' And now that slain Lamb of God says, 'I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.' The guiltiest may enter in by Jesus. And hear how sweetly he says, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, Rev. ii. 7.

O my soul, like Ephesus thou hast left thy first love, yet this promise is to thee. In Jesus thou hast a right to the tree of life. 'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' I that in myself have a right to a place in hell, in Christ have a right to a place under the shadow of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God.

2. *May enter in through the gates into the city.*

Here we are on our way to the heavenly city. We are coming up from the wilderness. Sometimes we have clouds between us and Christ—doubts as to our conversion—our union to Christ—our new nature. There all clouds and doubts shall flee away. Here we have diverse temptations from the old man, from the world, from our adversary the devil; there temptations cannot come. The old man will drop off as we enter the pearly gate; the world will then dazzle no more when we look on the golden pavement; the fiery darts will never rise over the battlements of the New Jerusalem. Here we have no city where the most are righteous. We can hardly speak the name of Jesus in the streets, but we are made the song of the drunkard. There the inhabitants are all righteous—'there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth.' None but the holy angels, and the brothers and sisters of Christ shall be there. The song of eternity shall be, Worthy is the Lamb. Here we love Christ unseen. Often he withdraws himself and is gone. We seek him and find him not. There we shall be for ever with the Lord. We shall see him as he is. We shall be with him, and behold his glory which his Father gave him. We shall say without another doubt to all eternity, 'I am my Beloved's, and his desire is toward me.' This is the reward of the sanctified. O my soul, is this reward for thee? Welcome light afflictions, which are but for a moment. Welcome sweet cross, that I must bear for Jesus. Roll round, swift years. Hasten the day of his espousals—the day of the gladness of his heart and mine, that I may enter with all his redeemed through the gates that are all praise.

'Jerusalem, my happy home,  
Name ever dear to me;  
When shall my labours have an end  
In joy, and peace, and thee?'

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities,'* Psal. cxxx. 7, 8.

In these words we have a believing Israelite inviting all his people to come to the same Fountain where he has found pardon and peace with God. He had been himself awakened by the Holy Spirit to feel the awful 'depths' of sin and misery in which he was sunk by nature, and by practice. On his knees, beneath the heart-searching eye of God, he felt that he was 'under sin,'

that his 'mouth must be stopped,' and that he could not be just with God,' ver. 3. 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' But even in these depths the free mercy of God was reached forth to him; the scales were made to fall from his eyes by the eyesalve of the Spirit, and the glorious discovery was made to his soul, that there is a way of forgiveness open to the vilest of men, ver. 4. 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' With intensest anxiety did this believing soul now wait for the Lord. Those only who have experienced the dawning of the Sun of righteousness on their own soul, can know what it is to 'wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.' More anxiously than the sick man on his bed, 'full of tossings to and fro,' longs for the first gleam of morning light coming in at his window; more anxiously than the weary Levite, keeping watch upon the temple wall, turned his eye toward the east, to see if the day began to break over mount Olivet; more anxiously far did this believing soul now wait for fuller discoveries of the fair face of Immanuel, and for a richer experience of the power of Jesus to purge the conscience, and purify the heart.

But no man can be contented to go to the Well of salvation alone. Joy in Christ is not a selfish joy. A man may have gold without wishing others to share with him. A man may have earthly learning, and be proud to keep it to himself. But the moment a man has found Christ, his cry is, 'Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did.' O! that all I love but knew Him. 'Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption, and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.'

O sinner, whoever thou art, here are three amazing reasons why thou shouldest hope in the Lord. Satan would drive thee to despair, as if there was no hope that such an one as thou art could be saved. But as God is true, here is a door of hope for thy perishing soul.

1. 'With the Lord there is mercy.' God is such a God that with him there is mercy. Mercy dwells in him as in a fountain. All the mercy that is in the universe flows from him. Mercy is compassion to those who deserve no compassion, but infinite wrath. It was mercy that made God spare fallen man, and not cast the world speedily into hell. It was mercy that made him give his only begotten Son. It was mercy that made him choose, awaken, and draw any sinner to Christ. He never saved any but

out of free sovereign mercy. There is none so vile but God can save him without prejudice to his justice, truth, holiness, or majesty. God has saved as vile wretches, in time past, as any vile wretches that need now to be saved. Manasseh, once a monster in human form, is now a white-robed saint before the throne. The dying thief is this day with Christ in paradise. The murderers of Jesus are now tuning their harps of gold, and singing, 'Worthy is the Lamb.'

This is good news for thee, O vilest of men—for thee who hast sinned against light and against convictions. I do not know that God will save thee, but I know that if he does, it will be in perfect accordance with his nature. 'He delighteth in mercy.'

2. *With him is plenteous redemption.* When the manna fell upon the face of the wilderness round the camp of Israel, there was a plentiful supply for the many thousands of Israel. 'He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack.' So it is with Christ. He is freely offered to every creature. We are not straitened in Christ, but in our own hearts. 'With him is plenteous redemption.' No sinner ever came to Christ, and found the Fountain of forgiveness dried up. One of the texts that was instrumental in the conversion of John Bunyan was this, 'Yet there is room,' Luke xiv. 22. Undone sinner, let this text lead thee to Christ. Many have come to Christ since the days of Abel. Thousands have entered through the strait gate, and are now his believing people on earth, or his glorified people in heaven. 'But yet there is room.' There is room for thee under Christ's wings. 'With him is plenteous redemption.' Brainerd once asked one of his converted Indians, 'Do you see enough in Christ for the greatest of sinners?' She replied, 'O enough, enough, for all the sinners in the world, if they would but come.' And when he asked her if she would not tell others of the goodness of Christ; turning herself about to some poor Christless souls who stood by, she said, 'O there is enough in Christ for you, if you would but come. O strive, strive to give up your hearts to him.' Sinner, let the words of this poor believing Indian sink into thy heart. There is enough in Christ for thee, for with him is plenteous redemption. O! take up the words of the returning prodigal, 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger; I will arise and go to my father.'

3. *He redeems from all iniquities.* If you drop a pebble into the bosom of the ocean, it is

covered out of sight in a moment. But if you were to carry an immense rock and plunge it into the same ocean, it would be equally covered. So is it with the least of sinners, and the chief of sinners, when they come to Christ. There is no difference. The ocean of the blood of Jesus covers both equally. All sinners that come to Christ are equally justified in the sight of God. He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities. Christ is no half-saviour. His work is perfect. Dost thou believe in Christ? Then 'all the transgressions that thou hast committed shall not be mentioned unto thee.' Canst thou say the sweetest words that human lips ever uttered, 'My Beloved is mine?' Then on the authority of him who cannot lie, I say to thee, 'As far as east is from the west, so far hath he removed thy transgressions from thee.' But perhaps thou sayest, 'However far removed, God's all-seeing eye may still be fixed on them. This cannot be; for thou canst say with Hezekiah, 'Thou hast cast all my sins behind my back.' Nay, they are not only behind God's back, but out of sight, for it is written, 'Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' But are they not to be found in God's book of remembrance? Listen to his own gracious declaration, 'I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins.' But God can remember my sins, even though he has blotted them out of his book. Hear again his own word, 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' But surely if God were to search out my sins he would find them somewhere, and condemn me in the judgment. Fear not, O troubled soul, this cannot be; for it is written, 'The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.'

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's,'* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

IN these words we have the history of a believer.

1. *There was a time when he did not belong to God.* This is implied when it is said, 'ye are bought with a price;' for a man does not buy what is already his own. An unconverted soul does not belong to God. In one sense, indeed, all things belong to God; for 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.' He says, 'Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle

upon a thousand hills.' And again, 'the Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.' Still, it is also true that the wicked do not belong to God. They are not his portion, his inheritance, his purchased possession. They are lost. They are sold under sin. When a fisherman draws his nets, and finds a great many bad fish among the good ones, he does not count the bad ones as his own. He gathers the good into vessels, and casts the bad away. So does God look upon lost souls. He says to them, 'Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.'

God does not reign in unconverted souls. It is true he reigns over them, as he does over the wild beasts of the forest, and over the wild waves of the sea. He makes their wrath to praise him. He holds them in with bit and bridle. But God does not reign in their hearts. The devil reigns there, and not God. 'The heart of an unconverted man is the devil's house,' Mark iii. 27.

O! it is good for me to look unto the rock whence I was hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence I was digged. Truly I can say, like Hezekiah, 'Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of corruption.' Should I not add, 'I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul?'

2. *The happy change.* 'Ye are bought with a price.' When a man has bought anything, and paid for it, more especially if it has cost him a great price, he says, 'This is mine.' So it is with God and the believer. He has laid down a price for him, the pearl of great price. And now he says of every believing soul, 'Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.' The moment that Jesus spreads his skirt over a poor dying polluted sinner, the voice of the Father is heard saying, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.' There never was a possession so completely belonging to any one as a redeemed soul belongs to God. We are his by creation, 'He hath made us, and not we ourselves.' We are his by preservation. 'In him we live, and move, and have our being.' How many years he preserved us when we were cutting at the hand that kept us out of hell. We are his by election. 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' 'Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou Jeshurun whom I have chosen.' We are his by redemption. 'I lay down my life for the sheep.' 'This is my body broken for you.' We are his by the indwelling Spirit. 'I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' Accordingly, we are pecu-

liarily dear to God. 'Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.' God puts more value upon one believer than upon all the ungodly in the world. He is very kind to the ungodly; he gives them food and raiment; houses and riches, health and pleasures, sunshine and showers; and yet he gives a child of God more in one day than he gives to all the ungodly during their whole existence. He gives his own children—forgiveness, peace with God, and the Holy Spirit. Truly we are not our own, we are bought with a price.

3. *The blessed duty flowing from this.* 'Wherefore glorify God,' &c. This duty is simply the resignation of soul and body into his hands, for time and for eternity. Take an example in one of the holiest and most eminent divines that ever lived. 'I have been before God, and have given myself, all that I am, and have, to God; so that I am not, in any respect, my own. I can challenge no right in this understanding, this will, these affections which are in me. Neither have I any right to this body, or any of its members—no right to this tongue, these hands, these feet; no right to these senses, these eyes, these ears, this smell, or this taste; I have given myself clean away, and have not retained anything as my own. I gave myself to God in my baptism, and I have been this morning to him, and told him that I gave myself *wholly* to him,' (President Edwards). Or take the example of a dear boy who died about eight years old, and who was evidently taught by the same Spirit. One evening, near his death, he said to his watchful mother, 'Mother, I think I belong to him.' She asked, 'To whom, my child?' He replied, 'To God, mother; my will, my understanding, my affections; I am God's boy altogether, mother.'

O my soul, dost thou know anything of this? Canst thou say, 'I am my Beloved's, and his desire is toward me?' Is it the chief desire of my heart to glorify God by fleeing from all sin? When the world comes and says, Come with us, stolen waters are sweet; my soul replies, Sinful world, I am not yours, I am the Lord's. When Satan says, Come with me, thou shalt not surely die; my soul cries out, Get thee behind me, Satan, I am not yours. I was once yours, but now I am bought with a price; I am Christ's. When my own wicked heart says, Come and taste a little worldly pleasure; my new heart replies, Old man, I am not thine—I am not my own, I am bought with a price—therefore will I glorify God in my body and my spirit, which are his.

## TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

'He came unto his own, and his own received him not,' John i. 11.

IN this chapter John describes the coming of the Son of God into the world, and his rejection by those whom he came to save, in three different ways. In ver. 5. he says, 'The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.' When Jesus came to this world, it was like the rising of 'the bright and morning star;' but the hearts of men were covered over with murky vapours, like those that settled over Egypt in that night when the 'darkness might be felt,' so that the heavenly radiance of Immanuel was not allowed to shine upon their souls. To those that knew him he was 'the light of men,' 'the morning Star,' 'the Sun of righteousness,' the 'morning without clouds;' but all the rest of the world comprehended it not.

Is it not still the same? 'We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' On many souls Christ has arisen with healing in his wings, so that we can say to them, 'Arise; shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee.' But, ah! the most have never admitted the sweet, soft, peace-bringing beams of Jesus to shine into their dark hearts. 'The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them.' They know not whither they are going. Their feet are ready to stumble on the dark mountains. 'The path of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they shall stumble.'

Again, in ver. 10. it is written, 'He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.' Strange visit to this fallen world! He who 'hung the earth upon nothing'—he who said, 'Let there be light, and there was light'—he who 'formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'—he 'by whom were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on earth'—that glorious being came to his own world, 'God manifest in the flesh.' Surely all his creatures will run to worship and adore him. Surely they will 'worship and bow down; they will kneel before the Lord their maker.' Not so: 'the world knew him not.' They knew him not at his birth. He left the hallelujahs of the heavenly world for the manger at Bethlehem. No angel bowed before the infant Saviour. No seraph veiled his face and feet before him. 'The world knew him not.' A few shepherds from

the fields of Bethlehem came and kneeled to him; and the wise men saw and adored the infant King; but the most despised him. 'He is despised and rejected of men.' 'She wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger, for there was no room for them in the inn.' They knew him not during his life. Few believed on him. They called him glutton, wine-bibber, deceiver. Once they sought to cast him over the rocks. Often they plotted to kill him. He that had all things now wanted every thing. 'Certain women ministered to him of their substance,' Luke viii. 3. He had no money to pay his tribute. The creatures of his hand had a warmer bed than he. 'The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' 'Every man went to his own home; Jesus went to the mount of Olives.' Another time he sat weariod on a well, and said to a poor woman, 'Give me to drink.' He that was God over all, blessed for ever, could say, 'I am a worm and no man.' The world know him not to this hour. The offence of the cross has not ceased. The way of salvation by Christ for us is still despised by most. He who is a sanctuary to all them that believe, is a stumbling-stone and rock of offence to most. O my soul, canst thou believe on Jesus when the world despise him? Canst thou be one of the little flock? Canst thou enter in at 'the strait gate, and walk on the narrow way,' with an unbelieving world on every side?

'Obey the gospel call,  
And enter while you may;  
The flock of Christ is always small,  
And none are safe but they.'

Again, in ver. 11. it is written, 'He came unto his own, and his own received him not.' In John xix. 27, the same words are rendered more fully, 'to his own home.' To see the full meaning of the passage before us, we must adopt the same reading here: 'He came unto his own home, and his own family received him not.'

The Jews were, as it were, his own family; and when he came to them, it was like coming to his own home. It was he who called their father Abraham, and separated them from among the nations to be a peculiar treasure: 'He said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old,' Isa. lxxiii. 8, 9. He was the substance of all their types. He was the true pillar-cloud that guided their fathers, the

true bread from heaven; he was the rock that followed them. He was the true Isaac the child of promise, the prophet like unto Moses, the David the beloved, the true Solomon the prince of peace. Though to all the world he may appear 'without form or comeliness, having no beauty that they should desire him;' yet surely his own Israel will receive him as 'the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys.' Ah no! '*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*' They cried, 'Not this man, but Barabbas.' 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him.' 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children.' The rulers derided him. The very thieves railed at him. They shoot out the lip, they wag the head, they give him vinegar to drink.

To this day his own receive him not. Ah! think, sinner, whom it is you are despising. Did you ever see the son of a king lay by his robes and his glory, become a poor man, and die in misery, and all for nothing? Do you think the Lord Jesus Christ left his Father's love and the adoration of angels, and became a worm and died under wrath, and all for no purpose? Is there no wrath lying upon your soul? Have you no need of such a Saviour? Why then do you delay to flee to him?

'Ungrateful sinners! whence this scorn  
Of God's long-suffering grace!  
And whence this madness that insults  
The Almighty to his face?'

TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

'No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day,' John vi. 44.

I. *How amazing is the depravity of the natural heart!* The scriptures abundantly teach us this. All faithful ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet to show the people this; and it is the first work of the Holy Spirit on the heart to convince of sin. There is not in the word of God a more fearful discovery of the depravity of the natural heart than in these words. David says, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,' Psal. li. 5. God says by the prophet Isaiah, 'I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb,' Isa. xlvi. 8. And Paul says, 'We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others,' Eph. ii. 3. But here we are told that the impotency of a natural man,

and his aversion from Christ, are so great that they cannot be overcome by any power less than divine. 'No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.' There never was a teacher like Christ. 'Never man spake like this man.' He spoke with such authority, not like the scribes, but with a heavenly dignity and power. He spoke with such wisdom; he spoke the truth without any imperfection; his teaching was pure light from the Fountain of light. He spoke with such love, with the love of one who was to lay down his life for his hearers. He spoke with such meekness, bearing the contradiction of sinners against himself, when reviled, reviling not again. He spoke with such holiness, for it was 'God manifest in the flesh.' And yet all this did not draw them. There never was a more precious gift laid at the feet of sinners. 'My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' The very Saviour their perishing souls needed was now before them. His hands were stretched out to them. He was within their reach. He offered himself to them. Yet they would not come to him. Oh! the desperate blindness, hardness, deadness, and wickedness of the unconverted heart. Nothing but Almighty grace can change it. Oh! graceless man, your friends warn you, your ministers cry aloud to you, the whole bible pleads with you; Christ, with all his benefits, is set before you; and yet, unless the Holy Spirit be poured upon your heart, you will remain an enemy of the cross of Christ, and the destroyer of your own soul. 'No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.'

II. *How invincible is the grace of Jehovah!* No creature power can draw the sinner to Christ. Demonstration, miraculous evidence, threatening, invitation, may all be used in vain. Jehovah alone can draw the soul to Christ. He pours out his Spirit with the word, and the soul is sweetly and powerfully inclined to run to Jesus. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' 'Is any thing too hard for the Lord?' 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will.' Take an example:—A Jew was sitting at the receipt of custom, near the gate of Capernaum. His brow was furrowed with the marks of covetousness, and his jealous eye exhibited all the low cunning of the publican. Very probably he had heard much of Jesus; perhaps he had heard him preach by the shore of the lake of

Galilee; still his worldly heart was unchanged, for he remained at his wicked trade, sitting by the receipt of custom. The Saviour passed that way, and as he bent his eyes upon the busy Levi, said, 'Follow me.' He said no more. He used no argument, no threatening, no promise. But the God of all grace breathed on the publican's heart, and he was made willing; 'he arose and followed him.' It pleased God, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, to give Matthew a saving glimpse of the excellency of Jesus; a drop fell from heaven upon his heart, and melted it; he smelled the sweet savour of the Rose of Sharon. What is all the world to Matthew now? He cares not for its gains, its pleasures, its praises, any more. In Christ he sees what is sweeter and better than them all. He arose and followed Jesus.

Let us learn that a simple word may be blessed to the saving of precious souls. Often we are tempted to think there must be some deep and logical argument to bring men to Christ. Often we put confidence in high-sounding words. Whereas it is the simple exhibition of Christ carried home by the Spirit, which awakens, enlightens, and saves. 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' If the Spirit be breathing on the people, these little words, 'Follow Jesus,' spoken in love, may be blessed to the saving of a whole congregation.

Let us learn to give the whole praise and glory of our salvation to the free, sovereign, efficacious grace of Jehovah. An old divine says, 'God was so angry with Herod for not giving him the glory of his eloquence, that the angel of the Lord smote him immediately, and he died a miserable death; he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But if it be very sinful in a man to take to himself the glory of such a qualification as eloquence, how much more a man's taking to himself the glory of divine grace, God's own image, and that which is infinitely God's most excellent, precious, and glorious gift?' How many times, in the 1st chapter of Ephesians, does Paul insist upon it that we are saved by free, unmerited grace? And how fully does John ascribe the whole glory of salvation to the free grace of the Lord Jesus? '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. Amen.' How solemn are the words of President Edwards, in his Personal Narrative! 'The doctrines of God's absolute sovereignty and free grace, in showing mercy to whom he would show mercy; and man's absolute dependence on

the operations of the Holy Spirit, have very often appeared to me as sweet and glorious doctrines. These doctrines have been much my delight. God's sovereignty has ever appeared to me a great part of his glory. It has often been my delight to approach God and adore him as a sovereign God, and ask sovereign mercy of him.'

'O! to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to thee.'

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come,'* John xvi. 13.

I. Let us meditate on the glorious person here spoken of. 'The Spirit of truth.' A little before Jesus had called him 'another Comforter,' and 'the Comforter,' because he is the Author of all true divine comfort in the soul of man. He alone pierces the heart with deep conviction of sin, and binds up the broken-hearted by healing discoveries of Christ. 'These words'—the Comforter—(says an eminent Christian) 'seem immensely great, enough to fill heaven and earth.' But here he is called 'the Spirit of truth;' for two reasons: 1. Because he sees all things truly. He is the omniscient One. He sees sin as it is, in all its infinite blackness. He sees the heart of man as it is; his eye penetrates to the deepest recesses of the ungodly heart. He sees Christ as he is, in all his infinite excellency and glory. 'He searches all things, yea, the deep things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 10. He sees the gospel in all its divine wisdom and pure heavenly grace. 2. Because he teaches all things truly. He is the Fountain of life and light to the soul of man. When he comes to the soul, he quickens and enlightens in the same moment. He reveals the truth, as it is in Jesus, without any imperfection, without any cloud or error. If there be any dimness in our view of divine things, the fault does not lie in the Teacher, but in the perverse heart of the disciple. He does his part with divine perfection, revealing the Mediator in all his matchless beauty, fulness, and grace. Earthly teachers fail in two ways: in their perception of the truth, and in their communicating the truth. They do not see things exactly as they are, nor do they teach them exactly as they see them. But the Spirit

of truth does both. O that we were filled with a sense of the glory of the third person of the blessed Trinity. Then we would pray with David, 'Thy Spirit is good, lead me unto the land of uprightness,' Psal. cxliii. 10.

II. *Let us meditate on the work of the Holy Spirit.* 'He will guide you into all truth.' In the verses preceding, Jesus had told them what the Comforter would do in the hearts of natural men; 'He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment;' but here he tells them what the Comforter will do for those who are disciples indeed, 'He will guide you into all truth.' The same sweet promise is repeated, 1 John ii. 20. 'Ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things.' This does not mean that Christians know all worldly knowledge. The apostles themselves, with the exception of Paul, were unlearned and ignorant fishermen of a small inland lake, and many a simple cottage-believer is on his way to glory,

'Who knows, and knows no more, his Bible true.'

'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' Neither does it mean, that Christians who have the Spirit know all divine things. The disciples were long ignorant of the death of Christ, and of his resurrection; and Paul expressly says, 'Now we see through a glass darkly; now I know in part.' This is the childhood of the new creature—we speak as a child, understand as a child, think as a child. What then does this promise mean? 1. It means that he will teach you all things needful for your salvation. In smaller matters he sometimes allows you to wander, to teach you your ignorance and weakness; but in things essential to your salvation, he will guide you with his eye. If a mother were guiding her little child through a wood, where there was no danger, she might allow it to stray, now and then, and lose itself, to teach it to keep closer by her side; but if they came to a place where were the dens of wild beasts, she would clasp her child in her arms, and carry it quickly past. So does the good Spirit. In smaller matters he suffers you to err, but not when the safety of your soul is concerned, then he will carry you as on eagles' wings. He will guide you into all truth. That was a sweet word which Jesus spake, 'There shall come false Christs and false prophets, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive even the elect.' Dear believer, whose feet have been set upon the rock, it is not possible that you can be deceived as to your eternal salvation. 2. It means that he is willing to make you know all things.

It is your own fault, not his, if you are not guided into all the truth as it is in Jesus; he is an infinite fountain of pure heavenly light; he is willing and able to leave neither sin nor darkness in your soul. Soon you will be filled with the Spirit, and then you will see face to face, and know as you are known, and love as you are loved.

In the following part of the verse, the truth which the Spirit teaches is more fully opened up. 'He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak.' When Jesus himself came to this world he came as a Witness. This is his name, Rev. i. 5. 'Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness.' And he said to Pilate, 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.' Most men receive his testimony as Pilate did; they say, 'What is truth?' and turn away. Still Jesus came to bear witness that men are lost, that God is love, and that there is a way of forgiveness to the chief of sinners. Such is the office of the Spirit of truth, 'When the Comforter is come he will testify of me,' John xv. 26. O! it is sweet to be taught, by the Spirit, the deep things of God's bosom. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.'

Again, 'He will show you things to come.' This promise was eminently fulfilled in the experience of Paul, when the Spirit showed him so expressly the features of the coming papacy, 1 Tim. iv. 1. And in the experience of the beloved John, when, on the lonely rock of Patmos, he was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'

To all believers it is fulfilled, when amid the bustle, and confusion, and abounding wickedness of their present dwelling, they can calmly, and with holy delight, feed upon the prophecies and promises of the conversion of Israel and of the world.

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one,'* 1 John v. 7.

IN verses 4th and 5th, we see that the only way of overcoming the world is by believing that Jesus is the Son of God. 'Be often at Gethsemane, be often at Golgotha;' and so the weakest child of God may trample the world, the devil, and the flesh below his feet. But some may ask, Upon what evidence am I to believe that Jesus is a divine, full, and free Saviour?

Here is the evidence, 'There are three that bear record in heaven.' Oh! that Jesus may breathe upon us while we meditate on THE HEAVENLY WITNESSES.

**I. THE FATHER.** Jesus often appealed to the testimony of his Father. 'The Father himself, which hath sent me, he hath borne witness of me,' John v. 37. One amazing example of this was at his baptism. Jerusalem and all Judea had come out to John to be baptized. The work of the day was nearly done, and it was probably near the evening. The setting sun was pouring his golden rays through the palm trees that skirt the banks of Jordan. John, clothed in his rough garment of camels' hair, stood stern and bold declaring the words of eternal life, while multitudes hung upon his word. Then Jesus came to be baptized. No sooner had he come up out of the Jordan than the heavens were opened, as to the martyr Stephen. Every eye was attracted to heaven; when, behold! a dove descended gently upon the head of Jesus. Every eye now rested upon Jesus; when a still small voice broke upon the silence of evening, like the rushing of the wind through the forest, or like the noise of distant waters. First it spoke to Jesus, 'Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.' Then it spoke to the listening crowd, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' (Comp. Luke iii. 22; Matt. iii. 17.)

In this way God has confessed Jesus to be his Son, and the Saviour of the world. This testimony was repeated on Tabor's woody summit, and is still unrecalled. That voice is still echoing through the world, and shall do so till the knell of the departing universe, 'This is my beloved Son: hear ye him.' In this way does the Father point the eyes of all his creatures to Jesus, 'Behold the Lamb of God!

**II. THE WORD.** In courts of law it is not customary to take a man's evidence concerning himself. He would be the very best and most conclusive witness; but man is such a depraved creature that he cannot be trusted in a matter where his own interest is concerned. But Jesus is the blessed Word of God 'who cannot lie,' and therefore it is quite right and lawful to take his own evidence concerning himself. Let us meditate on his testimony.

*By his miracles* he declared himself to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. 'The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me,' John x. 25. They were all done at his own command and will, not as prophets and apostles wrought their miracles in the name of another. Jesus said, 'I will: be thou clean.'

They were all miracles of mercy; with the exception of cursing the barren fig-tree, and even that, rightly understood, was a miracle of mercy also. All he did showed divine love towards sinners glowing in his bosom. They were all typical miracles; showing forth the glorious salvation which he came to work out. He opened the eyes of the blind, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, raised the dead. Every one of his miracles did in this way point the weary sinner to Jesus, saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God!'

*By his plain declarations* he bare record that he was the Saviour of the world. When he stood beside the well of Sychar, the poor guilty woman of Samaria said to him, 'I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ, when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.' To a poor guilty worm he plainly revealed himself.

Again, a poor blind soul at Jerusalem had received sight from Christ. Jesus said to him, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he which talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe.' How plainly did he here declare himself to be the Son of God!

Again, he said to the unbelieving Jews, 'I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' Thus did the blessed Word join in the testimony of the Father, drawing all men to himself, drawing every eye to behold him, every heart to cleave to him. 'Behold me, behold me!' 'No man cometh to the Father but by me.'

**III. THE HOLY GHOST.** In many ways does the Holy Ghost bear record. At the baptism of Jesus he came down upon him like a dove. He abode upon him. He anointed him for his ministry. He assisted him to offer up himself without spot unto God. But most of all, on the day of Pentecost he bare witness to Jesus. Christ had said, 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him unto you.' And so when he came from the hand of the risen Saviour, he showed that Christ was risen indeed. He came in cloven tongues of fire, and every tongue spoke the glory of Jesus, Acts ii. So in every time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of sinners, there is a fresh testimony that Jesus is the Saviour of the lost. The Spirit always directs the sinner to look to a pierced Christ. 'I will pour the spirit

of grace and supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,' Zech. xii. 10.

Oh! my soul, hast thou believed the record of the heavenly witnesses? 'If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.' If a faithful minister says he is willing to receive anxious souls to tell them the way of peace, how many will knock at his door, saying, Sir, what must I do to be saved? And why? Because they believe his word. But why do you not go as confidently to the door of Christ? Does he not say, 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.'

Oh! my soul, behold the guilt, the blackness of unbelief. Words cannot tell the weight of that God-defying sin. 'He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.' We shall see better the guilt of this in that day when 'the fearful and unbelieving' shall be cast in along with whoremongers and murderers into the lake of fire, Rev. xxi. 8.

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#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake,' 1 Thess. i. 5.*

THRICE happy minister who can address his people in these delightful words. Oh! that all our ministers could with truth say this. Why is it not so? Surely if we are determined, like Paul, 'to know nothing among them but Christ Jesus and him crucified;' if we are filled with the same Holy Spirit, if we live the same devoted life, and carry the same message night and day with tears, we ought to be able to use these precious words. 'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again bearing his sheaves with him.' The day of Pentecost was the time of the first-fruits. The day of ingathering is yet to come. The apostles had the former rain. We wait for the time of the latter rain.

I. *Let us meditate on an unsuccessful ministry.* The gospel comes to the people in word only. How often a faithful minister preaches the gospel, and the people seem to drink it in with joy! A beam of natural eloquence lights up all he says, or he has a gentle pathetic strain which rivets their attention. But no saving effects are seen to follow. No hearts are broken, no souls added to the church of such as shall be saved. So it was

with Ezekiel: 'Lo! thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not,' Ezek. xxxiii. 32. These are they that receive the word into stony places; they hear the word, and, anon, with joy receive it, yet have they not root in themselves, but dure only for a while.

Oh! my soul, art thou contented to receive the gospel in word only? Can a hungry man be fed by the smell of the viands? Or can a beggar turn rich by hearing the sound of money? And can my hungry soul find rest by hearing the tinkling of the gospel cymbals? Alas! it is a fearful thing to drop into hell under the sound of gospel mercy.

But there are some who not only hear the gospel, but know the gospel; and yet it comes to them in word only. How many a child is brought up under godly parents, well catechized in divine truth, well disciplined in the bible? They understand the gospel scheme. They have all knowledge; no point is new to them. And yet they have no spiritual sight; no tasting and seeing that Christ is good; no rock below their feet; no sitting with great delight under the shadow of the apple-tree. Ah! these are the most miserable of all unconverted hearers. They will sink lower than Capernaum. Ah! how many children of ministers, how many sabbath-school teachers, how many preachers of the gospel may know, that the gospel has come to them in word only, and never in power. Alas! how sad is it to perish pointing to the city of refuge, to preach to others, and then to be a cast-away. But there is a more excellent way. Turn we now to meditate on—

II. *A successful ministry.* 'Our gospel came unto you in power.' What a powerless thing the gospel sometimes appears. The minister is half ashamed of it. The people slumber under its most affecting statements. Again, at another time, the gospel is evidently 'the power of God unto salvation.' An unseen power accompanies the preached word, and the sanctuary is felt to be the house of God, and the very gate of heaven. Then the word of Jeremiah is fulfilled: 'Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' Jer. xxiii. 29. Then stout-hearted sinners are awakened. Old, and middle-aged, and little children, are made to cry, What must I do to be saved? An awful stillness pervades the assembly. The arrows of the King of Zion are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, and the people are brought down under him. Oh! sinner, has the

gospel come thus in power to you? Has the hammer of the word broken your rocky heart? Has the fire of the word melted your icy heart? Has the voice that is 'like the noise of many waters' spoken peace to your soul?

'Our gospel came unto you in the Holy Ghost.' It is he, the third person of the blessed Godhead, that makes the gospel come with power. It was he who 'moved upon the face of the waters,' when this world was without form and void, and brought life and beauty out of a dead world, Gen. i. 2. It is he that moves over the face of nature still, when the winter is past, and brings the fresh life of spring out of the cold bosom of the ground, Psal. civ. 30. But most of all, it is the Holy Spirit's work to take away the veil from the hearts of sinners, so that they turn to the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 16. The carnal mind has got such enmity to God, the unconverted sinner is so stupid in divine things, that there must be the work of the Almighty Spirit—quickenings, enlightening, and making willing—before the sinner will cleave to Jesus.

Oh! sinner, has the Holy Spirit come to you? Sweet is the peace which they enjoy who are taught by him. When it is a dry time, ministers labour in vain; they spend their strength for nought and in vain. They feel like one standing on the sea-shore, speaking to the hard rocks, or the raging waves, or the tameless winds. But when the Holy Spirit comes, the weakest instruments are mighty, 'mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.' Oh pray for such a blessed time.

'Our gospel came unto you in much assurance.' This is the effect on the soul, when the word comes with power, carried home by the Holy Ghost. The soul thus taught has a sweet certainty of the truth of the great things revealed in the gospel. When a man contemplates the sun, he feels a certainty that it is not the work of man but of God. So when a sinner gets anointed eyes, he sees a glorious beauty and fullness in Christ, so that his heart is filled with a sweet certainty of the truth of the gospel. He does not ask for evidences. He sees enough of evidence in Christ himself. He says, I am all guilt: thou art Jehovah my righteousness. I am all weakness: thou art Jehovah my banner. I am all emptiness: in thee dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. 'I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine. He feedeth among the lilies.' It is this that fills the bosom with all joy and peace. It is this that gives a sweet sense of forgiveness and nearness to God. It is this

that enables us to pray. Now we can say, 'My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.' 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' 'Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?' This is the gospel coming in much assurance. Oh! happy minister that can take up these words of Paul, and say, 'Our gospel came not unto you,' &c. That people is thy joy here, and shall be thy crown throughout eternity.

'What contradictions meet  
In ministers' employ;  
It is a bitter sweet,  
A sorrow full of joy.  
No other post affords a place  
For equal honour or disgrace.

'On what has now been sown  
Thy blessing, Lord, bestow;  
The power is thine alone  
To make it spring and grow.  
Do thou the gracious harvest raise,  
And thou alone shalt have the praise.'

#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour,'*  
Titus iii. 5, 6.

I. *The way of pardon.* When a soul is under conviction of sin, he feels that God is angry with him every day. The soul sinks down into a gloomy condition, 'the sorrows of death compass him, and the pains of hell get hold upon him.' When God visits this soul in mercy, he does it by revealing something in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ; he makes 'the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appear,' ver. 4. The Spirit pours a beam of light upon the face of Jesus. He shows how he pitied the lost, came for the lost, obeyed and died in the room of the lost, and that the guiltiest of men may freely receive him as his Saviour. The sinner beholds the Lamb of God, and his bosom is filled with peace in believing. Now this is what is meant in these words, 'According to his mercy he saved us.'

1. Some souls are seeking salvation 'by works of righteousness.' You take great pains in religious duties, you read the word and pray, you feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, in order to make up for past sins, and to lay God under obligation to save you. From these words it is plain that you have mistaken the way to heaven; this way is blocked up; it is 'not by works of righteous-

ness which we have done.' 'If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain,' Gal. ii. 21.

2. How are we to be saved? It is by 'the appearing of the love and kindness of God our Saviour.' You think that you must do something to change God's mind toward you, whereas Christ our great High Priest has, by the one offering up of himself, done all that needs to be done, or that ever can be done, to open the way of reconciliation to God. God is 'ready to forgive,' Psal. lxxxvi. 5. Learn not to look *in*, but to look *out* for peace. You are poring over your dark history, and your still darker bosom; you are straining your eyes to discover some gleam of light there. This is vain. Who ever sought the light of the rising sun by gazing into a dungeon? Look out upon the kindness and love of God our Saviour. It is a discovery of the person, offices, beauty, finished work, and freeness of God our Saviour, that fills the heart with peace, and the mouth with praise.

'My terrors all vanished before his sweet name,  
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came  
To drink at the fountain life-giving and free,  
Jehovah Tsidkenu is all things to me.'

II. *The way of holiness.* 'He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' 1. It is a 'washing.' The work of the Spirit on the pardoned heart is called washing, because it is a making clean. The natural heart is polluted and vile; no streams of nature can wash it clean, no good resolutions, or vows, or endeavours can change the carnal heart, Jer. xiii. 23. The Holy Spirit alone can do this. 2. It is 'the washing of regeneration,' or of a new birth. It is no outward washing of the body, but an inward change upon the soul; no baptism with water, but baptism with the Holy Ghost. Ah! how often have I washed the body clean, have I ever experienced the washing of regeneration? I was once washed in the water of baptism, have I been baptized with the Holy Ghost also? 3. It is a constant washing. The water that Christ gives shall be within the soul, 'a well of water springing up into everlasting life,' John iv. 14. Most places, when well washed, keep clean for a time. Not so the heart of man; it is a vile sink of iniquity. The 'river of water of life' must be turned into it, and made to flow perpetually through it. We must be watered every moment. Oh! happy soul that has got the Fountain of living waters within. We do not know our deceitful heart if we do not feel our need of an unceasing well of the Spirit to purify us from all filthiness. 4. It is 'a renewing of

the Holy Ghost.' When a house has become crazy and insecure, no repairs will do it any good. It must be taken down and built up again. Such a house is the heart of a sinner. It is past all repair. The leprosy of sin is ingrained in the walls of it. It must be taken down and built up again. This is the 'renewing of the Holy Ghost.' When there has been a long and severe winter the trees stand bare and leafless; they are in a manner dead, and cannot bear fruit. If the winter were to continue they would really die. But when summer breathes upon them again, the juicy sap ascends into the branches in full and mighty stream, 'the fig-tree puts forth its green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.' The face of the earth is renewed, Psal. civ. 30. Such a dead plant is the heart of a sinner. A Christless state is the winter of the soul. But when Christ is revealed, when the soul comes into the love of God, when the Spirit is sent forth into the heart, the soul becomes a new creature, and sings, 'I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.' Lastly, 'The Spirit is shed on us abundantly.' Christians often complain that there are few drops of the Spirit falling in our day. Alas, there is too great cause for this complaint. Yet in one view it is not true. Wherever there is a single believer, there the Spirit is shed *abundantly*. When I look at the whole world lying in wickedness, and the thousand snares laid for my soul in every path; when I listen to the roaring of the lion who walketh about seeking whom he may devour; and above all, when I look in upon the law in my members warring against the law of my mind, I am tempted to cry, 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.' If I had legions of angels on my side they could not hold me up. No created arm can keep me from falling. But Jesus says, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' He sheds the Holy Ghost abundantly. What a constant dropping of the rain, what a constant springing of the well, what a full inflowing of the river of God is needed to hold up my helpless soul. Glory to God for an indwelling Sanctifier. 'Now unto him who is able to keep me from falling, and to present me faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.'

## FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever,'* John xiv. 16.

How much of the majesty of Christ shines in these words! What a divine sweetness breathes in them! He knows his own mind, he knows the mind of his Father, he knows the mind of the Spirit, and, therefore, he speaks with a holy certainty. I will pray, the Father shall give, the Spirit will abide with you for ever. We should receive his words with the same sweet certainty as that with which they were spoken.

I. *Observe what Christ will do.* 'I will pray the Father.' This shows that Christ is not dead. He was dead, but he is now alive for evermore. The dead do not pray; the lips that are sealed in death are silent lips. But Jesus says, 'I will pray the Father.' He looks beyond his agony in the garden, and on the cross; he looks beyond his rocky sepulchre; and, as if he had nothing to do but to step into the presence of his Father, he says, 'I will pray the Father.'

Again, this shows the constancy of Christ's love. When a friend is going away to a far land—an 'inner friend'—a praying friend, we say to him as we are going to the ship, 'Now you will never forget us,' and he says, 'No I never will, I will pray for you.' O! such a friend is Christ. He is one born for adversity, a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. At times we are cast down when we think of his glory, and our meanness; of his being the very Sun of heaven, and we a vile worm on the earth; but be not faithless but believing. I will never forget you, he says, even when I am at the right hand of the Father, I will pray for you.

II. *Observe what the Father will do.* 'He shall give you another Comforter.' We learn from these words the certainty of the gift of the Holy Spirit. How confidently Jesus speaks, 'No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him.' If an angel had come and said, the 'Father shall give you another Comforter,' we might have doubted; for, how does an angel know what the Father will give? But Jesus is 'the true and faithful Witness,' he had 'come from God, and went to God,' and he says with a divine boldness, 'The Father shall give.' Ah! how many Christians seem never to have received the Comforter. How many have no sweet sense of forgiveness. How many have no close walk with God. Ministers constantly bless their flocks, saying, 'The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.' How few seem really

to possess it. Why is this? It is because of unbelief. You do not fully realize this truth, 'We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' You do not believe that the Father delights to give the Spirit, in answer to the prayer of his Son. You do not live upon that promise, Isa. xlix. 8. 'In an acceptable time have I heard thee.'

Again, observe that word, '*another Comforter.*' Jesus was the first Comforter. He came 'to comfort all that mourn;' his words were all 'good words, and comfortable words;' his blood was peace-speaking blood. He had comforted the disciples by the way, by the well, and on the stormy sea. But now he must go his way to him that sent him. He leaves this word behind, 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.' '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.' Enter into this argument, O my soul! He that gave the first Comforter for sinners will surely give the second Comforter to his dear children.

III. *Observe what the Comforter will do.* 'Abide with you for ever.' Jesus and his Spirit are one. He knew what is the mind of the Spirit. He also knew what is in man—the unbelieving, inconstant, unholy heart of man, and yet he says the Comforter shall abide with you for ever. Sometimes a young believer is cast down by this thought, 'How do I know that my faith shall not fail me; the veil of unbelief may cover my heart again, perhaps in the hour of temptation, perhaps in a dying hour.' Here is the answer, Jesus will pray, the Father will give, and the Comforter will abide with you for ever. Observe this in a singular instance, Luke xiii. 31. 'Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.' Be not afraid, only believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. He that was the Author will be the Finisher of your faith.

Sometimes a young believer is sadly cast down by a discovery of the plague of his own heart. When he looks into the smoking volcano that is in his own bosom, he begins to tremble lest after all he become a cast-away. Take these two directions: 1. Be humbled in the dust under your body of sin and death, but do not despair. Paul had the same, and all true Christians have the same. Make this resolution your own, 'Resolved never to give over, nor in the least to slacken my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be.' 2. Believe in

the Comforter. Keep your eye fixed on Christ, on his wounds out of which the blood flowed, that cleanseth from all sin; on his lips that pray so sweetly for his own, (Song v. 16). wait for 'that holy Spirit of promise.' He alone can make you holy; and he will do it, for faithful is he that promised.

'Beware of Peter's word  
Nor confidently say,  
I never will deny thee, Lord,  
But grant I never may.

'Man's wisdom is to seek  
His strength in God alone,  
And even an angel would be weak,  
Who trusted in his own.'

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?' Luke xi. 13.

Jesus desires all his disciples to pray for the Holy Spirit. He knows that we cannot believe at the first, nor continue believing without this precious gift. He knows that our soul cannot live, love, resist the devil, mortify the deeds of the body, nor overcome the world, without this living water; therefore does he urge his people to ask, seek, and knock. He is still saying to poor sinners, 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water,' John iv. 10.

I. *Earthly fathers, who are evil, give good gifts to their children.* This is a fact in human nature. The most wicked fathers are often kind to their offspring. In some countries it is true, Satan has shown his infernal power in destroying the parental affections, so that the Hindoo mother has been known to plunge her sickly infant into the Ganges, or even to hurry it, while yet alive, into a grave dug with her own hands, and to trample the ground over it with her own feet. 'The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.' In general, however, there is, even in the bosom of savage men, a chord of tenderest love toward their little ones. The wild Indian of America will bring home from the woods the most brilliant feather to deck the brow of his prattling boy; and the rude Greenlander will brave the icy blast to provide a scanty meal for his tender children. You must break a father's heart in pieces, before you can break asunder that mysterious bond of love that binds him to his

child. Earthly fathers who are evil give good gifts to their children.

II. *How much more shall God, who is a good Father, give the Holy Spirit.* God excels an earthly father in two respects:

1. *He is wise,* 'the only wise God.' Earthly fathers are short-sighted men. They do not know the wants of their children, nor do they know the best time and way of supplying these wants. They often give to their children when they should withhold, they pamper their humours, and spoil their dispositions; they often withhold when they should give, and provoke their children to fretfulness. But God is a wise Father. 'The Father of spirits' knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust. He knows our minutest wants, and he knows the very best time and way of supplying them. Above all, he knows our need of the Holy Spirit. He knows that we are naturally dead in trespasses and sins. He knows that a veil is over our hearts—he knows that our faith is weak—and that our enemies are too many for us, and too strong. He knows the temptations and afflictions to which we are called. He knows the manner and measure of the Spirit's help which we need to keep us from falling.

2. *God is love.* God has a natural love to a soul in Christ. Earthly fathers love their children, but O how coldly compared with God's love. In Isa. xlix. 15. it is preferred above a mother's love: '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.' There is no love in this world like a mother's love. It is a free, unbought, unselfish love. She cannot account for it. You cannot change it. You must break to pieces the mother's heart before you will change it. It is the fullest love with which a creature can love. She loves with all her heart. But the love of God to a soul in Christ is far above a mother's love. It is a love ingrained in his nature, and God must change before his love can change. It is a full love. The whole heart of the Father is as it were continually showered down in love upon the Lord Jesus. And when a sinner comes into Christ the same love rests upon that soul; (see John xvii. 26.) When the sun showers down its beams on the wide ocean, and on a little flower at the same time, it is the same sunshine that is poured into both, though the ocean has vastly larger capacity to receive its glorious beams. So when the Son of God receives the love of his Father, and a poor guilty worm hides in him, it is the same love

that comes both on the Saviour and the sinner, though Jesus is able to receive infinitely more. In Psal. ciii. 13, God's love is compared to a father's love: 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' His love combines all the tenderness of a mother's, and all the wisdom of a father's love. How surely then will he give the Holy Spirit to every one of his children that ask him. Far more surely than an earthly father gives bread to his hungry children. This is good news for my weary soul. I am like David in the wilderness, (Psal. lxxiii. title,) 'My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. 'My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me.' All my grace comes from thee. Thou didst begin the good work in me when I was an enemy, wilt thou not carry it on, now that I am a child? Thou didst pour down the Spirit when I was like the dry ground, wilt thou not water me every moment now that I am a plant, though a feeble one, of thine own planting? Hear the divine answer, O my soul, and be still! 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel,' Hosea xiv. 4, 5.

'Come holy, holy, holy, Lord,  
The Father, Son, and Spirit come,  
Be mindful of thy changeless word,  
And make the faithful soul thy home.'

#### SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord;  
and great shall be the peace of thy children.'  
Isa. liv. 13.

WHEN the Jews are brought again to Zion, and converted to God, they will be an example of a people, 'all taught of the Lord.' God says, Jer. xxxi. 34. 'They shall all know me, from the least of them even unto the greatest of them.' And again, Isa. lx. 21. 'Thy people shall be *all* righteous.' They are to be the first example of a 'righteous nation.' In some of our well-ordered parishes, we see a people all taught of man; but, ah! how much ignorance, deceit, and wickedness are lying below the surface. But all the children of Zion shall be taught of the Lord, and, therefore, they will be a people of great peace, and great holiness.

Such is the case of spiritual Zion at this moment. They are all taught, not of man, nor of angel, but of the Lord, and their peace passeth all understanding.

1. *Meditate on the great teacher, the Lord.* He alone knows divine things as they are. Ministers have but glimpses into the eternal world. They see but little of sin, of the shortness of time, of the depth of hell, of the love of God, of the person, work, and grace of Christ. Therefore they cannot teach effectually. Books also are infinitely imperfect. The best of them are but sparks from the bible, mingled with human darkness. But the Lord knows all things as they are. 'All things are naked and laid open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' He knows our infinite guilt; hell and destruction are before him. He knows the Son. 'No man knoweth the Son but the Father.' He knows, 'The love of Christ, that passeth knowledge.' He then can make it known. O my soul hast thou been taught of the Lord! Again, he alone can teach the heart. Man can speak to the ear, to the understanding, to the memory, God alone to the heart. The reason why human teaching does not convey saving light to the soul is, that the heart is dead. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and against everything that comes from God; and, therefore, when the truth is presented, the worldly heart draws the mind away from beholding it. But when the Lord is teaching, he touches the heart, and it melts under his hand. He awakens concern in the dead soul, so that the person runs to hear the word preached. He makes the soul willing in the day of his power. He makes salvation, by Christ, clear to the mind, and sweet to the heart, in the same happy moment. None can teach like God. He can teach a child, or an idiot, or an old man. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? 'O send forth thy light and thy truth, let them lead me, let them guide me.'

2. *What is divine teaching?* It is not mere head-knowledge of divine things. Many have great knowledge of the bible, have read it all, studied much of it, learned much of it by heart; they know the Catechism well, they have a just notion of divinity; some have great knowledge of books, of Boston, and Willison, and Flavel; some may be great judges of sermons, able to discriminate between legal and evangelical preachers; alas! all this may be, and more, without one spark of divine teaching. Alas! how many ministers have there been like the finger-post that points the way, but does not go. No doubt Judas had a clear knowledge of divinity, and could preach well, yet Jesus said he was a devil. We know that Satan has great knowledge of the bible, and yet he only trembles.

What then is divine teaching? It is God giving the soul a sense of the wondrous beauty,

excellence, and sweetness of the way of salvation by Christ. 'Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' Take an example in one of the most eminent saints that ever lived. 'The first instance that I remember, of that sort of inward sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading these words, 1 Tim. i. 17. "Now, unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." As I read these words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the divine Being; a new sense, quite different from anything I ever experienced before. Never any words of scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever! I kept saying, and as it were singing over these words of scripture to myself; and went to pray to God that I might enjoy him; and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do, with a new sort of affection. But it never came into my thought that there was anything spiritual or of a saving nature in this. From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by him. An inward sweet sense of these things, at times, came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them.'

Ah! this is divine teaching. This is the teaching that brings us to the foot of Christ, like the woman which was a sinner. Before, we are perplexed about coming to Christ, believing on Christ, closing with Christ; but now it is all sweet and easy; we cannot but believe on Jesus. This is teaching that fills the bosom with all joy and peace. It gives 'great peace,' 'peace like a river,' 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' This is the teaching that sanctifies. A man may have the head-knowledge of an angel, and the heart of a devil. But when God touches the heart he makes all things new.

'Behold! I change all human things,  
Saieth he whose words are true,  
Lo! what was old is passed away,  
And all things are made new.'

## SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'* Eph. ii. 8.

Most men try to lay God under debt to save them. They work for salvation instead of working from it. They 'go about to establish their own righteousness.' In this way worldly people seek eternal life: 'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?' John vi. 28. Although in words they renounce all pretence of any worth in themselves or in their duties, yet they have a secret hope of recommending themselves to God by their decency, sobriety, and religious performances. In this way those who have a little concern for their souls, like the young ruler, seek for eternal life: 'Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?' Matt. xix. 16. His earnest desire was to make himself appear righteous before God. In this way, also, those who are under the deepest concern often wander in search of pardon and peace. Perhaps there may be traces of this feeling in the anxious question of the poor jailor, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved,' Acts xvi. 30; and in the piercing cry of the prostrate Saul, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Acts ix. 6. Certain it is that self-righteousness is the worst and longest-lived viper in the human breast. Most men under convictions are very unwilling to throw away all *self-confidence*. They are not willing to despair of ever being fair in the sight of God in themselves. They shrink back from the idea of being lost and undone, for anything that they can do. They do not like to venture to lie helpless and without a plea at the feet of a sovereign God. How solemn to a sinner in such a state should these words be, 'By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God!'

I. *Salvation is by grace.* When a man chooses an apple off a tree, he generally chooses the ripest, the one that promises best. It is not so with God in choosing the soul he saves. He does not choose those that have sinned least, those that are most willing to be saved; he often chooses the vilest of men, 'to the praise of the glory of his grace.' This is proved by the instances given in the Bible of brands plucked out of the burning. Why did God choose Manasseh, who 'caused his children to pass through the fire,' set 'a carved image in the house of God,' and filled Jerusalem with the blood of holy men, while many of his deluded people, who had sinned far less, perished? 2 Chron. xxxiii. Why did

God save Zaccheus the hoary-headed swindler, 'the chief of the publicans?' Luke xix. 1—10. Why did Jesus tell the Pharisees, 'the publicans, and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you? Why did Jesus enter into the pearly gates of paradise with a poor thief, who had never done anything but sin up to his last hour? Luke xxiii. 43, comp. Matt. xxvii. 44. Why did he leave the other thief, who was no worse than his fellow (both were hell-deserving), to sink into perdition within an arm's length of an Almighty Saviour? All these things happened unto them for ensamples, to show us that God saves according to the good pleasure of his will, not for our goodness, but to show his own free adorable grace.

The same thing is proved by the experience of every child of God. Who that has ever 'tasted that the Lord is gracious,' does not feel a response in their bosom to the declaration of a simple believer, 'Had he not chosen me before I was born, he had never seen reason to choose me afterwards.' There was nothing in me to attract the love of God. 'Behold, even to the moon and it shineth not, yea, the stars are not pure in his sight; how much less man that is a worm, and the son of man which is a worm.' He loves what is pure, holy, heavenly; but 'I am carnal, sold under sin.' There was everything in me to drive God away. 'God is angry with the wicked every day,' Psal. vii. 11. He was angry with me. His whole nature abhorred me, for I was under Adam's sin; I was shapen in iniquity; every member of my body, every faculty of my soul, had been only the servant of sin. Yet he came over all these mountains to my soul. I said, Art thou come to torment me before the time? I desire not the knowledge of thy ways. But he made me willing in the day of his power. Glory, glory, glory, to the Father who chose me, the Son who died for me, and the Spirit who quickened me. Salvation is of the Lord, and it is all of grace.

II. *Salvation is through faith.* When David Brainerd was under conviction of sin, the corruption of his heart was dreadfully irritated by this, that faith alone was the condition of salvation. Of this very text he used to say, 'It is a hard saying: who can bear it?' Another thing that kept him in misery was this, 'I could not find out what faith was, or what it was to believe, and come to Christ. I read the calls of Christ to the weary and heavy laden, but could find no way that he directed them to come in.' This is a difficulty which almost every inquiring sinner feels. It is probable that Satan often uses it as

a fiery dart to keep poor sinners away from Christ. The only way really to know what faith is, is to experience it. In one part of the word it is described as '*knowing*.' 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,' John xvii. 3. A true realizing knowledge of God, and of Christ as the sent of God, is saving faith. Have I this knowledge, O my soul? I was born like a wild ass's colt. God was not in all my thoughts. I did not like to retain God in my knowledge. But it pleased God to reveal his Son in me. Flesh and blood could not reveal Him unto me, but my Father who is in heaven. He has opened to me the way of salvation, so that I see its wisdom, excellency, and freeness. I cannot but believe, and this I humbly trust is that faith which is the gift of God.

Again, it is described as *discovering the beauty and excellency of Christ*: 'In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel,' Isa. iv. 2. A real discovery of the glory, suitableness, and freeness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the soul, is saving faith. Natural men know what it is to get a discovery of a beautiful countenance, and the natural heart immediately glows with admiration. None but believers know what it is to get a discovery of the fair face of him who is 'fairer than the children of men,' and to have the heart filled with all joy and peace in believing. Has this discovery been made to me? Can I say, 'Whom, having not seen, I love; in whom, though now I see him not, but believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Once I saw no form nor comeliness in Jesus, no beauty that I should desire him. But he came like a roe or a young hart, leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills. He stood behind our wall, he looked in at the window, *showing himself* through the lattice. He showed me his hands and his feet pierced for sinners. He showed me that there was room beneath his shining righteousness. He showed me his heart, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and now I cannot but say, He is to me beautiful and glorious, excellent and comely. If there were ten thousand other ways of pardon, I would pass them all by, and flee to him. He is altogether lovely. This I trust is saving faith, which is the gift of God.

'Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!)

That saved a wretch like me:

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

'Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.'

SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' John i. 12.

WHEN the Lord of glory came to this world, the most despised and rejected him. Yet all did not. Isaiah cried, 'Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' And yet in a few verses after he adds, 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied,' Isa. liii. 1, 11. In like manner, John in this chapter tells us, that when Jesus came, 'the darkness comprehended him not; 'the world knew him not; 'his own received him not.' Still, a little flock did receive him. Their eyes were opened to behold his glory, their hearts to feel his love. They left their earthly all, and followed him, they hung upon his lips, kept his sayings, walked in his steps, put on his righteousness, drank in his spirit; and 'to them he gave power to become the sons of God.' There always has been, and always will be, a hidden church. As David was never to want a son to sit upon his throne, so David's Son and David's Lord never shall want souls over which to reign. As in Noah's day of almost universal corruption, and in Elijah's day of dark idolatry, there were some hidden ones that knew and loved the Lord; so in our day, in the darkest parishes of Scotland, you will find some hearts that kindle at the name of Jesus. In countries sunk in the darkness of popery, you will find some heaven-taught souls groping their way to heaven by the strait gate and the narrow way. Christ will never want a vineyard on earth on which to show his love and care. He will never want a witnessing church to proclaim his grace. 'Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Matt. xvi. 18.

How clearly these words show that to receive Christ is the same as to believe on his name. Many souls find great difficulty in knowing what faith is. Satan seems to make great use of this in some hearts, in order that he may divert their anxious soul from the great object of faith to look at the workings of their own mind. The

Bible makes no difficulty in the matter. At one time it is described as *coming* to Jesus: 'I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst,' John vi. 35. Again, it is called a *laying hold*: 'Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us,' Heb. vi. 18. In another scripture it is called *submitting*: 'They have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God,' Rom. x. 3. In other parts of the word of God it is called *looking to Jesus*, *calling* upon the name of the Lord, *hearing* that the soul may live, *knowing*, *cleaving* to the Lord. In one and all of these the meaning of God is, that the heart is made willing to be justified through the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus. O! it is the truest and most lasting joy in the universe when Christ is fully revealed to the soul, and when the excellency of the way of salvation by Christ is made manifest; the heart is often so filled that the tongue cannot speak. It is 'joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

Sinner, have you received the Lord Jesus Christ? Has your heart melted at the sight of the heaven-provided Saviour? Have you known the gift of God? Have you seen and delighted in the *finished work* of Christ? If Christ had to come and die, you might say, perhaps he will not go through with it. But he has done it. It is more than eighteen hundred years since he agonized in Gethsemane, and poured out his soul upon the cross. 'It is finished.' His whole work, as Surety in the place of sinners, is finished. The whole undertaking is completed. Nay more, God has accepted it. He has declared it from heaven: 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,'—and that any sinner is welcome to draw near by Jesus. O! I am willing to be found in Jesus, let your soul reply; I am willing to stand under the shelter of the one Mediator to all eternity. What satisfies God satisfies me. 'Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died.'

But what good shall I obtain by receiving Christ? Hear the divine answer: 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' An awakened soul is seeking only rest, peace with God, forgiveness of sins. But Christ gives far more. He gives the child's place in the father's love. We are by nature children of the wrath, a generation of vipers, children of the wicked one; but the moment we consent to put on the glorious righteousness of Immanuel we become adopted sons of God: 'God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.'

Sinner! do you know what it is that God offers you in the gospel? Though you are a viper, under the curse of the broken law, and your heart more like Satan than God, yet the holy God offers you a place in his bosom. He sent forth his Son to make room for you, to take you into the son's place. He cast out his dearly beloved Son, that he might enfold you in his arms. What are all the joys of sin compared with this? What are earthly titles compared to this? Sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Surely you must be deceived by the god of this world, if you are willing to remain a child of the devil rather than become a child of God.

There is still fuller blessing contained in these words. Those who receive Christ receive power to become adopted sons. This is blessed, this is wonderful. But those who receive Christ receive power to become real sons—sons by a new birth. It is good to be an adopted son, but ah! to be a real son of God, having the same spirit, features, joys, this is the full bliss of being a Christian. When a rich man adopts a beggar boy into his family, and takes him for a son, he not only clothes him, and feeds him, but he educates him as his child. He puts him under a teacher to rid him of old habits, to put a new spirit in him, the spirit of his own child. This is what God does with all that receive Christ. When a sinner flees to Christ, God not only puts the best robe on him, and embraces him, and seats him at his table, but he sends forth the Spirit of his Son into his heart. The same almighty Spirit that dwelleth in his own bosom, and in his Son, the Spirit that was given to Jesus without measure, he sends into the poor pardoned sinner's heart, to make him a son indeed, 'born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Surely if men knew what God is willing to do for them in Christ, they could not so lightly esteem the Rock of their salvation. O sinner! God is willing to take out your old alienated heart, and to give you the heart of one of his own weaned children. He is willing to give you the Spirit of Christ, to change you into his image, to make you like him now and in eternity. Surely it may be said to every soul that despiseth Christ, 'Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?' Jer. xiii. 27.

'Lo! his clothing is the sun,  
The bright Sun of righteousness,  
He hath put salvation on,  
Jesus is his beauteous dress.

'Lo! he feeds on living bread,  
Drinks the fountain from above,  
Leans on Jesus Christ his head,  
Feasts for ever on his love.'

## SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.'* Mark ix. 24.

How very small was the faith with which this man came to Christ. It was like a grain of mustard seed. Twice we read of Jesus expressing wonder at the great faith of the poor worms that applied to him. When the centurion came to him in behalf of his beloved servant who was sick, he believed that Christ was willing and able to heal him, though he lay beneath a sinful roof. 'Jesus marvelled at so great faith,' Matt. viii. 5—13. When the Syro-phenician woman cried after him in behalf of her child, she would not be turned back by his long silence, or by his seemingly rough words; she saw deep into his heart of grace, and waited for an answer of peace, till Jesus cried, 'O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt,' Matt. xv. 21—28.

Another time a leper came, and as he kneeled said, 'Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean.' This was little faith. He believed the power of Jesus; he was not sure of his willingness. He thought he might be willing, for he came and applied to him; still he was not sure, and said, 'If thou wilt.' With holy majesty Jesus rebuked his unbelief, and granted his desire: 'I will, be thou clean,' Matt. viii. 3. But far weaker than all these was the faith of this unhappy father; 'If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.' Alas, that ever such words should be spoken to the Lord of glory. He in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways—He by whom all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth—He whose name is Jehovah-Rophi, 'The Lord that healeth thee,' was standing before him, and yet his faith could reach no higher than that, 'If thou canst do anything.' And yet Jesus did not cast the unbelieving man away from him. Jesus never can deny that word, 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' He sent him home a happy father with his child made whole. These things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. How evil unbelief appears in another, and yet how little do I perceive the same dishonouring thoughts of Christ when they lurk in my own bosom. I feel as if I never could use such language to Jehovah-Jesus; and yet how many times in the day I doubt both his love and his power. How often, when guilt is on my conscience, I doubt whether he be entirely willing to be the Mediator between God and such a sinful

wretch as me. How often, in an hour of temptation, when the passions are roused, I doubt whether he be able to subdue such a heart as mine. How often these words are the language of my heart: 'If thou canst do anything, have compassion on me, and help me.' And yet for all our unbelief, he doth not send us empty away. Faith, as a grain of mustard seed, obtains everlasting benefits, Luke xvii. 6. Do not let me then keep away from Christ, because my faith is small. Though he had to call his disciples, 'Ye of little faith,' yet that did not hinder him from rebuking the winds and the sea for them, and there was a great calm, Matt. viii. 26. In like manner though my name may be, 'Thou of little faith,' to the end of life's troubled journey, yet will I go to him with such faith as I have, and he will in no wise cast me out.

But observe the prayer of the anxious father, 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.' O! surely this was a groan dictated by the Spirit of supplications. Never was prayer better timed, or better expressed. The Author of faith stood before him—to whom could he go for faith but unto Christ? Faith is the gift of Jehovah Jesus, John xvii. 2. He in his kingly power, riding through the world, sends out his arrows, and brings down the people under him, Psal. xlv. 5. He not only brings gold for our ransom, and white raiment to cover our nakedness, but he brings in his hand, to the door of sinners, eye-salve to anoint our eyes, that we may see, Rev. iii. 18. He was not only wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for iniquities, but he bids us reach forward our finger, that he may guide it into the prints of the nails, and reach forward our hand, that he may guide it to his wounded side. He was not only the Rock cleft for sinners, but by his Almighty power he puts us into the cleft of the rock, and hides us there, Exod. xxxiii. 22.

Would that all the church of Christ were taught this prayer, 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief,' or that other, 'Increase our faith,' Luke xvii. 5. Two precious things are contained in it. A sense of our want of faith, and a clear knowledge of the fountain whence living faith must flow. Few people know how small their faith is. In a Christian land, sitting under a lively ministry, surrounded by warm-hearted Christian friends, the feelings are fanned into a glow, and the believer thinks that his faith is strong and full. But let providence call that believer to a foreign land, where—

'The sound of the church-going bell  
These valleys and rocks never heard,  
Never sighed at the sound of a knell,  
Nor smiled when a sabbath appeared.'

Let him wander among those that never pray to Jesus, like Abraham in the land of the Canaanites, or let him lie on a sick bed with none to wait on him that know the Saviour, then he will begin to learn by sad experience that warm feelings are not faith—that faith in Jesus is like a grain of mustard seed in his bosom. O it is a painful but a blessed lesson to be taught how weak our faith is. It makes us trust less to our feelings, and less to friends, and makes us cleave closer to Christ as our all in all.

But if it be good to know how little faith we have, it is better far to know what an overflowing fountain Jesus is. He is 'Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.' He is 'the Author and the Finisher of our faith.' He anointed our eyes at the first, and made us see men as trees walking. He alone can anoint them more fully, that we may see all things clearly. He alone can help our unbelief. He can cover all the sin of it, for O it is crimson sin. He can remove it by fuller discoveries of himself. 'My Beloved is like a roe, or a young hart.' On Judah's hills the gazelle bounds with amazing ease and graceful swiftness over the most rugged rocks. It is its very nature to spring from crag to crag. So easily, swiftly, and agreeably to his gracious nature does the Lord Jesus reveal himself to the souls that wait for him. Often by a single visit the unbelief of half a lifetime vanishes, and the soul cries out with adoring joy, 'My Lord, and my God.' Wait on the Lord Jesus, O doubting soul. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart. 'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord,' Lam. iii. 20. Often look beyond the blue sky to him who sits on the right hand of God, and cry out with tears, 'Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief.'

'Lord, thou canst heal me if thou wilt,  
For thou canst all things do,  
O cleanse my leprous soul from guilt,  
My filthy heart renew.

'He heard, and with a gracious look,  
Pronounced the healing word,  
"I will—be clean," and while he spoke,  
I felt my health restored.

'Come, lepers, seize the present hour,  
The Saviour's grace to prove,  
He can relieve, for he is power;  
He will, for he is love.'

## EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.'* Eph. iii. 16—19.

How remarkable are the prayers of Paul! He used to pray for individuals whom he loved by name. Without ceasing, the names of Timothy and Philemon were upon his heart, 2 Tim. i. 3; Phil. iv. He prayed for believers whom he had never seen, Col. i. 9; ii. 1. He prayed for all true saints, Eph. vi. 18, 24. He wrestled with continual sorrow of heart for the Jews, Rom. ix. 1; x. 1. In how remarkable a manner he prayed, 'without ceasing,' 'day and night,' 'with joy,' 'with thanksgiving,' with humility 'bowing his knees.' How large were his requests! He opens his mouth wide, that God may fill it. In Rom. xv. 13. he prays: 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.' In 1 Thess. v. 23. he prays: 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly,' &c. So in these words he asks for amazing gifts. God only can fully comprehend the vast meaning of such a prayer. The words of man seem to be too narrow to express his large desires. These are 'groanings that cannot be uttered,' the intercession of the Spirit through the mind and heart of Paul. None but God could have given such a prayer, and none but God could answer it.

O that all ministers could pray like Paul. Probably no man ever lived who was the means of saving so many souls as Paul. Probably no minister was ever made the instrument of bringing his people to such a height of holiness as Paul. How was this? Look at his prayers for an answer. Consider their frequency, their urgency, their vastness. It was on his knees Paul fought the good fight of faith, and obtained grace for his own soul, and for all the churches. Such a man would be a blessing to the whole world. 'O Lord, teach us to pray.'

There are three principal petitions here, each one growing out of the other.

1. Consider the last petition, ver. 19. 'That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.' This is the sum and end of all his prayers for them. Indeed it is the chief end of man. The great object of the gospel is to bring poor empty sin-

ners to be filled with all the fulness of God, to be like an empty vessel cast into a vast ocean, to be filled with all the fulness of his love, of his presence, of his Spirit, of his joy, of his likeness. This Adam would have been had he persevered in holiness. This we become when united to Christ, and shall be to all eternity. This David panted after, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God,' Psal. xlii. 2. This David, in some measure, enjoyed: 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth whom I desire beside thee,' Psal. lxxiii. 25. Certain it is that the believer's God can draw near, and reveal himself, and fill the soul in a way that worldly men never thought of. He can fill the heart with a *sense of his love*. One dear Christian could say, 'My soul hath been compassed about with the terrors of death, the sorrows of hell were upon me, and a wilderness of woe was in me, but blessed, blessed, blessed be the Lord my God, he hath brought me to a place of rest, even to the sweet running waters of life.' Another dear Christian, of whom President Edwards writes, experienced such clear and lively views of Christ that 'her soul did, as it were, swim in the rays of Christ's love like a little mote swimming in the beams of the sun that come in at a window.' The same person, speaking upon the most deliberate consideration, could say, that 'what was enjoyed in a single minute of the whole space, which was many hours, was worth more than all the outward comfort and pleasure of the whole life put together.' O! that Christians now were filled with these drops of the fulness of God. He can fill the soul with *his holiness*. A natural man has not a spark of God's holiness. He may be pleasant, amiable, and of a natural integrity, but he has none of the 'living water.' The moment a soul is united to Christ, the same Holy Spirit who dwells in the bosom of the Father dwells also in him. 'I will put my Spirit within you,' Ezek. xxxvi. 27. The believer becomes 'a partaker of the divine nature,' 2 Pet. i. 4. He becomes 'a partaker of his holiness,' Heb. xii. 10. He does not become as holy as God, but the same stream that flows through the divine bosom flows through the soul that is one with Jesus. O to be holy as he is holy, blessed as he is blessed, pure as Christ is pure. O to be filled with all the fulness of God.

2. Consider the second petition, ver. 17—19. 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth know-

ledge.' This appears to be one vast petition expressed twice over, that they may have a calm, abiding, realizing view of Christ and his love. If any man were to ask, How shall I come to be filled with the fulness of God? The answer will be found in this prayer; you must come first to an abiding believing knowledge of 'the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.' Keep the eye of faith continually fixed on Jesus, on his glorious person, 'fairer than the children of men;' on Jesus your Prophet, having 'the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to them that are weary;' on Jesus your Priest, 'through the eternal Spirit offering himself without spot unto God;' on Jesus your King, reigning from sea to sea in the hearts of his own, and winning many crowns in the conversion of sinners. Behold him, behold him. Keep your eye and heart upon him, keep the arms of faith around him, so 'that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith.' A tree takes a firm hold of the ground by its thousand roots; the winds shake but cannot remove it, so let your heart 'be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ,' then you may calmly view the vastness of that love. When a man is first awakened he does not know much of his sin, and cannot know much of the love of Christ; but when rooted and grounded in Christ, and the Spirit breathes in the heart, he then begins to comprehend with all saints, and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. Observe 'the breadth and length of it:' 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us,' Psal. ciii. 12. Compare Lev. xvi. 22. So broad and so long is the love of Jesus. Observe the depth of it: 'He being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself,' &c., Phil. ii. 6. Measure from the throne of glory to the cross of Calvary, or to the rocky sepulchre—so deep was the love of Christ. Observe the height of it: 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne,' Rev. iii. 21. Measure how far it is from the lowest hell to the throne to which Christ will raise us; so high was the love of Christ. 'It passeth knowledge.' It is like a vast ocean, and our heart is like a little creek upon the shore; we embrace the ocean, but we cannot measure it; we shall know more of it in eternity; we never shall know it all, for 'it passeth knowledge;' and it gives 'a peace that passeth all understanding.'

3. Observe the first petition, ver. 16. 'That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' If any man were to ask, How

shall I come to that abiding believing knowledge of the love of Christ? The answer is to be found in this petition. The Father must grant you his free Spirit. Every word is precious—'That he would grant you.' The gift of the Spirit at first is of free grace. When he breathes on the dry bones in the open valley, it is of freest mercy. And so every further work of the Spirit on the heart is of free grace. O what need have we to pray, 'Cast me not from thy presence, neither take thy Holy Spirit away from me.'

But has God enough to supply our need? Yes, he has 'riches of his glory,' unsearchable riches. Just as he has inexhaustible treasures of rain and dew to water every green herb, so he has infinite treasures of the Spirit all ready to be poured into the hearts of his needy people. But what will his Spirit do for me? 'He will strengthen you with might in the inner man.' Your eye is dim, and cannot see afar off. He will anoint it that you may see the King in his beauty. Your heart is dead and stony. He will quicken and soften it that eternal things may impress you. Your faith is like a bruised reed. He will strengthen you with might, so that you shall hold Christ, and not let him go. It is true of the Spirit as of the Father, that 'he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.'

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EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,'*  
1 Cor. i. 9.

THE anxieties of a faithful pastor never end in this world. First he is anxious that his people be brought to Christ, and then he is anxious that they be kept abiding in him to the end. What a fountain of consolation is this text while he looks upon those, of whom in his heart he has the sweet persuasion that they are 'sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints,' and repeats these words in his heart, 'God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ.' It is this sweet truth, the faithfulness of our covenant God, that is a rock to the pastor's soul, and makes him feel that those who are now 'dearly beloved, and longed for,' will soon be 'his joy and crown.' But not only to the pastor, to the flock also, especially in time of temptation, affliction, and desertion, these words are like 'the snow of Lebanon, or the cold flowing waters from another place.' Sometimes it

pleases God to withdraw his comfortable presence from the soul, chiefly to humble us in the dust, to discover some unmortified corruption, or to lead us to hunger more vehemently after him. Such was David's state when he said in his heart, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul,' 1 Sa. xxvii. 1. And again, when he wrote the 42nd psalm. Such was the feeling of Job when he said, 'the arrows of the Almighty are within me;' and again, 'Oh that it were with me 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,' Job xxix. 2, 3. In such an hour as this, when the feeling of distance from God is almost insupportable, ah! how cheering, how full of nourishment, what a heavenly cordial may this word in the hand of the Spirit be: 'God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.'

*I. Believers are called to share with Christ.*

To have fellowship with another, is to have things in common with him. Thus in Acts iv. 32, it is said of the first Christians, that they were 'of one heart and of one soul, neither said any that ought of the things which he possessed were his own, but they had all things in common.' They had all their goods in common, they shared all they had with one another. This is what John desired to see amongst Christians in spiritual things, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us,' 1 John i. 3. The same expression is used here, 'Ye are called unto the fellowship of his Son.' How strange, that a creature of sin and shame should be called to share with God's dear Son. Yet so it is; he shared our flesh and blood with us, that we might share his throne with him.

*1. We share with the Son in his justification.*

Once Jesus was unjustified. Once there were millions of sins laid to his charge. Men, devils, nay, even his holy Father, hurled their fierce accusations at him. He stood silent. He could not answer a word. Although 'he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;' yet he had agreed to bear the sins of many, and therefore, he was dumb under every accusation. 'It was exacted, and he was made answerable.' This was his chief agony in the garden, and on the cross, that at the bar of God he was unjustified; 'He was numbered with the transgressors.' His only comfort was, 'He is near that justifieth me,' Isa. l. 8. He knew that his trial would be short and that he would overcome. The hour of darkness is now past. The wrath of God has all

fallen upon him. The thunder clouds have spent their lightnings on his head. The vials of God's anger have emptied their last drops upon him. He is now justified from all the sins that were laid upon him. He will bear the scars to all eternity, Rev. v. 6; but not another drop of agony shall ever fall upon his soul. When he comes a second time it is 'without sin,' Heb. ix. 28. Have you the Son? Do you believe the record that God has given concerning his Son? Do you with purpose of heart cleave to the Lord Jesus? then you share with him in his justification. You suffered in his suffering, you obeyed in his obedience, you died in his death. You are as much justified as Christ is. You have as little to do with the guilt of your past sins as Christ has. There is as little guilt lying upon you as upon God's dear Son. The vials of wrath have not another drop for Christ, and not another drop for you. 'By Jesus all that believe are justified from all things,' Acts xiii. 39.

*2. We share with the Son in his Father's love.*

When Jesus was about to leave this world, he said to his disciples, 'I leave the world and go to the Father.' When he died he cried, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' When he entered into heaven, and passed up the opening ranks of the adoring angels, the Father said, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;' as if he had said, Never till this time did I see thee so worthy to be called my Son. Ah! it was a blessed exchange when he left the frowns and curses of the world for the embrace of his Father's arms; when he came from under the outpoured wrath of God into his full eternal love and smile; when he left the crown of thorns for the crown of glory. Such is the change of every poor sinner in the moment that he is persuaded and enabled to embrace Christ. Dost thou believe with all thine heart that Jesus is the Son of God? Can you say you have fled for refuge to Christ? Then you share with Christ in his Father's love. Christ says, 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God,' John xx. 17. God is as much your Father as he is Christ's Father. Your God as Christ's God. The Father loves you with the same full, unchanging, soul-satisfying love, with which he loves Jesus, (see that never to be forgotten prayer, John xvii. 26.) Oh! what a blessed change for an heir of hell to become an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ,' John viii. 17. For one who deserved, and still deserves, to share with the devil and his angels, to share with Christ that sits at the right hand of God. Oh! to inherit God, to have a son's interest in God! Eternity alone can reveal the full meaning of

that word, 'Heir of God, and joint heir with Christ.'

II. *God is faithful to souls in Christ.* 'God is faithful, by whom ye are called unto the fellowship of his Son.' When a soul is in affliction, temptation, or desertion, his cry is, 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me.' Sometimes this feeling approaches to actual despair. Here is a rock for the soul to lean upon, 'Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' and 'God is faithful' who called us to share with Christ. Harken to the voice of the great shepherd, 'My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' Satan desires to have you. The world are laying snares for you. Your own wicked heart would sometimes be for leaving the hand that has saved you. But 'none is able to pluck you out of the Father's hand.' Harken to the Father's own word, 'Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away,' Isa. xli. 9. The soul united to Jesus is not like the grass, but like the palm tree. Even in old age he shall bear fruit, he shall be full of sap and flourishing. 'To show that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him,' Psal. xcii. 15. At the very time when Zion was saying, 'My God hath forgotten me,' God had her walls engraven on his hands, Isa. xlix. 16. Look still to Jesus, oh! deserted soul. The love of God shines unchangeably on him. Abide in him and you will abide in the Father's love. Your afflictions may only prove that you are more immediately under the Father's hand. There is no time that the patient is such an object of tender interest to the surgeon, as when he is bleeding beneath his knife. So you may be sure if you are suffering from the hand of a reconciled God, that his eye is all the more bent on you. 'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'

'If ever it should come to pass  
That sheep of Christ might fall away;  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!  
Would fall a thousand times a day.  
Were not thy love as firm as free,  
Thou soon would'st take it Lord from me.'

## NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,' 2 Tim. i. 9.

THERE are two ways in which men are called to believe the gospel. There is an outward and an inward calling, an earthly and a heavenly calling. All believers are 'partakers of the heavenly calling,' Heb. iii. 1.

The outward call comes to all who hear the gospel sound: 'Many are called, but few chosen.' Every time the church bell rings it is a call. It says, 'Come away sinner, thy sabbaths are numbered. Eternity is at hand. God's people are hastening to the house of God, God's stewards are dealing out the bread of life. Sinner do not stay behind; Jesus is ringing for thee, inviting thee, wooing thee. If thou wouldst but listen, it would sound as joyfully as a marriage bell.' Ah! there are multitudes in Scotland who hear no more of the gospel than the bell, and that will be enough to condemn them in the great day. *The open church door* is a call. It seems to say, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.' 'Go ye to them that sell, and buy for yourselves,' lest the bridegroom come and the door be shut.

Come in, come in,  
Eternal glory thou wilt win.'

*The lighted windows* of the church at evening are a solemn call. They cry in your ears, 'Jesus is the light of the world.' 'Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.' Jesus hath lighted a candle, and is sweeping the house, and seeking diligently to find lost pieces of silver. *The village spire* that points the way to heaven, is a silent call. It says, Look up stedfastly into heaven, and see the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. 'Seek those things which are above. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.' *The voice of the preacher* is a call. It says, 'Repent and believe the gospel, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 'We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.' *Every tract* given in at your door is a divine call. It says, 'I have a message from God unto thee.' 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' *Every leaf of your Bible* is a call. 'It says, Search the

scriptures.' I am able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. I am given by inspiration of God, and am profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. *The death of every unconverted friend* is a loud call. It says, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' 'It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment.' 'Prepare to meet thy God.' It may truly be said of every sinner that shall read these words, that you are *now* called, warned, invited to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on Christ set before you. If you have not got enough to save you, you have enough to condemn you.

But all who are in Christ have received the inward call. All, who like Timothy, have 'unfeigned faith,' and have received 'the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,' have been 'saved and called with a holy calling.' This is the work of the Holy Spirit; and therefore it is called a *holy calling*. It is the call of the unseen Almighty Spirit who sweetly inclines the will, and melts the heart of the sinner. It is therefore a *saving call*. When Jesus said to Matthew, 'follow me,' the Spirit breathed upon his heart, and made him willing: 'He arose and followed Jesus.' When Paul preached to the Thessalonians, he gave the outward call. Had Paul stood alone, they would have remained as hard as the rocks that dash back the waves of the Ægean sea. But the Spirit breathed upon their hearts, and so the gospel came not unto them in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance,' 1 Thess. i. 5. When Paul preached at Philippi by the river's side, many a Grecian matron had the outward call. His words fell pleasantly upon their ears. Still all remained unmoved but one; one heart was opened, a foreigner whose dark eye told that she came from the sunny plains of Asia. 'The Lord opened the heart of Lydia,' Acts xvi. 14.

O sinner! do not think that your reading or hearing the gospel will of itself save your soul. Do not think that because you have a Bible, a minister, and a place in the house of God, that you are therefore on the way to heaven. Remember God must save you, and call you with an holy calling. If you are not quickened from above, your outward calls will only be the savour of death unto death to your soul. It will be one of the chief miseries of hell to remember the texts and sermons that you heard on earth, when you would not come to Christ and have life.

Bless God, you who have been 'saved and called with an holy calling,' for it is 'not according to your works, but according to his purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' Every saved soul can say, 'He hath not dealt with me after my sins, nor rewarded me according to mine iniquities.' He has called me out of darkness into marvellous light, from under wrath and curse to pardon and peace with God, from death unto life. How many he has passed by that were no worse than me. But he has been willing to make known the riches of his glory on me, a vessel of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory. How sure my sinful soul is of glory. He calls *from* heaven, and calls *to* heaven. 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' 'Bless the Lord, O my soul.' Now I may sing with Toplady,

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

#### NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

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

WHEN travelling through popish countries, where the people bow down to images of wood and stone, and where God's word is forbidden, the mind of a believer turns to the fearful words in the preceding verses with a feeling of unutterable sadness; and, again, when the mind wanders from these desolate regions to the little flock of dear believers in happy Scotland, it realizes something of the joyful feeling with which Paul wrote these words—'But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord,' ver. 13.

I. *We are here taught that God is sovereign in choosing the souls that are saved.*

1. *He is sovereign in choosing men, and not rebel angels.* We read in the bible of two grand apostacies from God. The first took place in heaven. Lucifer, son of the morning, one of the brightest cherubs that stood round the throne, rebelled through pride along with myriads of the holy angels. 'They kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.' 'God spared them not,

but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,' 2 Pet. ii. 4. The next rebellion was in paradise. Man believed Satan rather than God, and ate of the forbidden fruit. 'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' Both of these families sinned against the same God, broke the same holy law, fell under the same curse, and were condemned to the same fire. Now it pleased God, in infinite compassion, to provide a way of pardon for some of these lost creatures. He determined to save some 'to the praise of the glory of his grace.' But whom shall he save—men or rebel angels? Perhaps the unfallen hosts of heaven pleaded that their once brother angels should be taken, and men left. They might have said that the angelic nature was higher and nobler, that man was a worm. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' He spared not the angels. He passed by the gate of hell. He raised no cross of Calvary there. 'He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham,' Heb. ii. 16.

2. *He is sovereign in choosing the countries that have the light of the gospel.* All nations are equally lost, and vile in the sight of God. 'He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth' And yet how differently has he dealt with different peoples. Why did God choose Israel to be a peculiar treasure to himself, and to have the oracles of God committed to them? Was it because they were more righteous than others. No; that is expressly denied: 'Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people,' Deut. ix. 6. Neither was it on account of their greatness: 'The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; (for ye were the fewest of all people;) but because he loved you,' Deut. vii. 7. Again, why has China, with its teeming millions, been walled around for centuries, and left to the darkness of its vain idols? Why has India been left under the cruel chains of Hindooism? Why has Africa been given over to witchcraft and superstition? Why has the fair face of Europe been almost given over to the delusions of the man of sin; and why has our own bleak island been chosen to be so long the brightest repository of the truth in all the world? Are we better than they? No, in no wise. There are sins committed among us that would make the heathen blush. 'His way is in the sea.' 'He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and

he hath compassion upon whom he will have compassion.'

3. *He is sovereign in choosing the most unlikely persons to be saved.* You would have expected that most of the rich would have been saved. They have most time to study divine things; they are not harassed by the fears of poverty; they can procure all advantages. And yet hear the word of God: 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom,' James ii. 5. Again, you would have thought God would have chosen the wise and learned, to be saved. The gospel is a subject of deep wisdom. The Bible is written in ancient languages, hard to be acquired. And educated men are generally free from prejudices, to which the common people are subject. And yet hear the word of our Lord: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' You would have thought that surely God will save the most virtuous people of the world. He is a God of purity, who loves what is holy; and though none are righteous, no, not one, yet some are much less stained with sin than others. Surely he will take these. What says the Lord Jesus to the Pharisees? 'The publicans and harlots do enter into heaven before you.' The blameless young ruler is left to go away sorrowful, whilst the king of glory enters in at the pearly gate of the New Jerusalem with a thief washed in his blood by his side.

If my soul is saved, am I not bound to give thanks? If ministers are bound to thank God for the free salvation of their people, how much more are we bound to praise him ourselves for saving us. I am no better than a rebel angel. Devils never rejected Christ as I have done, and yet he passed them by and saved me. I am no better than a Chinese or a Hindoo, and yet grace has passed millions of them, and come to me. I was no better than the sinners round me, perhaps worse than most, and yet I trust I can say, 'Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.' Glory to God the Father, that he chose me before the world was. Glory to Jesus, that he passed by millions and died for me. Glory to the Holy Spirit, that he came out of free love and awakened me.

II. *We are here taught that God chooses the means as well as the end.* 'He hath chosen us unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.' The first step that God chooses his people to come to, is 'belief of the

truth.' God does not choose men to leap from their sins into glory. But he sends the free Spirit to anoint their eyes, to melt their hearts, to persuade and enable them to embrace Christ freely offered in the gospel. A simple heart-felt belief of the truth, is the first mark that we have been chosen to salvation. 'All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.' Have I come to Jesus? Then I know that I am one of those whom the Father gave to him before the world was. Do I really believe the truth as it is in Jesus? Then God has chosen me to salvation. The second step that God chooses his people to come to, is 'sanctification of the Spirit.' It is written, 'After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,' Eph. i. 13. The moment the soul cleaves to the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit takes up his abode in that bosom; he abides there for ever. He changes the cage of unclean birds into a temple for Jehovah's praise. He makes the soul all glorious within. He destroys the dominion of sin; he fills, quickens, renews the whole inner man. Have I received the Holy Ghost? Has that heavenly seal been applied to my heart, impressing upon me the features and the mind of Jesus? Have I the sanctification of the Spirit? Then I have the clear evidence that my calling and election are sure. I can look back to my election before the world was; and forward to my salvation when the world shall be passed away. How foolish is the presumption of those who say, 'If I am not elected, I cannot be saved, whatever I do; and if I am elect, I shall be saved in whatever way I live.' The simple answer is this, Whether you are elect or not, *you cannot be saved without believing the truth, and being sanctified by the Spirit.* What is written in the Lamb's book of life, I do not know; but what is written in the holy Bible, I do know, that 'he that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.' And 'without holiness, no man can see the Lord.'

'To God's holy child, so strong to redeem,  
By us, who through grace his likeness do bear,  
Be glory for ever, while rooted in him,  
A people of prudence and peace we appear.'

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TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace ye are saved),' Eph. ii. 4, 5.

WHAT a fearful discovery do these words give of what was once the condition of all true believers?

'We were dead in sins.' The apostle classes himself with the Ephesian believers in the humbling confession. The most living and burning saint, who now tunes his harp before the throne of the Lamb, was once a dead soul. This is the true condition of all unconverted men at this moment; they are dead in sins. Even our highly-favoured country is like the valley which Ezekiel saw full of bones: 'And he caused me to pass by them round about; and, behold, there were very many in the open valley, and, lo, they were very dry,' Ezek. xxxvii. 2. *The understanding of a natural man is dead:* 'He is wise to do evil, but to do good he has no knowledge,' Jer. iv. 22. 'There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God,' Rom. iii. 11. The mind is often clear and penetrating on earthly things, but it is dark and dead in heavenly things. *The heart is dead.* True, it is alive toward worldly friends, and worldly objects. In pursuit of their lusts 'they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait.' But set the loveliest of all beings before them, the precious corner-stone, the desire of all nations, the pearl of great price; and their heart is not affected, it melts not, it moves not, it loves not; it is dead. *The conscience is dead.* They feel wrongs done against themselves or against their neighbours, but they do not feel wrongs done against God, or against Christ, or against the Holy Spirit: 'Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled,' Tit. i. 15. In some the death of the conscience is total, so that they are past feeling, 'having their conscience seared as with a hot iron.' How many swearers can pour out their oaths, without once imagining that they are striking at the throne of God. How many can put away the gospel message, without feeling that they are making God a liar. How many can come unconverted to the Lord's table, without once thinking that they are crucifying Christ afresh, and putting him to an open shame. In such cases their 'consciences are seared as with a hot iron.'

Turn we now to consider the blessed change that has been wrought in the heart of every believer: 'He hath quickened us together with Christ.' It was a solemn scene when Jesus stood beside the rocky sepulchre of Lazarus. It was a little way from the village of Bethany, embosomed in its fig and almond trees. Martha and Mary stood weeping, and many Jewish friends beside them. They had rolled away the stone from the mouth of the cave, and as the Saviour looked into the dark silent tomb he cried,

'Lazarus come forth. And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin.' This was giving life to the dead. A still more marvellous scene, compared to which this is but as the drop before the thunder shower, shall yet take place upon this earth. 'The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.' When the voice of Christ is heard, then from every lonely church yard, from the deep caverns of the sea, and from silent battlefields, the myriads of sleeping dead shall rise and come forth. It will be a day of joy to some, and of woe to others, joy and woe unspeakable. But more wonderful, even than this, is the quickening of the soul in conversion. It is spoken of in these words, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live,' John v. 25. In every part of the world where the Spirit accompanies the preaching of the gospel, this secret, silent resurrection of dead souls is going on every day, little noticed by men, though well known in heaven, and in hell. When the Spirit comes he gives life to the dead conscience; he makes it accuse and condemn the sinner, so that he feels lost and undone. He gives life to the understanding, anointing the eyes with eyesalve, so that the sinner sees the way of pardon provided by God. He gives life to the heart, melting it, and persuading the sinner to cleave to Jesus; and so he 'quickens us together with Christ.' The Spirit thus raises the soul out of its grave, looses his grave clothes, namely, worldly lusts and attachments, and lets him go free. 'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us.' If He quickens my soul, then no power can keep it dead. Truly, the guilt, indwelling sin, temptations, and spiritual enemies of my soul often confound me. But I pray to know 'the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,' Eph. i. 19. And then I sing—

'With Christ the Lord I died to sin,  
With him to life I rise,  
To life, which now begun on earth,  
Is perfect in the skies.'

But what is it in the bosom of God that moves him to quicken a dead soul? The answer is to be found here: 'God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (by grace ye are saved).' The free rich grace of God is the fountain from which the quickening Spirit flows.

When God came to save Paul he found him dead in sins. There was nothing in the heart of Paul to draw God to visit his soul. But he came because he was rich in mercy, and out of the great love wherewith he loved him, by grace he saved him. There is nothing lovely or attractive about the dead, especially if they have been long dead. The coldness, the want of motion, the paleness, the want of animation, is dreadful. The corruption is abominable. And so Abram says, over the remains of his beloved Sarah, 'Give me a possession of a burying-place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight,' Gen. xxiii. 4. So there is nothing amiable to the eye of a Holy God in a dead soul. The coldness, the insensibility, the corruption is loathsome, in his pure sight. And yet he came to the dead soul of Paul, and gave it life. And every soul that now rejoices in the love of God can say, I was polluted in mine own blood, when he passed by and said unto me, Live; yea, he said unto me, when I was in my blood, Live, Ezek. xvi. 6.

There is good news for those who feel themselves loathsome as the putrid dead. You may be quickened, for such were all believers once. Good news for those who feel helpless as the dead. The Lord can quicken such. And he is rich in mercy; 'He willeth all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. In him compassions flow. He is ready to forgive. One poor soul who had long been tempest-tossed under the conviction of a life time of sins, was brought to full peace in Christ by meditating on the 1st verse of the fifty-first Psalm: 'According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.' She said, 'I will just put the multitude of his tender mercies over against the multitude of my sins.' And so she found rest for her soul. Surely this soul, and all who have been thus saved by free sovereign grace, will have cause to join in Rowland Hill's favourite hymn:—

'And when I'm to die,  
Receive me, I'll cry,  
For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell why.  
But this I can find,  
We two are so joined,  
He'll not be in glory, and leave me behind.'

## TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,' 2 Cor. v. 17.*

WHAT is it to be in Christ Jesus? It is a very remarkable expression, and occurs very frequently in the word of God. Paul speaks of Andronicus and Junia his kinsmen, 'who also were in Christ before me,' Rom. xvi. 7. He says, that he counted all things but dung, that he might 'win Christ, and be found in him,' Phil. iii. 9. And he speaks of dear departed believers, as those who 'sleep in Jesus,' 1 Thess. iv. 14. The meaning of this blessed expression is, that those who have fled to Christ, are reckoned with by God as if they were a part of Christ. His crucifixion is reckoned theirs; his spotless obedience is reckoned theirs. God sees no iniquity in them. He looks upon them in the face of his Anointed. Just as Christ was in us when he stood in our place, and was covered over with our sins so completely that none of his holiness appeared, so we are in Christ when we submit to his precious righteousness, and are so covered, that none of our sins appear in God's pure sight. How plainly was this sweet truth taught to our first parents after the fall: 'Unto Adam, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them,' Gen. iii. 21. How plainly did he teach them that they could not come naked and guilty into his presence, neither could their own rags of self-righteousness cover them, but the snowy clothing of a slain Lamb must be their raiment, neither have they strength to put it on themselves, but God must clothe them. Thus they were taught what it is to be in Christ Jesus.

When Jacob came to his father Isaac in the goodly sweet-smelling raiment of his elder brother, and he came near to his father, and his father kissed him, and smelled his raiment, and blessed him, this was a dark shadow of the way in which a sinner comes to the Father, Gen. xxvii. 15. Here only is the great difference: God is not deceived at all, but of his own free will, most truly, righteously, and by consent of our Elder Brother, clothes us in the sweet-smelling raiment of Jesus, so that we can sing, '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 with jewels,' Isa. lxi. 10. In the parable of the vine (John xv.) Jesus said to the disciples, 'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the

vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' He teaches us the need of a vital and continued union to himself. It is not enough once to consent to be washed in my blood, and clothed with my righteousness, you must remain thus, even until death. And herein consisted all the peace and joy of the first believers; they constantly abode in Christ. This was their answer to all accusations, 'Christ hath died,' 'I am crucified with Christ.' Herein consisteth all my joy. Blessed be the day when first I was found in Christ. Whenever I am in myself before God, then comes darkness, accusations of conscience terrify me, the curses of the law threaten me, the smallest temptation is too strong for me, my soul is like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. But the moment I am again made willing to hide in the wounds of the great Mediator, to be covered with the bright shining folds of his 'garment down to the foot,' that moment the accusations of conscience are hushed, the thunders of Sinai die away, I sit like the maniac at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in my right mind, and a still small voice whispers within my breast, 'Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God,' Rom. vii. 4.

What is the result of being in Christ Jesus? 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold! all things are become new.' A divine change takes place upon that soul more wonderful than the creation of the world, a change brought about by Him who calleth the things that are not as though they were. Indeed this change is begun before the soul submits to Christ, for nothing less than Almighty power can melt the rocky heart, and bend the stubborn will to relish the gospel way of salvation. But it is after a man is brought to Christ that the change is manifested.

1. *He becomes a new creature in understanding.* No man dares to think until he is at peace with God. The mind of a natural man shrinks back from contemplating the realities of God and of the eternal world. The understanding is busied about things seen and temporal, or else about unseen things apart from God; but all that is divine and holy in the universe, or in other words, all that is truly worth knowing, is a field into which the unconverted soul dare not enter. 'The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God.' When a soul is made willing to take Jesus as his mediator, and comes into pardon and peace with God, then he begins to think. A new

world is opened up to him, the ocean of divine truth stretches out before him, and the verdant hills of immortality rise up to view. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid in Christ, and the glories of the three-one Jehovah now fix the heart. The Holy Spirit renews the soul in knowledge after the image of Jesus. A new life of the understanding is begun in that soul. 'I am unable to express the actings of my soul as I feel them, (says Andrew Lindsay), yet I am helped to conceive a little of them by the springs which are in the way from my home; as those springs, though small, have some water in them, so I trust it is with my soul; the water in some of these springs is covered with grass and weeds, so is the sight of this life hid from me, at times, by the corruption of my heart; but as the water appears on a man's removing the weeds with his hands, so does this life by a new manifestation. And as the water continues in these springs, now in August when great pools are dried up, so I hope the life of God will continue in my soul, because the love of Christ is unchangeable.' Happy soul! This is the experience of a new creature in Christ Jesus.

2. *He becomes a new creature in his affections.* No man truly loves till he come to Christ. 'Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.' Before Paul fled for refuge to lay hold on Christ, he was an old creature in his affections. 'I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,' Acts xxvi. 9. His heart was like a bow bent against Christ and his cause. He hated the humbling truths of the gospel. When God's faithful witnesses were put to death, he gave his voice against them. But when he came to Christ he was made a new creature. Never, perhaps, did such burning love to Christ ever glow in a human bosom as in Paul's: 'What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' And now what tender compassion breathes through his soul toward the little flock of 'Christ: 'Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us,' 1 Thess. ii. 8. He is a new creature in love. He has got the same stream of love in his heart that springs eternally from the bosom of God. O sinner! this is what God will make thee if thou art willing to be found in Christ. Remember, none but new creatures will ever enjoy

the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

' From various cares my heart retires,  
Though deep and boundless its desires  
I've now to please but one;  
He before whom the Elders bow  
With him is all my business now,  
And with the souls that are his own.'

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TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

'And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation,' 2 Cor. v. 18.

In the preceding verse it is written, 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, all things are become new' in that soul, and here we are told whence all this change proceeds: 'And all things are of God.' The beginning, the carrying on, and the perfecting of the glorious work of regeneration in the soul, is the work of Jehovah; so that every new creature can sing, 'The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me; thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the work of thine own hands,' Psal. cxxxviii. 8. In a still wider sense these words are true, 'All things are of God.' He is the fountain of being: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.' All creatures flow from him, and will ultimately show forth his highest praise. Harken to the song of the four and twenty Elders, as they cast their crowns before the throne: 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created,' Rev. iv. 11. He is the fountain of providence. Every drop of water in the air, or in the river, or in the ocean, performs its appointed course. The myriads of insects that flutter in the sunshine, all fulfil his will. And every man, angel, and devil, only fulfil the eternal counsel of the blessed Jehovah: 'All things are of God.' The natural heart rages against this truth, but it is like the raging of the foam upon the everlasting rocks—the purpose of the Lord it shall stand. But the true meaning of the words is, that all things of the new creation in the soul are of God. It is God who freely, sovereignly, and from eternity loves the soul that is to be saved: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' It is God who guides the soul under the ministry where he is to be awakened, he prepares the way to the

heart, and at length, when his blessed time is come, he sends the word home with power. It is God who keeps the awakened soul from going back to the world, from taking rest in any refuge of lies, or from being offended at Christ. It is God who reveals his Son in the heart, as he did to Paul: 'It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me.' This is a work peculiarly divine; nature cannot help in it. Man cannot accomplish it. It is God who now fills the soul with the Holy Spirit, and he persuades the sinner most freely and heartily to leave old sins, old habits, old companions, and to follow Jesus in the way. All this amazing change, more wonderful than the creation of the world, more durable than the whole material universe, is the work of God alone: 'All things are of God.' Ah yes! when my guilty soul shall stand washed, and justified, and sanctified before the throne of God, when I shall see clearly the whole way by which he has led me, when I shall know fully the spring and ocean of that love which is from everlasting to everlasting, when my dark mind shall grasp the whole plan of the universe, by which every atom, and every being, saved or lost, is brought to yield eternal glory to God and the Lamb, then I shall understand the word that is written, 'Salvation belongeth unto the Lord,' and I shall be enabled to join the new song of the innumerable company before the throne, 'Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb,' Rev. vii. 10.

In what remains we have a description of the stream of grace which flows from this Fountain of living waters. A twofold stream is here set before us, the one part reconciliation to himself, the other the gift of the ministry. They are mentioned together in like manner: Rom. i. 5, 'We have received grace and apostleship.' These two gifts are not inseparable. Many have been reconciled to God who have not got the ministry committed to them. Women, for example, are made partakers of *grace*, but never of *apostleship*; for Paul says, 'I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence, 1 Tim. ii. 12. Those also who are converted in mature years, when they are deeply engaged in some profession, do not seem to be called upon to change their business, and undertake the work of the ministry, unless in extraordinary times, and by a very clear call from heaven: 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called,' 1 Cor. vii. 20. On the other hand, many have had the ministry of reconciliation committed to them who never received saving grace in their own souls.

Was not Judas called by Christ to be an apostle? Matt. x. 4. And are there not in all the Protestant churches many ministers called to the ministry as Judas was. Woe to that man who has the office of the ministry without grace in his own soul. He is of all men the most miserable. Like one who carries water, and tastes not of the precious draught. Like the sign post pointing to the city of refuge, itself immovable: 'It had been good for that man if he had not been born.'

'The sword of God shall break his arm,  
A blast shall blind his eye,  
His word shall have no power to warm,  
His gifts shall all grow dry.'

When these two, grace and apostleship, are united in one man, O! what a gift is this from the God of all grace. What amazing love is it not only to save our guilty souls, but to make us instrumentally the saviours of the souls of others: 'According to thy manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies,' Neh. ix. 27. It is Christ alone who gives faithful pastors, and from him they should be sought. This is one of the gifts which he obtained by dying for sinners, 'He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,' Eph. iv. 11. It is Christ alone who guides ministers to the sphere where he wishes them to shine. Happy the pastor who allows no hand but Christ's to place or to remove him. It is Christ alone who gives them all their light and brightness, all their gifts and graces, the gifts of prayer, eloquence, knowledge; the graces of faith, love, zeal, perseverance, boldness. All this was taught to John in the island of Patmos, when he saw 'one like the Son of man walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and he had in his right hand seven stars,' Rev. i. 13, 16. It is Christ alone who gives ministers all their success: 'I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase,' 1 Cor. iii. 6. He can take away the blessing from a slothful, self-pleasing, self-conceited minister. He can bless one who is weak in body, weak in argument, weak in everything. When I glance for a moment at the weight, vastness, responsibility, blessedness, and glory of this work, these words rise up before me: '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.' When I consider the urgent need of unconverted men, the shortness of the time, the awfulness of eternity,

and the mercy that has come to my own soul, I am forced to cry, 'Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel,' 1 Cor. ix. 16

'Chief shepherd of thy chosen sheep,  
From death and sin set free,  
May every under-shepherd keep,  
His eye intent on thee.

'With plenteous grace their hearts prepare,  
To execute thy will,  
Compassion, patience, love, and care,  
And faithfulness, and skill.

'Inflame their minds with holy zeal,  
Their flocks to feed and teach,  
And let them live, and let them feel,  
The sacred truths they preach.'

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TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation,' 2 Cor. v. 19.*

In these words we have an epitome, or short description of the gospel ministry.

1. *Observe the manner in which God approaches sinners in the gospel:* 'God was in Christ.' If God had come to us without a Mediator, it would have been to destroy. In his unchangeable nature he is holy, sin-repelling, and sin-consuming. This is the glory of God, his moral image, without which he could not be Jehovah. As surely as fire devours wood by its physical nature, so surely God must destroy sinners by his glorious moral nature. Therefore it is written, 'Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness,' Psal. xi. 6, 7. And again, 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity,' Hab. i. 13. And 'we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. For our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. x. 30, 31; xii. 29. If God had drawn near to us without his justice being satisfied in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus, his justice must have broken out upon us, and sought its satisfaction in our everlasting punishment. Glory to God in the highest, that God did not come to us without Christ, that he did not come upon us naked, guilty, defenceless, without a shelter for our heavy laden soul. He put the Mediator between him and us: 'For there

is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all,' 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6: 'God was in Christ.' Christ is the meeting place of a holy God, and hell-deserving sinners: 'Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near.' When the high priest entered within the vail, on the day of atonement, he carried with him a bason filled with the blood of a bullock, slain as an atonement for himself and his house. He dipped his finger in the blood and sprinkled it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat seven times. He then carried in another bason filled with the blood of a goat, slain for the sins of the people. Dipping his finger into the blood he sprinkled it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat. The mercy-seat was of pure gold, the floor was covered with gold, yet he did not fear lest he should soil it. The mercy-seat and the golden pavement were wetted with blood. His feet stood upon the blood. That blood represented the blood of Christ. And the high priest standing on the sprinkled blood represented the only way in which a sinner can come to a holy Jehovah. God meets us in Christ. O sinner! hast thou come to God in Christ, hast thou entered into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. If not, thou art yet unpardoned, and ready to perish. Some have very weak notions of conversion. They seem to think that to weep at a sermon, to pray with a glow of feeling, to amend the life a little, is true conversion—whereas it is turning to God in Christ: 'Ye turned to God from idols,' 1 Thess. i. 9. Except thou be thus converted, thou wilt never see the kingdom of God.

3. *Observe the extent of the gospel remedy:* 'Reconciling the world unto himself.' There can be no doubt that the whole world will not be saved: 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' The awful transactions of the judgment-day are summed up in these solemn words: 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal,' Matt. xxv. 46. One amazing portion of the human race will depart speechless, conscience-stricken, self-condemned, into a hell as everlasting as the heaven of those who are saved. O self-deceived Universalist! it is the same word which describes the eternity of heaven and the eternity of hell. There can be no doubt that God has chosen a peculiar people out of this world: 'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee,' Psal. lxxv. 4. Six times over, in the 17th chapter of John, does Jesus call them 'the men which

thou gavest me,' and he says, 'I pray for them, I pray not for the world.' And yet it is equally true that 'God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,' 1 Tim. ii. 4. He is 'long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,' 2 Pet. iii. 9: 'God was in Christ, reconciling *the world* to himself.' The gospel is truly and sincerely addressed 'to every creature under heaven.' The calls and invitations of God to wicked men are not mere words of course, far less are they deceitful and lying words; they are true as God is true. There is not even the shadow of falsehood in them. Hear the words of a master in Israel: 'There is all in God that is good, and perfect, and excellent, in our desires and wishes for the conversion and salvation of wicked men. As for instance, there is a love to holiness absolutely considered, or an agreeableness of holiness to his nature and will; or in other words, to his natural inclination. The holiness and happiness of the creature, absolutely considered, are things that he loves. These things are infinitely more agreeable to his nature than to ours. There is all in God that belongs to our desire of the holiness and happiness of unconverted men and reprobates, excepting what implies imperfection. All that is consistent with infinite knowledge, wisdom, power, self-sufficiency, infinite happiness, and immutability. Therefore there is no reason that his absolute prescience, or his wise determination and ordering what is future, should hinder his expressing this disposition of his nature, in like manner as we are wont to express such a disposition in ourselves, viz., by calls, and invitations, and the like.' O sinner! it is true that God has no pleasure in your dying, but had rather that you would turn from your wicked ways and live. God honestly, sincerely, and with all his heart, beseeches you to be reconciled through the blood of Jesus. He is willing this day to cover you with the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus, so that he may consistently, with his just and holy nature, not impute your trespasses unto you. Why has he spared you out of hell to this day? Only because 'he is not willing that you should perish.' Why has he followed you with personal and family mercies, comforts, deliverances? 'The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance,' Rom. ii. 4. Why has he sent frowns of providence upon you, poverty, sickness, bereavements, disappointments, like wave upon wave? Is not this the answer: 'Whom I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent,' Rev. iii. 19. Why has the Spirit striven with you in the Bible, through

ministers, and in secret prayer? Is it not that the holy loving Spirit desires you to turn to Christ, and is 'vexed,' and 'grieved,' and 'quenched,' by your 'always resisting?' Acts vii. 51. Why, above all, does Christ offer himself freely to every creature, why has he knocked at your door, and stretched out his hands to you all day long? Ah! read here the answer, which you will remember to your everlasting agony in hell, if you turn not, 'How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' Matt. xxvii. 37. O sinner! the Lord Jesus Christ is like the manna. It fell round about the tents of Israel every morning, so that no Israelite could go out of his tent without either gathering it, or trampling it below his feet. So the Lord Jesus is laid down at thy feet. Thou must either take him as thy Surety, thy Saviour, thy Lord, or trample him below thy feet.

'Come ye weary heavy laden,  
Lost and ruined by the fall,  
If ye tarry till you're better,  
You will never come at all,  
Not the righteous, sinners Jesus came to call.'

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,' 2 Cor. v. 20.

I. *Meditate on the ground of the gospel message, ver. 21.* 'He hath made him to be sin,' &c. What a remarkable description of Christ is here given, 'He knew no sin.' He was pure in his birth. The angel that came to Mary called him 'that holy thing which shall be born of thee.' He was pure in his life, 1 Pet. ii. 22. 'He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' He was pure in his death, 'He offered himself without spot unto God.' But here we are told 'he knew no sin.' He did not know the feeling of sin. He did not know the swelling of pride, the burning of lust, the rankling of envy in his pure bosom. He knew suffering well, but he knew no sin. Learn, O my soul, the loveliness of Christ. 'He is altogether lovely.' His loveliness consists mainly in this, that he knew no sin. It is this that ravishes the hearts of the redeemed above while they sing, 'Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy?' Learn the suitableness of Christ. If Christ had had a spot of sin he could not have suffered for ours. 'Such an High Priest became us who is

holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.'

But how did God deal with this sinless One? 'He hath made him to be sin for us.' In Isa. liii. 6. we are told, 'The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all.' But here it is described in a more dreadful manner. The Lord heaped upon him the thousands and millions of our sins, till at last he was so covered, in God's sight, that nothing but sin appeared. He was looked upon, by his Father, as one entire mass of sin. He was dealt with by God as if he were all sin from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head. Learn, O my soul, the deep agonies of Christ; he knew no sin, and yet he was made sin. Nothing can be more agonising to a pure mind, than to have sins imputed to him. This was Christ's deepest sorrow. Hence the heart-rending cries recorded in the 22d. 38th. 40th. and 69th. Psalms; cries that often resounded through the silent vale of Kedron. Learn the amazing love of Christ; 'it passeth knowledge.'

But why was he made sin? It was 'that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Just as Christ was so covered with our innumerable sins that in the eye of a holy God he appeared one mass of sin, so the vilest of sinners who consent to be found in Christ, is so covered with his glorious righteousness, that in the eye of God he appears one mass of divine righteousness. The sinner is lost and swallowed up in the righteousness of Christ.

O my sinful soul! what an amazing provision is here set before thee for thy complete pardon and acceptance with God. As truly as Christ was made the sin of men, so truly may I be made the righteousness of God. As truly as our sin covered him, so that none of his heavenly beauty appeared, so truly may his righteousness cover me that none of my hellish blackness may appear. Christ held down his head for shame on account of my sin, I may hold up my head in peace on account of his righteousness.

'Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling;  
Naked came to thee for dress,  
Helpless look to thee for grace;  
Foul I to the fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.'

II. *Meditate on the gospel embassy*, ver. 20 'We are,' &c. Christ was God's greatest ambassador. He was 'the messenger of the covenant.' He was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' He was 'the faithful Witness.' He was sent to tell men the way to the Father. But when he ascended

up on high he sent his believing followers in his name, John xx. 21. 'Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.' 'When he ascended up on high, he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' 'Now then (all faithful ministers may say) we are ambassadors for Christ.'

1. This shows that ministers should speak with authority. The people were astonished at the doctrine of Christ, 'for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.' He spoke with a holy certainty and boldness, and so should ministers now. 'These things command and teach; let no man despise thy youth,' 1 Tim. iv. 11, 12. A faithful minister should be like Jeremiah, (i. 18.) 'I have made thee this day a fenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land.' He should hear God saying to him as he did to Ezekiel, (ii. 7.) 'Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.' How fearful is the curse threatened if we alter the gospel of Christ, Gal. i. 8.; if we add to, or take away from, the message committed unto us, Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

2. Ministers should speak with divine tenderness. 'God is love,' and so should his ambassadors be. There is in the heart of God the deepest compassion for perishing sinners. Hear his words, Deut. v. 29. 'O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever,' (compare xxxii. 29; Ezek. xxxii. 11). When God was manifest in flesh he showed this holy tenderness through his whole life, Luke xix. 41. 'When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,' (compare Matt. xxiii. 37). Such should be the heart of every faithful minister. Paul used to preach with many tears, Acts xx. 31. His tears often fell upon the parchment on which he wrote his epistles, Phil. iii. 18; 2 Cor. ii. 4.

Surely if we could realize an eternal hell into which the most are dropping, an eternal heaven which the most are losing, and a divine Saviour whom the most are rejecting, we would preach as Jeremiah did, 'O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears,' ix. 1. We would be mercifully bold, like the angels at Sodom, laying hands on lingering sinners, and pulling them out of the fire.

3. This shows the message which ministers

bear. 'We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God.' There is a quarrel between sinners and a holy God. 'God is angry with the wicked every day.' The dark heavy clouds of divine anger are resting upon their heads, ready to break every moment. Sinners are angry at God. Their carnal mind is enmity against God. They are night and day fighting against God. Now God sends his ministers with a white flag of truce, and he puts this word in their mouths, 'Be ye reconciled unto God.' O my soul, hast thou heard and received the 'good tidings of great joy?' Have I submitted to the way of pardon here revealed? Then in a moment God's anger is all turned away, and my heart is changed from bitter enmity to love and praise.

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip,'* Heb. ii. 1.

COULD we look into the secret history of believers, what woful declensions might be pointed out. How many, who began the conflict well, have fallen under the blows of Apollyon. How many are there of whom God complains: 'What iniquity have ye found in me that ye are gone far from me,' Jer. ii. 5. How many of whom Jesus complains, 'I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love,' Rev. ii. 4. The spring of all these sad declensions is to be found in 'letting slip the things which we have heard.'

I. *Meditate on the times when Christians are in danger of letting the gospel slip.*

1. *A time of worldly prosperity.* An old divine says, 'Quails often make a lean soul.' 'He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.' When a man is under conviction of sin, divine things often absorb every other anxiety. That text is ever before him, 'What shall it profit man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' He becomes careless of his person, for he feels that he would be decking a body condemned to the burning. He becomes careless of his business, for the matter of his forgiveness is unsettled. He walks among the things of time, looking through them into the things of eternity. What a vain shadow is this world to an awakened soul. O! how that soul sickens at the vain companies of an unbelieving world; how he loathes their dances and wanton songs. But when that soul has found true rest in Christ, sometimes the world begins to smile again. He begins to launch out into business,

or a more lucrative situation is offered to him. His attention is a little diverted from eternal things; he becomes more keen about the things of time. He begins to lose his fresh hold of Christ. He is letting slip the things which he heard. So it was with Lot. When he first came from Haran he left all for God. He followed Abraham, a simple shepherd lad with staff in hand. But when he got flocks, and herds, and tents, and when he saw the plain of Sodom well watered everywhere, he went and pitched his tent toward Sodom, Gen. xiii. So it was with Demas. At one time he seemed to leave all for Christ. He became the companion of self-denying Paul. But soon his eye was caught with the glitter of gold. He lets slip the things which he heard. He bids farewell to the believer's joys and trials: 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' 2 Tim. iv. 10. O my soul, 'love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'

2. *A time of persecution.* 'For every ten bodies which persecution has killed, it has slain a thousand souls.' We are told of the seed that sprung up so quickly in stony places, that 'when the sun was up it withered away,' and Jesus explains this of those who, 'when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended,' Matt. xiii. 21. Some people are brought to Christ with little or no persecution. They attain 'to joy and peace in believing,' no man forbidding them. They begin to think that the offence of the cross has ceased, and that the solemn warnings of tribulation to the believer were intended for a bye-gone generation. Suddenly their sky is overcast. They begin to be hated, and buffeted, and opposed for their attachment to Christ. An awful prospect is before them. Either they must breast the tide of scorn and reproach that is now flowing in upon them, perhaps from their dearest friends, or else they must let slip the things which they have heard. Ah! how often, in such an hour, the soul shrinks back from an open confession of Christ before men, refuses to bear the cross, and falls into unholy compromise with an unbelieving world. Storms try the vessel, and persecution tries the believer. When Peter was in peace he could say, 'Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I.' But when the hour of trial came, he said with oaths and curses, 'I know not the man.'

II. *Meditate on the remedy.* 'We ought to give the more earnest heed,' &c.

1. *Increase thy diligence in the means of grace.*

If you have truly found the Lord Jesus, be often at the spot where you have met with him. Every true disciple should often resort to Gethsemane, John xviii. 2. If you found him in the word, be faithful and diligent in meeting him there. If you begin to let your Bible slip, you are beginning to let Jesus slip. If you found him in secret prayer, give the more earnest heed to meet him often there. It is a sweet trysting-place with Jesus, 'within the veil.' If you let slip the throne of grace, you let Him slip who sits thereon. Have you found Jesus in the sanctuary, then 'love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwelleth,' Psal. xxvi. 8. Has he revealed himself to you in the breaking of bread, then 'continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer,' Acts ii. 4'.

2. *Feed on Christ in the ordinances.* Many love the ordinances who love not Christ. Many are occupied about the shell who never taste the kernel of the gospel. These are Sardians who 'have a name to live while they are dead.' These are talkers about the gospel and its ministers; but 'the talk of their lips tendeth to penury.' If you have found Christ in ordinances, give earnest heed to find him more and more. Penetrate through every veil to the living Saviour, and the living God. Do not rest in a form of prayer if you find not Christ. 'Bodily service profiteth little.' O my soul, abhor the cloak of formality. It is an abomination to God and man. 'It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.' But O how sweet are ordinances when we can say, 'He brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.'

3. *Watch against occasions of letting slip.* If you knew the deceitfulness, the desperate and unsearchable wickedness of your own heart, and if you knew the adversary who accuses you day and night, you would be sober and vigilant. Watch your own heart, its infirmities and tendencies; 'Keep thy heart above all keeping, for out of it are the issues of life,' Prov. iv. 23. Watch the roaring lion; be not ignorant of his devices, 1 Pet. v. 8. Watch the world, for you are in an enemy's country, 'The whole world lieth in wickedness,' 1 John v. 19. Above all, keep your eye on Jesus. You cannot hold him if he does not hold you. 'Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you,' 1 Pet. v. 7.

'Let doubt then and danger my progress oppose.  
They only make heaven more sweet at the close,  
Come joy or come sorrow, whate'er may befall,  
An hour with my God will make up for it all.'

A scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,  
I march on in haste through an enemy's land,  
The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,  
And I'll smooth it with hope, and I'll cheer it with song.'

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ,'*  
Acts ii. 36.

THIS is the strong and confident asseveration of an aged and unlettered fisherman, on whom a greater change had within the last hour passed, than could have been accomplished by the longest and most effective moral and intellectual training. Peter was one of those, who, a few days before, had asked Jesus, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' and who, a few hours before, were so ignorant of the true nature of Messial's kingdom, that they might have repeated the question. But the day of Pentecost had arrived, and was not yet half gone; the promise of the Father had been waited for, and had just been obtained; the promise expressly made by our Lord to Peter, 'What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter,' had just received its fulfilment; 'the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father,' 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,' had just been miraculously and by a visible sign, vouchsafed; 'they had now an unction from the Holy One, and they knew all things;' the visible had been accompanied with an audible miracle, — 'they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.' Peter, therefore, though an aged and unlettered fisherman, and till now filled with the secular expectations and inveterate prejudices of the Jews, became instantly and intimately acquainted with the true nature of Messiah's kingdom. A divine knowledge had entered his understanding, and had suddenly revolutionized his long cherished views and expectations; the emblem of a divine commission had sat, or, as some suppose, was still sitting on his head; a divine power had attuned his tongue instantly to speak in languages he had never learned, and with an energy which all the power of the adversary could neither gainsay nor resist; he who formerly quailed before a timid maid, so as to abjure his Lord, now fearlessly proclaimed to the 'confounded' and partly mocking multitude of strangers and fellow-countrymen around him, with all the authority of an

ambassador from God, and with all the certainty and confidence of one who knew what he affirmed, and testified what he had seen; 'Let all the house of Israel *know assuredly*, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ.' His crucifixion may be to you a stumbling-block, and all the more so, that ye yourselves inflicted it. But let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that the cross hath become a crown. That same Jesus whom ye crucified is Lord—the Lord of all. 'God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' His crucifixion, you thought, had disproved his Messiahship, and you cruelly and tauntingly reviled him, saying, 'Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' 'But Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, though ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it: and being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know *assuredly*, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ. He is 'Messiah the Prince,'—'the Lord and his Anointed.'

But who is this that is so highly and so assuredly exalted? He is that *same Jesus*, whom the angel of the Lord so named, because he would save his people from their sins—that same Jesus, in crucifying whom, the Jews unwittingly fulfilled the purposes of the merciful Jehovah. 'For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.'

'He died to bear the guilt of men,  
That sin might be forgiven;  
He lives to bless them and defend,  
And plead their cause in heaven.'

He is the Expectation of the Jews, the Consolation of the Gentiles, the Saviour of all—'a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people Israel.'

Precious truth! More precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold! For what is a man profited though he gain the whole world and lose his soul! Oh! then, let us 'beware lest

that come upon us which is spoken of in the prophets; 'Behold! ye despisers, and wonder and perish!' The house of Israel have beheld, and wondered, and perished—perished from their land; and thereby exhibited an irrefragable testimony to the truth of his Messiahship, whom they despised and rejected:—perished in their sins in other lands; and thereby exhibited a painful testimony to the guilt and inveteracy of an unbelieving heart. But are the house of Israel the only despisers that believe not, but wonder and perish? To the impenitent and unbelieving of every age and nation, it may be said, Know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom by your unbelief and sin ye crucify afresh, both Lord and Christ;—both Lord and Christ, to save in this the day of mercy—both Lord and Christ, to destroy with a fearful aggravated destruction, if ye neglect so great salvation. God hath spoken: ye may deny it, but ye cannot disannul it. God hath spoken: ye may deny it, but the denial cannot take away your sins, or give you comfort under them. God too hath done it, and who can hinder? Who can resist his will? *He* hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ; and 'all his works are done in truth,' 'his work is honourable and glorious, and his righteousness endureth for ever.' Ye may cavil at his work, but your cavilling is sin; and it can no more affect the certainty and stability of what he hath done, than the impatient petulance of the bear-eyed child can arrest the rising of the sun, or bring a cloud upon his mid-day brightness. 'Why do ye not understand my speech?' said Jesus to the perverse Jews; even because ye cannot hear, that is, bear my words. They are too pure, too offensive, too self-denying. 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.'

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

'Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Acts ii. 37.

WE may be brought to a conviction of sin and the felt necessity of a Saviour, by a prayerful inquiry into the truth as it is in Jesus. But this is not the only means. Providence, by his angry dispensations, sometimes thunders forth at once, as from mount Sinai, the condemnatory sentence which scripture contains, but does not force upon the attention, much less upon the faith of men.

He sometimes, by a sudden calamity, causes to flash upon the mind, with the suddenness, the vividness, and the fearfulness of lightning, the truth which had formerly shone clearly and steadily, but unregardedly, from the page of revelation. What is thus accomplished by the frowns of Providence, is sometimes not less suddenly, and not less strikingly, accomplished by the simple preaching of the word. While the cloud of Providence is charged with the lightning, the Scriptures—the quiver of the Almighty, are charged with the sharp arrows of conviction; and when directed by the Spirit, are not less effectual in piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. The simple announcing of a text is sometimes the means of startling the conscience from the sleep of self-security, to a painful apprehension of coming wrath. 'As a dream when one awaketh,' so the sin-convicted and self-condemned sinner comes to a consciousness, that hitherto he has been dead, while he lived—dead to the most solemn and momentous realities, to the most certain, the most awful, and the most imminent of dangers.

The effect of such a disclosure is an irrepressible alarm; and while an irrepressible, it is seen to be a well-founded alarm, respecting the salvation of the soul. For, how fearful the revelation which the disclosure makes! It is *wrath* that is revealed, the wrath of an Almighty avenger, wrath revealed from heaven, from the throne of Him whose glory now appears like a consuming fire—not the radiant glory of a purely beaming light, of an unclouded sun, as He appears to angels and reconciled men; but the portentous glory of a fiery meteor, of a blood-like sun charioted in mountain masses of lurid clouds pregnant with flames, in which the red right hand of the Almighty seems embosomed, and already moving to smite with its awful everlasting vengeance. It is wrath too, from which there is seen to be no escape. It is seen that 'he that fleeth shall not escape, and he that escapeth shall not be delivered.' And while it is 'a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation,' from which there is no escape; it is a judgment and indignation, for deliverance from which the sin-convicted can plead no self-satisfying, and far less a God-satisfying excuse. His sin, he has come to see, was willfully, obstinately, and perseveringly committed; and so committed, notwithstanding manifold counsels, warnings, and rebukes.

The terrors of the awakened conscience being thus, the terrors of coming wrath—wrath from heaven—wrath from which there is no escape,

and for the mitigation of which the sinner can plead no excuse; it is with an earnestness at which the dead in sin may wonder, or which they may deride as weakness, but for which there is in reality too good reason, that the convicted and self-condemned sinner cries, Men and brethren, what shall I do?

This is a cry, not in solitude; or if in solitude, not in solitude alone. It is a cry directed to those who can sympathize with, and counsel, in such an emergency. And to such, though a distressing, it is a gladdening cry. It is the uttered pangs of the second birth; but it is joyfully prophetic of the life that shall never die. True repentance is a cup of bitterness—a dark valley—a day of great heaviness and sorrow, and trembling of heart. It is 'the daughter of sadness, clothed in sackcloth, and sitting in ashes. Her eyes are red with weeping, and her breast is bare, and sore with beating.' Were this the sorrow of the world, which worketh death, we might well weep over it. But it is a sorrow which calls for joy—joy even in heaven—the joy of angels over one sinner that repenteth. The gay, laughing prodigal, wasting his substance in riotous living, makes the wise man, and especially the serious Christian, weep. The prodigal become the swine-herd, sitting in rags, without a friend to give to him, and fain to fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, full of melancholy, poignant thoughts on his past folly and the want and degradation of his present state; this sad spectacle fills the wise man and the serious Christian with the joy of hope. But it is a spectacle enough to make the sons of God shout for joy, when the downcast prodigal, coming to himself, and calling to mind his father's house, says within himself, 'How many hired servants in my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father.' The prodigal is yet in wretchedness; but he is on his way to happiness: and the joyful father might well say, even before the best robe was put upon him, before the ring was on his hands, or the shoes on his feet, 'let us eat and be merry.' It is not then to uninterested, but to deeply and joyfully sympathizing counsellors—to brethren, that the penitent address themselves, when they inquire, 'What shall we do?' Let not the spiritually distressed, therefore, fear to go to the godly minister or neighbour, to ask counsel, how they may obtain comfort to their afflicted souls. Let them go to impart joy and return rejoicing.

## TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING

*'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me,' Acts xxvi. 18.*

'Who so blind as those who will not see?' asks the proverb. And says the prophet, 'Bring forth the blind people that have eyes.' There is, then, other than natural; there is intellectual, moral, spiritual blindness. Comparatively few are blind to the light of the sun. It is the reverse of this with the light of the gospel: comparatively few have their eyes open to behold it. None can behold it, till they obey the command in its spiritual sense, 'Go wash in the pool of Siloam.' Go then, ye that are blind, to the fountain of gospel truth and spiritual influence; like the blind man, wash in faith, and like him you will come seeing.

Seeing what? God in his majesty, holiness, and frowning displeasure against iniquity—sin in its guiltiness and loathsomeness—self in your guilt, depravity, danger, and helplessness—Christ in his all-sufficiency and freeness for your salvation—God in Christ, reconciling a guilty world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses. You will see time in its shortness and uncertainty, eternity with its heaven of bliss and its abode of misery—the one in its allurements, the other in its terrors, and both in their unending perpetuity.

But you will say, All these I see; I have been taught them from my youth up. Yes, you have heard of them by the hearing of the ear, but hearing is not seeing. Mark the difference: 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now doth mine eye see Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' It is one thing to be told that God is holy, it is another by faith to see God's holiness. It is one thing to be told that sin is sinful, it is another by faith to see sin's sinfulness. It is one thing to be told that Christ is all-sufficient, it is another by faith to see and lay hold on his all-sufficiency. It is one thing to contemplate past events and distant scenes with the faculties of the unimaginative, uninterested compiler of facts; it is another to contemplate these with the realizing and creative faculties of the poet or the painter. What imagination is to the poet or the painter, faith is to the Christian. It gives vividness, presence, substance, to the object which it contemplates. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for.' It not only knows that God is in heaven, it sees him there: 'It enters within the

veil.' Imagination makes the poet feel; so does true faith the Christian. It brings the object which it contemplates near to him,—gives it not only reality but proximity. It enables him to know experimentally the full import of that expression, 'Enoch walked with God;' and can he but feel, when he is conscious of such august and holy companionship?

We have said that hearing is not seeing. But there is also a seeing which is not the seeing of faith. There is openness of the mind's eye to truth in the abstract, while there is blindness to truth in the concrete, that is, to truth in connection with the object of whom it is affirmed. The eye of the mind may take in the idea of infinitude, and wisdom, and power, and goodness, from the works of creation and from the page of scripture, while there is a habitual blindness to the personality, presence, and active agency of the Being in whom these attributes reside. In short, God's attributes as abstract truths may enter the mind and remain there, while God's personality and presence as the actual possessor and exerciser of these attributes, is habitually excluded. And so of every other scripture truth. This enables us to understand how unbelievers and nominal Christians can sometimes stand amazed at the works or ways of God, and yet with truth be said to be 'living without God in the world.' It is the mere immensity of the power, or wisdom, or beneficence, which overawes them, not the apprehended personality and agency of the Godhead in whom these attributes reside. They are overawed, but their feeling is like that of the atheistic painter when he contemplates Alpine scenery; or like that of the atheistic poet when he contemplates the sublimities of the hurricane—the feeling of the mere man of taste. Such feeling is no certain indication of the faith of a Christian, or of a religionist of any name; for it may be experienced by him who denies the being of a God. Say not then that your eyes are open to gospel truth, merely because you have been taught it, and are feelingly impressed by it.

But the text speaks not only of opening the blind eyes, but of turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. And why? Because we may have our eyes opened to the darkness in which we have hitherto lived, and yet 'love the darkness rather than the light; our deeds being evil.' Light is pleasant to the eye that loves it, but it is painful to the eye that cannot bear it. The light of evidence is courted by arraigned innocence: 'He cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest.' But the

light of evidence is dreaded by the arraigned culprit, and he is tempted to do every thing in his power to quench it, or to escape from it: 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.' It is not enough, therefore, that the light of conviction shine in upon the conscience; the power of conversion must turn from 'the unfruitful works of darkness.' Gospel light only makes manifest; it does not necessarily convey salvation. It reveals the way, but we must turn our feet into it, and walk therein. Has then the gospel opened our blind eyes to the darkness in which we have hitherto lived? Let us turn our back upon the darkness, and hasten to the region where the true light shineth. Having turned our back upon the darkness,—which is Satan's element, and one of the chief secrets and sources of his power,—we shall escape from under the dominion of that dread and deceitful enemy to God; and having reached our once angry, but now reconciled Father, we shall obtain forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified. What is there in darkness that should be tempting to any but a devil? To him the darkness is tempting, were it for nothing else than to escape the light. But if we are not wholly devils, and if we dread their destiny, what more desirable than forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among the sanctified by faith in Christ?

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 TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING

*'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,'* Psal. cxix. 18.

THERE are professing Christians who can admire the beauty and propriety of such a prayer as this; but who, when you unfold to them its meaning and the doctrine upon which it proceeds—the doctrine of spiritual influence,—will forthwith say, 'This is an hard saying: who can hear it.' They find it easy, and they think it rational, to utter the prayer without meaning; but they find it hard, and they think it irrational, to utter it with the intelligence and faith of a Bible Christian.

The Greek Testament contains the same wondrous things that the English Testament contains. But we must learn the language, before we can see those wonders in it. In like manner, we must learn the language of the Spirit, before we can read spiritually its recorded discoveries. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither

can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.' It is only a Grecian that can teach to understand Greek: so it is only the Spirit that can teach to understand the things of the Spirit. 'The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' 'But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God.' 'Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' Of whom speaks the apostle when he says, we have received? Of himself, or of other men? Of himself; but of other men also: 'for the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,'—to every man that asks. 'Ask, and it shall be given unto you,' &c., Luke xi. 11—14. How undeniable then the doctrine! How universal the offer! How free the gift! 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' Lord, I avail myself of the promise, and betake myself to thee in prayer. 'Spirit of truth!' descend into my soul: what is dark, do thou enlighten, and make me obedient to the truth. Spirit of wisdom, and of a sound mind! 'make me wise unto salvation,' and 'let my heart be sound in thy statutes.' Spirit of love! enable me to love Him who first loved me; and may the love of Christ constrain me. Spirit of sanctifying power! 'create within me a clean heart, and renew within me a right spirit.' Comforter of the sorrowing! 'restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.' Spirit of adoption! enable me to cry, and to feel while I cry, Abba, Father. Revealer of the deep things of God! 'open mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' Father, hear; Son, thou art my surety and my plea; Holy Ghost, the helper of the helpless, help my infirmities, and make intercession for me, with an earnestness that cannot find utterance. Amen.

How welcome every one to utter such a prayer! And how strong the inducements; whether we consider the power and willingness of the hearer and answerer of prayer, the prevalence of the intercessor at the throne, the power of the intercessor in the heart, or the gifts which are received in answer to our supplications!

But it ought not to be forgotten, that the blessings which we receive through the Spirit, are not sent down by miracle from heaven. They are already upon the earth treasured up in the law of God. They are like the treasures hid in the earth for the husbandman that ploughs, or for the miner that digs for them. In the word are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and though the eyes were opened by the Spirit,

we cannot expect to find them, till we seek them there. The word is 'the sword of the Spirit;' and it is through it that he inflicts the blessed wounds of conviction. It is the Spirit's chest of healing medicine, from which he takes and applies 'the balm of Gilead,' and 'the oil of gladness.' The Bible is the Father's blood-sealed testament to his believing children: and it is from it that he makes known to them their present privileges and future prospects. The Bible is the believer's manual of devotion; and it is in prayerfully perusing it, or meditating on it, that the Spirit quickens his piety and gratitude. The Bible is the believer's authoritative rule of rectitude; and it is while prayerfully perusing or remembering its dictates that the Spirit discovers to him the true import of its precepts, and makes him feel the authority by which they are enforced. When we read the Scriptures then, let us present the prayer, 'Open mine eyes.' And when, in our daily devotions, we add this to our other supplication; let it be out of the law, and not from heaven, or from the Spirit brooding upon a void within, that we look for the expected wonders. And wonders we shall behold—Wonders of Wisdom and knowledge, prompting the exclamation, 'Oh! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!'—Wonders of condescension; 'Will God indeed dwell with men?'—Wonders of suffering; 'Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow;'—Wonders of love, of love 'passing knowledge;'—Wonders of guilt and ruin; 'There is none righteous, *no, not one*;'—Wonders of unbending rectitude, yet of justifying grace; 'A just God and a Saviour;'—Wonders of grace to the chief of sinners; 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise;'—Wonders of privilege; 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God;'—Wonders of providence; 'I am as a wonder unto many;'—Wonders of future prospect; 'Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath in store for them that love him;'—condemning, yet justifying; alarming, yet peace-speaking; humbling, yet exalting; saddening, yet gladdening wonders! These we shall behold; not only know, but *behold*; behold and *feel*; behold and feel as deeply interested actors and sharers in them, and not as staring, but apathetic, because uninterested spectators; behold and feel with the discerning eye, and beating heart, of a rational being; and not with the brutish eye and heart of the irrational creation.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me,'* John vi. 45.

'TAUGHT of God,' that is, taught *by* God; not concerning Him. Or, God-taught, as the original might be correctly rendered; and, as the same phrase, 'taught of God,' in 1 Thes. iv. 9, would be rendered, if literally rendered.

'Learned of the Father.' Here also the 'of' should be 'by,' or 'from,' to indicate with less ambiguity, as the original does, whence the learning has been derived.

But, how taught by God? By His works, by the miracles of Christ, and by His word, say some. Truly so; but not wholly, nor chiefly so. Many of the Jews whom Jesus addressed, had enjoyed this mode of teaching to the full, and had not come to Him. But He says, *Every man that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* It is of an effectual teaching that Christ speaks; not of an ineffectual. He speaks of his Father as a *teacher* by whom men *shall* learn; not of his works or word, as a *book* from which they *may* learn. How then taught by God? Taught by his Spirit, for this is the prediction of the prophets: 'It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.' 'I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.'

Why should we demur to receive such a doctrine? Why be slow to avail ourselves of such a promise? Are we naturally so teachable in divine things, so void of prejudice, so fond of truth?—of humbling, self-condemning truth? Are holiness, and self-denial, and love of God, so natural to us, so congenial to our corrupt affections, that we need not the aid of a divine illuminator and sanctifier? Are we so like the holy angels that we are already worthy of, and fit for, heaven? Or, if not, is it so easy a matter to acquire their likeness, and a liking to their society, their employments and enjoyments, that we can dispense with foreign aid for such a purpose? Have we hitherto been so obedient to the truth? Have we hitherto made so ample a return to Christ, for the great love wherewith He loved us? In our eating, in our drinking, and in whatsoever we have done, have we done all so uniformly, so devoutly, so devotedly to the glory of God, that we are sensible of no shortcomings; or of no such shortcomings as to make us wish for help that they may be fewer, and that

the very end of our being may be more the desire of our hearts, and the fruit of our lives? Ah! what says an inspired and eminently devoted apostle! 'We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.' 'O! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

But whence our unwillingness to acquiesce in, and to ask for, so necessary, so desirable, and so free a gift, as the gift of the Spirit? 'It interferes with my free-agency. It detracts from my own sufficiency. It makes man nothing, and God everything, in my salvation.' O pride, pride! of how much hast thou bereft us! Of how much wouldst thou bereave us still! Is it not enough that thou separatest between chief friends on earth? that thou sealest up the fountain of love and charity, by sealing the lips and palsying the hand of the poor but proud unfortunate among men? Will nothing satisfy thy lust of power, and love of liberty, but the separating of the creature from the Creator—the redeemed from the Redeemer? Will nothing satisfy the haughtiness of thy poverty, but to spurn the pearl of great price, and the riches of redeeming and sanctifying love? 'Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Let the forbearance and tenderness of a compassionate God, who knows thee and thy necessities better than the proud can know themselves, subdue thee to acceptance of His authoritative, yet affectionate advice: 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.' But, still talking of thy freedom? Thou fool! It is because God will not, cannot, as moral governor, touch thy moral freedom, that thou, if impenitent, art left to perish in thy sins. God desires not the death of any sinner, and He has done every thing short of interfering with liberty of will, for overcoming the sinner's unwillingness to come unto Himself. His *seeming* interference, and the sinner's plausible, but unfounded objection, are an affecting proof of this. 'Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.'

But it is not only the pride of moral freedom; the pride of personal character creates a prejudice against the doctrine of the text. 'Every one that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' This draws a distinction between themselves and the true followers

of Christ, which the worldly and unregenerate cannot brook. They would fain be thought the followers of Christ, although they have not his Spirit. 'But if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' They would unwittingly be both the pharisee and the publican—the pharisee in character, and the publican in blessing. Forgetting their bad deeds, they boast of their good deeds, would be thought less needful of repentance than the publican, and would thereby be justified in the sight of God. Nay, they despise, perhaps, the publican and his unostentatious distance, downcast eyes, and beating of his breast. Yet they would inherit his blessing. They give to God their negatives in morals, and their positives in religion:—their negatives in morals; for they are neither extortioners, nor unjust, nor adulterers, nor quite so bad as the publican, which they think is saying a great deal for themselves:—their positives in religion; for they fast twice in the week, and they give titles of all that they possess; and these are the substantial, if not the essentials, of a gift. These they give, and they think it hard that a becoming consciousness on their part of the value of their gift, should of itself turn their gold into dross, and their sacrifice into an abomination. Such is their knowledge of divine things. Yet they are not ignorant. They are sometimes the wisest of the wise in this world; and they are not unfrequently the wise in their own conceit. But it is of the world that they have learned—not of the Father: and they have been always learning, but have never come to the knowledge of the truth. Well did Esaias prophesy, saying, 'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, *teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*' Teach me *thy way*, O Lord, teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good.

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Draw me, we will run after thee,' Cant. i. 4.

THIS prayer is from the Song of Songs; that is, according to a Hebrew idiom, The most excellent of Songs. Open mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of this portion of thy law.

The church of God is in this Song poetically represented under the figure of a bride, surrounded by a company of choral virgins. The bride sings, 'Draw me.' The choral virgins unite with her in singing, 'We will run after thee.'

Though this Song, as a whole, can be fully understood and appreciated only by the experienced Christian, it nevertheless contains sentiments common to him with the newly begotten in the faith. Of these sentiments this is one, 'Draw me, we will run after thee.'

Drawing implies unwillingness to follow. But the text is a prayer, and if sent up to God in sincerity, the will must have followed. True: the will of the new man has followed, but not of the old. 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.' 'To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.' There is willingness implied in the prayer, to be drawn; but there is unwillingness of some kind implied in the necessity to be drawn. There is the obstinacy of the will, and the obstinacy of the affections and propensities. The one obstinacy may be subdued, while the other remains unbroken.

Drawing implies difficulty and tardiness in following. These arise from various causes:—from the opposition of the old man, already referred to—from the very frailty of our frame, the spirit being often willing, while the flesh is weak—from the sacrifice which duty sometimes calls on us to make of our temporal interests and tenderest affections, such sacrifice being often painful, as the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye—from the very blindness of the understanding, often, as to what duty really is; the question of duty being sometimes so beset with difficulties and momentous consequences, that nothing but very pains-taking and prayerful inquiry can set us free from its entanglements,—and finally, from the opposition of misjudging friends, who would dissuade us from incumbent duty, or from the opposition of unbelieving, envious, and malicious foes, who would withstand us in the active discharge of it. But greater is He that is for us, than all they that can be against us. For,

See the power of divine grace: Draw me, we will *run* after thee. Grace overcomes difficulty, and converts tardiness into a race. Sin may have so paralyzed our frame, that our feet may be almost gone, and our steps well nigh slipped: but, 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.' 'He maketh my feet like hinds' feet.' Unsanctified, and even natural and amiable affections, may so fetter our spiritual energies, that we may be like the chained captive, slow and toilsome in our movements of obedience; but, 'They shall take them captive, whose captives

they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors.' Sinful selfishness may so obscure the path of duty, that we shall 'meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noon-day as in the night;' but, 'I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.' Misjudging friends may say, 'There is a lion in the way,' but, 'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.' Persecuting foes may prompt the complaint, 'Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy;' but, 'The arms of the wicked shall be broken, and the Lord upholdeth the righteous.' Gravitation does not act more uniformly in preventing us from ascending bodily into the clouds, than does sin in ourselves and in the world around us, in preventing the soul from freely ascending on the wings of meditation into the heaven of heavens. 'But they that wait upon 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.'

Are such my weaknesses? and such thy promises? Draw me to thy promises: enchain my faith and my affections to them—to Thyself, that I may be drawn *by* them—*by* Thyself. Draw me from the world's allurements and sinful entanglements. I am fettered: but, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' Draw me to duty. I am weak: but, 'Perfect Thy strength in my weakness.' Draw me by the cords of love—by the cords of Thy love to me; by the cords of love in my heart to Thee. Enlarge my heart by love's strong, expansive emotions, and I will run in the path of Thy commandments. What shall hinder, when love without allures, and love within constrains? How light the footstep which is winged by such a sentiment! How willing the surrender which is made by such a sentiment! How incorrupt, how acceptable the sacrifice which is salted by such a sentiment! It is the essence and the sweetener of devotion. It is the soul and beauty of obedience. It is the comforting and animating sister of faith and hope, and it shall live when they have died. Draw me by the cords of love, and if those cords must be the cords of salutary chastisement, they are still the cords of love. Thy will be done. 'The bitter must come before the sweet, and that will make the sweet the sweeter.'

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified,* Rom. viii. 29, 30.

We have here an enumeration of, and a scripture foundation for, the most peculiar doctrines of our Confession and Catechisms—predestination, effectual calling, and justification by the righteousness of Christ. The Arminian and Socinian must find it hard to mould such a text as this into conformity with their opinions: and, after they have done what they could in this way, it must disconcert them not a little, to find such a text as this at every considerable interval of perusal, struggling, like a warped plant, to recover in their minds its natural shape and dimensions.

We have here, also, the intimate and inseparable connection which subsists between these fundamental doctrines. They are the links of a chain, firm as the links of destiny—the links of that golden chain which binds the redeemed on earth to their glorious destiny in heaven. They are the steps of one continuous ladder, indissoluble at any part; reaching, like Jacob's, from earth to heaven: founded deep as the unknown depths of the one, and reaching high as the unseen glories of the other. It has its angels too:—the angels of the churches calling—the Angel of the covenant justifying—the angels that carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom, ushering into glory.

Whatever may be said of foreknowledge and predestination, as these affect the finally impenitent, we have here a foreknowledge and predestination that every mind should rejoice to admit—predestination to holiness and happiness. The former is a dark, the latter is a radiant mystery. Our selfishness may recoil from admission, and even from the contemplation of the one. Our selfishness should be allured to the faith and grateful contemplation of the other.

Our gratitude to a benefactor, and our confidence in him, are enhanced when we come to know that he knew us and our necessities, long before we came to know either him or his benefactions toward us. But God's foreknowledge of us preceded our being—preceded all time—was coeval with eternity. 'Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.'

Our gratitude and confidence are still farther enhanced, when we come to know that the kindnesses of our benefactor are the result of a settled

and unalterable purpose respecting us; especially if it be a settled, unalterable purpose, formed irrespective of any other view of our character and condition than that of our poverty, wretchedness, and helplessness. Both these ideas then, are involved in the term predestination. It is a 'purpose'—a 'purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.' It is a purpose, including not only our happiness, but our regeneration and holiness; nay, a purpose having our regeneration and holiness primarily in view, and as preparatory to happiness—as the means unto the end. 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate;' but predestinate to what? 'To be conformed to the image of his Son'—the perfection of holiness: and for what end? 'That he might be the first-born among many brethren'—the perfection of happiness.

Again, our gratitude and confidence are still farther enhanced, when, in order to banish our fears respecting the future, our benefactor *makes known* to us his unalterable purpose of providing for our happiness; and at the same time makes known his power to fulfil his purpose. Behold then another enhancement of the believer's gratitude and confidence towards the God of his salvation! 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called'—'called out of darkness into his marvellous light'—the light of a fully revealed salvation; whether it respects its Author, its Finisher, its objects, or its end.

Another, and perhaps the greatest, enhancement of our gratitude and confidence, is, when we come to know that the principles upon which our supposed benefactor's purpose of providing for our happiness is founded, are such as have required or shall yet require, a painful sacrifice of his own ease and comfort: when we come to know, for example, that in order that we may be rich, he must become poor; that we may be honoured, he must be despised; that we may live, he must die a lingering and ignominious death. Behold then another, and the greatest of conceivable enhancements of the believer's faith and gratitude towards his heavenly Benefactor! 'Whom he called, them he also justified—and justified how? By the atoning death of his own dear Son. 'He made his soul an offering for sin.' 'He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty might be made rich.' '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, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled

himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Finally, our gratitude and confidence are consummated, when we come to contrast our former condition with that to which our benefactor has already raised, or is yet to raise us:—if it be, for instance, from beggary to opulence, or from heirship to poverty to heirship to a throne, that he has raised us. But what earthly contrast can give an adequate idea of the believer's deserved condition, as compared to that to which God has in prospect raised him? For 'whom he justified, them he also glorified.' A grovelling worm, and a soaring eagle—a dungeon and a palace—a raging fever and blooming and buoyant health—the chamber of the dead, and the bridal feast with its decorated queen of beauty—a sacked city, with its groans of agony and its howlings of despair, and a woody hamlet on a sunny festive-day, re-echoing with the dance of sportive youth, and the mirth of happy age—these are infinitely feeble, they are meaningless as contrasts, if used to express the difference between the believer's deserved, and his destined state of being. Think on the fire unquenchable, on the gnawing worm that never dies, on the angels that kept not their first estate, on the wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Such is the destiny that he deserved. But behold the sun when he shineth in his strength. The believer's destiny is higher, his abode is brighter, his soul is purer, his range of vision more unbounded. Listen to the song of the heavenly host. Your dull ear cannot take in a thousandth portion of its sweetness. It is such a song that he shall sing; and all its sweetness he shall, with a seraph's ear, drink in greedily and everlastingly. 'And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sung as it were a new song before the throne; and no man could learn that song but the redeemed from the earth.' 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath in store for them that love him.'

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,' 1 Cor. i. 30.*

IN Christ, not merely by profession, but by covenant relationship and vital union. Levi the tithe-receiver was, we are told, a tithe-payer;

—not however in his own person, but in his father Abraham: 'for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedek met him.' What Abraham did long before Levi was born, Levi is thus said to have done in him, as being one with him in natural relationship and covenant relationship to God. In like manner, whatever Christ did for us, we are considered as having done in him; and whatever He is for us, we are considered as being in Him. 'Who of God is made unto us wisdom,' &c. This is less emphatic than the original. Its full meaning is as follows: Who is made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness from God, and sanctification from God, and redemption from God,—all blessings precisely suited to our character and necessities as sinners; and all, from that very Being with respect to whom our necessities are felt. But what are these necessities? Ignorance, guilt, pollution, and liability to perdition. But here we have,

Wisdom to enlighten our darkness, to chase away its superstitious fears and false hopes, and to give 'more understanding than the ancients,'—wisdom from the All-wise, from Him whose understanding is infinite—wisdom from God.

We have here a mantling righteousness, sufficient to enfold the guiltiest soul—a righteousness when robed in which, God sees no iniquity in Jacob, and no perverseness in Israel. It is a robe without a stain, without a rent, pure and radiant as the light, and imperishable as the God that wrought it out and gives it. 'Who are these which are arrayed in white robes.'—'These are they which have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.'—'I counsel thee to buy of me—white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear'—the white raiment of justifying righteousness from God, the righteous judge, under whose sentence of condemnation sin has already brought us.

Nor is this all. Not only is the sinner's guilt covered; his pollution of heart is purged away, and sanctification from God is wrought within the soul. Clothed with the mantle which admits into God's spiritual family, the believer undergoes the training of God's adopted children; His own Son being the master, His word the class-book, His Spirit the eye-salve and healing medicine, His providence the rod of correction, or the reward of diligence. Besides, the believer's rags being exchanged for robes, he acquires a prince's nobility of soul, loathes his former filth, and aspires after the pure and lofty destiny awaiting him. And this he does not despairingly, but in the full assurance that sanctification truly begun, is

sanctification completed: for like wisdom and righteousness, it is from God—from God as a whole and certain, and not as a partial and uncertain gift; as will appear from the last and consummating blessing.

Redemption. Wisdom is given to make sinners wise as to their folly—their folly amid guilt and danger, and an utter destitution of a justifying righteousness. Righteousness is given, for acceptance with, and for access with boldness to the infinitely Holy; and it necessarily leads to sanctification. Sanctification is given, that God may be holy as well as just in our redemption, which is the consummation of all the preceding blessings.

'These are the means, but this the end.'

Glorious scheme! Divine in its origin, fair in its proportions, harmonious in its movements, magnificent and beneficent in its results, as a new creation!

But what is the animating soul, the moving, harmonizing principle? It is Christ. He it is that gives all these blessings their individual meaning, makes them available for us, and so indissolubly connects them, the one with the other, that they may be said to blend like the colours of the rainbow. He is 'the white light' of gospel truth; and these blessings are its decomposed elements, spanning, rainbow-like, the sinner's threatening horizon, that he may look and repose on the stability of the divine promises. Without light we could not have the rainbow with its distinct yet blending colours; so, without Christ, we could not have these distinct yet blending and peace-speaking adornments of the soul. The colours of the rainbow have their resemblances in the varnished compounds of this world's dust: so, we may have the varnished resemblances of these gospel gifts and graces, in the gifts and graces of this world. But how dim! how sordid! how superficial! We may have this world's wisdom. But it will die with us; and while it lasts, how adulterated and debased by folly! We may have righteousness of a tawdry whiteness, with which to clothe ourselves in the artificial light of an earthly tribunal. But how rent, and stained with spots! And how black will its white become before the great white throne! We may have sanctification, consisting of sanctity of look, and gait, and phraseology, sufficient to deceive the most discerning spirit. But what will such sanctity avail, when the deceiver and self-deceived has appeared naked in the presence of his Judge? We may have a redemption. No: we can have none. We are speaking of the

soul; and out of Christ there is for it no redemption. 'There is none other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus.' Be mine, then, a vitally uniting faith in Christ; that He may be made unto me wisdom, and make me wise unto salvation—that He may be made unto me righteousness, and that I in Him may be found righteous as Himself, now, and in the great day—that He may be made unto me sanctification, and that I may be holy as He is holy, and at death be found meet for his immediate presence—that He may be made unto me redemption; redemption, from hell, from a wicked and ensnaring world, and from the otherwise hopeless mansions of the dead.

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TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21.

MADE sin! He who knew *no sin made sin!* Made sin for us! Made sin for us, that *we* might be made *the righteousness of God* in him! How emphatic the terms; how divine the appointment; how humbling the doctrine; how precious the privilege!

How emphatic the terms! for it is not,—'made a sin-offering.' That may indeed be its meaning; yet the expression is remarkable—'made sin.' Without doubt, the expression is used to intimate, not merely that our punishment, but that our sins were made His—transferred to him by imputation; to intimate, that He had taken on Himself not only our responsibilities, but our very character. 'He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us.' True it is, that our imputed guilt could never make Him an actual transgressor. Could it have done so, that would itself have rendered Him unfit to be our substitute. Yet how complete his substitution, and how honouring to the divine law, that it was as a sinner, and with 'our iniquities laid upon Him,' that he suffered, 'the just for the unjust.'

The strength of this expression, 'made sin;' and it recalls another, 'made a curse for us,' should convince us of the unscripturalness of contemplating Christ merely as a sufferer by sin, and not also as a substitute for sinners in the fullest sense of the terms. There is a manifest and essential difference between these two views of the Lamb of God. Contemplate Him as an outcast innocent, as a persecuted benefactor, as

dying that He might rise again, and thereby bring life and immortality to light, and you have the first, but an altogether inadequate view of His character and atoning work. Contemplate Him, on the other hand, as personally a perfect innocent, but officially, and by imputation, guilty; contemplate him in all that he did and suffered, as doing and suffering all in the room, and as the representative of sinners—as made not only a sufferer, but a sinner in our behalf, and a sinner in so emphatic a sense as to justify the expression from the pen of inspiration, ‘*made sin* ;’ and you have the second and only adequate view of Christ’s character and atoning work which will meet the demands of scripture. You will then see, not only how God could be just in justifying the ungodly, but how He could be just in hiding His face from the perfectly righteous One, and in smiting him with the sword of sin-avenging justice. You will then see too the full meaning of being ‘*made the righteousness of God in Him* ;’ see that while our sins were made His, His divine righteousness and its infinite meritoriousness are made ours; for it is a righteousness which is ‘*unto all and upon all them that believe*’—unto all as a gift, upon all as a covering. ‘*He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.*’ You will then see how complete we are in Him, who is the Head—how completely He was what we are, and how completely we are what He is, in the work of our salvation. Wondrous and blessed exchange! Wondrous, that the infinitely, eternally, and essentially Happy, should condescend to suffer—to suffer that ‘*we might rejoice*’—‘*rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*’ More wondrous still, that the infinitely, eternally, and essentially Holy, should condescend so to ally Himself unto our sinfulness as to be ‘*made sin*, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Blessed exchange! The sinner made righteous—made the righteousness of God! Bless the Lord, O my soul. Bless the Wonderful—the Prince of peace. Sin has been consumed on the golden altar of His divinity. The ashes of a consumed have become the imperishable beauties of a glorified humanity; and in Him who once was made sin, we behold the everlasting righteousness of God’s redeemed people.

How divine the appointment! An atoning substitute!—a substitute whose previous and revealed appointment is necessary to apprise mankind of the need of such a substitute! Whence could the idea come? From God-dishonouring, God-debasing man, whose inveterate proneness to idolatry and will-worship all past history so sadly demonstrates? And *such* a substitute!—

so holy, so divine! So allied to man, and so allied to God! So conformable to the sinner’s wants, and so equal to the law’s demands! Could human-thought, could angel-thought give birth to the conception? Impossible. And even granting the conception possible, where could it find realization? where could such a substitute be found? In heaven? Then who but God could send him thence? On earth? Alas! all flesh have corrupted their ways, and there is none righteous; no, not one. No second Jesus has appeared, or can appear, either as a reality, or as an imagined and recorded character. Jesus, the holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, were he again upon the earth, and hourly before our eyes, would baffle the wit of man even to appreciate and paint his character; not to speak of originally conceiving it. Earth has no colours equal to its brightness. Heaven alone could supply the colours, and inspiration alone could guide the hand to a faithful portraiture.

How humbling the doctrine! For, whence the necessity of such a substitution? From the extent, the spirituality, and the unchangeableness of the demands of the law of God; and our utter inability to meet those demands. ‘*If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the law.* But the scripture hath concluded all under sin. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.’ Boasting! In the creature? In *such* a creature? Before God? Before *such* a God? How impious the thought! But, have we ‘*submitted to the righteousness of God* ;’ and has ‘*the righteousness of God been revealed to us from faith to faith*?’ How self-renouncing such a submission! How humbling such a revelation! It is the submission of the culprit whose mouth has been stopped, and whose own lips have condemned him. It is the humility of him who contemplates personal guilt in the presence, and under the very eye of perfect holiness—of him whose personal corruptions are drawn forth into the beaming light of divine righteousness. Nor is his humility less deeply felt; it is more deeply and ingenuously felt when, by faith, he comes to be embosomed in its brightness—enrobed in its spotless whiteness. Like poverty promoted to the robes of royalty, the believer’s present rank makes him more sensible of the lowness of his origin. Like modesty exalted to honour, the more sensible he is of his exaltation, the more is he inwardly humbled and ashamed. Like linen, clean and white, upon an impure body, the

imputed righteousness of Christ only makes him more sensible of his personal uncleanness, and of the necessity of the 'washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' How humbling the doctrine! But,

How precious the privilege! What more precious, during life, than peace to the troubled conscience, and freedom of access to God in meditation and in prayer? What more precious than confidence in God, and a well-founded hope of a blessed immortality when we come to die? What more precious than an all-prevailing plea of acquittal, and an irresistible claim of right to the heavenly inheritance on the day of final reckoning? But all this is the preciousness of the privilege of being made the righteousness of God. 'Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.' And, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth.'

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TWENTY SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,' Rom. iv. 3.*

WHAT is faith? It is a simple belief of, and reliance on, the divine testimony, whatever the subject of that testimony may be; whether testimony respecting a temporal or a spiritual deliverance. The blessing bestowed upon simple belief of, and reliance on, the divine testimony, is a personal experience of the deliverance of which the testimony speaks. Christ, when on earth, testified his power to heal; and when he wished to show the connection between faith in that power, and its exercise in behalf of any individual, He required an explicit avowal of faith in Himself before exerting his power to heal. 'Believe ye that I am able to do this?' was the question. 'Lord, I believe,' was the requisite answer; and it never failed to obtain the blessing. Such was the faith through which the patriarchs received their recorded temporal deliverances: as is largely illustrated in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, 'Who through faith subdued kingdoms,' &c.

But there is faith in the divine testimony respecting spiritual, as well as temporal blessings: and this is the faith which is here ascribed to Abraham. It was a faith which looked beyond the present, to another and happier state of being. For while 'by faith he sojourned in the land of promise,' he sojourned there 'as in a

strange country;' 'for he looked for a better country, that is, a heavenly,'—'for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' And of Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah, and perhaps of Abel, Enoch, and Noah, as well as of Abraham, it is said, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises,' &c. Read Heb. 11th chapter, 13—15, 16, 35 verses. Also, for David's sentiments respecting a future state, read Ps. xvii. 15; xlix. 14, 15; and for Asaph's, Ps. lxxiii. 24; and for Job's, Job xix. 25—27.

Again, Abraham's faith had respect to Christ: for said Jesus to the Jews, 'Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.' And says Paul, Gal. iii. 8, 'The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the *gospel* unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.' Nor was this gift of faith in spiritual blessings through a coming Messiah, peculiar to believing Abraham. 'By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, esteeming the reproach of *Christ* greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.' And says Jesus, 'many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and to hear those things which ye hear.' 'Of which salvation,' says Peter, 'the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who have prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.' Prophets and kings are here spoken of, not, however, as though the knowledge and belief of a coming Messiah were confined to them. All who knew and believed their writings had a like faith and hope. Hence we read of the 'just and devout Simeon waiting for the consolation of Israel;' of 'Joseph, the honourable counsellor, who waited for the kingdom of God; and of *all them* that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.' Hence also the current expression before and at the time of Messiah's advent, 'That prophet that should come into the world.'

The faith of Abraham, having thus respect to Christ, was a justifying faith—'it was counted to him for righteousness.' Having respect to Christ, it was identical in character and effect with that which is required under the Christian dispensation; that is, it was faith in a coming Saviour, and a faith which justified without works. Such too must have been the faith of

Abraham's believing predecessors. Such we are expressly told was the faith of Abel, Enoch, and Noah—a justifying faith. Such also must have been the faith of his fellow-patriarchs, and of his believing fellow-countrymen of after ages; for it is in general terms declared, that 'by it (faith) the elders (ancients) obtained a good report.' 'And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.'

Such was their faith; such is our faith—a faith counted for righteousness.

Mark then the oneness of the economy of grace in this particular. Justification by faith is one of the unbroken, bright threads, running the whole length of the otherwise variegated web of the divine dispensations—from Abel to the new-born sinner of the present moment; from the new-born sinner of the present moment to the sounding of the last trump.

Mark too the presumption of *our* seeking to be justified by works. If Enoch, 'that walked with God, and was translated that he should not see death, because he had this testimony that he pleased God;' if Abraham, who is called 'the friend of God,' and is so highly promoted at the marriage supper of the Lamb, that to lie with the head upon his bosom, as is said of Lazarus, is to enjoy the highest honour and felicity; if David, 'the man after God's own heart,' the most gifted, the most devout of scripture writers, and the most experienced of scripture-saints;—if these most eminent of holy men had nothing of which to boast in the sight of God, spoke of 'the blessedness of the man whose iniquities are pardoned, and whose sin is covered,' and were justified by faith, which was counted to them for righteousness; how shall we, who have no pretensions to their godliness, and devotion, and heavenly-mindedness, presume to arrogate to ourselves a righteousness of which they were destitute? 'God resisteth the proud, but He giveth grace to the humble.'

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#### TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; 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,' Rom. iii. 24, 25.*

God's righteousness might have been declared in the sinner's condemnation. Here it is said to be declared in the remission of his sins, and his jus-

tification by grace. But how? Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And how does redemption in Christ Jesus manifest the righteousness of God in the justification of the sinner? By Christ's being set forth to be a propitiation. Let this term 'propitiation' be clearly understood, and the 'how' will become apparent.

There are other terms in our language which will express a part, but not the whole of its meaning. Thus, when Christ is said to be our propitiation, we might explain the expression by saying, that He is our peace-maker. This explains what he does as our propitiation—makes peace. It explains the 'what,' but not the 'how,' in the question. It does not explain the chief idea implied in propitiation. The chief idea is, that in making peace, He, as an atoning sacrifice, makes satisfaction to God's justice in behalf of, and in the room of the sinner. A man may make peace between two hostile parties, especially if both have been at fault, by simple reasoning and remonstrance. He may do this without any sacrifice on his part, and therefore without becoming in any sense a propitiation. But if the one party has an undoubted claim upon the other; if, for example, the cause of the enmity be a large and most just debt, and if the creditor will not, and cannot, from claims otherwise made upon him, forego the debt; in this case, the peace-maker must satisfy the just demands of the creditor, before he can expect to reconcile him to the debtor. If he do so at his own expense, he makes a sacrifice, and becomes, in a sense, a propitiation:—but only *in a sense*; for the full and proper meaning of the term propitiation can be found only in the work of our redemption. And it is found as follows. God and the sinner are at enmity. The cause of the enmity is, that the sinner owes, but has failed to give to God what He, as an infinitely righteous Governor requires—a perfect obedience to his just and unchanging law. The sinner is neither able nor willing to give this perfect obedience. God is unwilling to inflict the penalty. He desires, determines on his forgiveness. But, in forgiving, He cannot recede from the demands which his law makes upon the sinner, without such a satisfaction to its claims as shall vindicate its authority and rectitude. God accordingly sends his Son to make this satisfaction. The Son, for this end, voluntarily takes upon himself the nature and the obligations of the sinner—his obligations as subject to the law, and as liable to its penalty. Subject to the law, He gives perfect obedience to its requirements, that, as perfectly innocent, He might meritoriously bear its penalty. Its penalty

He bears. He dies the just for the unjust. —Whatever coming short of the demands of unbending justice there may seem to be in Christ's being a substitute only, and not the actual transgressor, is more than made up by Christ's dignity as divine, and by his near relationship to God as his eternal Son. For what more honouring to the law; what vindication of its authority more appalling, than that the Son of the Lawgiver, than that the Lawgiver Himself, should, in the room of the sinner, and with the sinner's iniquities laid upon Him, suffer the penalty? This did He, 'who, being the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.' Eternal Justice has been satisfied, and, in testimony of the fact, Christ is *set forth* to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare God's righteousness for the remission of sins.

The scripture proof of this view of Christ's atoning work is most abundant. It is to be found in the very term 'propitiation;' which implies these four ideas, enmity, reconciliation, a reconciler, and a propitiatory sacrifice as the ground of the reconciliation. The chief of these ideas is the last, which is often set forth in scripture, especially in the sacrifices under the ceremonial law, as these are explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The text itself exhibits this last idea as the chief; for it is 'through faith in His blood, that He becomes a propitiation to the sinner. Again, we have the term *redemption* in the text, which, with other ideas, has that of the payment of a price as its distinctive meaning. Hence the expressions, 'to give his life a ransom;' 'bought with a price;' 'redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ;' 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.'

Let not the above view be supposed to detract from the mercy of God. His righteousness required that His law should be vindicated before the sinner could be saved. Not, however, that He was unwilling to pardon, but that, as righteous Governor, He was morally unable to pardon, without a vindication of His law. Not that He was unwilling, but most willing; yea, resolved to pardon: and, therefore, both the pardon and requisite vindication originate in, and proceed from Himself. As a God of justice He exacts the vindication; as a God of mercy he provides for its accomplishment. Mercy as well as justice is thus more illustriously displayed. Hence we are said to be 'justified freely by his grace.'

Had the exacted vindication been made of the sinner, this could not have been said. The exaction was made not of the sinner, but of a substitute—of a substitute provided by the Exactor—provided by the Exactor in behalf of those who were in a state of enmity, and of such an enmity as refuses even to admit the necessity of such a substitute. How true then, how emphatic the statement—'justified *freely by his grace!*' Grace is the origin, freeness is the character of the blessing. Grace gave it birth; freeness sends it forth in universal offer, and for gratuitous acceptance. Grace is the fountain-head; freeness is the channel bearing down within its flooded banks to the parched wilderness, the waters of salvation, 'without money and without price.' Ho, every one that thirsteth! come ye to the waters.

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TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Do we then make void the law through faith?  
God forbid: yea, we establish the law,' Rom.  
iii. 31.

'It is of the nature of transgressors and criminals,' says an acute divine, 'to bear a grudge and prejudice against the law, because the law is against them.' How then does the transgressor and criminal, in the person of the objector, whom the apostles addresses in the text, come to stand up for the law? Because he has not seen it to be against him. He has not been personally condemned by it; or if he has, he thinks that after condemning, it may yet, in the end, acquit and justify him—a nation not tending much to the honour and establishment of the law. But this answer, besides accounting for their self-contradictory zeal for the law, on the part of the legalist, and the unimpressed by a sense of sin, serves to establish the converse of the above quotation, namely, that it is of the nature of righteous and justified persons to have a favour and love for the law, because the law is for them. The legalist and personally uncondemned by sin, presumptuously think that the law is, or at least may, in the end be for them. Hence they can have a zeal for the law. The justified by faith know that the law is already for them, and cannot be against them; and therefore they cannot but be in love with, and be zealous for the law. But while both are zealous for the law, the zeal of the one proceeds upon a virtual making void the law; the zeal of the other has its origin in a complete and glorious establishment of the law. Why is it that the legalist and impenitent bear

no grudge nor prejudice against the law? Because they think that it is not so high in its demands, nor so inflexible in the infliction of the penalty, as to be already conclusively against them; which is a virtual making void the law. For what greater dishonour can be done to a law, than first to break it, then to withhold its just vindication, and then to deny that ever it required the vindication sought? Faith, on the other hand, establishes the law in all its authority, meets all its demands, and manifests its unchangeableness. That faith does this for the law in the character of judge, none who know the object of that faith can deny. That object is Christ, dying the 'just for the unjust,' 'magnifying the law, and making it honourable.' By his death he has shown that the moral Governor of the universe has not relaxed, but has rather, if we take into account the dignity of the Substitute, and the sufferings he endured, enhanced the demands of the law. He has shown what the legalist and impenitent have to expect, when they are summoned to answer personally, and on their own footing, at the law's magnified tribunal.—But it is not so much the authority of the law as judge, as its practical influence as the governor of human conduct, that is alleged to be made void by the doctrines of gratuitous justification; and it is not so much of its practical influence on the conduct of the impenitent—with respect to them its practical influence must be seen to be mightily augmented—as of its practical influence on the conduct of the believer of the doctrine, that the allegation is made. The believer is delivered from the law as a judge, and therefore, it is concluded, he is removed from its restraints as a governor of conduct. The conclusion is plausible. But if it be just, what is to be said of angels and glorified saints. They are delivered from the law as a judge; but are they delivered from it as a governor of conduct? And if it be possible for them to honour and obey the governor without fearing the judge, it follows, that fear of punishment is not the only motive fitted to secure obedience. Nay, if we contrast the obedience of heaven with obedience on earth, we will be disposed to conclude, that there must be some other means more effective in securing obedience, than that of the fear of punishment. Let a sovereign be loved; let his law be loved, because seen to be holy, just, and good; let the sovereign be viewed by the subject, not only as a just and affectionate governor, but as a personal friend, as a personal benefactor, as a father, and a more effective provision will be made for sincerity, uniformity, and ardour of obedience, than could be made

by the most exact requirements and the severest penalties. Such then is the provision made by the gospel for securing the obedience of its subjects—love, gratitude, sense of obligation, delight in acting conformably to these sentiments, discomfort in acting contrary to them. The more a man is persuaded that has been justified freely by the grace of God, the more deeply are these sentiments felt, and the more actuating and sanctifying is their influence upon his heart and conduct. Besides, consider the nature and consequences of that spiritual change with which justifying faith is uniformly accompanied—a new birth, a new creation, all old things done away and all things become new, renewal in the spirit of the mind. Consider too the believer's privileges, hopes, and enjoyments; how quickening, strengthening, elevating, animating, and how utterly incompatible with the love and practice of sin! Nor is this all. The objection to gratuitous justification proceeds upon the supposition that the believer is freed from all fear of penalty. This is not true. He is indeed freed from fear of the final penalty, everlasting condemnation. But when he falls into sin, he falls into a pit, and mire, and under the power of a hated and much dreaded oppressor; his most satisfying joys are turned into bitterness of soul, and he subjects himself to the rod of an angry Providence. In these there is a restraining and actuating power, not to be found by the legalist in the distant and sometimes doubted penalty, however great.

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TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,' Rom. iii. 26.*

God set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for two ends: First, 'To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,'—that is, under the former dispensations—'through the forbearance of God.' The sins committed under the former dispensations God forbore to punish, in the prospect of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice for sin; and now that 'Christ, in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,' it is seen from Christ set forth as a propitiation for those sins, that God's forbearance was not exercised at the expense of his justice; but that during the long exercise of the mercy of forbearance, respect was prospectively had to justice, in the appointed death of Jesus. How long and how sorely tried

was His forbearance! Yet He waited to be gracious.

But if Christ, set forth as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, declares that justice was not dethroned during the long reign of forbearance, under the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, that exhibition no less emphatically declares, Secondly, That justice is still enthroned with mercy in forgiving sin 'at this time,' that is, under the present dispensation. To declare at 'this time his righteousness,' &c. Had God forgiven the ungodly, and treated them as just persons, without any vindication of His law, He would have acted solely as a God of mercy, and from any thing we can see, would have done violence to His character as a God of justice. But he cannot at any instant, or in any matter, act from the impulse of one attribute so as to derogate from another. All his attributes must harmonize at every instant, and in every act. It is one of the distinguishing peculiarities of the gospel, one of those peculiarities which are far beyond the reach of human discovery, and therefore demonstrative of the gospel's heavenly origin, that in it mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other, in the salvation of the sinner; that in it God is just and the justifier—a just God and a Saviour. Christ has vindicated the law—magnified it and made it honourable. This he has done more fully and strikingly than could have been done by the death of the actual transgressor. Hereby God is declared just in pardoning.—But He is declared to be just, not only in pardoning, but in justifying and eternally rewarding the transgressor. Christ died not merely as a solemn warning that sin shall not escape unpunished, nor merely that the sinner might be delivered from the merited reward of his misdeeds. He died as our substitute: and not merely as a suffering substitute; nor merely as a vindicatory substitute, like one rebel chosen out of ten to suffer the last penalty of the law, in order to vindicate its authority while forgiving the other nine. He died as our *meritorious* substitute, that the pardoned might not only have their guilt removed and the penalty remitted, but that they might be invested with His perfect righteousness, and on the ground of its meritoriousness, have a claim, so to speak, on the justice of God for the reward which that meritoriousness has purchased—eternal life. God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; not merely that we might not die the death of sinners, but that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And made the righteousness of God in Him, how just is God

in justifying and eternally rewarding the ungodly.'

We have said just in justifying *the ungodly*. But that term must be restricted by the phrase, 'him which believeth in Jesus;' that is, him that believeth in the necessity, reality, and sufficiency of Christ as a sin-atoning Saviour. But why so restricted? Because no satisfaction has been made; no satisfaction *can* be made to justice in behalf of him, who, after rebelling and after forgiveness has been offered, still perseveres in his rebellion. There must be first submission to its claims before justice can permit the forgiveness of the sinner. And no submission can be fuller and more honouring to justice, than is implied in faith in Jesus. It is the submission of the penitent, justice-adoring suppliant—of the suppliant confessing personal desert of punishment, humbly, gratefully, and eagerly, laying hold of the justice-honouring-substitute, and founding all his claim to mercy on the honour done to justice by the death of Jesus.

How great the encouragement thus held out to come and be reconciled to God! Every obstacle has been removed. All things are ready. God is waiting to be gracious. Fear not. 'Fury is not in me:—Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me: and he shall make peace with me.' 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

But how wretched, how hopeless is a state of unbelief! Unmitigated, fearfully aggravated justice, claiming the impenitent and unbelieving as its own! No more sacrifice for sin! Fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary! What so fitted to alarm! Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?

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#### TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies,' Psal. ciii. 2—4.*

The same words have sometimes a very different meaning in the lips of different men. These words may be used not without an important meaning, and not without feeling, even by the unbeliever: but how far short do both the meaning and the feeling come of those of the consciously reconciled and devout believer! The

gratitude of the one is the gratitude of the natural man for blessings to the animal nature; the gratitude of the other is the gratitude of the spiritual man for blessings to the spiritual nature. It is his spiritual nature—his soul, that he addresses, when the Psalmist says, 'Who forgiveth all *thine* iniquities, who healeth all *thy* diseases,' &c.

To the believer the soul is the chief object of concern. For what is life? It is a vapour—unsubstantial, evanescent. What is all time itself when compared unto eternity? It is but a fleeting moment. And what makes eternity to come more awful than eternity gone by? The soul—the soul lying under the curse of its iniquities. Give him deliverance from these, and every other deliverance will be very vanity in his estimation. But deliverance he has obtained—deliverance from iniquities already committed; and, as iniquities are daily committed—for every little sin has in his sight the magnitude of an iniquity—they are by faith and penitence, daily remitted. Hence the song of gratitude, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul: who forgiveth all *thine* iniquities;' who not only *has* forgiven, so as to accept in the Beloved, but *continues* to forgive, so as to bless in the Beloved.

Not, however, that his iniquities, when committed, leave the soul scatheless as soon as the prayer of penitence has been uttered, and the promise of forgiveness has by faith been appropriated. They inflict painful and sometimes festering wounds upon the soul, which sicken and predispose it to farther iniquity. But there is the healing Spirit, who mollifies the wounds, and gradually restores to perfect soundness. Hence the next clause in his song: 'Who healeth all thy diseases.' 'I said, Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.' 'O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.'

If from want of watchfulness, and from want of prayer for forgiveness and for the healing and sanctifying Spirit, the soul, as sometimes happens, has been brought to the very verge of destruction; if the wounds inflicted by sin have been allowed to fester, overspread, and eat in to the very vitals;—in such an extremity God does not desert him, but gives him reason to add this to his other ascriptions: 'Who redeemeth my life from destruction.' 'Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world;' and, 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.'

But besides the negative blessings of deliverance from guilt, from spiritual disease, and deadly apostacy, there are positive blessings—'Kindnesses and mercies.' And how precious these

kindnesses and mercies! Trebly precious! Precious in themselves—precious from their source—precious from their abundance and their dignity!

—Precious in themselves. They are not only the kindnesses and mercies of deliverance from the fears and discomforts of conscious guilt, but of settled, soothing peace, of animating hope, of beautifying joy—of settled, soothing peace, for 'his soul shall dwell at ease;' and it is the peace of God which passeth all understanding,—of animating hope, for 'it entereth within the veil,'—of animating joy, for 'we rejoice in hope of the glory of God,' 'rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

—Precious in their source. They are *loving-kindnesses* and *tender-mercies*—the mercies of a loving, the kindnesses of a tender heart;—not the kindnesses of the churl, which are cold as snow in winter; but the kindnesses of a father, which are as the dew upon the tender grass;—not the fitful mercies of a tyrant, like gleams of sunshine in a tempestuous day, but the tender mercies of the mother's heart, yearning with affection over her sickly babe. 'As the eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord.'

—Precious from their plenty and their dignity: 'Who *crowneth* thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.'—The crown is the emblem of plenty: 'Thou crownest the year with thy goodness.' Accordingly, the kindnesses and mercies of the gospel are not given with the sparing hand of the needy or the niggard. They are given as the givings of the God of harvest—outpouringly and seasonably.—The crown is the emblem of victory: 'He is not crowned except he strive lawfully.' The victory then, and its attendant honours, are the believer's; and the believer's from the Lord.—'We are more than conquerors;' and, 'Victory is of the Lord; *He* giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Well then may the believer exclaim, in a sense infinitely higher, and with sentiments infinitely purer and more elevated than the most grateful worldling: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not *all* his benefits—forget not *all* his benefits. To *remember all* is impossible:

'Eternity's too short to utter all thy praise.'

But, O my soul *forget not all* his benefits. Justified freely! Justified by Immanuel's righteousness! Sanctified wholly, in body, soul, and spirit! Preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! Glorified! Crowned! Precious privileges and glorious hopes. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

## THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life,' Rom. v. 18.*

'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' *All* have sinned. In what sense? In the same sense in which Adam sinned? that is, actually? No, not in every instance: 'Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. In what sense then have *all* sinned? All have sinned in Adam as their federal head: 'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners;' and, 'By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.' 'In Adam all die.'—As to the extent of the penalty, it is worthy of special notice that it is called 'condemnation,'—not natural death only, but condemnation. It is not only said, 'Through the offence of one many be dead;' but, 'The judgment was by one to condemnation.'

Such is the result of our headship in Adam. But Adam 'is the figure of him that was to come;' that is, as Adam was our federal head bringing us into condemnation, he was a figure or type of Christ our federal head, bringing us into a state of righteousness and salvation—Christ, 'the second man,' 'the last Adam.' 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'

But is the headship in both co-extensive? The text implies that it is. But in what sense? It cannot be supposed that upon every one condemned in Adam, the justification of life will so come, as that he shall be justified and saved, whatever may be his personal faith and character, whether believing or unbelieving, saint or impenitent sinner. Such a supposition would contradict the plainest dictates both of reason and scripture. 'The free gift,' says Calvin on this text, 'is made common to all, inasmuch as it is offered to all; not because it is actually bestowed upon all. For, although Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and is offered to all without distinction, yet all do not lay hold upon him.' But a more complete and consistent sense is found by keeping the federal headship in view. Through Adam condemnation has come upon all of whom he is the head. Through Christ, the free gift unto justification of life has come upon all of whom he is the head, namely, his body the

church. This interpretation accounts for the 'all' of the text, being spoken of as 'the many,' in verses 15 and 19; and it accounts for the restriction contained in the 17th verse, where those who shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ, are described as 'they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness.'

Let not, however, anxiety to establish particular interpretations of controverted words or clauses in this or any text, tempt us to overlook the undoubted and apparent truth which it contains. Judgment is here declared to have come upon all men to condemnation. Sad truth! yet certain. It is judgment to condemnation by the righteous God: 'And shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' And if it originally came by the offence of one; it has been a thousand times incurred and confirmed anew 'by many personal offences.' But the sadness needs not be the sadness of discontent or despair: for, 'As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.' Here we have justification sufficient to meet and answer all the wants implied in condemnation,—justification free and universal in offer; free, universal, and sure in effectual application to every one that believeth. If we are condemned in Adam, and on account of personal guilt, along with Adam; 'There is now no condemnation,' there is justification of life—a life-giving justification, 'to them that are in Christ Jesus.' 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' Wonder, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

## THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,' John viii. 24.*

THE command to believe, is sometimes so understood as greatly to obscure the specific duty implied in it. Considered in itself, to believe is an act of the mind by which we embrace and rely upon as true, all that the Bible says respecting Christ. Considered in connection with its fruits, it comprehends, along with the act of the mind technically called faith, the whole of what is usually denominated obedience. In themselves, however, faith and obedience are perfectly distinct. Yet they are sometimes so confounded and lost the one in the other, that there is no correct conception of either. The result of this is, either that the command, believe, is considered

as being identical with the command, obey, and a less explicit form of it; or, faith is assigned a subordinate importance as compared to obedience, being considered merely as the means, or rather as a means unto the great end obedience. It is not considered, as it ought to be, as being in itself an end, as being in itself a distinct and specific command, so distinct and so specific as sometimes to be put in direct contrast to the command, obey. It is not considered as being *the* command, obedience, to which is the turning point of our salvation. When our Lord put the question to the two blind-men, Believe ye that I am able to do this? and when he said to the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe; the faith required had no reference to obedience. Also, when our Lord said to Peter, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?' and to the disciples, 'Have faith in God; for verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith;'—it was a state of mind and heart alone which was required. Now, the faith which justifies and saves is as specific in its nature, and as much an act of the mind and heart alone, as was the faith by which miracles were wrought or received. When the apostle says, 'They have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,' Rom. x. 3, he evidently speaks of a mental, and not of a moral act; for these words stand opposed to ignorance of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness. And says he elsewhere, 'To him that worketh not, but believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness.' 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that *believeth*,—not worketh, nor worketh and believeth taken conjunctively, but believeth taken distinctively.' Hence the prominence and importance given to faith in the word of God. It is called 'the work,' and 'God's commandment' by way of eminence. 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' This 'is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' Let us then beware of confounding what the apostle calls the 'obedience of faith,' that is, of believing—of yielding assent unto the truth, with the obedience of works. Let us not suppose that we are obedient to the truth as it is in Jesus, merely because we are doing our little utmost to be obedient to the moral law; which little utmost we may try to do, while Christ is not in all our thoughts, or there, only as a subject of doubt

and speculation, if not of positive denial. Let us listen to his words in their specific, strictest sense, 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.'

If any man be disposed to say that he has no power over his belief; the inveterate drunkard or libertine urges the same excuse; he says he has no power over his practice. No man can bid away his evil propensities by a mere effort of the will; and it is equally admitted, that no man can, by a mere effort of the will, bid away his unbelief. Means must be employed. Means will be effectual in both cases. And the first means is, to cease cherishing, either by thought or deed, the evil which is desired to be eradicated. Ceasing to do evil is a preparatory, and the most important step in learning to do well, in matters of speculation as well as in matters of practice. If faith in the gospel be desired—and who would not desire to have a firm faith in its sanctifying truths and glorious promises?—avoid every thing that is hostile to it, and welcome every thing that is friendly.

As another preparatory means, let us examine the heart whether it be right toward God, and willing to receive truth from whatever quarter, and however humbling. The heart and not the understanding is the stronghold of unbelief. Therefore, let pride and prejudice, and above all, the love and practice of sin, be renounced; let humility, piety, love of truth, and a sacred regard to the dictates of conscience, become the cherished inmates of the breast; after, or along with this preparatory process, let the understanding be directed to the investigation of the truth of scripture, and to the study of scripture truth, under a solemn impression of the momentous importance of the inquiry, and with earnest prayer to the God of truth, that he would aid, direct, and bless our inquiries. Let these means be employed, and then let us say whether it be true that we have no power over our belief. A modification, or an entire change of our former creed, will be inevitable. We have not, it is true, such a command over our belief, as to be able to determine, beforehand, what will be its precise complexion;—and yet what a command have even sceptics over their belief, and with what facility and certainty can they mould it to their prejudices and passions, when they allow themselves to be led by these! We may not be able to determine, beforehand, what will be the precise result as to our belief; but surely we would be no more entitled, on this account, to say that we have no power over it, than the merchant would be entitled to say that he

has no power over his lot in life, because he cannot predict what will be the precise issue of his speculations in business. We may not be able to determine, beforehand, the truths which our creed will contain: but one truth we may predict that it will contain, namely, that we are

sinner. If we are sinners, and if Christ be no Saviour, we shall die in our sins, for there is none other name under heaven laying claim to such a character. If Christ be a divinely appointed Saviour, he says, 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.'

## M A Y.

### FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'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.*

It is objected against the doctrine of justification by faith, that it is inconsistent with rational views of God's moral government. Is not God, it is asked, a God of justice, and is it not essential to his character as such, to reward virtue and punish vice? What therefore, it is concluded, but personal obedience or disobedience can be the ground of our acceptance or rejection by God? The truth of the premises is undeniable; and we proceed upon this admission to show the inadmissibility of the conclusion. God, it is said, is a God of justice, and must reward virtue and punish vice. This we admit; but so far from concluding as the objector does, we argue to the very contrary. That the argument may be the better understood let the following distinction be attended to, namely, the distinction between obedience considered in itself, and obedience as found in the person of a responsible agent. If it be asked, will not God reward obedience? We answer, most certainly. But if it be asked, will not every one in whom obedience is found be finally approved of and rewarded by God? We cannot give an immediate or unqualified answer to such a question. We must first know whether it be a complete, or only a partial and imperfect obedience. Bring before a just king a man who has been for many years a loyal and blameless subject, but during all these years has been an undetected murderer, and will it not become a question, whether his blamelessness, since the murder was committed, entitles him to the life and privileges which his life has already forfeited?—not to speak of the reward to which the uniformly

obedient are entitled; to that he can have no imaginable claim. Is obedience entitled to a reward? is one question. Is man's obedience entitled to a reward? is another and very different question. That God will reward the obedience of a race of innocents is certain. That he will reward the obedience of a race of sinners; that is, that he will overlook their sins, and deal with them only for their obedience, our very reason tells us is by no means certain. Nay, if reason gives us any certainty at all in the matter, it is that the sinner must be reckoned with as well for his sins as for his partial obedience, for it is as essential a part of justice to punish as to reward. The conclusion to which we are hereby driven is, that if we have already forfeited our life by sin, we cannot claim its restoration at the hand of justice, and that the inevitable result of our trial on the ground of obedience and disobedience must be our condemnation.

But it will be said, that while the justice of God rewards our good deeds, the mercy of God will forgive our bad ones. In reply we observe, 1. That if it be as essential a part of justice to punish as to reward, then if mercy be extended, it comes not as a matter of right, but wholly as a matter of grace. 2. That if a man, by transgression, incur the penalty of a broken law, the utmost that his subsequent good conduct can claim at the hand of justice is a mitigation of the punishment, not its remission, far less a positive reward. But what we need, as sinners, is not a mitigation of the punishment proportioned to the number of our good deeds. That the justice of God will grant even to the finally condemned. What we need, as sinners, is the entire forgiveness of our sins, and complete restoration to the divine favour. And shall we go to justice for such a gift as this? And if we go to mercy, shall we insist on mercy bestowing as a matter of right what it can give only as a matter of favour. If we go to justice we must take what alone justice can give—a complete reward for a complete

obedience, an unmitigated punishment for unmitigated disobedience, or a mitigated punishment, yet still a punishment, for an imperfect obedience. If we go to mercy for remission either of an unmitigated or mitigated punishment, we must go renouncing all claim of right, and receive, as a free and unmerited favour, whatever mercy is willing to bestow. So that for a sinner to speak of personal merit as the ground of his acceptance with God, is the grossest folly, not to say impiety. To speak thus, argues a state of heart utterly unbecoming the transgressor—a state of heart which is the essential element of impenitence. If then there must be the exercise of mercy in our acceptance by God, is it any dishonour done to justice to consult and answer its claims in the method by which the mercy is vouchsafed? Yet this is precisely what justification by faith does. It is a method of acceptance devised and prescribed by God, for the express purpose that he might be a just God, and at the same time a Saviour. It does honour to justice, by inflicting its penalty on an altogether willing and all-meritorious substitute; and by requiring an humble and adoring acknowledgment by faith on our part, that such a vindication of the claims of justice was indispensable to our salvation. Far, therefore, from justification by faith being derogatory to the justice of God in the moral government of the world, it is the only way in which we can be saved in consistency with that attribute; and so far are we from being able to be justified by the works of the law, that we have already been condemned by them. We will never have views of the moral government of the universe consistent in themselves, honouring to God, and comforting to our souls, till we can say with the apostle, '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.'

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FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

'And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,' Phil. iii. 9.

SALVATION, from its very nature, must be of grace, and not of merit, and we must look for it, not to justice, but to mercy, to mercy pacifying justice.

But in what does this salvation consist, and what must we do in order to become partakers of it?

Has the gospel only made provision for the forgiveness of the past, and left us to work out and merit anew the salvation of the soul? On such a supposition salvation would be impossible. For let God enter into judgment with us after our belief of such a gospel, and who could stand the scrutiny of his righteous judgment? We must inevitably be condemned and perish, just as before the proclamation of such a gospel.

But it may perhaps be thought, that while such a gospel provides for the forgiveness of the sins that are past, it provides also for the relaxing of God's severity of justice in judging for the time to come, makes him less strict in entering into judgment with us, nay, makes an imperfect obedience meritorious. If this be supposed, it follows that the effect of the death of Christ has been to prove, that God must have been too strict before, and convicts him of injustice in originally exacting from us more than an imperfect obedience. If God has entered into judgment with us on the principles of strict unbending justice, and on these principles, has declared that condemnation hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; and if he afterwards departs from such a strictness, lets down the demands of his law, and enters into judgment with us, and justifies us on less strict principles; then, one of two things must follow; either he was unjust to *us* in pronouncing condemnation in the first instance, or he was unjust to his *own law* in pronouncing justification in the second instance; that is, he must either be an unrighteous Governor exacting more than he can justly demand, or a fickle and inconsistent governor, beginning his government on one principle, and unable on account of its severity to carry it out, ending it with another and less stringent principle. One or other of these conclusions must be arrived at if we entertain the idea that the gospel provides for the relaxing of the strictness of God's justice in judging us for the time to come. The impiety of both conclusions should make us turn with horror from the premises.

But how are these conclusions to be escaped? By being 'found in Christ, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' 'Found in him,' we are able to meet the strictest demands of justice. In him we have suffered the penalty of the law, and obtain remission for the past. In him we have a perfect righteousness sufficient to meet all, even the highest demands for the future. And it

is no relaxing of justice to deal with us as found in such a substitute. His death is more demonstrative of the unchangeableness of the law, and more honouring to its prerogatives, than the death of the actual transgressor. His righteousness is infinitely more meritorious as a ground of acceptance than that of any creature, even the most innocent and exalted. It is 'the righteousness which is of God.' Found therefore in Christ, 'not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ,' the justice of God, instead of being relaxed or impaired, is confirmed and magnified in our salvation. What an emphasis does this view of salvation by the gospel, give to the words of Paul! 'And, O God, grant that I through faith may be enabled to appropriate them.' 'We have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'

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SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away,'* Isa. lxiv. 6.

HERE are three of the most distinguishing features of the genuine penitent,—self-loathing, self-reunciation, sense of estrangement from God and of consequent spiritual impotency.

1. Self-loathing. 'We are all as an unclean thing.' It is of the nature of uncleanness to be insensible to its own defilement. The swine is not only an unclean, but an unconsciously unclean beast. It has a sense of its own, but that sense seems to find gratification equally in the unclean and the clean. So is it with the impenitent. He is insensible to spiritual defilement, either in himself, or in his sinful enjoyments. He has a sense of right and wrong, of happiness and misery; but by that sense he can know only, and that but partially, the punishment of sin, or at most, its worthiness of punishment. He cannot, while impenitent, feel its offensiveness as a self-polluting uncleanness. Consciousness of guilt may make him a fearful

or suffering, but not a self-loathing culprit. But let him be renewed in the spirit of his mind, and what formerly seemed to him a mere scripture hyperbole, or perhaps a calumny against our nature, will be seen and felt to be a certain and humbling truth. Let his eyes be opened to the holiness of God, and like Job, too much a self-approver before the appearing of the Holy One, he will be brought to exclaim, '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.' Let him by faith be brought to the great High Priest of our profession, to have his character, as a sinner, judicially pronounced, and like the leper with his clothes rent, his head bare, and a covering upon his upper lip, he shall be constrained to cry out, Unclean, Unclean.

2. Nor will it be uncleanness of person only, but uncleanness of covering, that will then be discovered and confessed. 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,' tainted with the leprosy of sin.—It would seem that it is possible to form too low an estimate of the value of our righteousnesses in the sight of God. Let a man form ever so low an estimate of his benefactions towards his fellow-men, and he will be commended not less for his humility than for his beneficence. He may be thought more humble than necessary; yet his very excess of humility will command reverence; while a self-complacency, less even than an exact estimate of his benefactions would warrant, will provoke envy and detraction. But it is, and if we are to be taught by the wise in this world, it ought to be otherwise, when we speak of righteousness in the sight of God. We must not, it seems, suppose that the humility and self-renunciation which commend us to our fellow-men are acceptable and well-pleasing in the sight of God. Let us speak of the worthlessness of our good deeds done to our neighbour, and the stronger our language, and the greater our sincerity in using it, the greater will be our commendation. But let us speak of the worthlessness of our good deeds as done to the holy heart-searching God, and the stronger our language, and the deeper our sincerity, the greater will be our reprobation—the stronger our language, the more will we be deemed hypocrites; the deeper our sincerity, the more will we be deemed fools and fanatics. But, O my God! be mine the sincerity of such hypocrisy! be mine the wisdom of such folly! Enter not into judgment with thy servant. Mine innocence I have worn to rags. My moralities, my charities, my prayers, my love, my zeal, my holiest, heavenliest frames of mind and heart have been leavened, leprosid, and polluted by

sin; and they all need the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and thy forgiving mercy. Be mine the righteousness of the Redeemer. All my righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

3. But whence this all-pervading and polluting sinfulness? From our estrangement from God, from our inherent depravity, and from our consequent spiritual impotency for what is truly and only good. 'We all do fade as a leaf,' and our iniquities like the wind have carried us away.' The primary application of this text is without doubt to the Jewish nation; and therefore the withering of the leaf, and its dispersion by the wind, evidently describe the withering of their national energies, and their dispersion as a people by a sin-avenging providence. But the figure no less aptly describes the character and condition of the whole human race. In all, the green leaf is seared, has lost its freshness and vitality, is severed from the parent stem, and if left to itself, is susceptible of nothing but tossing and corruption. In other words, a blight has passed upon the mental, and moral faculties, and spiritual sensibilities of every human being; and the energy that remains is an energy which, if left to itself, inevitably tends to corruption in morality and religion. This tendency all history and personal experience prove, and sadly exemplify. This the true penitent has come to know experimentally. He sees what he should have been, and where he should have been, and how far and how violently he has been driven away by the gusts of evil passion within, and the current of evil influences and example without. He sees how when he was living in rebellion, all his actions were the actions of a rebel, and partook, some more, some less, but all in some degree of the spirit and offensiveness of rebellion. He is sensible, too, of this offensiveness belonging not only to himself, but to all his fellow-men; and penitentially confesses in the words of the prophet, 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; we are all withered away like a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have carried us away.'

SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see,'*  
Rev. iii. 18.

THERE are two kinds of riches spoken of in the Bible. There are the 'deceitful,' 'uncertain,'

and 'unprofitable' riches;—The deceitful, which prompt the rich farmer's soliloquy, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;' but 'to whom God said, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee:'—the uncertain, that 'are not for ever,' and that 'take to themselves wings and flee away:'—the unprofitable, 'that are kept by the owners thereof to their hurt,' and that 'profit not in the day of wrath.' Such were the riches of the rich man, who was clothed in purple, and fared sumptuously every day, but afterwards lifted up his eyes in hell being in torments, and saw the once mendicant and diseased, but now glorified Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom.

In contrast to these, there are 'the treasures in heaven,'—'the true riches,'—'the durable riches and righteousness,'—'the riches,' 'the exceeding riches of his grace,'—'the riches of the glory of his inheritance,'—'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' These last are the only riches worthy of the name. All past experience has proved the deceitfulness, uncertainty, and unprofitableness of the former. All Christian experience, and the word of God, have proved the truth, the durability and unsearchableness of the latter,—proved them to be gold tried in the fire.

Again, there are two kinds of raiment mentioned in scripture; the 'rags of righteousness,' and 'the garments spotted by the flesh;' in contrast to which we have 'the wedding garment,' 'the garment of salvation,' 'the robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.' The former is the clothing of spiritual poverty and impurity; the latter is the clothing of divinity—spotless purity—'fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints.'

With respect both to the riches and the raiment, there are those who are disposed to say, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.' But to such, 'The Amen, the true and faithful Witness,' saith, 'Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Thou sayest I *am* rich—rich already, and have need of nothing. Thou sayest I *am* rich—rich in and of myself, and need not depend upon another. But the Amen saith, Thou art *poor*—thy riches are poverty; *thou* art poor—poor in and of thyself—thou and not another. I counsel thee, take my advice, and lean not to thine own understanding, for he that trusteth to his own heart, especially in such matters, is a fool. I counsel thee to buy of *me* gold tried in a fire, in which your gold would be consumed to ashes; and white raiment without a spot, and in which there is no rent through which

the shame of thy nakedness can appear. Thou hast nothing with which to buy, for thou art poor. But my invitation is the old invitation of the prophet, Come, buy, without money and without price.

—Buy of me, and what thou receivest without money and without price, shall be as rightfully thine own, as if it were an actual purchase. Thou art blind, blind to thy poverty and nakedness, to my riches, and the glory of my regal vestments. But I have an eye-salve. Come and anoint thine eyes that thou mayest see.

How kind, how forbearing the Redeemer, towards the pride of self-sufficiency! 'I counsel thee.' It might have been an indignant 'I command thee.' But 'my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.'

How pure, how precious, how lasting, the blessings of the gospel! Gold, gold tried in the fire, seven times purified. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

How condescending the Holy One, to disrobe himself of his divinity, and invest himself with our humanity, that he might weave for us the robes of righteousness and immortality!

'How bright these glorious spirits shine!  
Whence all their white array!  
How came they to the blissful seats,  
Of everlasting day!  
Lo! these are they from sufferings great,  
Who came to realms of light,  
And in the blood of Christ have washed  
Those robes which shine so bright.'

How conformable the grace of the gospel to our necessities! Vain is the light of the brightest sun to the darkened eyeball—vain the most glorious promise to the unbelieving heart. How suitable then the eye-salve of spiritual influence! that we may see and believe, believe and rejoice in 'that light, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' But the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not. Yet they say, We see. Yes, they see enough to condemn them, but not enough to save them. Therefore their sin remaineth.

### THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

'For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father,'  
Rom. viii. 15.

THE spirit of bondage is the spirit which actuates the bond-slave, and that spirit is fear and crouch-

ing servility. The bond-slave is his master's property. His sinews are his master's substance, and he can claim no reward. His master may feed him; but he may do so, just as the manufacturer does his machine—to keep him going. The chief difference between the bond-slave and the machine is, that the machine is inanimate, but the bond-slave can feel, and fear, and hate—feel the rod, fear its infliction, hate its inflictor.

Such is the spirit of bondage, and it aptly describes the state of the unreconciled sinner's heart towards God and his law. God is to him clad in terrors—a consuming fire, and he cannot think of God without disquietude. The just requirements of God's law he feels to be severe and imperious exactions, and his toilsome endeavours to fulfil them bring no reward. From the lash of the law he cannot escape, and its lacerations whet his spirit into real, though it may be unconscious hatred of the authority by which they are inflicted. But, says the apostle, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption;' that is, the Spirit of love and confidence; and these, in their most endearing and confidential form.

The love is endearing, for it is the love of the loving child toward the loving parent. But it is more. It is confidential, for it is the love of the loving son toward the loving father. A son loves his mother with the love of tender endearment; but he loves his father with the love of endearing confidence. His father has power to protect him, and promote his happiness, as well as, like his mother, the inward emotions of disinterested affection. Hence the twin sentiments, love and confidence.

Nor are these less ardent, because they are the offspring of adoption, and not of natural relationship. Adoption, when complete, gives all that natural relationship can give, with this additional incentive to love and confidence; that it is on self, as an outcast and perishing, that its gifts and affection are bestowed. When were the filial love and confidence of the prodigal more deeply and strongly felt? Was it when his father gave him the portion of goods that fell to him, and with an embrace permitted him to take his leave on his journey of prodigality? Was it not rather, when, after having forfeited his sonship, his father had compassion on him, and ran and fell upon his neck, and kissed him, and adopted him anew into his family, with formal investiture and rejoicings; saying, 'Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let

us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' But this is precisely the adoption vouchsafed to the estranged but returning child of God. 'We are all his offspring' by nature, but have lost our filial affection, and have become, estranged from him and his unfallen family by sin. Yet, let us remember that he is our Father still, and return to him by true repentance, and he will freely reinstate us in all our former honour and happiness, and near relationship unto himself. By the Spirit of adoption he will cause us to feel towards him a love, and to address him with a confidence, all the greater that he condescends rejoicingly to say of us, 'This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

Abba, Father! Is this language the privilege of the believer? Is it language prompted 'by the Spirit which proceedeth from the Father?' Lord, help our unbelief. Let the Spirit also 'help our infirmities, and make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

'Then let us, with a filial heart,  
Come boldly to the throne  
Of grace supreme, to tell our griefs,  
And all our wants make known.

'That mercy we may there obtain  
For sins and errors past,  
And grace to help in time of need,  
While days of trial last.

'Then let our hearts no more despond,  
Our hands be weak no more:  
Still let us trust our Father's love,  
His wisdom still adore.'

### THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

'And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,' Rom. viii. 17.

IN order to our comfort, our enjoyment of the faith which we profess, and our freedom and pleasure in keeping the commandments, it is of the utmost consequence that we have a firm and realizing persuasion of the privileges which belong to ourselves as believers.

We say, to *ourselves* as believers. For, while we do not doubt that believers are the children of God, we may be in great and habitual doubt whether such a character and such privileges belong to ourselves. This doubt may arise, not so much from conscious want of faith, as from conscious defectiveness in our obedience, and therefore we add,—to ourselves as *believers*,—as believers, not as workers. There is a tendency to connect our adoption and its privileges with works instead of faith; and being unable to satisfy ourselves that we have worked enough to assure

ourselves that they are ours, we can never come to have a satisfying persuasion of our personal adoption. Whereas, were we to connect our adoption, as the Bible does, with our faith alone, the reality and strength of which is so easily ascertainable, we should have less difficulty in discovering that we are personally, and in very deed, the sons of God; and we should then enjoy the happiness of being conscious of such exalted and promising relationship. Let us first ascertain that we really believe; let us then take for granted, as a heaven-ordained consequence, that we are sons and heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Let us habitually dwell upon the honours and the rights with which we are invested, and the inconceivably blessed prospects, which, with the certainty and rightfulness of an inheritance, await us; and how great will then be the comfort and enjoyment which our faith will afford us! how strong will then be the inducements to walk in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless! and how great our freedom and delight in doing so! Obedience will then flow from a cherished persuasion of our adoption, and not from a vain attempt to found our adoption on our obedience. If great or habitual subjection to any sin create in us a doubt, as it may well do, of the reality of our faith, and so of our adoption; we will thereby be led to entertain the question anew, and all the more earnestly and searchingly, on account of our backsliding, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God.' But although disobedience may prompt such a question, obedience cannot answer it. The heart alone can answer. Obedience may fortify the answer of the heart, but it cannot supply it when wanting. It may keep out doubt from the heart already believing, but it is no certain indication of faith in the heart that is unconscious of believing.

But, not only are we entitled, and (if we consult our happiness and progress in holiness,) called upon, to argue directly from our faith to our adoption. We are also entitled to argue from our adoption to all that that word implies; namely, heirship, heirship to him who has been pleased to adopt us, co-heirship with him, in and through whom we are adopted. *If sons then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.*

—Heirs, that is, sure expectants of an inheritance. Nay, legal claimants; if we consider the economy of the gospel, and the relationship to the Disposer of the inheritance, into which the gospel brings us. According to the law of nature the son is the legal heir of the father. The gospel is no exception. Nature is in this an illustration of grace. *If sons then heirs.*

Heirs of whom? Heirs of God, that is, legal claimants and expectants, deriving our claims and expectations from him who is the source of all law, authority, and power, and whose will as Testator is sealed with the seal of immutability, and ratified by the blood of his own dear Son. If sons, then heirs, heirs of God.

But heirs of what? Of all the good that is in God, up to our utmost capacity of receiving. God is the portion of his people. He is 'the possessor of heaven and earth,'—'all in all;' and therefore an all-sufficient portion. He is 'from everlasting to everlasting,' and says, 'I change not;' therefore a never-ending portion. He has 'all power in heaven and earth;' therefore an inalienable portion. No power can wrest it from us. Omnipotence is pledged to its preservation and perpetuation. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth whom I desire besides thee.' But see another bulwark of our faith and hope:

—'Joint heirs with Christ,' that is, having our expectations built not only on our own adoption, but on his eternal sonship. We are in him. His heirship is our heirship. We are joint-heirs. 'The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.' Nor are our expectations founded on relationship only, but on the rights of purchase. He redeemed us by his precious blood; and it is the privilege of the bought, as well as of the buyer, to urge the payment that has been made. Nay more, our rights and expectations are those of actual possession by our head and representative. 'He has arisen the *first-fruits* of them that sleep.' Heaven is our inheritance, 'whither our forerunner has for us entered.' 'I go to prepare a place for you. And, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' or, 'from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?' 'the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again,' as sons and heirs, 'unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.'

## FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God,' 1 John iii. 1.*

'THE sons of God! what tongue can tell  
The glory and the grace,  
These little words are teeming with  
For our rebellious race!  
The sons of God! what heart can know  
The greatness of that love,  
Which speaks in words so comforting  
To man, from heaven above!

—'To man, so worm-like, so defiled,  
So long the slave of sin,  
So hostile to his Saviour, God,  
When striving him to win.  
—To man from heaven, so oft defied,  
By deed and daring thought;  
Yet crying from its battlements,  
A crown, a crown, for nought.

'Behold and wonder, O my soul;  
Behold what love hath done!  
Raised thee from vileness, and from flames,  
To sonship and a throne.  
Behold and wonder, O my soul;  
And let the wonder wake  
Adoring raptures in my breast:  
—My soul, O Spirit, take;

'In vision waft it to the realms,  
All gloriously bright,  
That I may see and wonder more,  
And kindle at the sight;  
And with the hosts above proclaim;  
The love of God Most High;  
The Sovereign of the myriads  
Who Holy, Holy, cry.

'Love gave to that adoring throng,  
Their crowns and harps of gold,  
Their deathless life, their robes of light,  
Their blessedness untold.  
Love winged the cherub, fired the seraph;  
Called them around the throne,  
To sing and revel in the beams,  
Mantling the Living One.'

'How great such love! but greater far,  
Greater beyond compare,  
The love of God to sinful men,  
Who His salvation share.  
*That*, is the benefactor's love,  
*This*, of the insulted Lord,  
Forgiving when he might have cursed,  
As the deserved award.

'*That*, is the benefactor's love,  
*This*, of the injured Father,  
By love alluring rebels home,  
Around his throne to gather.  
*That*, is the benefactor's love,  
*This*, of the Elder Brother;  
*That* gives, *this* saves from death, then gives  
The glories of the other.

'*That*, is the benefactor's love,  
Who makes no sacrifice:  
*This*, of Incarnate Deity,  
Who saves by groans and cries;  
Who stoops from regal dignity,  
Among the hosts of heaven,  
To die a more than mortal death,  
That sin might be forgiven.

'That, is the love the angels know,  
They long have felt its reign:  
*This*, the great mystery divine,  
Whose depths they sound in vain;  
The mystery of God himself,  
High as the heavens above,  
Deep, as the lowest depths beneath,  
Boundless,—for God is love.

'And is this love, a love for me?  
This dignity and bliss!  
Behold, and wonder, O my soul,  
And love, with love like this.  
And is this love, a love for you,  
Ye perishing in sin?  
Behold, and wonder, and believe,  
And ye shall glory win.

'There is, there is, a land on high,  
A resting-place, a home,  
Where exiled hearts no more shall sigh,  
Nor rebel passions roam.  
Oh! give me then an eagle's wings,  
Give me to soar away,  
To that blessed land of light and love;  
I'm weary of delay.

'Not that this life I would despise,  
Or say, earth has no joys:  
I know 'tis paradise regained  
When grace sin's guilt destroys.  
It is that I would weep no more,  
Nor feel sin's deep disgrace;  
It is that I would love still more,  
And see my Father's face.

'And is it so! shall all my wo,  
Cease there to gnaw my heart!  
Shall mem'ry to oblivion throw,  
The thoughts from which I smart!  
Oh! hasten then, ye tardy hours,  
Speed on my dying day;  
Unveil the regions of the blessed,  
Whose love knows no decay.'

#### FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and 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,'* 1 John iii. 2.

A KING'S son, when in exile, has one consolation—the thought of his regal parentage. There is consolation in such a thought; especially if his exile be only for a time, and if he have the prospect of being ere long recalled to inherit his father's throne. *Now* is our exile: but we are the sons of God—of the King of kings; and we have the certain prospect of being ere long recalled to our Father's house—the regal mansion of the universe; and '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 on his throne.'

It doth not indeed appear what we shall be there; but our ignorance is not the ignorance of uncertainty. It is only the ignorance of imper-

fect knowledge; or rather, of incapacity of knowing. It does not appear, because it hath not been revealed. And it hath not been revealed, because we have not eyes to see—to take in the revelation were it made to us. But when he shall appear, then we shall have eyes to see; for, 'He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.' Then we shall be like him—be beside him—see him as he is, with the unclouded vision of immortals.

And how transforming such a sight! Even here, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, believers 'are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' But how much more gloriously transforming and assimilating will the beholding be, when through a glass darkly has become 'face to face.' The mortal countenance of Moses, when on the mount, caught such a dazzling radiance that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold it. But how perfect the glorious assimilation, when this mortal shall have put on immortality, when this earthly shall have put on the image of the heavenly, and when in glorified humanity we shall have been admitted not only to behold, as Moses did, the effulgence in which the Godhead is enthroned, but to enter that effulgence and behold 'face to face,' and see him as he is! We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

This we know. With this knowledge let us rest satisfied. Were a king to send his son to the outskirts of his empire to tell some simple rustic that his father had called him to come and share with him the honours and pleasures of his palace, what would the rustic know of these, but that they were his, and that they surpassed his knowledge? He would know that they awaited him: and this would be enough to make him exultingly and thankfully await the knowledge of what they are. Though therefore it doth not appear what we shall be, we *know* that when He shall appear we shall be like him.

This we know. This knowledge let us cherish. Though not actual, it is certain knowledge. 'For 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.'

Though not minute, it is comprehensive knowledge. We shall be like him—terms comprehending all the holiness, the happiness, and glories of Divinity.

Though knowledge only in part, that which is perfect is a-coming. And though it doth not yet appear, it will *soon* appear what we shall be. He that cometh shall come and will not tarry:

'Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced Him.' Yes, they too shall see him, but it will be to be consumed by the brightness of His coming. The brightness which will transform the saint, will confound and consume the sinner. Summer-brightness transforms the grub into a winged daughter of the sun,

— 'Rising from their tombs

To higher life; by myriads, forth at once,  
Swarming they pour; of all the varied hues  
Their beauty-beaming parent can disclose.  
Ten thousand forms! ten thousand different tribes!  
People the blaze.'

But the same brightness parches the earth, shrivels up the grovelling worm, sets on fire the forest, and consumes, amid crackling horrors, every living thing within its dark recesses.— Emblem of the twofold power of the revealed glory of the Son of man. Rejoice, ye righteous, and say, Even so: come, Lord Jesus. Tremble, ye impenitent transgressors, for the hour is coming when ye shall say to the mountains and to the 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.'

#### FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,' Eph. i. 3—5.*

Much in few words—a crowded yet perspicuous sentence, from a gorgeous passage of the word of God: in which the deepest mysteries, the highest sublimities, the richest blessings, the most glorious privileges, the most animating hopes, the most humbling, comforting, and sanctifying doctrines of our faith, are brought together, and presented to the eye of contemplation with the magnificence of mountain scenery—like mountain beyond mountain, and deep beyond deep, and all illumined with the softest, richest, and most gladdening sunshine. Each word is a theme, each clause has the comprehensiveness of a science. How full of rich and sublime truth the heart that could give it utterance with such copiousness, compactness, simplicity, and power!

God—God, even the Father—the Father of Jesus Christ—the Father of our Lord—hath blessed—blessed *us*—with spiritual blessings—with *all* spiritual blessings—blessings in heavenly places—in Christ! How boundless, how varied, how glorious, the field of contemplation presented to the reflecting mind! how elevating, quickening, beatifying, to the believing mind! Blessing, when we deserved the curse! blessing from such a Being—so great, so independent, and so glorious! blessing from such a Being in such a character, that of a Father—the Father of such a Son—of such a Son appointed to such an office, that of anointed Saviour and Lord of all, of all for us! blessings so pure, so numerous and comprehensive, and in such lofty regions! blessings for *us*; and therefore so full of condescension, so unmerited, so often forfeited; so personal too, and therefore so deeply interesting! blessings in Christ; and therefore so dearly purchased, so freely offered, and so secure and certain of bestowment! *Blessed* be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

But read again. He hath chosen us—chosen us in Him—before the foundation of the world—that we should be holy—without blame—holy and without blame *before Him*—and in love! And yet again. Predestinated us—unto the adoption of children—by Jesus Christ—to Himself—according to the good pleasure of his will!

Thought of!—made choice of!—made the subject of an irreversible decree, before the foundations of the earth were laid! Holiness of character and blamelessness of life, the end!—love the animating principle!—Himself the witness and the judge!—Adoption of children, the privilege!—God the adopting Father!—Jesus Christ the ratifying sacrifice, and indissolubly connecting bond of filiation!—and all according to the good pleasure of his will! What an aggregation of wonders for meditation; of obligations and incentives to gratitude; of encouragements to hope, and confidence, and joy; of motives to affectionate, zealous, and fruitful obedience! Can these things be in any measure apprehended and believed, and their influence be unfelt? Can such truths be lodged in the heart, without expanding, purifying, and giving an earnest of the heavenly inheritance? And can they be there and have such effects, without awakening an ardent gratitude? It was gratitude in the breast of Paul which brought these blessings together, and set them forth to view in this striking passage. It was the intensity of his gratitude

which so clustered and condensed them; and it was that that intensity might become still more intense, that in blessing God he recounts the magnitude and multiplicity of his obligations. May mine be a like gratitude, and may it be quickened by a like apprehension and concentration of my obligations in all their magnitude and multiplicity.

FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,'* Rom. viii. 16.

WE can reason directly from our faith to our adoption. If we can truly say, I believe, we can as truly say, I am a child of God, and an heir of glory. But here we have a more experimental evidence to the same effect—the witness of the Spirit. The one is a conclusion drawn from a state of mind. The other is an impression made, as by a seal, upon the heart. 'After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.' Faith entitles us to conclude—I am a son. But after this, and along with this, the Spirit impresses on the heart the confidence and affections of a son. The one is a persuasion, the other a pledge—a pledge in three ways :

1st. As a gift. A gift from a father to a child is an evidence to the child that the father loves him, and acknowledges him as a son. The Spirit is in an eminent sense the gift of the Father; and we are expressly told, that He is given in consequence of previous adoption. 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.' Hence we can say with John, 'Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us,—the most intimate of all relationship—'because he hath given us of his Spirit:' and with Paul, 'ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

2d. As the Spirit of adoption; that is, the Spirit witnesseth with our spirit by the filial confidence and filial emotions which He produces. Natural relationship gives confidence to a son toward his father. He can count upon that relationship as a guarantee that his father loves him. But strong affection in the son gives a greater confidence. It is confidence itself. In such a case, the confidence of relationship is lost in that of love; and filial love is not the ground only, as filial relationship is, but the very essence of filial confidence. But filial confidence toward

our Father in heaven is the fruit of the Spirit: and thus 'the Spirit witnesseth with our spirit that we are the children of God.' 'And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.'—'The Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.'

3d. As a regenerating and sanctifying Spirit. 'The fruit of the Spirit,' or in other words, the testimonies which he gives to our adoption, are 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (fidelity), meekness, temperance.' Let these fruits, therefore, be produced:—let love, love to God, his holiness, his law, his creatures, supplant selfishness, hatred, and corrupt affections; let joy, 'joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' and joy in the happiness of others, supplant the bitterness of spirit produced by slavish fear of God, by envy and malice toward our fellow-men; let peace, even that 'peace which passeth all understanding,' peace with God, with ourselves, and with one another, supplant the disquietude of conscious enmity to God, and the disquietude of self-reproach and of contention with our neighbour; let long-suffering, that long-suffering which bears with equanimity and without retaliation, ingratitude, injustice, and unmerited reproach, supplant an impatient, querrulous, quarrelsome, and vindictive disposition; let gentleness, the gentleness of a kind, affable, and courteous disposition, and of a mild and inoffensive deportment, supplant sourness of temper and surliness of behaviour; let goodness, the goodness of piety, generosity, and candour, supplant an irreligious, covetous, captious, and selfish disposition; let fidelity, the fidelity of faithfulness to the trust committed to us, whether by God or man, the fidelity of an honourable, upright mind, and of an incorruptible honesty and veracity, supplant a disposition, faithless, tortuous, vacillating, regulated by no religious principle, and animated by no religious hope; let meekness, the meekness which gives long-suffering a calm and unruffled, as well as a patient temper, and a benignant as well as a dignified and unfrowning aspect, let such meekness supplant secret repining at the wrongs of others, as well as angry and malevolent feelings; let temperance, the temperance which keeps in due subjection our appetites and passions, and fits our souls and bodies for being the dwelling-place—the temple of the Holy Ghost, let such temperance supplant all desire for debasing and corrupting pleasures, and all tendency to excess in lawful pleasures; let a thorough change of character by regeneration, be thus accompanied by

sanctification of internal feeling and social affection, and outward deportment, and can we be insensible to the evidence which will thereby be afforded that the kingdom of God has been formed within us? Knowing from the greatness of the change, whose work it is, as well as from the testimony of scripture, can we fail to be persuaded that we have therein the witnessing of the Spirit of God with our spirit, that we are the children of God? Besides, will not the nature of our internal experience be such—have so much of heaven in it, as to prove its celestial origin, and thereby our personal adoption? Will not the love be so pure, so disinterested, so divine? Will not the joy be so placid, so elevating, so animating, so satisfying? Will not the peace be so well-founded, so stable, so gratifying? Will not the long-suffering, the gentleness, the goodness, the fidelity, the meekness, the temperance, be so opposite to our former, and so congenial to our present character, as to convince us that they could not spontaneously, could not by any mere moral training, become the product of our depraved nature? Will they not be such that we will feel as if the Divinity had taken up his abode within us? But why say, *as if*? 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' 'Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

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SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us,'* Eph. v. 1.

ONE of the advices usually given to those who desire to arrive at superior excellence in any walk of science, or art, or life, is, to keep habitually before them some eminent example of the excellence after which they aspire. The advantage of such an example is, that it gives distinctness, individuality, embodiment, to the object at which they aim. It also guides as a light, allures as an attractive influence, and prompts by the love and admiration which it inspires. But the Christian is an aspirant after the highest of all excellence, whether in kind or in degree. If wise then, he will imitate the worldling, though not in the object of his pursuit, yet in his policy. He will keep habitually before him the perfect exemplar of the excellence after which he aspires—be a follower—an imitator of God.

An example is more influential the more nearly the exemplar is allied to us by the ties of kindred, affection, or benefaction. The virtues of a father are more constraining to a son than to a stranger. To the son the virtues of the father are better known, in their fruits he has more largely shared, in the honour attached to them he feels a deeper personal interest, and he lives in closer contact with their assimilating influence. Believers then, are not 'strangers and foreigners.' They are 'dear children,'—beloved of God. They know their Father's excellencies, and have experienced their blessed fruits, in a sense, and to an extent, that the world knows not of. Their Father's honour they feel to be their own, and they live in intimate and habitual communion with Him, by meditation and by prayer. Great therefore are their encouragements, facilities, incitements, obligations, to be imitators of God. The points in which He can be imitated are indeed few in number: but they are cardinal points, and they embrace the whole circle of human duty. They are such as these: 'Be ye holy, for I am holy. Be ye merciful even as your Father which is in heaven is merciful. Love one another as I have loved you.'

Of all the moral perfections of the Godhead, that of love and its kindred sentiments is the most imitable. Holiness and love may be viewed as comprehending all the other moral perfections of the divine character, and they are the two great elements of Christian perfection. But there is this difference between them. Holiness is more a description of character than a principle of action. Love is more a principle of action than a description of character. And besides being more a principle of action, it is that perfection which most readily commends itself to our affections, and to which we are most indebted. Accordingly, it is with respect to love that the Apostle says, Be ye *imitators* of God, as dear children. As dear children ye are beloved. Love in return. Loving children are beloved children. Show therefore that you are loved by loving.

And walk in love: that is, in all your walking be actuated by it. Walk in it as an atmosphere, surrounding you wherever you go, and imparting vitality, health, and vigour, to all your practice. Walk in it as in a way, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, but allowing it to direct and hedge in your path, whether it may lead you to the sanctuary or the infected chamber, to the society of friends or the society of foes, to the house of mourning or the house of feasting.

Walk in love, and take Christ along with you

as your pattern and prompter. Like his, let your love be purely disinterested, for, 'when he was rich, for our sakes he became poor.' Like his, let your love be self-denying, for, 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' Like his, let your love be practical, for 'He went about doing good,' and we ought not to be weary in well-doing. Like his, let your love be forbearing and forgiving, 'Putting on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.'

Let us be prompted to such a love by considering what we ourselves owe to it—deliverance from the wrath to come, our present peace and hope, and a future inheritance among them that are sanctified. And it was Christ that loved us and paid the price of such deliverance. May we love Him, because he first loved us. It is all the return that He requires of us. It is a self-enriching return. Shall we then not make it?

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#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment,' 1 John iii. 23.*

A SINGLE commandment, but a twofold injunction, enforcing both faith and love, and a commandment comprehending every other; for faith embraces all that is necessary to the justification and acceptance of our persons in the sight of God; and love is the sum of human duty,—is its most actuating, its everlasting principle. The commandment is first faith, then love,—faith to reconcile, and love to manifest the reconciliation, and beatify by the heavenliness of the sentiment. But it is faith in *his Son Jesus Christ*, and then, *love one to another*. And rightly so: for faith in the Son of God not only reconciles to God, but to our fellow-Christians. 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.' The household of faith 'are one body,' and 'are members one of another:' so that 'whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice

with it.' Being one body, they are filled and actuated by one Spirit, have one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all. Ties so numerous, so close, so sacred, so strong, make mutual love a natural and inevitable result of true faith in Christ. Hence the test of sincere discipleship—brotherly love. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother abideth in death.'

Few things are more difficult than to control the faith and the affections. Some falsely magnify the difficulty into an impossibility. Yet here we have a positive command to control our faith and our affections. And why? Because difficulty of obedience does not abrogate the authority of the lawgiver; otherwise, the more we become enslaved to sin, the more do we become emancipated from the restraints and responsibilities of righteous government. Neither does difficulty of obedience render an expression of the will of the lawgiver unavailing. On the contrary, an expression of his will in the form of command, is the very thing which helps us to obedience, especially if the command be the utterance of legitimate and acknowledged authority, prescribe what in itself is right, contain directions, and present powerfully constraining inducements to render the required obedience. A command from the father of lies, to believe a lie, could give us no command over our faith. The command, 'love your enemies,' from a bitterly persecuting foe, could give us no command over our affections. But can the same be said of the God of truth, when commanding us to believe the truth—of the God of love, when commanding us to imitate his love, or rather, to repay the great love wherewith he loved us even when we were enemies?

And is it no assistance to our obedience, when it is not merely his commandment, 'That we should believe on his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another,' but that we should do so, *as he gave us commandment*? That is, that with respect to faith, we should obey his commandment, intelligently, searching the scriptures;—ingenuously, judging not according to appearance, but judging righteous judgment;—in the way of obedience to truth and duty already known, and willingness to follow new discoveries of truth and duty; for, if any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine;—finally, prayerfully, saying, 'Lord, help mine unbelief.' And with respect to mutual love, his commandment is, that we should obey it in the manner which his word prescribes, and from all the considerations which his word suggests. As

to the manner which his word prescribes, his commandment is, that love should be 'unfeigned,' 'without dissimulation,' 'with a pure heart,' 'fervently;' that it should be with 'meekness and forbearance,' and should lead us 'to esteem others better than ourselves;' that it should be a self-propagating love, 'provoking unto love;' that it should be an active love, 'by love serving one another;' that it should be a lasting love, 'letting brotherly love continue.' As to the considerations which his word suggests, his commandment is, that we should love one another from a consideration of the dignity and blessedness of the sentiment, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God,'—from a consideration of the congeniality of the sentiment of love to the renewed and sanctified soul, 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, — from a consideration of the example and obligations of the love of God and of Christ, 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;' 'and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us;'—from a consideration of our common frailties, 'Let brotherly love continue, remembering them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body;'—from the consideration that love is the distinguishing and most commendatory badge of the Christian profession, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' It is thus that He has given commandment with respect to faith and love; and how depraved the heart, and how obdurate the will, which can withstand the force of such rules and considerations! What but positive hostility to Him who gives the commandment, and the dislike of the unregenerate heart to the commandment itself, can be the cause of difficulty in rendering obedience? And who could dare to urge hostility and dislike as an excuse for not obeying? Who too, that feels the difficulty, and is willing to encounter and overcome it, would not ask for that assistance from on high which is so freely offered to all that will but submit to ask it?

## SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'* Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

UNION among brethren is here affirmed to be both *profitable* and *pleasant*; and in the remainder of the psalm, these properties are illustrated by apt and beautiful similitudes which, in accordance with the usage of Hebrew poetry, are arranged in an order inverse to that of the properties themselves.

For brethren to dwell together in unity is obviously *pleasant*—most pleasant! How grateful to the senses must have been the odoriferous unguent, when it was poured out on the head of the high priest on the day of his consecration, and went down over the whole of his splendid vestments, diffusing fragrance as it went! Equally pleasant to the soul is the spectacle of a harmonious brotherhood, whether that brotherhood be a family, a nation, the collective human race, or that more exalted relationship which is formed by regeneration and adoption through Christ Jesus! Where unity exists, mutual confidence is easily maintained; and with confidence are sure to be conjoined kindness and love—the very elements of happiness. Nay, the play of the benevolent affections assimilates their possessors to God himself; for 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him!'

But it is *good* as well as pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity; delightful as 'ointment poured forth,' it is also profitable as the refreshing and fructifying dew.

How good is it for brethren, the children of the same parents, to dwell in unity! Let a family be united, and all their burdens will be lightened by being shared; all their sorrows alleviated by the interchange of mutual sympathy; all their enterprises made to prosper by the energy of hearty co-operation.

How good is it for fellow-citizens of the same country to dwell in unity! What but the prevalence of mutual respect and good will among all classes of its inhabitants can secure a nation's prosperity during peace? What but a united people can form an impregnable bulwark during war?

How good is it for the whole family of men to maintain the relations of amity and peace! O! what a happy world we should behold—how fast would civilization spread—how gloriously would religion prosper—were men of every tribe and tongue to unite in causing wars to cease under

the whole heaven! Earth would reflect somewhat of the image of heaven!

The advantages of unity, however, are most of all apparent among 'brethren in Christ Jesus.' How plainly does union among Christians tend to give strength and stability to the Christian church! The fable of the dying father and the bundle of lanes is not more applicable to children of the same family, than to the Christian brotherhood. Let believers busy themselves more with the minor points on which they differ, than with the grand verities on which they are agreed—and their enemies will easily triumph over them. But let them maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and strive to excel each other, not in questions of disputation, but in obedience to the Redeemer's new commandment—and they will present a front to the foe, which all his onsets will be unable to break!

How plainly, moreover, does union tend to secure a copious descent of divine influence on the church! Not a few of the most precious promises in scripture are suspended on unity as their condition: 'If two of you,' says the Saviour, 'shall agree on earth touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done to them of my Father which is in heaven.' The more numerous the signatures attached to the petitions we send to the celestial throne, the greater, it would seem, is the influence of our petitions there. While, on the other hand, the surest way to turn aside our prayers, and shut up the windows of heaven against us, is to cherish unbrotherly sentiments. The Spirit, like the peaceful dove, resolutely forsakes every scene of confusion and strife. And let a religious revival be proceeding ever so prosperously, you have only to start a spirit of disunion, in order to drive off the hallowing influence, and transform the seeming garden into a blasted desert!

Nor are the benefits of brotherly union limited to believers themselves. Such union helps them to bring others under the influence of their religious principles. Even in Christian lands the divisions which unhappily exist among the faithful, present a formidable obstacle to inquirers, and furnish a powerful handle to enemies; and they must be still more influential for evil in heathen countries. Imagine the case of three or four missionaries, of different sects, labouring in the same district; and suppose that, instead of giving exclusive prominence in their public teaching to the essential truths on which they are at one, and evincing in their private intercourse a constant anxiety to fulfil the Saviour's new commandment, they make their differences their principal theme, and main-

tain the attitude of rivals towards one another. In such a case is it possible that their work can go on prosperously? Prosperously! Why, not a single convert will be added to the faith! Their heathen auditors will be more affected by their practice than by their preaching; and the conclusion drawn in regard to the claims of the gospel will just be this: 'This religion is indeed a religion of love in name, but it is a religion of strife in reality! It professes to breathe only the spirit of the gentle dove, but it inspires its subjects with the temper of the tiger! It cannot be from God! It must be an imposture! Away with it!' All experience proves, that the cause of Christ can make rapid advances only when its adherents 'stand fast in one spirit, with one mind,' and display a temper which compels spectators to exclaim, 'Behold, how these Christians love one another!'

Such being the pleasantness and profitableness of unity, how important that I should maintain and promote it! But how is this to be done? If I would be *one* with my brethren, I must begin by becoming *one* with Christ. If I would see my home the abode of love; my country a land of peace; the world a united community; the church a scene of brotherhood; I must commence the work by first giving myself to the Lord, and striving to induce all within the sphere of my influence to do the same. The moment a man believes in Christ, he acquires such new views of his own character, of his relationship to his brethren, and of his obligations to love and benefit them, as must constrain him to dwell with them in unity! In a world whose inhabitants are so variously endowed by nature, so differently trained in youth, so oppositely circumstanced in after years, it would be unreasonable to expect the same opinions, the same tastes, the same forms of worship and government, everywhere to prevail. But uniformity is not essential to unity. The sons and daughters of a human parent may differ widely in taste, and pursuit, and outward condition, and yet all alike cherish the warm family affection which they imbibed in early years at the same mother's knee and around the same father's hearth. And so the children of the one great Father in heaven need not be precluded, by their inevitable diversities in minor and external things, from loving the same adorable Redeemer, and dwelling as brethren one with another. Let no obstacle, then, discourage me from making universal union an object both of pursuit and of hope! Union is heaven's first law. The works of God in creation are all marked by unity. The scheme

of providence is arranged on principles of perfect harmony. And redemption has for its first and last object to reconcile and heal—to unite man with God, and heaven with earth! Is such indeed the constitution of the universe? And shall *man* persist in forming the only exception to the beautiful design—the only note of discord in the glorious anthem of harmonious praise? Perish the impious thought!

SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God,'* Matt. v. 9.

DISCORD and its baneful effects are unhappily too rife in families, in the church, and in the world, to render it at all doubtful that 'peace-makers' are a class of men much and urgently needed. But where are we to look for these ministers of reconciliation? Christian! it is thy duty to assume the office! To discharge the function of a peace-maker is one, and a most essential, part of every believer's mission. As a follower of Jesus, he is required not only to follow peace himself, but also to use his influence for allaying feuds among others; not only to avoid planting himself the thorns and briars of strife, but also to root out those which other hands have planted. He would not, as a man, behold a neighbour's dwelling on fire without assisting to extinguish the flames; and no more must he, as a Christian, stand idly by, while the fires of vindictive passion are consuming the happiness and virtue of his fellow-men. Let others, if they will, be the apostles of strife: *His* mission is to heal and harmonize—to mediate between friends and reconcile foes—to nip quarrels in the bud—to prevent disagreements from ripening into rancour—to make peace descend, with halcyon wing, on every scene of stormy contention—to transform earth into the image of heaven! Beautiful office! Who would not aspire to perform it? who would not account it an honour to discharge its duties with success?

To this noble vocation the believer is invited by the highest of all examples. When Jesus left the bosom of the Father to suffer with men on the earth, what was the office he came to perform? Was it not that of a 'peace-maker' between God and man? And when, after enduring the cross and despising the shame, he returned to his Father's right hand in heaven, what was the function which in the plenitude of his love he chose to assume, and has ever since fulfilled?

Was it not that of a Mediator, and minister of reconciliation? And shall the disciple who bears his name, and professes to be his representative, decline the honour of treading, in this respect, in the Redeemer's steps?

For this vocation the believer is also peculiarly qualified. Being himself reconciled to God by faith in the Mediator, he lives in an element of constant peace, which cannot but dispose him to seek the peace of others. Being favoured, moreover, with the continual presence and help of that Spirit whose office is to form him to the love of God and of man, he is, or ought to be, a proficient in the exercise of the charity which hopeth all things, and which, so far from dwelling on the faults and infirmities of others, delights to cast a veil over their errors, and to draw out to view their latent excellencies. In a word, the believer carries, or ought to carry, within his bosom, a copious fountain of brotherly-kindness, which being perpetually fed from the love and grace of heaven, may well be expected to flow forth in streams of healing charity among his brethren on earth!

Although furnished with such motives and qualifications for undertaking it, the Christian must not expect to find the office of peace-maker an easy one. Few tasks, indeed, are beset with more difficulties and discouragements. The evil spirit of discord is emphatically of that 'kind which goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.' An irascible temper is too prone to self-justification, and too impatient of rebuke, to be easily brought under the dominion of calm reason. And party-spirit, whether it appear in society or in the church, takes too many disguises, and is fenced with too many palliations, to 'come forth' in obedience to the ordinary forms of exorcism. The peace-maker must also lay his account with misconstruction of his own motives and objects. Is he not certain to incur the open hostility of the violent and narrow-minded; and to be stigmatized as a 'meddler with other men's matters,' even by persons more open to reason? If it is a family-quarrel in which he attempts to mediate, he undertakes what is proverbially a thankless office, If it is a difference in his own religious sect or party, he has nothing to expect but to be branded as a disguised adversary by some; a lukewarm friend by others; an unsafe and timorous counsellor by all. Let it be added, that he has to contend with the further difficulty,—surely no imaginary one! of making peace without any sacrifice of principle. 'Could he but soften a little the demands of truth and justice, so as to adapt them to the views of contending parties, how

easily, in many instances, should he bring matters to a pacific issue! Yet this must not be! The peace-maker may waive his own rights, but he must not tamper with the claims of his God! He may sacrifice his own comfort or reputation, but he must not surrender one iota of heavenly truth! He may accommodate himself to many of the customs and prejudices of others, to please them for their good to edification, but never once must he descend to any sinful compliance, never once must he compromise any evangelical sentiment! With reference to things indifferent, his course may be pliant and accommodating, as the shallow stream which yields to every obstacle, and takes its direction from every rock or shrub that indents its channel; but with respect to the eternal obligations of truth and duty, he must resemble the river in full flood, when it sweeps along with an evenness of current, and unity of strength, 'which, while it is beautiful to behold, is terrible to withstand!'

The difficulties of the peace-maker, however, ought not to be contemplated apart from his encouragements. Such a devoted friend of his species may surely calculate on being *sometimes* cheered with instances of success. And need it be said how highly in every such case his good offices will be prized, his presence welcomed, his memory revered, by those whose feuds he has healed! But even if universal failure attend his efforts, he is not without his reward! No disappointments can deprive him of the inward consciousness of pure intentions—the comfort of a peaceful and benevolent temper—or, what is better than all, the association into which his office brings him with the best of all Beings. His Father in heaven is 'the God of peace!' His Redeemer is 'the Prince of peace!' The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is the bestower of peace! The covenant-offices of the glorious Trinity are all exercised with a view to the promotion of 'peace on earth.' And is it nothing?—no encouragement?—no reward?—to be associated with the Tri-une God in a work which infinite love has selected as its own? Nay, in the act of prosecuting such a work, there is more than association with God; there is assimilation to God. To display a peaceable and peace-making temper is to resemble God—is to reflect his image—is to exhibit the mark of his children! And who can doubt that the Almighty Father loves to contemplate the likeness, and will at last acknowledge it! What then though the peace-maker may encounter opposition or obloquy from men? he has a Father in heaven who owns him for a son! Men may despise him, but he is dear to God! And a day

is hastening on, when being taken from this land of strife and sorrow, he shall be borne to a region where no feeling of unkindness ever jars on the soul, and no note of discord ever grates the sense.

Blessed, then, are the peace-makers who shall thus be called the children of God! O! to breathe their spirit—to copy their example—to enjoy their reward! That I may be enabled to do so, 'let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from me with all malice;' and let me open my heart and life to the humanizing influence of that Holy Spirit of grace, whose blessed fruits are 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance!'

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#### EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

'For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,' Heb. xii. 6.

THE afflictions of life, whatever be their secondary causes, are all to be referred to the purpose of God as their ultimate source. Under the Divine government, nothing happens by chance or by necessity; nothing befalls any creature, which is not the result at once of deliberate design, and of special superintendence. The fall of a sparrow enters into the plan of Providence, no less than the fate of an empire; the trivial mishaps of the cottage, no less than the tragic misfortunes of the palace. No event can be named, however apparently casual or contingent, which does not owe its origin to the purpose, and its occurrence to the providence of Heaven.

God being thus the author of our afflictions, the question naturally arises, In what capacity does he appoint and administer them? Is it in the mere exercise of his power as a Sovereign? Or is it for the vindication of his law as a Judge? Or, finally, is it in the character and with the ends of a Father?

With the holy Scriptures in his hands, no man need incur the impiety of ascribing the ills of life to a capricious exercise of Almighty power. The God whom the Bible unveils to our faith, is incapable of any exercise of power merely for its own sake. He is a Being who can never act without a reason, far less from caprice; nor can any reason suffice to move His infinite mind, which does not commend itself to the most comprehensive wisdom, and the most exalted rectitude. When God afflicts, therefore, He must do so from some

wise and righteous motive. And, as he is as incapable of acting cruelly, as he is of acting capriciously, that motive must be one which precludes Him from dealing either unjustly or unkindly towards the subjects of his government.

Is the theory more tenable which views our afflictions as the award of a righteous judge? It is not. At first sight, indeed, human sorrows seem to have a *penal* design; for they entered the world in connection with sin, and they are confessedly the natural and appropriate wages of transgression. But the fact that they are *penal* in their own nature, does by no means infer that they are actually imposed on us for a *penal* purpose; and the experience of human life, as well as the general aspect of the world, is in entire contrariety with such a hypothesis. What would be the state of the world, were retributive justice the rule of the Divine Providence? Would it be such a scene as we now behold, where the ills of life, though sufficient to cast a shadow over our joys, are neither so numerous nor so severe, as materially to affect our general comfort? No. It would be a place of universal and unmitigated misery. What, again, on such a supposition, would be the comparative condition of the righteous and the wicked? Would one event happen to them both? or would the saints, rather than the ungodly, be those who are subjected to a series of troubles peculiar to themselves, over and above the ordinary 'shocks that flesh is heir to'? It is impossible! The truth is—this world is a scene, not of retribution, but of probation with a view to retribution. Guilt abounds, but its punishment is suspended. Men deserve wrath, but the execution of the sentence is averted or deferred. There is a moral government; but mercy is so much more the rule than justice, that the scheme can be reconciled with the Divine rectitude, only on the supposition of the existence of an economy of grace and a future retribution.

The only consistent account of affliction is that which connects it with the plan of redemption; and describes it as subordinated to the objects contemplated in that blessed plan. The true and sole key to the mystery of Providence, is the scheme of redemption through Christ Jesus. Under this economy, the penalty of sin, instead of being a thing still in dependence, is a thing which, in the case of all believers, has been already exhausted and liquidated by the sufferings of their substitute; and the relation in which God stands to them, is no longer that of an offended Judge whose law is armed against them, but that of a gracious Father who has been reconciled by the death of his Son, and is bound

not only to grant them all the spiritual blessings purchased by Christ, but to order his providence in such a manner as to insure their actual possession of these blessings. In fact, by the tenor of this gracious scheme, God cannot bestow upon his people *anything but blessings*; and when, therefore, he casts the cloud of sorrow over their path, their affliction must be, in reality, a privilege, not a punishment; a token of love, not a messenger of wrath!

In beautiful accordance with this view of the subject, the apostle represents affliction as the 'chastening' of a Father, and a mark of sonship. 'For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not!' The chastisements of an earthly parent are well known to have love for their origin; for it cuts a parent to the soul to subject his child to pain and weeping; and no stronger proof of true affection can be given, than in the exercise of seasonable correction. 'He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes.' It is the same with our heavenly Father. His chastisements, so far from throwing a shade of suspicion over his kindness, are to be regarded as decisive evidences of his concern for our well-being. Such a father as God is, would doubtless, were such a course consistent with our good, strew the whole of our path with roses, instead of making it rough with briars. But he loves us too sincerely—he values our souls too highly—he cares for our true happiness too intensely—to withhold from us an allotment which, like affliction, is one of the blood-bought privileges and promised blessings of the Christian covenant.

Need it be added, that such a view of the troubles of life is most consolatory to the Christian mourner? That our sorrows are the appointment, not merely of a God of infinite wisdom, but of a reconciled Father; that they are put into our hands, not as a cup of trembling, but as a cup of blessing; that they are expressions of divine love—new covenant mercies—marks of sonship; how rich are such considerations in matter of holy thankfulness and joy! We are not, indeed, to infer our adoption into God's redeemed family from the mere fact that we are afflicted; for to mourn is the common lot and destiny of man. But if we have arrived, on other and independent grounds, at a well-founded persuasion of our union with Christ, let us not, from any fear of being deemed presumptuous, deny ourselves the comfort of realizing a Father's

hand in our troubles. It is the absence, not the presence, of afflictive dispensations, which constitutes the *real* ground for alarm; it is those who are 'without chastisement whereof all are partakers'—not those who are bowed down with a heavy load of woe, that have reason to fear lest they should be found 'bastards and not sons.' And we therefore debar ourselves from comfort which God designs for us, and declares to be ours—if, when troubles abound, we allow painful misgivings about the Divine favour to agonize our souls.

EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness,'* Heb. xii. 10.

IN a preceding verse we are informed of the *motive* of our heavenly Father in afflicting us; in this, of the *end* He has in view. Affliction, according to the apostle, is not only the result of Fatherly love, but the appointed and appropriate means of filial improvement. As it has its source in the same infinite benevolence which originated the scheme of our redemption, so it is subordinated, in its ends and uses, to the objects of that blessed scheme—being turned by the Divine mercy from its natural purpose as the wages of sin, into an instrument and auxiliary of holiness.

How consolatory is such a discovery to all who feel that holiness constitutes the true dignity of their nature, and is cheaply purchased at any cost, however great, of present suffering. To know that our Father's chastisements are dictated by love, is cheering: but doubly cheering is it to know besides, that they are designed for our profit, more especially when we also remember that our Father is as able to secure, as He is disposed to seek, our good. In the case of an earthly father, the pure current of parental affection is often polluted by the admixture of angry or capricious feeling; and even when he is most desirous to render correction subservient to the benefit of his child, he is liable to fail of his object by administering it at an improper season, or to an unsuitable extent. But no error can ever occur in the chastenings of our Father in heaven. His wisdom is unerring, his knowledge infinite. He can desire no object which he has not power to secure. He can run no risk of defeating his end by the employment of means

either inadequate or superfluous. And if He engages to make our sorrows conduce to our sanctification, we may rest assured that they will all be adapted, alike in measure and in order, to our exigencies—imposed only when necessary—and removed whenever their purpose is accomplished.

The holy and gracious *end* thus contemplated by God in afflicting us, ought to reconcile us to our trials, even were we ignorant of their *fitness* for effecting it. But on this point also we have full information, for, in fact, the experience of Christian mourners in all ages is nothing else than a commentary on the fitness of sorrow as an engine of sanctification.

Take, for example, the case of the backslider, who is fast departing from his God, and returning to the love and service of the world. What so likely to arrest him in his defection, to spoil his relish for worldly enjoyments, and to throw him once more on God for consolation, as a succession of heavy trials. A single stroke may be insufficient to rouse him; but it is scarcely possible that he shall sleep on while shock after shock assails him. Every one admires the sagacity of the chief who, after finding the inefficacy of all ordinary expedients to detain his son and heir from following the fortunes of the Pretender, took a loaded pistol from his breast, and deliberately lodged its contents in the arm of the fool-hardy youth, thereby inflicting a wound which unfitted him for joining the rebels. And shall we less admire the fitness of the means which the heavenly Father employs when he sends sickness upon the backslider's person, bereavement into his family, or a moth among his treasures,—when he says to one fiery trial, 'Go and consume his outward comforts!' and to another, 'Go and destroy his peace of mind!' when, in short, he adds sorrow upon sorrow, until the wanderer 'comes to himself,' and returns to the paths of righteousness.

Or, take the case of a Christian who, from being unalive to the defects of his character, is taking no step for its amendment. What so fitted to bring him to a sight and sense of his imperfections as a season of severe trouble? Water which appears pure and pellucid while kept in a state of rest, may cast up particles of mire and dirt when it is troubled. And so the soul which in the calm of prosperity seems to be wholly under the influence of grace, may exhibit countless defilements when the storm of adversity descends to stir it through all its depths. If impatience is my unknown sin, a fit of racking pain must help me to detect it. If it is worldly-

mindedness, an unexpected loss of earthly substance must bring it to light. If it is undue attachment to my family, a sore domestic bereavement must bring me acquainted with its power. Affliction is, in fact, of the nature of a test applied to one's principles and temper, and it is hardly conceivable that it shall not issue in making a Christian alive to the defects of his character, and thereby preparing him for their successful cure.'

But it were superfluous to multiply illustrations. As there are sins which only suffering can enable us to detect, so there are graces which only suffering can enable us to display. But for the trials that darken the domestic hearth, where would be the means of calling into exercise those gentle and kindly affections which prompt us to alleviate the griefs of others by tender sympathy and offices of love? But for the ruder shocks that assail us in the world, where would be the scope for the development of the loftier and sterner virtues? How could patience have her perfect work, unless there were protracted trials to endure? How could forgiveness be exemplified, unless there were injuries tempting to revenge? Who has not been electrified by displays of moral heroism which, but for times of sore trial, could never have been elicited? There are some sufferings which we pity: but who ever dared to *pity* Daniel in the lion's den, or the three children in the fiery furnace, or Paul and Silas singing praises in the dungeon? A voice within us instinctively whispers, 'How enviable is such glorious intrepidity!' and the thrill of admiration which warms our hearts as we witness every such display, vouches for the fitness of affliction as a discipline of holiness.

Affliction, indeed, does not operate as a charm, and make us holy whether we will or no. It cannot recall the backslider from his worldliness if he obstinately refuses to bethink him of his danger; it cannot bring the slothful believer acquainted with the plague of his heart, if he pertinaciously decline to turn his eye inward; it cannot refine our sensibilities, or strengthen our patience, or exercise our heroism, if we set no value on the possession and display of these lovely graces. But wherever, and whenever, there is a soul earnestly set on its own sanctification,—wherever, and whenever, there is a soul disposed to walk up to the measure of its present light, and desirous of more light, that its walk may become still holier, there and then will affliction prove itself, whatever form it assumes, a ministering angel sent down from heaven to beautify and hallow the sufferer. Nor ought we

to complain, but rather to rejoice, that it visits us again and yet again, and refuses to let us go until we take from its hands the fulness of the blessing wherewith it is charged.

#### NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him,'*  
Heb. xii. 5.

WE are cautioned against two extremes into which the afflicted are prone to fall—disregard of the divine chastisements, and despondency under them.

It is not necessary that we should cherish a *conscious* contempt, either of God or of his visitations, in order to incur the guilt of 'despising the chastening of the Lord.' This sin is chargeable on many who would shrink with horror from the idea of mocking the divine providence; and, indeed, it assumes so many and various forms, that it may easily be committed without our being aware of our guilt. In *some*, it takes the form of a stoical or a studied indifference to trouble—an indifference, which, though it has the sanction of worldly fashion to recommend it, plainly implies contempt of him who has endowed us with an emotional nature, and requires us to *feel* our sorrows, to the end we may be made better by them. In *others*, it appears in a habitual tendency to separate God from their trials. The 'chastening' may not itself be despised; but the divine Chastener is as little recognized as though, like the gods of the Epicureans, He had long ago exchanged activity for repose, and left his world to work on by its own communicated energies. A *third* class neglect the *end* of their afflictions—acknowledging, perhaps, the providence of God in them, but turning a deaf ear to the design of the rod, and the duty of improving it. While a *fourth* evince the same unsoftened and unbelieving temper, by restraining prayer in the season of adversity, and thus showing that they are without any true sense of dependence—any conscious need of heavenly help—any sincere desire for that blessed relief which arises to the sorrowful from pouring out their hearts before their God.

But the sin of despising the chastening of the Lord, whatever form it assumes, is grievously unbecoming in Christians. To be indifferent to the rod were daring impiety, even did God chasten only as an offended Sovereign, or as a righteous Judge! But is it in either of these capacities

that he afflicts us? Far from it! Hear the argument of the apostle: 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; *for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*' It is then as a Father that God afflicts—a kind and considerate Father, who loves his children, and spares not the rod, just because he loves them! And is it nothing—no presumption—no impiety—to condemn a Father? to pour despite on a Father's love? Consider the case! The great God comes forth from his place to set in order a course of afflictive events for our benefit; *He* deigns to occupy his infinite mind in adapting them to our several exigencies; *He* sacrifices his parental feelings (if we may so speak) so far as to chasten those whom it pains him to subject to any suffering? And yet, instead of seconding his design, and showing gratitude for his condescension, we make as light of his corrections as if they were the result of chance, or as if all we had to do with them was to get rid of them! What blindness! what unthankfulness! what heartlessness! O Lord! how marvellous is thy mercy in still continuing to address to such hardened offenders the paternal entreaty, 'My son, despise not thou the chastenings of the Lord.'

The case of those who run to the opposite extreme of fainting under the divine rebuke, is perhaps worthier of commiseration; but it is not less criminal. Despondency usually appears—unless its victims be persons of a morbid temperament, who require a physician for the body rather than comfort for the soul—in connection with heavy and protracted afflictions. And who requires to be told, that it is difficult for flesh and blood to bear accumulated woe! It is trying to be stretched prostrate on the bed of sickness, when the support of one's family, or the success of one's favourite scheme, imperiously calls for immediate and vigorous exertion! It is mysteriously trying, to be laid aside from active duty, and to have only the work of patience assigned us, when our prospects of usefulness are bright, and our desire to throw ourselves into them ardent. No one who has not had his fondest hopes suddenly blasted, or the object of his warmest regard unexpectedly severed from his grasp, or the result of years of anxiety and labour in a moment consumed before his eyes—can form an adequate conception of the strong temptations which God's people sometimes have to faint under their burdens—to weary of life—and to abandon themselves to despair!

Yet the sin of the despondent is not less grievous than that of the despisers of the divine chas-

tisements. Does it not, equally with the other, imply a disbelief of the providence of God? Does it not, equally with the other, involve a disregard of the end of affliction? Above all, is it not accompanied with the self-same aggravation—contempt of a Father's love? It is remarkable, that the apostle employs the same argument against both sins. He calls upon the children of God to avoid both, from one and the same consideration—namely, that the Chastener is a Father; and the chastening the result of paternal love: and he, therefore, virtually teaches that both are extremes arising from the same principles, and involving similar guilt. Indeed, what conceivable proof can there be of the folly and guilt of immoderate grief, so decisive as the fact that our heaviest, no less than our lightest, trials originate in the love of God, and are administered with a special regard and adaptation to our wants and well-being? What could any man wish for more, in respect to his trials, than to have them measured out, and superintended by an infinitely wise and gracious Being—a Being who knows what is best for him—and who will not, like a foolish father, ruin him by ill-timed indulgence, nor yet weary him by unnecessary correction?

The true course for the people of God is to pursue the middle path between apathy and dejection. We are not forbidden to mourn, nor are we precluded from seeking the removal of our sorrows. But our grief must not be allowed to unfit us for duty, nor must we labour so much for the removal as for the sanctification of our trials. Let us ever strive, then, to make our sorrows tributary to our piety! While trial lasts, let us possess our souls in patience. And whensoever we are tempted to faint or to murmur, let us thus commune with our own hearts, and with God: 'Why should I repine? Am I not a sinner who deserve far more than I suffer? Am I not in the hands of a gracious Father who corrects in love, and will not inflict one pang more than is necessary? O my Father! let me ever trust thy wisdom, and confide in thy goodness! Let me ever, by the eye of faith, pierce the clouds, and contemplate the bright serene heavens stretching away behind them! And let my hard and foolish thoughts of thy providence give place to meek resignation, and filial confidence, and lively hope!—so that I may desire and have no will but thine!'

## NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word,'* Psal. cxix. 67.

THE Psalmist here records the result of his personal experience with regard to the respective tendencies of a state of prosperity and a state of affliction. He had passed successively through both conditions: and on a review of their influence, he felt bound to declare that the former had proved as unfavourable, as the latter had been propitious, to his spiritual improvement. . . .

Is the experience of the Psalmist singular in this respect? Or is it only such as these opposite conditions may be expected generally to produce?

When it is said that uninterrupted prosperity is apt to make men forget and forsake God, it is not meant that such is its *necessary* effect, irrespective of the character of men. Far from it! Heaven is a place secure from adverse changes, and yet there the inhabitants never go 'astray' from God! Eden, in the state of man's innocence, was a scene of unbroken prosperity, and yet there our unfallen progenitors walked with God! The effect of outward circumstances depends in a great measure on the beings on whom they operate. And in determining the moral tendency of prosperity, we must look not alone at the nature of prosperity, but also and chiefly at the character of man.

Now, what is the character of fallen man? Is it too much to affirm, that instead of being pre-disposed to piety, he has a natural bias to ungodliness? Present the idea of God to an unconverted man, does he welcome it? does he strive to detain it before his mind? Alas! he shrinks from it, and struggles to shun it and shut it out. Show him the character of God as revealed in scripture—His holiness, His rectitude, His omniscience: does he thank you for the display? does he gladly entertain the thought of such a Being, as one well-fitted to solemnize and sanctify his soul? Alas! he immediately and instinctively resists it as the intrusion of a visitor whose presence would only serve to disturb and torment him—to thwart his schemes of ambition—to embitter his cup of worldly pleasure. Such being our natural estrangement of heart from God, what can be the effect of unvarying prosperity but to build us up in ungodliness? We are strongly tempted to forgetfulness of God, even amid calamities and disasters, which remind us that 'the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong;'—and what but entire atheism can be expected to result, when no wish is ever frustrated, and no plan miscarries? The

Psalmist describes nothing more than the natural working of a long course of prosperity, when he says of the wicked, 'Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.' Nor does the history of the world certify any fact more clearly than this, that disregard of God, self-dependence, worldly-mindedness, and hardness of heart, are the fearful price which men generally pay for an overflowing cup of earthly good. 'Give me not riches,' prayed the inspired son of Jakeh, 'lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord!' 'Ah!' said the celebrated Dr Johnson, to the great comedian of the time, when the latter, in the full flush of his success, conducted the moralist over his splendid mansion and garden—'Ah! these are the things which unfit us for death, and make us unwilling to die!'

The Psalmist, then, recorded an experience regarding prosperity, which thousands have shared with him, when he said, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray.' But is his experience regarding affliction equally that of men generally? Is affliction as beneficial in its tendency as prosperity is perilous?

As prosperity is not necessarily the occasion of irreligion, so neither is affliction of piety. In the same way as men whose hearts are right with God may be very prosperous without being impious, men whose hearts are thoroughly ungodly may pass through 'a sea of troubles' without being at all loosened from the world, or led to God. Such cases, however, form the exceptions. Constituted as human nature is, adversity is usually a school of piety and virtue.

Let us suppose the case of an unawakened sinner, who has no thought about God, and no desire for any other portion than what the world seems capable of supplying. He is in high health; he has ample possessions, and still ampler prospects; his temper is cheerful; his society is courted; and no disappointment has ever occurred to scatter his day-dreams, or cool his ardour. In these circumstances, what has such a man to do with religion! Beyond the questions, 'What shall I eat, and what shall I drink?' there is nothing to excite his interest, or occasion him anxiety. As to his relation to God—the state of his soul—his prospects for eternity—these are matters which cannot be expected so much as to occur to his thoughts, far less to fill him with solicitude. Yet there is a way by which a wise and merciful God may reach the heart of this votary of the world! He may visit him with affliction; he may lay him on a bed of racking pain, or of wasting sickness; or he may consume from before his eyes the worldly portion on

which his heart is set, and so convince him of the folly of resting for happiness on any thing under the sun. It does not indeed necessarily follow, that the visitation which is thus fitted to spoil his relish for created good, will work in him a moral change, and shut him up to God as the only source of felicity. For, alas! such is the perverseness of fallen man, that even affliction sometimes hardens, instead of softening, the heart, and weds more closely to the world, instead of divorcing from it. Still the suitability of such adversities as a means in the hand of the Divine Spirit for arresting and turning careless sinners, is apparent. And nothing more will happen than might be reasonably anticipated, if this gay and giddy worldling shall rise from his bed of sickness, or come forth after the shipwreck of his fortunes, a man *completely changed*,—a man, whom prosperity only confirmed in irreligion, but whom affliction has turned to God,—a man, whose experience warrants and requires the confession, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.'

But the effect of affliction is not exhausted when it has proved the occasion of turning a sinner, in the first instance, from the error of his ways. It leaves impressions behind it, and conveys lessons, which may be expected to operate for good throughout the whole remaining course of his pilgrimage. The child who has been scorched by unwarily meddling with gunpowder, learns to be cautious in handling it for the future; and must not the man who has seen the bitter fruits of sin in the sickness of his body or the remorse of his soul or the unhappiness of his family, learn from this experience to be on his guard against a lapse into his former evil courses? In this, and countless other ways, may affliction tend to the benefit of the Christian convert. And, so far, therefore, from being a thing to be deprecated, it is a thing to be desired by every one who would 'keep' God's 'word,' and carry within his bosom the treasure of a healed and holy heart.

If it be thus the tendency of affliction to recall us from our wanderings to God and duty, the practical inference is inevitable, that it is not only a good, but a *responsible* thing to be afflicted. The ordinary means of grace are admitted to entail a responsibility proportionate to their power of benefiting us; but the rule is equally applicable to our afflictions. Nor can those of us who have been often in the furnace be held guiltless, unless our purification from sin be commensurate with the refining power of the ordeal.

## TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'In all their affliction, he was afflicted,' Isaiah lxiii. 9.

DURING his abode on earth, the Lord Jesus, to whom these words refer, was afflicted with all the afflictions to which his people are exposed. His condition was indeed a continual affliction. His good name was vilified by slander; his beneficent acts repaid with ingratitude; his friendly counsels rejected with insult. Foes maligned him; friends deserted or betrayed him; devils mocked and tempted him; the God in whom he trusted hid his countenance from him! In short, there is no sorrow incident to man in this fallen state, excepting the misery which springs from conscious guilt and indwelling corruption, in which the blessed Jesus did not largely share; while over and above the ordinary 'shocks which flesh is heir to,' he had to drink to its dregs that cup of penal wrath, which is the rightful desert of all, and the destined heritage of the finally impenitent.

The fact that our blessed Lord thus endured in his own person every species of human affliction, constitutes the first and the chief element of comfort to the Christian mourner. In the sufferings of a sinless Saviour, he reads his own exemption from the penalty of sin. One who had no sins of his own to suffer for, and yet led a life of unexampled sorrow, must have been emptying the vials of wrath in behalf of others. On no other theory than this, can the afflictions of the Holy One and the Just be explained in consistency with the rectitude of the Divine government. And the mourner in Zion, therefore, is chargeable with no presumption, when he extracts strong consolation from the afflictions with which Christ was afflicted; and interprets them into an assurance that the cup of sorrow which he is called to drink in this vale of tears, is without one drop of gall, or one ingredient of wrath, to embitter its taste.

This view of Christ's sufferings, however—though it thus lies at the foundation of all true comfort—is not *that* by which the prophet here seeks to reconcile the mourner to his lot. The words do not run—'with all their afflictions'—but 'in all their afflictions, he was afflicted.' They relate, not to the sorrows which our *sins* caused the Saviour, but to the sorrows which our *afflictions* cause him. They speak of him as a *sympathizing*, rather than a *suffering* Saviour. *He* suffers, they assure us, when believers suffer; *he* grieves when *they* grieve; in all *their* afflictions, *he* is afflicted.

Being a partaker of human nature, Christ's personal experience of suffering could not but prompt and qualify him to feel for the woes of others. A mere man can scarcely pass through a course of severe trials, without acquiring a capacity of sympathizing with all who are similarly tried. And how then could *He* whose heart was an unfathomable fountain of sensibility and tenderness, fail to acquire in the school of adversity a fellow-feeling for his brethren in sorrow? Scripture reveals what at once commends itself to our faith, when it assures us that 'we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, but (one who) was in all points tried as we are, yet without sin.' And it deduces an inference from the fact, as irresistible as it is consolatory, when it adds, 'For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted (or tried), he is able to succour them that are (similarly) tempted.'

It is accordingly not more certain that Christ while on earth was himself afflicted, than that he felt for the afflictions of others. Follow him along the whole course of his pilgrimage, and what do you behold, but a man ever ready to grieve more for the woes of others, than for his own? You seek for him in vain in the place of high festivity, or in the resorts of the gay and prosperous; his steps are unfamiliar with such haunts! But go to the wilderness where a multitude is fainting for lack of sustenance; and, behold! he is there to be 'moved with compassion on them.' Go to the gate of the city, where there is a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she a widow; and, behold! he is there to say to the widowed mourner, 'Weep not.' Go to the place of burial, where sisters are weeping over a brother's recent grave; and, lo! he is there to mingle his tears with theirs, and to whisper to their hearts the blessed assurance, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' Is Peter agitated with groundless alarm, and ready to sink, because the wind is boisterous? Jesus is by his side to re-animate his feeble faith. Is Mary weeping for her buried Lord, and disconsolately exclaiming, 'I know not where they have laid him?' Jesus is standing near to raise her drooping spirits, by the affectionate greeting, 'Mary!' When indeed did the Saviour ever behold affliction in any of its forms, and especially the mental distress which arises from tenderness of conscience, and anxiety about salvation, without having his sympathy awakened?

But is that heart which while on earth thus led at every spectacle of woe, less tender—less tuned to sympathetic feeling now? Assuredly

no! My adorable Redeemer is still 'the man Christ Jesus;' and, though he occupies a throne, he is my brother still. A human heart throbs beneath the vesture of the King of kings? And I may feel as sure of his sympathy, now that he is at the right hand of God far above all principality and power, as if he were still my fellow-sufferer in this vale of sorrow. Nay, his exalted office as Head over all things to the Church, ought to impart a peculiar charm, in the Christian's estimation, even as it adds a peculiar efficacy, to his sympathy. It were cheering to know that we have a sympathizing friend in Heaven; but how much more cheering to be told that that friend is on the throne itself; that his fellow-feeling for our infirmities is not greater than his power to give effect to it; nay, that he holds and exercises his high prerogatives to the very end he may give effect to it. To know that my Saviour, my Advocate, my Teacher, my King—he who has all power committed to him in heaven and in earth—is my brother, and a brother born for adversity:—herein indeed is consolation. Christian mourner! take and enjoy this blessed consolation. Rest assured that exaltation has not changed the compassionate Jesus. Thy sorrows may be too sacred for the ear of an earthly friend; or thou mayest have no earthly friend to divide them by sharing them with thee. But they cannot be beyond the knowledge, and the sympathy, and the help of Him who is at once omniscient and all-merciful; who proved the reality of his love by dying for thee, and who lives and reigns that he may bless and save thee.

#### TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'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.*

APART from its revelation of the future glory, the Bible makes many discoveries well fitted to reconcile the afflicted Christian to his lot. It teaches him that his trials proceed, not from blind chance or inevitable fate, but from the purpose and providence of God:—a consolatory discovery! It acquaints him that they are not the inflictions of an angry Judge, but the chastenings of a loving Father; a consideration more cheering still! It informs him—and appeals to his own experience in corroboration of the fact—that they are intended and fitted to advance his best interests, to withdraw him from sin, to wean him from the world, to allure him to God; a most blessed

addition to his knowledge! And, most consolatory of all! it assures him that he is not left to suffer unnoticed and uncommiserated, but that he has the constant sympathy of a compassionate Redeemer who, though now exalted beyond the reach of evil, still retains a remembrance of his own unnumbered woes, and a fellow-feeling of the sufferings of his people!

Still, these blessed discoveries are not all that is necessary for the comfort of the child of sorrow. His lot and destiny, despite of them all, is still to suffer while life remains. 'Flesh,' according to the pregnant saying of Luther, 'remains flesh until the earth is thrown over.' Or rather, as Fenelon expresses the same sentiment, 'When we have nothing more to suffer, we have no longer to live—as a patient is dismissed from the hospital as soon as he is restored to health.' One thing more, therefore, is needed to sustain and cheer the Christian in this desert land; and *this* the Bible likewise provides, when it unveils to his faith 'the unsuffering kingdom,' and invites him, with hope as his guide, to go up and take possession—to anticipate his dismissal to its songs—and to compare the lightness of his afflictions here, with 'the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory' there!

To assist us in forming some conception of this reversion of glory, the apostle here introduces the figure of a balance—with the believer's afflictions in the one scale, and the glory of heaven in the other. And so 'light,' he assures us, is the former scale compared with the latter, that it at once kicks the beam. The 'afflictions' of earth are 'light,' and 'but for a moment;' whereas the 'glory' of heaven possesses a 'weight' which is 'far more exceeding and eternal.' Nor does he present us, in illustration of the subject, with merely a striking figure. He clothes the figure in language which is the very soul of energy. The phrase, 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight,' has in the original a force which defies translation; it exhausts even the strength of the Greek tongue; nor indeed can it be explained, except on the supposition that the apostle had in his mind a conception of the magnitude and magnificence of the glory destined for the Christian mourner, which made him feel how inadequate is the speech of earth to embody the thoughts of heaven!

The reversion of glory which thus awaits the afflicted believer has various properties which may well serve, by the contrast they afford to his present sorrows, to reconcile him to his lot.

In the *first place*, it is enduring, while his afflictions are only temporary. 'His affliction,

which is but *for a moment*, worketh for him an *eternal* weight of glory.' The life which now is, is short, and the sorrows which sadden it are evanescent; but the life to come is everlasting, and the blessedness to which it introduces knows no end! 'Frailty' is stamped upon every thing earthly, and even its miseries depart like a flowing stream; but the inscription on all things in heaven—on its objects, its pursuits, its inhabitants, its joys, is, 'FOR EVER.'

This reversion is, in the *second place*, as delightful as his present lot is distressing. Instead of 'affliction,' there shall be 'glory;' instead of 'light affliction,' 'an exceeding weight of glory.' Sweet to the weary body is anticipated rest; sweet to the endangered soul is the hope of deliverance! But the believer is encouraged to expect not rest only, but recompence—not safety only, but happiness—not exemption from all evil only, but enjoyment of all good! How consolatory such a prospect! how suitable to his circumstances! Now, he is subjected to physical suffering—to disease with its pain and languishing—to poverty with its numerous train of hardships—to death with its loathsome and humbling accompaniments. But, in heaven, he shall be freed from suffering—enriched with 'enduring substance'—and endowed with a 'charmed' and immortal life! Now, he is liable to be assailed by the tongue of calumny, to be reviled by those he labours to benefit, and despitefully entreated for his righteousness' sake. But, in heaven, he shall be numbered with the saints whom God has justified, and none can condemn—confessed by his Redeemer as his good and faithful servant—and honoured with the love and admiration of angels! Now, he is sometimes required to do violence to his strongest affections—counting not his property—his relatives—his life dear to him, that he may honour Christ. But in heaven, he shall obtain an inheritance which shall never be taken from him—friends who shall never desert him—a recompence which shall infinitely transcend all his sacrifices! Now, his heart is often troubled by the humbling consciousness of indwelling corruption, and his righteous soul vexed by the sight of abounding iniquity. But in heaven, he shall be placed beyond the fear and the capacity of sinning—attired in the beauties of holiness—and for ever associated with beings who are as perfect in purity as in happiness! What suffering too severe to be borne, when it is to be followed by *such* enjoyment! What night too dark to be cheerily endured, when it is to usher in *such* a morning!

Finally, this reversion of future glory stands related to his present afflictions, as their appointed

and necessary result. 'His light affliction *worketh* for him an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Between the Christian's present position and future prospects, there exists not only a contrast but a connection. They are related to each other as means and end, as work and wages, as battle and victory.

'The path of sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown!'

No Christian, indeed, can be so ignorant as to suppose that his afflictions *merit* the heavenly inheritance. But though they do not purchase glory, they prepare him for it. They help him to mortify the sins that unfit, and to cultivate the graces that meeten, for its pure delights. They train him to a capacity for its enjoyments. They attune his taste and affections to a unison with its songs and sanctities. And, as by the gracious constitution of the new covenant the future recompence of the saints is apportioned to their present attainments, so they enable him, by improving them to the utmost, to secure for himself an exalted place among the redeemed—a crown of more than ordinary lustre—a position very near to the throne! O how light must affliction appear, when it is thus perceived to carry in its bosom the very germ of celestial blessedness—when it is seen to be, as it were, the crystal tomb in which the soul is nurturing its strength, and trimming its wings, to take its happy flight, as a perfect being, in the atmosphere of light and purity above! Privileged to read his coming destiny in his present trials, the Christian mourner may well exchange heaviness for rejoicing, and begin, even in this valley of tears, the song of the heavenly land!

Think on these things, ye mourners in Zion, and be comforted! Yet a little while, and the blessed prospect will be turned into reality!

—'Ye good distressed!  
Ye noble few! who here unbending stand  
Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up awhile;  
The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,  
And one unbounded spring encircle all.'

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation,' 1 Pet. i. 15.

The grand object of the economy of grace is to form us anew to the moral likeness of God—to make us holy even as God is holy. To this, as its ultimate end, all its parts and provisions are subservient. For this the Father devised the

plan of mercy; for this the Son assumed the mediatorial office; for this the Holy Ghost becomes the paraclete of the church. We are justified, only that we may be also sanctified. We obtain a title to heaven through the perfect righteousness of our Substitute, only that we may further acquire the personal holiness which constitutes our meetness for its joys.

The gospel, having it thus for its ultimate end, to reassimilate us to the moral likeness of God, most naturally and properly holds forth the Divine holiness—that is, the perfect moral excellence of the Divine character—as the grand model after which we ought to aspire. Such a standard is confessedly above our reach, even as the heavens are above the earth. For, uniting, as it does, 'all that is pure with all that is kind—all that is lovely with all that is venerable—every excellence and all infinite,'—we may well say of it, 'It is high, we cannot attain unto it.' Yet, in selecting such a standard, the gospel has consulted the exigencies of God's people, not less than the accomplishment of its own gracious design. So far from being an objection to the Christian morality, it is its very glory, that it presents a model so perfect as to afford scope for indefinite and endless imitation. As no arrow can hit its mark unless the aim be taken towards a point still more elevated, so no progress can be made in holiness unless the pattern aspired after be one of superhuman excellence. There might be a temptation to pause in the pursuit of holiness, and a plea for supine contentment with present attainments, were we called to take for our exemplar merely the character of a fellow-creature. But having the all-perfect Creator for our pattern, we have a ceaseless reason and inducement to prosecute our pious labour with unflagging ardour. At no stage of sanctification, however advanced, can we stop and say, 'I have finished my task!' Let the heights of attainment we have reached be ever so elevated, there yet lie beyond peaks of holiness still higher—Alps above Alps of still rarer spiritual excellence. Having nothing less to acquire than entire and universal conformity to the Divine character, we must feel constrained to exclaim, even to the last sigh we draw, 'There is much land still to be possessed!'

'But granting that it is proper to set the *highest* example before me, and to expect me to strain towards it with untiring effort,—what does such an example avail so long as I am incapable of understanding it? I *cannot* summon up a well-defined conception of the Divine character! The holiness of a purely spiritual Being is a sublime

abstraction which it baffles all my efforts to realize! I am dazzled by its glory, but I cannot discern its features! And how can I be expected to imitate that of which I have no precise conception? Let the believer who thus feels and reasons be reminded, that the Divine likeness which the gospel exhorts us to transcribe into our life and conversation is not that of a purely spiritual being—is not an aggregate of undefined and unimaginable attributes. In merciful accommodation to the weakness of his children, God has come down and dwelt in flesh, thus enshrining his perfections in the tabernacle of a human nature, and rendering his excellencies in some measure appreciable by our understandings, and level to our sympathies. True it is—most true! that a purely spiritual Being—a Being of whom we know not so much what he is, as what He is not—a Being whose eternity and infinitude paralyse our understandings and affections, even in their first outgoings towards Him—cannot be the object of imitation, more than of confidence and love, to creatures constituted as we are. But then let it be remembered, that He who came to declare the Father—He who himself said to his disciples, ‘he that hath seen me hath seen the Father,’—is no mere abstraction. In Jesus Christ we have One made like unto ourselves—with a body like our own—a soul like our own—perceptions like our own—passions like our own. In Him we behold One who breathed the same air with ourselves—stood in the same relationships—passed through the same chequered course of joy and suffering—died the same death—preceded us to the same heavenly glory. In Him, therefore, and in *his* life, we possess a model as intelligible as it is perfect—a model, by copying which we copy God—by conformity to which we become conformed to the Divine image. ‘Let us therefore,’ to adopt the words of Jeremy Taylor, ‘press after Jesus, as Elisha did after his master, with an inseparable prosecution, even whithersoever he goes, that according to the reasonableness and proportion expressed in St Paul’s advice, “As we have borne the image of the earthly, we may also bear the image of the heavenly.” For in vain are we called Christians, if we live not according to the example and discipline of Christ, the Father of the institution.’

## ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*‘For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live,’* Rom. viii. 13.

THE state of grace on which the believer enters at conversion, is a middle state between that unregenerate condition in which he is born, and that condition of perfect purity to which he shall be ushered at death; and as it is intermediate to these two extremes in point of time, so it is also intermediate in point of character. It is neither all sin like the former, nor all sinlessness like the latter. It is a mixed condition. With a strong tendency to evil, there is conjoined a powerful love of holiness. There is much of ‘the old man,’ but there is also much of ‘the new man,’—much of miry clay, but also much of finest gold. The believer is conscious of the simultaneous existence within him of two antagonist principles—the flesh and the spirit; and he is called on to maintain a constant warfare, in which the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.

Conflict, however, is not the sole characteristic of this middle state: there is progression as well as conflict. It is not a state of ‘drawn battle,’ in which the two opposing principles are equally balanced. There is incessant war, but it is a war in which victory ever leans to the one side, and defeat disheartens the other. The state of grace does more than stretch over the lengthened space between unregeneracy and glory; it conducts from the one extreme to the other. It is a process of convalescence, in which disease is daily giving way, and healthful vigour re-asserting its dominion;—a process of refining, in which the baser metal is undergoing a gradual dissipation, and the silvery residuum waxing purer and brighter;—a ladder, like that seen in vision by the patriarch, which is planted indeed on the earth and partly enveloped in the fogs and smoke of this lower air, but which, nevertheless, stretches upward, and onward, and away, through the clear ether, to the better—even the heavenly country.

It is to persons professing to be in this mixed and progressive state, that the apostle addresses the words prefixed to this meditation; and his admonition relates to the discipline to which they ought to subject the earthward part of their character. ‘If ye live after the flesh,’ says he, ‘if ye foster and follow the impulses of remaining corruption, ye shall return to that state of spiritual death—the prelude of death eternal—from which ye profess to have passed; but if, through

the help of the Holy Spirit, ye habitually resist and crucify your carnal nature, ye shall steadily advance in that spiritual life—which is eternal life begun.' In other words, mortification of indwelling sin, is, according to the apostle, at once essential to spiritual life and a means of life.

Mortification of sin is essential to spiritual life. The propensity to sin has no *inherent* tendency to decay, any more than the principle of holiness to flourish, in the human heart. On the contrary, the former is as truly indigenous, as the latter is exotic, to our nature; and in every instance, therefore, in which the two conflicting tendencies are left to their own spontaneous operation, it is inevitable that grace shall droop and die, while sin shall strengthen until it choke its antagonist, and overrun the soul. In point of fact indeed, no person who has been once savingly converted, is ever permitted to fall back into a state of absolute spiritual death. But the case of the backslider who, from neglect of self-restraint, relapses into worldliness, is decisive of the tendency of sin to resume its original dominion over the soul. And he, therefore, who foregoes the habit of self-mortification, must not only be, for the time, without any evidence of life, but have reason to question whether he has ever at all been made spiritually alive.

But mortification is also a positive means of life. There is indeed a species of mortification which is not even a sign of grace, far less an auxiliary of life. When a man, for example, mortifies one sinful affection, only that he may gratify another; or relinquishes an evil habit from regard to health or public opinion, or because age or infirmity has spoiled his relish for it, or under the delusive hope of thereby purchasing salvation; it would be preposterous to expect any such result as genuine amelioration of character, for such cessation from sin may consist with an unsubdued love of sin itself. True mortification, however,—mortification proceeding from hatred of sin and a sincere desire and determination to be delivered from it, cannot be exercised without helping forward the work of sanctification. What is the necessary effect upon a man's character of habitual abstinence from evil deeds, and unvarying resistance to depraved affections? Is it merely to break the chain of sinful habits, and weaken the power of sinful appetites? This is indeed one effect, and a most beneficial one. But is this all? Far from it! Does not the man who uniformly mortifies the deeds of the body and strangles unholy desire in its first motions, exercise, in this sacred warfare, various important principles of the new nature?

Does he not exercise, for example, strength of will, hatred of sin, concern for his own spiritual welfare, zeal for the honour of God? If he is strenuous and successful in keeping under the body, and crucifying natural inclination, to what does he owe this energy and success but to the ceaseless and growing vigour of such principles as these? Yet such principles are the very elements of the spiritual life—the very lineaments of the Divine likeness. In mortifying the deeds of the body, therefore, the believer does more than narrow the dominion of sin; he extends and strengthens the reign of holiness. And though ostensibly employed in carrying on only one of the two great moral processes to which the gospel calls him—the process of subduing the earthward part of his character, he yet actually, though only indirectly, advances the other and parallel process of strengthening and maturing the principles of his new and spiritual nature. Instead of living after the flesh and thereby incurring the risk of death, he mortifies the deeds of the body and thereby invigorates life.

#### TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,'* Eph. iv. 22—24.

In entering upon the work of sanctification, the believer naturally begins with the renunciation of his outward sins, and the crucifying of his evil inclinations. A sense of sin is the first feeling which the Spirit awakens: a determination to break off sin by righteousness, the first purpose which the Spirit inspires. And as the works of the flesh are manifest, and even the depraved desires whence they proceed easily discernible by his now quickened conscience, he cannot but perceive it to be his duty to betake himself, at the very outset, to the task of withdrawing his members from the service of Satan, and engaging in conflict with the evil tempers and propensities to which he has been hitherto in bondage. This task, however, though specially incumbent immediately after conversion, is not confined to any single stage of the Christian life. Sin, though it ceases to reign, continues to exist, in the soul of the believer; nor can he reasonably calculate on ever arriving, on this side the grave, at such a state of perfect freedom from its evil promptings, as to warrant him to return his sword into the

scabbard. The recorded experience of the most spiritually-minded believers would seem to justify the conclusion, that 'warfare till death' is the Christian's destiny and duty.

But mortification of sin is only one-half of the task which the expectant of heavenly glory is called to perform. Besides conquering sin, he has to acquire holiness. Besides putting off the old man, which is corrupt, he has to put on the new man, which is created after the moral likeness of God. The image of the earthly is to be effaced, only that the image of the heavenly may be re-stamped upon the soul. In a word, the sanctifying process is incomplete until there is a constant and universal prevalence of holiness over the whole man; until all the faculties of the inner, and all the members of the outward man, are not only delivered from the power of corruption, but 'consecrated to God in love, if not perfectly with respect to act, yet sincerely with respect to principle and purpose of dedication.' Sinless holiness is indeed out of the question, and cannot be matter even of expectation to any enlightened child of God, while encumbered with a body of sin. But at *full* sanctification, and nothing short of this—at sanctification which 'fills the whole man, leaving no part empty of good, and no part under the power of habitual evil, though in every part capable of increase'—the believer is bound, and should delight, to aim. Nothing less than this is his privilege, and nothing less should be his pursuit.

In the twofold process of putting off the old, and putting on the new man, the faculty of the soul which the believer has chiefly to exercise, and which the Spirit of God has chiefly to renew and strengthen, is the *will*, or, as the apostle denominates it, 'the spirit of the mind;' and accordingly the exhortation to 'be renewed in the spirit of your mind,' is placed in the centre of the passage before us, as having an equal reference to each of the two great duties enjoined, and as forming, in fact, the keystone that binds them into one sanctifying process. Let but the *will* be renewed, and the double result of mortified sin and progressive holiness is certain. The *will* is that which controls the whole man, and gives a character to his temper and history; and it is *that*, therefore, in which it is of supreme importance that grace rather than sin—God rather than Satan—should sit enthroned. Establish God's authority in the will, or in other words, make the path of holiness our *choice*, and nothing more is wanted to effect a thorough reformation of heart and life. The moment the will is given up wholly to God, obedience ceases

to be a task, mortification of sin becomes easy, and the pursuit of holiness in all its branches a pleasurable exercise. How, indeed, should abstinence from sin be irksome to *him* whose choice and delight are fixed on holiness? How should Christ's yoke appear hard, or Christ's burden heavy, to *him* to whom conformity to the Redeemer is a matter of choice and desire? Such a man has the strongest of all inducements to holiness—even the love of it—the pleasure which he takes in it. Such a man resembles God; for the grand distinctive feature in the Divine character is, that he is righteous and holy, because he *loves* rectitude and purity!

But who can attain in this life to such a measure of likeness to God as this? Reader! men in all ages have done it; and thou thyself mayest do it. Provided thou hast already given thyself to the Lord, and obtained the forgiveness which is through faith in him, the path to complete sanctification is open before thee—the goal within thy reach! Only believe and press on! Abandon all known sin. Let thine eyes be habitually upon the bright and consummate model of excellence, whose temper and character thou art called to transcribe. Admire, adore, love *Him*—so that unconsciously, intuitively, and almost without an effort, thou mayest come to resemble him. And, above all things besides, pray for the Spirit—the sanctifying Spirit; for his light, that thou mayest discern more and more of the beauty and excellency of true holiness; for his power, that being baptized as with fire, thy dross may be consumed, thy tin purged, thy cold affections warmed, thy stony heart melted, and thy whole nature made to take the mould of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

#### TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death,'*  
Phil. iii. 10.

SANCTIFICATION, though it ought to be his ultimate end, is not the first thing which the sinner has to pursue. Being in a state of guilt and condemnation, he must first of all go to Christ for pardon and justification. So long as he is unforgiven, he is incapable of holiness. So long as he regards God as his enemy, he cannot love him—and where there is no love in the heart, there can be no holiness in the life! It is only when he is

brought to the knowledge of Christ as his divinely appointed and accepted substitute, and repairs to him, saying, 'Lord Jesus, thou art my righteousness, and I am thy sin—thou hast taken on thee what was mine, and given to me what was thine!' that his enmity is slain, his confidence in God restored, and a disposition implanted to follow holiness, not as a legal condition of acceptance, but as a pleasure and privilege.

The cross is thus the only starting-post whence the race of sanctification can be commenced. But it is more. 'Looking unto Jesus,' is an attitude of mind as essential at every subsequent stage as at the outset of the Christian course. In fact, a realizing view of Christ is the very aliment and vitality of holiness. Like the diver who works at the bottom of the sea, the believer can subsist and labour only by virtue of supplies transmitted down to him from a higher element; and these supplies of life and strength—are they not all treasured up in Christ, and receivable only through the habitual exercise of faith in him? Accordingly, the apostle, when expressing his ardent desire after perfect meetness for the resurrection-glory, makes it his prayer—as the grand means to this end—that he 'may know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.' 'Give me but this precious knowledge—this blessed experience,' he virtually says, 'and then I shall be certain to attain unto the resurrection of the dead—the resurrection from the death of sin here, and the resurrection to glory hereafter.'

'The power of Christ's resurrection' is merely another name for newness of heart and life; 'the fellowship of Christ's sufferings,' another name for mortification of sin; and to both these ends a knowledge of Christ is at once essential and conducive.

When you look at Christ's resurrection in the light in which scripture presents it, what do you behold? Not merely a man raised from the dead; not merely a vast miracle—a marvellous display of Almighty power! You connect the wonderful event with its final cause and proper effects. Remembering that Christ rose as your representative—you interpret his resurrection as the divine seal to the sufficiency of his obedience; and you read in the 'mighty power which God wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand,' a pledge that the same quickening energy will raise you alike from the death of sin, and from the dust of the tomb. And realizing these things, how can you fail to be quickened and comforted by the blessed contemplation! It is true, that the

truths thus presented to you cannot of themselves communicate life to your soul, and that it requires the inscrutable agency of the Holy Spirit to render them effectual. But to *these truths*, the Spirit is pledged to give stringency and effect—*these truths* are his appointed instrument for quickening and sanctifying the soul. And you may, therefore, calculate with all confidence on obtaining, through faith in the reality and ends of Christ's resurrection, an experience of the 'power' of that resurrection—even an experience of 'the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe.'

Nor is a knowledge of Christ less conducive to the other result prayed for, an experience of 'the fellowship of his sufferings!' In reference to his sufferings, no less than his resurrection, you are privileged to look on Christ as your Representative. 'These sufferings,' you are entitled to say, as you turn the eye of faith to the cross, 'are the penalty of my sins—that death, the expiation of my offences; and now the law, being magnified, has lost its power to damn me, and its right to reign over me!' You have thus *virtual* fellowship in Christ's sufferings, as well as the legal benefit of them. But can such virtual fellowship be believingly contemplated, without prompting you to crucify the flesh, and thereby become a *real* participant with Christ in suffering? Let the Spirit but exhibit, in their true colours, the hatefulness of those sins which brought your Redeemer to the dust of death, and the fearfulness of that wrath which but for his unutterable agonies, must have been your portion; and how shall you remain at peace with yourself, so long as any one sin has dominion over you? No doubt it is painful to deny one's self an inveterate evil habit!—to pluck out a right eye!—to cut off a right hand!—to tear asunder the old man limb from limb! 'It is no easy thing for a man to pursue his sins, as it were, to the cross—to nail them there—and to let them bleed till they expire.' But the spectacle of a crucified Saviour is surely sufficient to nerve you for the task—were it tenfold more irksome! Would you not cheerfully incur a painful sacrifice—though no benefit were to result therefrom—merely to evince your gratitude to a benefactor who had made you a rich present of gold or silver? And can you decline to crucify the old man for *his* sake, 'who hath given for you,' to adopt the words of Luther, 'not gold or silver, but *himself*; who hath received for you so many wounds; who hath undergone for your sake an agony and sweat of blood; who hath acquired for you a Father in heaven full of love;'

especially when this work of mortification is not more conducive to his glory, than to your own benefit? But fellowship of Christ's sufferings is not all painful; its pain is not without a high and peculiar pleasure. Jesus himself rejoiced in spirit, even while enduring the bitter cross; and are not you also enabled to say, 'Dying, yet behold I live; sorrowful, yet behold I rejoice?' In making sacrifices for Christ—in curbing and repressing the outbreaks of sin—there is a high and a stern delight. And irrespective of the growth in sanctification which such self-denial secures, and the blessedness in which that sanctification terminates, there is in the very consciousness of holy self-restraint, a sweetness—an ecstasy—a delectation, which verifies the saying in regard to every man who is daily dying unto sin, 'He alone has life who learns thus to die!'

THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,'*  
Rom. vi. 4.

ADAM, by whom sin entered into the world, was not only the public representative, but the natural root of all his posterity; and was therefore the means, when he fell, not only of involving all mankind in a state of condemnation, but of transmitting to them a corrupted nature. Christ, who came as the second Adam to repair the evils introduced by the first, stands to his spiritual progeny in two correspondent relations. While he is, on the one hand, the representative or substitute through whom the redeemed obtain a reversal of the sentence of condemnation, he is also, on the other hand, the vital head from whose fulness they derive a new and spiritual life. As in the former capacity he accomplished a work for them, by which they are constituted *legally* righteous, so in the latter capacity he effects a work in them, by which they are rendered *personally* righteous.

The two characters thus sustained by Christ, though essentially different, are yet closely connected. Indeed, his power as the vital head of his people, is the appointed and necessary result of his work as their substitute. He undertook the latter that he might be entitled and qualified to exercise the former. And when therefore at his resurrection he obtained gifts for men, and was invested with the prerogative of dispensing

these gifts out of his own fulness, he received nothing more than the stipulated wages and rightful reward of his previous labour of love.

To the benefits flowing from Christ in both his characters, the sinner is admitted the moment he believes the gospel—faith being the link by which the Spirit unites him to the Redeemer. And as Christ's work as substitute was subservient to his investiture with the honours and privileges of vital head, so the new relation to God into which the sinner is brought by having the Surety's righteousness imputed to him, is subsidiary and conducive to his attainment of a new and holy character. Unbelievers do not comprehend how a free remission and acquittal on the ground of a vicarious righteousness, should not tend to licentiousness rather than holy living. But he who possesses these blessings, knows that he has obtained the benefit of Christ's death. only that he may experience the power of Christ's resurrection; and the new principles which are infused into his mind through union with his Head, naturally constrain him to die to sin, and to walk in newness of life. What are the views and feelings which necessarily occupy the soul of the man who realizes his union with Christ? Does he not look upon himself as having virtually suffered the penalty of sin, when his surety died, and as therefore set free from its right to rule over him? Does he not feel somewhat as a criminal might be supposed to do, who, after suffering the last penalty of the law, and thereby acquiring an experience of the bitter effects of crime, had been miraculously restored to life in order to exhibit by a new course of conduct the salutary fruits of this dear-bought experience? Would not this criminal feel constrained to reason thus with himself, 'Have I already died by the hand of sin, and shall I now expect to live by it? Have I endured so much agony and shame on account of it, and shall I now be so foolish as to expose myself by continuing in it to a renewal of these unutterable woes?' It is true the case of the believer is not exactly parallel to that of a criminal in the circumstances supposed, for he has not himself actually suffered; he has only virtually suffered in the person of his surety. But does this consideration tend to weaken his impression of the exceeding sinfulness and ruinous tendency of sin? On the contrary, does it not serve to deepen it? His own sufferings and death *might* have taught him the evil and desert of sin; but surely not so affectingly as the sufferings and death of ONE, who united the Divine to the human nature, and voluntarily paid his debt out of love to his soul?

As he realizes the sufferings of Christ in his stead, he cannot but conclude that the sin which required such a costly sacrifice to expiate it, is a thing essentially and utterly abominable; while the view which is presented of the Saviour's disinterested love, cannot but send the lesson home with constraining power to his heart. The thought that a divine Redeemer pitied and loved him so tenderly as to submit to bleed and die for his deliverance, is even more touching than the thought that sin is such an evil that no inferior sacrifice could have atoned for it; and while he looks, therefore, at the cross, his own heart must be pierced with contrition—his own soul melted to penitence, the love of sin killed, and the resolution spontaneously formed to turn from all iniquity. O, there is no fear of the interests of holiness suffering from faith in the free pardon of sin! Clog the justification of a sinner with qualifying conditions, and men may remain dead in sin; for by thus limiting its freeness, you rob it of all power to melt and subdue the heart. But let its unfettered freeness be seen—let sinners perceive that they do not require to labour for pardon, but simply to accept the pardon which a gracious Saviour has already purchased, and their souls will be drawn to Christ with a force of affection sufficient to emancipate them from the tyranny of evil!

'Talk they of morals, O thou bleeding Lamb,  
The grand morality is love of Thee!'

Nor is a view of his union with Christ as his vital head less sanctifying to the believer, than a persuasion of union with him as his substitute. When he looks to Christ as a risen and reigning Saviour, what does he behold but an argument and encouragement to newness of life? Is not Christ exalted to give life to his people? Is He not entrusted with the 'well of life?' Is it not His office to dispense the Spirit—to intercede for his people, and to ensure their sanctification? Is He not, in short, their life, inasmuch that it is not so much they that are alive, as Christ that liveth in them? Can such considerations be other than most purifying, most consolatory? To feel that I am one with a Saviour thus exalted and thus occupied,—that I am a member of that mystical body through which the Spirit, poured without measure on the Head, freely and abundantly circulates,—that indissolubly united to him, I have continual access to his fulness, and am sure of being ultimately made to share in his glory:—why this is to live in a region far removed above the world of sin and death,—*this* is to breathe an atmosphere in

which evil cannot but languish, and holiness strengthen;—*this* is 'newness of life!'

The believer's union with Christ is thus not only the source of his sanctification, but a stimulant to it. And what his union thus enables and induces him to aim at, his public profession as a Christian pledges him to pursue. He has been baptized into the death of Christ,—nay, 'buried with Christ in baptism;' and in the act of emerging from the mystical waters into the open air of heaven, he has virtually declared that he is washed from the guilt and pollution of sin, that he may henceforward walk in the beauty of holiness. Baptism, indeed, is only a sign of the communicated purity of the Christian; nor is the language of the apostle to be regarded as expressive of an inseparable connection, far less an actual identity, between the outward rite and the spiritual grace. Baptism is called a death unto sin by a common rhetorical figure, in the same way as the elements in the Lord's supper are denominated the body and blood of Christ. Still this sacrament—though only an emblem—is a most impressive one; and by partaking of it, the believer necessarily proclaims his death unto sin, and resurrection to holiness. By giving myself to Christ in a mental act, I do indeed lay myself under invincible obligations to walk with him in newness of life: but by *publicly* avouching my union with him at baptism, I add the solemnity of a vow to the sacredness of an act of self-surrender. Like the youthful Carthaginian, I swear at the altar of the Lord an eternal and irreconcilable enmity with the devil, the world, and the flesh; and now no compromise may be entered into, no armistice may be negotiated! My dismissal from the Church militant to the Church triumphant, can alone be allowed to terminate the contest!

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'*That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,*' Tit. ii. 10.

THE leading phrase in this verse—'*adorn* the doctrine of God'—may sound strange to some readers. What, they may ask, is it possible to '*adorn*' the doctrine of God?—to embellish, by human comment or human practice, the pure and perfect truths of the gospel—the truths which, instead of needing the foreign aid of ornament, are 'when unadorned, adorned the most?' To attempt such a thing—what is it but

'To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,  
To throw a perfume on the violet.'

Yet there is a sense in which it is practicable to 'adorn' the doctrine of God. The design, let it be remembered, of 'adorning' an object is not so much to add to its intrinsic value or beauty, as to commend it to the admiration of beholders; and to this it is by no means essential that the thing which *recommends*, should be superior, or even equal, to the thing *recommended*. A fine scholar may obviously reflect credit on his teacher, and so recommend him to others—though the attainments of the pupil fall greatly below those of the preceptor. And in like manner a Christian may shed lustre on the lessons of the gospel—bear living witness to its hallowing and gladdening influence—and thus commend it to the admiration and acceptance of others; even though the best illustration he is able to offer, whether by his lips or by his life, come immeasurably short of its intrinsic excellence and glory.

In this verse, however, there is more to surprise the reader than the terms in which it is expressed. *Who* are the persons whom the apostle expects and requires to 'adorn' or recommend the doctrine of God? Are they persons whose stations or offices invest them with peculiar facilities for influencing their fellow-men? Men of rank, who occupy a position in society whence all may behold their virtues? Ministers of Christ, whose office furnishes them with constant opportunities of expounding the principles, and exemplifying the spirit of the gospel? Martyrs, who lead the van of the Christian host, and are necessarily 'a spectacle to men and angels?' Not at all! It is of persons of a very different class that the apostle speaks; it is of the mean, not the mighty of this world; the despised, not the exalted; the rude and unlettered, not the polished and erudite; it is bondmen and bondwomen: individuals belonging to the humblest class of society! 'Exhort *servants*,' says he to Titus, 'that *they* may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.'

But the most startling thing still remains. In *what way* are these humble persons to recommend the gospel? Is it by services and sacrifices of a peculiarly sacred kind? Is it by much prayerfulness, by strict sabbath-keeping, by zeal and liberality in supporting schemes of Christian usefulness? So most readers would have expected! Yet how different is the fact! Not a word does the apostle drop about purely religious duties, indispensable as these doubtless are. He speaks exclusively of duties of an entirely opposite class. The Christian's 'ornaments,' according to this passage, are not the sacred, but the secular virtues; not the shining services which draw the

eyes of the brethren, but the homely and every day duties which pass under the eye of the world. 'Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that (thus) they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.'

Nor is it difficult to discover substantial reasons why an apostle should thus single out persons of humble station as the adorners of the gospel, and specify common duties as those on which its honour is chiefly staked.

It is to be remembered, *in the first place*, that persons of humble station form the great majority of Christians. 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things which are not, hath God chosen, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.' And would it not, then, be to rob the great mass of Christians of a noble privilege, if only the great and powerful were capable of adorning the doctrine of God—if no services were fitted to recommend the gospel but such as require wealth, and leisure, and high accomplishment to perform them? Blessed be God, there is no such exclusiveness in gospel privilege! The peasant has it in his power no less than the peer, to shed around him the savour of Christ. Servants! ye are not precluded from reflecting honour on the name of your Redeemer. Children of the poor! ye are not shut out from the high distinction of being fellow-workers with God. Not one man upon the earth, however narrow his sphere or scanty his substance, but may do something for God—but may have his lowly condition exalted, his homely employment ennobled, by the lustre of a pure and virtuous life!

Let it be also remembered, *in the second place*, that a faithful discharge of common duties tells more powerfully with the world in favour of religion, than any observance of the offices of piety. Worldly men are not surprised to find Christians giving themselves to sabbath-keeping, and other sacred services; neither do they believe that strictness of religious profession requires any great strength of principle, or affords any security for honesty and diligence in the ordinary affairs of life. How mightily then must it tend to convince them, that Christian principle is more than a name—is really a thing of power—when they

behold its professors discharging, with all good fidelity, the various duties of their station and callings! Let a worldly master be made to see that his *Christian* servant is, of all others, the one who most sacredly watches over the interests of his purse and property: or let a worldly parent be made to perceive that of all his children, the one who is most given to his Bible is also the one who is most dutiful to himself; and how shall either of them be able to resist the inference, that Christianity is indeed a thing of high worth and holy efficacy? To excel in attention to duties of a purely sacred kind, may perhaps be the surest way to recommend ourselves to the admiration of our fellow Christians; but the way to advance the credit and esteem of our religion in the world, is to show all good fidelity in the relations of common life—to be firm to our word and faithful to our engagements, and to evince in all things an inflexible adherence to the law of rectitude and kindness.

A faithful discharge of common duties is also, in the *third place*, the best test of the actual presence and power of religious principle. It is not in the sanctuary, or under the public eye, that character is most undisguisedly disclosed. In public, men occupy an open stage, where they are tempted to play a part and exhibit themselves to the best advantage. It is only when they retire behind the scenes—when they return to the workshop or mingle in the family, that their minds, as well as their persons, appear in an undress. It is comparatively easy to preserve the semblance of piety when surrounded by the godly, or exposed to the excitement of sacred services. In such scenes and employments there is a charm which precludes the access of temptation, and enables the hollow professor not only to impose on himself, but to pass muster with others as a genuine saint. But it is otherwise amid the cares, and crosses, and petty annoyances of common life. Amid the tear and wear of every-day avocations, a man's temper is put to a severe test; nor is it possible that an assumed character can be long preserved, when every hour brings provocations to fretfulness—facilities for acting fraudulently—opportunities of advancing one's own interest at the expense of his neighbours. The apostle James describes the person who offends not in word as 'a perfect man,' that is, a man whose character has all the completeness which arises from the predominance of Christian principle: and the same may be said of every one who, amid the manifold temptations of his daily occupation, rises superior to the impulse of evil, and dorns his religion in all things.

Ought it not to be added, in the *last place*, that the example of Christ stamps a peculiar value and honour on the duties of common life? We do not exhaust the amount of honour which our Lord put on the station of the lowly, when we recal the fact that, in relinquishing his glory for humiliation, he took on him the *form of a servant*. His marvellous condescension in this respect was followed up by the diligent discharge, for thirty years together, of the duties of a humble sphere. Large as was the portion of time allotted by him to the performance of his sacred function as God's messenger, larger far was that which he devoted to the humble duties devolving on him as a son, a brother, a neighbour, a friend, a subject. And why was this, if not to show that this class of duties possessed in his eyes a very high importance, and was to be supremely binding on his followers? O, if He who is the Christian's exemplar, deemed it befitting to spend the greater part of his life in fulfilling the obligations and offices belonging to the lowly condition in which he was born and reared, how grievously must they mistake their Christian vocation, who reckon the duties of their ordinary callings beneath their notice—who disparage them as secular things which afford no scope for the culture of spiritual-mindedness—or who conclude that they sufficiently adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, when they merely display a flaming zeal for Christian truth, and a high esteem for Christian ordinances!

FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure;*  
Phil. ii. 12, 13.

THE grand privilege of the Christian dispensation is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of believers. Under the Jewish economy, though God dwelt with men on the earth, the symbols of his presence were restricted to a local temple. During the period, too, of Christ's residence in flesh, the Divine abode was in a visible sanctuary—the temple of Christ's human nature. But when the Redeemer ascended to his kingdom, and received, as one reward of his mediatorial work on earth, the right of dispensing the agency of the Holy Ghost, a new and more comprehensive economy was ushered in. God, instead of any longer confining the manifestation of himself to a sensible or local habitation, vouchsafed to make

the souls of believers his dwelling-place. And *now* the brotherhood of the saints, and not any material fabric—the worshippers, and not the walls which enclose them—constitute his temple. ‘Know ye not that believers are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in them?’

The object of the Spirit, in dwelling with his people, is to form, maintain, and perfect the life of holiness in their souls. He finds his temple full of defilement, with strange fire on its altar, and the tables of the money-changers in its court; and his gracious purpose in visiting it, is to purge it of its pollution, and consecrate it anew into the sanctuary of God, so that the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen, and the din of the traffickers, may give place to the holy ministry of praise, and prayer, and good works! In effecting this blessed transformation, the Spirit deals with man as a free agent—not forcing him, or even leaving him to remain an inactive spectator, but engaging, stimulating, and directing the exercise of his rational powers. He anoints our eyes, that we may understand the things of Christ; he renews our will, that we may comply with their dictates, and have a taste of their sweetness; he quickens our conscience, that we may nicely discern, and promptly decide, between the competing claims of Christ and sin; he purifies and elevates our affections, that, turning away from the broken cisterns of worldly good, we may seek and find our happiness in God. In a word, he so takes of the things of Christ and shows them to our souls, as to render them vital, influential, operative principles—the very aliment and sustenance of the spiritual life.

As the Spirit, in sanctifying us, thus ‘worketh’ by means of our rational powers, and not independently of them, his presence and operations are indistinguishable from the proper and independent action of our own minds. The fact of his indwelling and influence is known in no other way, than the omnipresence of Deity in creation is known—from faith in the Divine testimony, and observation of the effects produced. But is this glorious privilege, on this account, the less certain, or the less valuable? Is it necessary that we should discern the Spirit by any peculiarity of immediate sensation, in order to be persuaded that he is with us and within us, and that he is ‘mingling his operations with our own government of our will and affections?’ Who pretends to be able to discriminate between the diabolical suggestions of Satan, and the spontaneous workings of his own corrupt nature? And why should we expect to be wiser with reference

to the operations of the antagonist influence? In truth, our incapacity to distinguish the movements of the Spirit from the workings of our own minds, is an inevitable result of the method which the Divine agent vouchsafes to adopt in sanctifying us—the method of actuating and guiding our faculties, rather than overbearing them, or dispensing with their co-operation. And this method of influencing us, instead of lessening, serves mightily to enhance, the honour conferred on us by the residence of Deity in our souls. It shows that the Eternal Spirit sets a high estimation on the constitution and laws of our nature. It shows that he will not do violence to our faculties—even to save our souls! He will use them as his instruments, but he will not force them! He will honour them, by employing them as his ministers; but he will not put on them the dishonour of employing them without our own concurrence!

It cannot occasion surprise that the apostle should adduce this grand privilege of Christians, as a persuasive to personal *diligence* in working out our own salvation. Why, the very thought of such an august presence within us, must tend to put the soul in a pious frame! King Solomon, when presiding at the dedication of the temple, was so overwhelmed with the thought of Jehovah deigning to abide between the cherubim, that he exclaimed, ‘But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; how much less this house that I have built!’ Can we feel less overawed, when we realize the presence of the Eternal Spirit in these polluted hearts of ours? That God has come to us, instead of requiring us to go to him!—that he is mysteriously about us and within us—watching us, counselling us, striving with us; that, go where we may, do what we please, we cannot escape from him; but are either led by his Spirit, or else grieving and resisting his Spirit!—how solemnizing, how searching such a consideration! how fitted to rebuke every rising of unholy desire, and to hush every pulse of sinful passion! It is, however, the thought of the Spirit’s *co-operation*, rather than of his *indwelling*, that forms the chief incentive to holy living. Indeed, a sense of his holy presence would only fill the soul with dismay, were it unattended with an assurance of his Almighty help. Happily, this is not our situation! The infinite Spirit abides with us, not merely to show us the plagues of our own hearts, but to vouchsafe us his aid in effecting a cure. And knowing this, how can we ever lack either the inducement or the ability to ‘cleanse our-

selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord?' True, we are weak, and the work given us to do is arduous; but can we doubt of accomplishing it, when *He* is with us to lend his co-operation—the Almighty power! Though he is free and sovereign, are we not authorized to expect the helps of his grace, whensoever we realize and feel our dependence on his agency; and, therefore, to enter upon every incumbent duty, however difficult, with the heaven-taught resolution, 'I will go in the strength of the Lord God!' The host of Israel, though but a handful compared with the armies of the aliens, never hesitated to join battle, when they knew that the ark of the Lord was among them:—and need we shrink from encountering our spiritual foes—even though their name be 'legion'—when *He* who dwelt above the ark by a visible symbol, dwells in us by his Spirit? Why refuse to stretch forth the withered hand, when *He* commands, who issues healing virtue with the command? Why decline to work out our own salvation, when it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure?

Nor is the persuasion of this glorious and present help a stronger incentive to diligent, than it is to anxious effort, in fulfilling our mission as Christians. While it persuades us to 'work out our own salvation,' it equally persuades us to work it out with 'fear and trembling.' The expression 'fear and trembling,' may possibly refer to the risk to which believers are exposed, of forfeiting and losing the aid of their mysterious visitant, by insensibility to their privilege, or misimprovement of it. It is a fearful consideration, that the Divine agent is susceptible of offence; and that, as he will not work in us against our will, so he may be constrained, by our neglect or perversity, to suspend his gracious offices, or even wholly to abandon us. When the threatened destruction of the Jewish temple drew nigh, there was heard from its recesses a mysterious sound, as of a rushing army, and a voice saying, 'Let us depart hence!' A similar departure of its occupant may be expected, when the temple of the Holy Ghost is defiled; when impure thoughts are indulged; when duty is neglected; when lukewarmness takes the place of zeal; and worldliness of piety. Surely such a consideration may well fill us with 'fear and trembling,' and self-jealousy. Tremble, O my soul! lest thou shouldst involve thyself in such an awful calamity! Help me, O my God, to woo the Spirit to stay, instead of tempting him to depart! Whensoever carnal

endanger my spirituality of mind, let me abhor and resist them as a sacrilegious profanation of the sanctuary! And whensoever, on the contrary, I am favoured with an experience of pious emotions—of peculiar tenderness of conscience—of ardent love for Christ—of burning indignation against myself for my unworthiness of his love; let me detain and sanctify the solemn impressions—regarding them as that fine climate of the soul, where the work of the spiritual husbandry may be most effectually advanced—as auspicious gales of Divine influence, to which I should spread every sail, that I may be smoothly wafted onward to Immanuel's land!

#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me,'* John xvii. 17, 20, 21.

WHILE 'the Holy Ghost who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,' is the great agent in regenerating and sanctifying the soul, it is important to remember, that in accomplishing the gracious work he employs the intermediate instrumentality of the word. His method is to take the *things of Christ* as exhibited in the gospel, and show *them* to the soul. He enlightens us, but it is by means of the truth contained in the word. He persuades us, but it is by means of the arguments and motives revealed in the word. He instructs, commands, promises, threatens, importunes, stimulates, and actuates, but only through the moral suasion and native influence of the truth. Accordingly, while our Lord recognises the necessity of divine influence, by praying in behalf of his disciples that the Father would sanctify them, he equally declares the necessity of the intermediate instrumentality, by adding, 'Sanctify them through thy truth—thy word, which is truth.'

Nor is the word—and especially that part of it which by way of distinction is called the truth—the truth respecting the person and work of Christ, unadapted to this important office. On the contrary, it is admirably suited as a moral means to purify the soul and ameliorate the character, being indeed framed and fitted by infinite wisdom for this very end. "All Scripture being given by inspiration of God, is profit-

able for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' Not more nicely adapted is light to the human eye, or melodious sound to the human ear, or atmospheric air to the human lungs, than the word, 'which is truth,' to the nature and constitution of the human mind. Nor, in point of fact, can this divine instrument be brought into direct contact with our souls, by being understood and believed, without leading us to repentance, love, and new obedience; without informing the intellect, renewing the will, quickening the conscience, humanizing the temper, and sanctifying the life. In consequence, indeed, of our natural depravity we are averse to the truth; and so effectually does this unhappy state of the heart bar up the approach to our understandings, that we require the Spirit to anoint our eyes and change our hearts, before we can discern its import and excellence, or experience its moral impression. But still the word contains all the materials of sanctification, all the doctrines which are to be believed, all the precepts which are to be obeyed, all the considerations which are to move and influence us in the work of holiness. And apart from the study of its contents, we may seek all our life long for the aid of the Spirit, without receiving one beam of heavenly light, or one drop of heavenly comfort! Comparing the soul to the wax which is to be impressed, the word is the seal which communicates the impression, and the Spirit the heat which prepares the wax for receiving it; and just as it would be absurd to expect the intended impression to be made on the wax by applying the heat, without also applying the seal whereon the image and superscription are engraved, so it is unwarrantable to expect the Holy Ghost to sanctify the soul, without the study of that divine record which alone contains the materials of edification. The Spirit indeed, like the heat to prepare the wax, must be there; but the word, like the seal to convey the impression, must likewise be there. The one agency is ineffectual without the other; the word is necessary as the means of stamping the divine likeness on the soul; the Spirit as the means of putting the soul in a moral state capable of discerning the glory of the word and of being persuaded by it. And the doctrine, therefore, which every one who desires to be 'one' in character with the Father and the Son, ought habitually to remember and act upon, is, that while the word without the Spirit *cannot*, the Spirit without the word *will not* sanctify!

Let me, then, guard against the error of

expecting sanctification by the direct and immediate agency of the Spirit, without the use of means, and in particular the diligent study of the word. Reliance on the Spirit, and prayer for his help, are indeed indispensable; but reliance is presumption, and prayer a vain oblation, when the word is not hid in the heart, and kept in contact with the soul. The province of the divine Teacher is not to communicate any new revelation, but simply to take of the things of Christ, and reveal *them* to the soul; and it is superstition or enthusiasm to ascribe to his influence any light, or experience, or joy, which is without the warrant of Scripture to support it. The Spirit adds nothing to what is already in the Bible. His influence (let the comparison be made with reverence,) is but the telescope which renders visible the countless lights in the firmament of revelation,—the microscope which discloses to our wondering gaze the unsuspected glories which crowd every portion of scripture. And, as the stars of divine truth are shining on in their glory, and its minor lights and lessons all sparkling in the sacred page—though the unaided eye of the natural man discerneth them not, so the way in which alone I can experience their genial heat and radiance, and through their assimilating influence become one with God and Christ and my fellow-Christians, is not to turn away my gaze from these spiritual heavens, but habitually to observe and contemplate them—adding devout prayer for those enlarged powers of vision which it is the province of the enlightening and quickening Spirit to impart!

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FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'* John xiv. 27.

WHAT Christ here bequeaths is doubtless the peace which he came into the world to obtain for his followers, and which his apostle beautifully describes as 'the peace of God which passeth understanding, and keepeth the heart and mind through Christ Jesus.' It is the inward peace of a forgiven and justified soul—the sensible peace in the heart, which springs from actual peace with God. This peace is the Redeemer's dying blessing to every true disciple; and it is enjoyed by every such person in a measure proportioned to the liveliness and constancy of his faith. While he remains without faith in God's forgiving love,

he can have no true peace; for his conscious guilt must prompt him to regard his judge as his enemy, and to recoil with instinctive dread from his presence—even as the untamed inferior animals flee from the presence of man. But whenever he is brought to look upon God as a reconciled father through Christ, his suspicions are allayed, and his confidence excited. His soul enters into peace. He realizes the Divine love to himself, and he loves God in return. God looks down on him 'with the gracious smile of paternal benignity,' and he looks up to God with the happy confidence of a forgiven child.

This 'peace' Christ was well entitled to bequeath. It was to procure it that he left his heavenly throne; it was to put himself in a position to acquire it, that he stooped down to the humble and sorrowful estate of man; it was to purchase it, that he paid down the immense price of his own most precious blood. It was *his*, therefore, by *conquest*; and consequently *his* to destine and bequeath.

This 'peace' was a legacy worthy of Christ to leave. No bequest could have been bestowed more accordant with the design of his mission—more suited to the exigencies of his followers—more desirable in itself! He *might* have left us riches, for 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;' but what could the wealth of a world have done to heal our troubled hearts? He might have loaded us with honours, for 'both riches and honour come of him:' but what could all earth's heraldry have availed to rescue us from the misery of conscious guilt, or the dread of coming retribution? Blessed be his name! he has left us what is far more precious—even a holy peace of heart, which produces real and abiding happiness; which adds relish to the cup of prosperity, and sweetens the bitter draught of sorrow; which keeps the spirit calm in life, and raises it to a holy confidence in the prospect of the grave. Who that knows any thing either of the wretchedness of being estranged from God, or of the felicity of reconciliation, would desire a better legacy!

'Give what Thou canst, without it I am poor;  
And with it rich, take what Thou wilt away!'

This 'peace' Christ bestowed—not reluctantly or sparingly, or only for a season, as the world bequeaths its gifts; but freely, fully, and for ever. Not with the grudging repugnance of the worldly man who would outlive his heirs if he could, and who relaxes his hold of the property accruing to them, only when he can no longer retain it; not with this cold reluctance did the

Redeemer confer *this* dying blessing on his people. Though it had cost him untold sacrifices to acquire it, yet he had acquired it, only that he might have it to *bestow*; and when therefore he gave it, it was with the cordiality of one who knew that it is more blessed to give than to receive. And what he gave, he gave for ever; for the gifts of Christ 'are without repentance!' The world's gifts concern only the perishable body; but Christ's peace is designed for the undying soul. The world has nothing to confer, which is not alike unsatisfying in its nature, and evanescent in its duration; but the peace of Christ is a well of living water that springeth up into everlasting life.

No wonder it should be said to those who possess such a legacy, 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid!' What, indeed, is there in the world that can reasonably disquiet the man who knows that God is his friend, and heaven his home! Equanimity is confessedly the grand secret of human happiness; and where is equanimity to be found, if not in the breast of him who has the peace of God to keep his heart and mind through Christ Jesus? What are the crosses and cares of the world to him who has cast the burden of all his concerns on the Lord, and feels that they cannot be in better hands? What is death, with all its gloom and ghastliness, to him who has committed his soul to the keeping of Christ, the conqueror of death, and believes that the grave is the road to his heavenly home? The peace—the transient, unstable peace—which the world can alone bestow—the peace which springs from lightness of heart, and briskness of spirits—or from unbroken prosperity—or from carnal security, may well give way at the shock of adversity, or the approach of death. But it is amid these very scenes that the believer's peace may be expected, not merely to shine serene, but to gleam with refulgent lustre. It is when the cloud is darkest, that the bow of *peace* spans it with the most brilliant hues!

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,'  
Rom. v. 1.

It must be obvious to every thoughtful mind, that nothing short of a *perfect* righteousness—an entire and universal conformity to the divine law—can bear the scrutiny of a holy God, or form the ground of acceptance in his sight. Yet if

this be so, what is to become of fallen man, who so far from having a spotless obedience to rely on, cannot point, during a whole lifetime, to so much as one act of unexceptionable obedience? The gospel mercifully solves the difficulty, by revealing a righteousness performed by another in the sinner's room, prepared to his hand, and freely tendered for his acceptance. It acquaints us, that Jesus the eternal Son of God, by taking our flesh and fulfilling in our stead the precepts and the penalties of the law, has brought in an everlasting righteousness. It holds forth this righteousness as the robe of 'fine linen, clean and white,' in which the sinner may attire himself. And it assures us, that such is *its* superlative worth in the eye of heaven—such *its* infinite sufficiency as a plea to justification, that on the ground of it—even though wholly external to himself—the guiltiest child of Adam may look upward to his Judge in heaven, and onward to the judgment day, not only without tormenting dread, but in the full assurance of an honourable acquittal.

But how is the sinner to become personally interested in this vicarious righteousness? The answer is, 'By *faith*.' 'Being justified,' says the apostle, 'by *faith*.' 'Faith' here means not faith or belief abstractedly considered, nor even faith in every thing which God reveals, but faith in the person and righteousness of Christ—faith inclusive of its object. So long as the sinner is without this faith, it is the same to him as if no vicarious righteousness had been provided—he remains in Adam, and consequently under the guilt and condemnation of sin. But the moment he has this faith, he becomes one with Christ; Christ's righteousness is put to his account; and he is held to have suffered for his sins when Christ suffered—to have fulfilled the law when Christ obeyed. Not that faith is necessary as a *meritorious* addition to Christ's righteousness! Far from it! Faith is simply the empty hand that receives Christ's righteousness: and it is wholly exercised in giving credit to truths which expressly exclude all merit and boasting on the part of the sinner. To believe that I am a lost sinner, and wholly incapable of doing anything to purchase acceptance with God—can there be any merit in *this*? To believe that my restoration to the divine favour is due, not in any measure to myself, but wholly to the work done for me by another—can there be any adding to the righteousness of Christ in *this*? To believe that the way to honour God's law both in its command and in its curse, is not to rely on my own doings, but to trust to Christ for righteousness—

can there be anything like dividing with Christ the glory of salvation in *this*? Yet what is the faith which is indispensable to justification—what? but simply the believing of these things?

An immediate result of this faith is '*peace with God*'—actual peace on the part of God towards the sinner, and sensible peace in the sinner's own heart. 'Being justified by faith, we have *peace with God*.' 'Peace with God' in the sense of reconciliation on the part of God, is a self-evident result, or rather accompaniment, of justifying faith. In fact, it is merely another name for justification, considered as the act of God: for faith, according to the constitution of the new covenant, unites the sinner to Christ—attires him in Christ's righteousness—and consequently renders him an object on which God may look—no longer with the anger of an offended Sovereign, but with the complacency of a reconciled Father.

'Peace with God,' in the other and more common sense of peace in the sinner's own conscience, is a less obvious, but equally certain and immediate, result of justifying faith. It is indeed conceivable, that God might be at peace with the sinner, and yet the sinner remain in his original state of painful apprehension and suspense. The sentence of condemnation might be actually expunged, and yet the sinner continue ignorant of the blessed fact. Such a case is conceivable. But happily for us this is not the manner of God! The fact that his Judge has become his Friend, is not kept secret from the sinner who flees to Christ for refuge, or left to be ascertained by him only after his faith has had time to evince its existence by its fruits. The faith by which he lays hold of Christ's righteousness as his plea to the divine favour, brings him in contact with truths which assure him of his Father's forgiveness, and impart immediate confidence and hope to his bosom. In the very act of believing the love of God as manifested in the gift and work of his Son, he cannot but gather up a confident persuasion of the friendship of heaven. Believing, as he does, that his Almighty Judge, so far from being irreconcilable, is full of concern for his well-being—that divine mercy has originated and executed a wise and benevolent plan for his salvation—that God himself has actually come down, and, in the person of the eternal Son, brought in a righteousness which magnifies the divine law, satisfies the divine justice, and is at once sufficient and intended for the free justification of all who repose on it: believing all this—what can the effect on his mind be but to produce peace—immediate peace? Can his tormenting dread

continue after he has admitted these things to be true? 'Can the voice of love and mercy from Calvary fail to hush the tremblings awakened by the thunders of Sinai?'

Nor is even the consciousness of believing essential to his enjoying this peace. This peace flows directly into the soul from the truths believed, and may therefore be experienced in all its tranquilizing sweetness before the sinner has time to make his belief the subject of distinct contemplation. If, indeed, he *is* conscious of believing, his peace will be thereby confirmed; for this will justify him in appropriating to himself the promise, '*He that believeth shall be saved*;' and still more will it be confirmed, when he is privileged to mark the fruits of faith in his heart and life; for these will assure him that his faith is indeed that which stands connected with the gospel promises. But irrespective of, and antecedently to, any such processes of self-reflection and self-examination, he may, and ought, to enjoy peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. The *source* of his peace is not in his conscious faith, or in his conscious holiness, but in the gladdening truths which he believes. And as these truths produce their proper effects on the mind, irrespective of any reflex consciousness of its own operations, so he has only believingly to contemplate *them*, in order to experience the immediate influence of their consolatory import.

'Blessed,' says the psalmist, 'is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity!' 'Blessed!' No wonder! To know and feel that the Almighty God is pacified towards him, and that the infinite attributes of power, and wisdom, and justice, are set for his defence, instead of being arrayed for his destruction—what consolation can bear comparison with this? The assurance of God's friendship is no transient emotion which familiarity may render less gladdening! The light of a heavenly Father's smile sheds a steady and abiding satisfaction on the heart; and the man who is blessed with it carries a treasure in his bosom, which may well make the path of obedience sweet, and cause him to drink either his wine or his water with a merry heart! Do I possess this holy peace? If I do, let me be thankful for the blessing, and strive, by constantly looking to 'the Lord my righteousness,' to retain and increase it. If I do not—but why should I not possess it? Is not the Redeemer's righteousness freely tendered for *my* justification? And will not God be more honoured by accepting me on the ground of that perfect righteousness, than by exacting at my own hands the

punishment of my sins? Surely that which satisfies God, may well satisfy me! Surely that which is sufficient to turn away God's anger, and light up *his* countenance with a smile of reconciliation, ought to impart peace to *my* conscience, and restore confidence in *my* heart!

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SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us,' Rom. v. 5.*

THE hope here spoken of, as appears from verse 2nd, is 'hope of the glory of God.' Of this hope the apostle asserts that it 'maketh not ashamed'—an expression which, though negative in its form, must be held, in conformity with the usage of scripture language, to involve the opposite affirmation, and consequently to mean, that the believer's hope, so far from being a cause of shame to him, is a ground of joy and exultation. Some indeed consider the apostle's meaning to be merely this, that the hope of the Christian will not put him to shame by being eventually disappointed. But this interpretation, though it conveys an important truth, and indicates the superiority of the believer's hope to the fallacious hope of the sinner, seems neither to fall in with the drift of the context, nor to come up to the height of the Christian's privilege. Throughout the passage, the apostle is discoursing, not of the future, but of the present, effects of the graces enumerated by him—faith, patience, experience, and hope. And instead of designing a contrast between the blessed fruition which shall crown the Christian's expectations, and the disappointment in which the hope of the sinner shall issue, his object is to show, that the universal tendency of hope to fill the heart with joy and the mouth with exultation, is experienced by the believer, no less than by those whose hope is directed to other and inferior objects. In short, his assertion that 'hope maketh not ashamed,' is but a reiteration, in another form, of what he more unambiguously teaches in the second verse, when he declares it to be one of our Christian privileges, that we 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'

So much is it the property of hope to exhilarate its possessor, that moral writers have often, and most justly, cited the pleasure connected with it as a striking proof of the Divine benevolence to man. To Hope belongs the happy power of lighting up the present with radiance borrowed from the future. 'It is the wealth of the indi-

gent, the health of the sick, the freedom of the captive. It is our flatterer and comforter in youth; it is our flatterer and comforter in years which need still more to be flattered and comforted.' Nor indeed can misery well be the inmate of any bosom which is warmed by its glow! No man can be truly wretched till he has come to the end of his hopes! But if even earth-born hopes, however unsubstantial and precarious, are fitted, by the law of our nature, to cheer the heart and gild the path of life, how sweet! how enlivening! must be the hope which anticipates and antedates the future inheritance of the saints. What an alleviation amid the sorrows of life, to be able to realize eventual admission to a world where all tears shall be wiped away! What a solace under the burden of conscious sin, to be able to behold in the distance the kingdom which is as 'sinless' as it is 'unsuffering!' Such a hope as this stretches along the whole path of existence, and may well maintain the soul in calm and unbroken serenity, whatever be our outward lot. It brightens the scenes around us, by bringing down upon them the reflected radiance of the fairer scenes beyond! It cheers a gloomy present, by drawing on the expected delights of a glorious future! It makes us forget the ruggedness of the ground we walk upon, by taking off the eye from 'our light afflictions, which are but for a moment,' and fixing them on 'the exceeding and eternal weight of glory!' Nor can this hope ever be dashed by any doubt of the capacity of its object to fulfil our expectations. Celestial blessedness is not one of those things which hope, prone as it is to high-colour its objects, can gild with over-brilliant hues! The glories of heaven are ineffable and inconceivable! 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! He who is privileged to cherish this lively hope, must possess in it 'an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast' to retain him firm and serene amidst all the tempests and troubles of life!

This blessed hope, being based on the promise of God, and produced by faith in the mediation of Christ, may and ought to be cherished by the believer the moment he embraces the gospel. As soon as faith relies on the truth of the Divine promise, hope ought to wait for the enjoyment of it. The believer's title to heaven rests not on any thing in himself, but solely on the finished work of his Saviour; and never, therefore, can he acquire a better title than that with which he is invested on his first reception into the family of God. And in truth, there must be some indis-

tinctness in his views, or some feebleness in his desires, or some wavering or weakness in his faith, if he does not feel himself warranted, from the very first, to 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'

Hope, however, in common with peace, joy, and the other graces which spring up in the believer's heart the moment he embraces the gospel, is capable of increase and confirmation. Though his title to heaven be complete from the first, his perception of it may become clearer. Whatever tends to convince him of the reality of his union with Christ, and his consequent interest in all the blessings of Christ's purchase, must equally tend to give new force and vividness to his hope of glory: and as he grows, therefore, in experience of the fruits of faith, he cannot but gather fresh and ever-increasing evidence of his title to the celestial inheritance. In an especial manner is 'the love of God which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost,' a confirmation of this hope. The knowledge that a living friend has remembered me in his will, may warrant me to indulge the hope of eventually receiving the legacy: but how much must it tend to strengthen this hope, if I am daily receiving fresh proofs of my friend's continued love to me! Such love I cannot but interpret into an assurance that my friend will not revoke the deed he has made in my favour. And can the believer draw a less cheering inference from his experience of the love of God? Nay, the man who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, has more than an evidence of his acceptance: he has the seal of that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the future inheritance—he has the meetness for heaven, no less than the title to it: and it is impossible that he should not abound in the hope which maketh not ashamed! Let it be remembered, however, that the 'good hope through grace' is not produced, but only confirmed, by this and the other fruits of faith. Its sole foundation, from first to last, is the mediation and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, and none but Christ, is the 'beginning' of the believer's confidence—the anchor of the believer's hope! Nor is the fresh glow of expectation which warms his heart as he grows in conscious meetness for the final glory, a new feeling, but simply a reinforcement of that blessed hope which gladdened his downcast spirit when he first discovered the Bible to be

—'true,  
And in that charter read with sparkling eyes,  
His title to a treasure in the skies!'

## SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,'*  
Rom. xv. 13.

A LIVELY hope of the future inheritance is not more fitted to gladden, than to sanctify the soul. Accompanied, as it necessarily is, with both an ardent desire, and a supreme esteem, for its object, it cannot but act as a spur to pious exertion, and lead its possessor to purify himself even as Christ its source, and heaven its object, are pure. It was a Jewish maxim, that the spirit of prophecy rests only upon men of a hopeful temper; and certain it is, that the hope of such a glorious inheritance as Christ has purchased at the cost of his most precious blood, is eminently conducive, if not to the exercise of spiritual gifts, at least to the growth of spiritual graces. The things which we hope for, no less than the things which we believe, exert an assimilating influence on the mind. And it seems scarcely possible, that a man shall be habitually bethinking him of the rest which remains above, and antedating his admission to its holy society, and treading in imagination its pavement of glory, without thereby acquiring an enhancement of heavenly-mindedness, and deriving a fresh incentive to holy obedience. The radiance which was reflected from the face of Moses when he returned from converse with God on the mount that might be touched, may well have its counterpart in the soul of him whom hope leads daily to converse with the spirits of just men made perfect on the mount of the heavenly Zion!

The influence of hope, as a means of comfort and sanctification, of course depends on the force and vivacity of the sentiment; and the believer, therefore, in proportion as he values his holiness and comfort, must be desirous to abound in hope—to have not merely a 'trembling hope,' but the assurance of hope—the full assurance of hope. For such a hope, accordingly, he is encouraged to pray to him who reveals himself under the endearing name of 'the God of Hope'—the hope-giving and hope-sustaining God; and that his prayers and efforts may take a right direction, he is informed that the way to abound in hope is to abound in faith—that the nether-spring of an unfading hope, is a heart filled 'with all joy and peace in believing.'

There may be occasional gleams of hope, where there is no steady faith either in Christ or in that eternal life of which he is the author. There is so much of the dazzling and the beautiful about the object of Christian hope—so much that

appeals to the imagination and the feelings, that sensibility may be kindled at the contemplation, and something like hope of eventual possession indulged. But this pleasurable feeling may be nothing more than the mere romance of the imagination—poetry, and not piety—transient illusion, not abiding reality. A new train of thought may scatter it—a whisper of conscience may annihilate it. But not thus transient and meteoric is the hope which springs from a firm reliance on the finished work of Christ, and the promise of eternal life through him! He who has peace with God through faith in Christ's righteousness, and a confiding reliance on those great and precious promises which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, possesses, as it were, the golden chain 'whereby hope holds to her anchor.' His hope cannot desert him. Its exhilarating power may vary with the varying causes that operate on his moral sentiments; it may not always rise to the glow of ecstasy; it may sometimes become so feeble as scarce to be discernible by his consciousness. But so long as Faith keeps her seat, and is attended by her handmaids, Peace and Joy, Hope must also be present. If there is not sunshine, there will at least be light; if there is not full assurance, there will at least be a 'good hope through grace!'

Dost thou, then, desire to abound in hope? Abound in faith. Look to Jesus. Recall his dying love. Realize the sufficiency of his vicarious righteousness. Rest on the prevalence of his perpetual intercession. Sit at his feet. Listen to his promises. Follow him to his glory. Thus act faith on him; and thy soul shall be filled with peace and joy in believing, and thy heart refreshed with the hope of eternal life! Nor fail to add prayer to faith—prayer, for the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the bestower and sustainer of the peace, and joy, and hope, which Christ has provided. Nor can these graces be abiding inmates of the heart, except through the indwelling and influence of that adorable Agent.

## SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,'* Rom. xiv. 17.

IN religion men are strangely prone to attach undue importance to external rites and modes of administration. Though nothing is more clearly taught in scripture than the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom—though the prophets speak

of it as a kingdom diverse from all others, and Christ himself expressly declares, that instead of being a secular kingdom which cometh with observation, it is a spiritual dominion which 'worketh its silent and unseen way through the world of souls;' yet multitudes in every age follow the ancient Jews in conceiving of it as an external polity rather than a reign of holy principles, and in inferring their interest in its blessings from their observance of certain prescribed forms and ceremonies, rather than from the amelioration of their moral sentiments. Uniformity of outward administration is more prized and sought after, than uniformity of inward experience; and the zeal which ought to be directed towards the conversion of souls, is suffered to expend itself in unbrotherly disputes about forms of government and modes of worship. Not that outward institutions are without their use or obligation. On the contrary, they are, within certain limits, essential to the existence and profession of religion—the 'meat and drink' by which religion is sustained. But to identify them with religion, or account them the chief part of it, is to identify the 'meat and drink' which supports life, with life itself. The reign which Christ came to establish, and lives to advance, is a reign by his Spirit over the unseen movements of the soul. And apart from this, all forms of government, all modes of worship, all systems of discipline, all outward ordinances—are but a mock-Christianity!—the show without the substance!—the casket without the jewel! 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

The '*righteousness*' characteristic of Christ's kingdom, is internal righteousness, or conformity to the will of God, in contradistinction to mere external and ritual observance. Human legislators must be content with outward obedience, since neither their cognizance nor their control reaches farther; but the prerogative of God is seen in commanding the heart and swaying the will. It is the submission of the inner man, that *He* claims as his due! And no one can be said to have the kingdom of God within him—whatever be the conformity of his outer doings—who does not obey the will of God from the heart; who does not take the whole will of God for his rule, and take it too in its largest extent and spirituality; who does not cherish a principle of aversion to all sinful desires as well as unholy deeds, and labour to have every thought and imagination, as well as every word and action, brought into captivity to the law of Christ! Such a righteous-

ness is not a product of the soil of nature. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. And in vain does any one expect to exemplify it, until he has become reconciled to God by faith in the righteousness of Christ, and thereby acquired that grateful confidence in his heavenly Father's love, which is the well-spring of cheerful and unreserved obedience!

'*Peace*,' as a characteristic of Christ's kingdom, stands opposed to the strife and debate which exclusive attention to things external is apt to engender. Like '*righteousness*,' it is the inmate only of a heart which has been purged of its enmity to God and man, by faith in the redeeming love of a reconciled Father; and as righteousness consists in conformity to God, so it displays itself in brotherly sentiments towards men. This '*peace*' is the very opposite of that party-spirit which so widely prevails among Christians, to the scandal of the church, and the extinction of charity. It has no sympathy with that narrow bigotry which excludes from the pale of Christ's kingdom all who decline to conform to a particular form of outward profession, or with that love of disputation and controversial triumph which turns zeal for the truth into an apple of discord. It loves to dwell on the points on which Christians agree more than on those on which they differ. It makes allowances for the weakness of brethren; refuses to impute bad motives; and hails with delight the evidences of real religion, whatever be the sect or party in which they appear. And as it considers Christian unity to consist in oneness of spirit rather than in outward uniformity, and schism to be a breach of brotherly love rather than a departure from established order; so it directs its chief efforts towards the cure of the misunderstandings and heart-burnings that separate Christians, and strives, as its grand object, to bring all under the practical influence of Christ's new commandment. What a beautiful spirit! How suitable in the subjects of a kingdom of which the peaceable and peace-making Jesus is the Head! Would God it were universally cherished and displayed!

'*Joy in the Holy Ghost*' is the holy delight which springs from a persuasion of the indwelling and sanctifying operations of the divine Spirit. The Holy Ghost is the grand privilege of the kingdom—the great promise of the Father—the blessed legacy bequeathed by Christ to his church; and the possession of such a gift cannot but prove a source of joy unspeakable to all who have reason, whether from faith in the divine promise, or from observation of the effects produced on the soul, to conclude that it is theirs. The Spirit

is the 'unction' whereby believers are made kings and priests unto God, and taught to understand and relish the truth as it is in Jesus. The Spirit is the 'seal' of God upon their souls, whereby their Father bears them witness that they are his, and assures them of their interest in his love and favour. The Spirit is 'the earnest of the future inheritance,' being given them as a pledge, that they shall obtain, in due season, all the eternal benefits which Christ has purchased. The Spirit is the 'first-fruits' of the future glory—and an assurance therefore to all who enjoy his communications, of the full harvest of unending blessedness which is 'reserved in heaven.' In fact, in this one privilege of the Spirit, all the blessings of the kingdom are included—all that is necessary to render believers safe and happy—all that is necessary to assure them of the love of God and of eventual felicity with him. And how should it fail to fill them with joy—abiding, exquisite joy? What better proof can we have of the favour of God—what higher dignity can we enjoy—what greater assurance of eternal glory, than that God has given us his Holy Spirit? To know that we have the Spirit, is to taste the grapes of Canaan in the wilderness—to have heaven begun on earth! Compared with the calm and holy satisfaction which this persuasion imparts—a satisfaction which gladdens without agitating the soul—

'Like a summer wave, whose motion  
Heaves, but does not break the ocean;'—

compared with the tranquil and abiding light of this holy joy, the turbulent pleasures of the world are but as the crackling of thorns—a sudden, and soon-extinguished blaze!

#### SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.'*  
Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

*'The God of peace.'* God the Father is entitled to this appellation, both because he is fully pacified by the atonement of Christ, and because he is the author and giver of peace. In approaching Him in prayer for spiritual blessings, it is necessary to recognise the relation in which he stands to us as a reconciled God, for it is only through

a Mediator that we can draw near to His throne; and without a persuasion of His being at peace with us, it is impossible to feel that child-like confidence which is essential to acceptable prayer. The assurance, however, that He is pacified, emboldens us to go and spread out our wants before Him—while the additional assurance that he is the willing bestower of peace and happiness, encourages us to expect a favourable audience and answer.

*'That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.'* The Father showed himself to be the God of peace, by awarding to our surety the honours of a glorious resurrection. No sooner had the Saviour completed his vicarious work by submitting to the agony of an accursed death, and the shame of an unhonoured burial, than an angel was despatched from the court of heaven to unbar the gates of the tomb, and, by setting the mighty captive free, to proclaim to the universe the Divine acceptance of his work. Christ was thus raised again for our justification. And we have, therefore, the blessed privilege of knowing that the God whom we approach has solemnly and publicly declared his full satisfaction with the work which forms our plea, to His favour and help.

*'That great Shepherd of the sheep.'* In the case of Christ, the honours of a resurrection were but preparatory to the higher honour of investiture with all power as the Shepherd and King of his Church. So fully satisfied and well pleased was the Father with what Christ had done on earth for His glory and man's salvation, that He not only brought him again from the dead, but endowed him with power and authority, as 'the great Shepherd,' to give eternal life to the sheep, to carry them in his arms, to gather them to his fold, and so to guide, feed, defend, and preserve them, that none of them should ever perish, or be plucked out of his hand. The willingness of God to bless us, was thus attested by his delegating the power of saving us to one whose interest in our welfare and desire to help us admit of no suspicion. And cold and unconfiding indeed, must be our hearts, if, after such a display of the good-will of Heaven, we can doubt of our Father's readiness to hear our prayers!

*'Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.'* This expression seems designed to qualify not any one of the preceding clauses separately, but the whole of them collectively, and to indicate the ground on which the Father has become reconciled to us, and raised our Shepherd to the right hand of power. 'The blood of the covenant'

is the blood of Christ, by which the covenant is sealed; and the lesson conveyed by these words is this fundamental and all-important one, that to the merit and worth of Christ's sacrifice we are indebted for peace with God, and every other spiritual blessing. We are, therefore, taught to approach God only through the mediation of the Son, and to ask for mercy and grace as benefits which can be ours, only because they have been purchased for us by our surety!

But what is the petition which we have thus so many and such strong encouragements to present to our Father in heaven? It is a petition for sanctification by the Spirit, for the sake of Christ. *'The God of peace . . . make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.'* We are to pray that our reconciled Father would fit us for every good work; that he would accomplish this by giving us the Spirit to work in us both to will and to do; and that He would vouchsafe all for the sake of the Redeemer's merits. What a comprehensive prayer! How cheering to think that the precious benefits which it craves are attainable, when earnestly, patiently, and habitually sought after! Inspiration taught Paul to ask them for his readers: and doubtless it would not have taught him to ask them, had there been any doubt as to their bestowment! Temporal blessings are not promised unconditionally; and it is better that the applicants should not be certain of obtaining them. But fitness for every good work, and the indwelling aid of the Spirit of grace, are blessings which we may seek under the full assurance of finding them. And shall we then, by neglect of fervent believing prayer, consent to forego them? Consent to forego them! Consent, with such treasures within our reach, to remain poor, infinitely poor, in time and through eternity! What terms of severity can be strong enough to describe the folly, ingratitude, impiety, and presumption, which such fatal neglect would imply!

*'To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.'*

It is not certain whether this doxology refers to 'the God of peace,' to whom the prayer is addressed, or to 'Jesus Christ,' who is the nearest antecedent. But the point is of no importance, as such an ascription is equally due to both, and to the Holy Spirit also. The blessed and glorious three are one God in covenant for our salvation; and though the offices which they execute are distinct, yet the part which each performs is so important as well to deserve our adoration. Nor can believers more worthily anticipate the holy services of heaven, than by

habitually ascribing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, equal and endless praise!

For pitying us when all undone,  
My soul! the Almighty Father bless;  
For pardon purchased, bless the Son;  
The Spirit bless, for holiness:  
For full salvation to the lost,  
Bless Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

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EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,'* Prov. iv. 18.

THE life of the just or justified is a *path of 'light.'* Before a man comes to Christ, he walks in darkness, for he is ignorant alike of his own and of the Divine character; and he has no source of comfort beyond what the present world supplies. But when once 'God, who at the first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,' a new and clearer course opens upon him. His own character stands revealed to him in all its sinfulness, and that of his God in all its excellence; Christ is seen and sought as the only refuge; heaven is anticipated as a grand reality; confidence in God takes the place of servile dread; a relish for Divine things supplants the love of the world; the hope of a blessed immortality overcomes the fear of death. In a word, the man walks in light; so that, instead of pursuing the journey of life in utter ignorance of his state before God, and in constant dread of judgment to come, he presses onward with a clear mind and a tranquil heart—following a path which is lighted up by the reflected lustre of those spiritual realities which, though invisible to others, are taken home with intensest sympathy by his believing and regenerated heart.

The life of the justified is also a *path of 'shining light.'* The knowledge and joy which fill the believer's soul, cannot but shine out from his temper and life, so as to attract the attention of his fellow-travellers. His heavenly principles cannot but shed an unearthly beauty on his walk and conversation. The light which encircles him while he is with God on the mount, cannot but beam from his countenance when he comes down into the world. It is true, that worldly men dislike the example that condemns them, and are ever ready to escape from the rebuke which it administers, by questioning the purity of the motives which sustain it. But when piety is

deep-rooted, and consequently consistent, it is sure to live down obloquy. The world reverences in its heart the holiness which it dislikes; and however much a believer may be despised or denounced for his singularity, when he first settles in a neighbourhood, the light of his example is certain eventually to secure for both himself and his principles the respect and admiration of all around him. None will in the end be so firmly trusted—none so frequently consulted—none so reverentially deferred to, as he. And when death removes him from the scene of his usefulness, the worldliest of his neighbours will be found lamenting his loss, and inwardly wishing to be as secure as he was, of entering into glory. The justified man is thus 'the light of the world;' and it therefore becomes him 'not to hide his light under a bushel,' but to let it 'shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in heaven.'

The main point, however, in the walk of the justified, which is set forth in the similitude of the wise king of Israel, is its *progressive lustre*. 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' As to justification, there is no progression; for the man who is once justified, is justified for ever; and, though he may become more and more certain of the fact of his justification, as his evidences of grace increase, he can never acquire a better, a different, or a more complete title to heaven, than he obtains the moment he believes on Christ. But with respect to sanctification or personal conformity to the moral likeness of God, *growth* is a prominent characteristic—even from the dawn of conversion onward to the perfect day of meetness for heaven.

The believer's *knowledge*, for example, is progressive. At first it is as the faint light at day-break; disclosing spiritual objects to his view only in dim and shadowy outline. It is long before he becomes thoroughly acquainted either with the desperate wickedness of his own heart, or with the full glory of the Divine character as seen in the person and cross of Christ. It is only by degrees that he discovers the extent and spirituality of God's law; and learns, from a perception of its exceeding breadth, to look with wonder on its perfect fulfilment by Christ, and with shame on the narrowness of his own attainments. It is only by degrees that he discerns the beauty, preciousness, and claims of Christ in the various offices which he executes as the Teacher, Advocate, King, and Judge of the redeemed, and in the various influences which, as the dispenser of the Spirit, he communicates to

his people. Such comprehensive knowledge, however, he *does* acquire, and the more fully, the longer he sits at the Saviour's feet. The dawn of spiritual discernment gradually advances into the day; and long before he passes to that world where 'he shall know even as also he is known,' he is favoured with an amount of acquirement, which makes him wonder at his earlier and lengthened blindness of heart.

His *faith*, too, is progressive. From his entrance on the path of life, he firmly *believes* as much of the revealed will of God as he understands. But as knowledge is essential to faith, his faith cannot embrace a large circle of Divine truth, so long as his knowledge takes in only a limited one; nor can it rise to the strength of a habitual principle of action, while the objects to which it is directed comprise but a section of the field of revelation. As knowledge, however, increases, faith extends its range; having more objects to fix upon, it is oftener called into exercise; from being only an occasional, it becomes a frequent, and by and bye the habitual attitude of his mind; and thus at length he becomes strong in faith—nay, *walks* by faith. How often is the fact of such a progress evinced, especially at the close of life! You shall behold the believer displaying, in the prospect of dissolution, a confidence in the certainty of unseen and eternal things, as steadfast and realizing as if the veil which separates him from the invisible world had become so thin and transparent, as to enable him to penetrate to the scenes beyond. He sees Christ upon the throne ready to receive him. He beholds the spirits of departed Christian friends waiting to welcome him. He descries the angel of the Lord approaching to deliver him from the chains of sin, and the prison of the flesh. The light shines around him. Another moment! and the angel shall smite him on the side, and bid him go free.

The believer's *love* is equally progressive. Love, in truth, must necessarily keep pace with knowledge and faith. The more I know and believe of my own guilt and helplessness, the livelier must be my gratitude and love to him who remembered me in my low and lost estate. The more I know and believe of the glories of the unfading inheritance which is reserved in heaven, the warmer must be my affection for the benefactor who purchased it at the cost of his own most precious blood. To know God, is necessarily to love him; for 'God is love.' And it is therefore only in the natural order of cause and effect, that with every increase of knowledge in the understanding, there should be a corres-

ponding increase of love in the heart ; even until love to God becomes the supreme and dominant affection, and the desire to be with Him in heaven triumphs over the interests and inclinations which bind to the earth.

Is not *joy* also a progressive sentiment? Sometimes, no doubt, the believer's joy is more vivacious immediately after conversion than at a later stage. As the first outbreak of morning light is peculiarly sweet to the watcher's eye, from its succeeding a season of darkness ; so the joy which the sinner experiences when he first finds rest in Christ, is often characterized by a liveliness not afterwards felt. But joy may gain in depth what it loses in liveliness. The deepest and strongest wave is not that which breaks in sparkling foam ; and the happiness of a confirmed believer may be all the deeper and purer, that it does not flow over in glittering and transient effervescence. Let the young convert's 'joy in believing' be what it may—is it once to be compared with the calm and steadfast assurance of him whose interest in Christ is certified by the mature fruits of the Spirit? What can the inexperienced Christian know of the 'rejoicing' which flows from the testimony of a good conscience? or of the delight which results from conscious and growing likeness to Christ? or of the joy—'joy in the Holy Ghost'—which arises from a persuasion of the indwelling of the Spirit of God? Such exquisite joys as these are reserved for an advanced stage of sanctification ; and are, therefore, decisive of the progressive sweetness of the believer's joy.

Equally progressive is the Christian's path in *humility*, in *hope*, in *tenderness of conscience* ; in short, in all the separate rays which, by their combined and blended loveliness, form his 'shining light.' His progress, indeed, is not always invariable or uninterrupted. He is not exempt from periods of stationariness, and even of declension. Faith sometimes wavers ; love sometimes waxes cold ; hope sometimes becomes obscured ; and joy, in particular, being dependent more than any other grace on constitutional temperament, is liable to frequent ebbs and flows. His path lies sometimes high up on the mount, and sometimes low down in the valley. And, as there are Christians, on the one hand, whose joy is lively at the outset of their course, and comparatively languid during their remaining journey ; so there are also Christians, on the other hand, whose path resembles that of the sun in a cloudy day, which, after struggling in vain at morning and at noon to pierce the murky sky, suddenly breaks forth with cheering radiance at eventide, to make

the hour of his setting an hour of glorious beauty. Progress *upon the whole*, however, is the law of the Christian life. Retrogression is the exception, not the rule. Nor did the wise king misread the experience of the saints, when he ventured to give a place among his Proverbs, or maxims of general truth, to the beautiful and consolatory saying, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

#### EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,'* Isa. lx. 1.

THIS is the salutation of the prophet to the church, in the prospect of the advent of Christ, 'the light of the world,' and 'the glory of Israel.' Nor are the terms in which it is couched, too glowing to express the great and happy change which the coming of the Saviour effected on the intellectual and moral condition of the human family.

Reflect, for instance, on the light which Christ shed on the character and government of God! The world had long lost all just conceptions of the Divine nature and attributes. While the mass of mankind had 'changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things ;' even the enlightened few had no higher idea of Him than a material Being confined to some local temple, or a pure abstraction without the power or the will to attend to earthly concerns. What a new and benignant light, then, must Christ have thrown into men's minds, when he revealed the sublime doctrine, that God is a Spirit pervading all space with his presence—that he is continually in active communication with every part of creation—and that, so far from being regardless of this world and its inhabitants, he exercises a providence which extends as well to the humble lily and the tiny insect as to the starry sphere and the heavenly seraph! Yet this was but the rudiments of what Christ taught respecting Deity. He showed men the care and condescension of God in providence, only as a prelude to the display of his mercy in redemption ; he pointed to the works of his bountiful hand, only that he might encourage them to trust in the love of his paternal heart. He drew aside the veil of the unseen world, and exhibited the Father of mercies thinking of the well-being of his children—planning a scheme to deliver them from their sin and

misery—surrendering his only begotten Son to humiliation and death as a satisfaction for their sins—and setting in order a series of dispensations for the purpose of recalling them to happiness. And what the Saviour thus revealed in his gospel he manifested still more affectingly in his person and beneficent acts. Christ was himself the image and reflection of the Divine nature, softened, subdued, and contracted, to meet the conception and sympathies of men.

Or, reflect on the light which Christ shed on the condition and destiny of man! A world which knew not God could know little either of the way of acceptance with him, or of the future destiny of his rational creatures. If a sense of sin was awakened, it could only fill the soul with terror; if the idea of a future life arose, it could only serve to throw a black shadow over present enjoyment. But, in truth, men had ceased to listen to conscience, or to anticipate retribution. The wisest shrunk from contemplating their moral relation to their Maker; and as for an after life, they deemed it merely a theme for scholastic speculation, or poetic invention. 'Heathen philosophy halted at the grave; and even ancient revelation, though it accompanied its disciples a little beyond, and told them of Sheol and of Hades, deserted them in the middle of their darksome journey.' But where former wisdom had only made darkness visible, Christ shed full and resplendent light. *He* explained how man may be reconciled to his Maker; and rolled away the stone from the sepulchre of human hope. He empowered faith to look upward to a God reconciled to all who believe in his Son; and encouraged hope to look onward beyond the valley of death to a region of perfect and unending blessedness. Appearing as the Saviour from sin and the conqueror of death, and endowed with power to give eternal life to as many as received him, he assured his followers of forgiveness, adoption, and holiness here, and of public acquittal and everlasting glory hereafter. How truly was such a Redeemer the light of the world! How befittingly might the church in the prospect of his advent, be exhorted to 'arise and shine' in the light of her Lord!

But Christ is still the light of the church and of the world, as truly as when 'the people that sat in darkness saw a great light:' and the prophet's salutation may still be addressed to the Christian community, and to the world at large, whenever the former receives an enhancement of spirituality, or the latter is turned from the pursuit of lying vanities to the service of God. As oft as a revival occurs in the church—as oft as

the missionary standard is planted on a heathen shore—as oft as the kingdom of heaven makes an advance in the earth, the apostrophe may be re-echoed, 'Arise, shine!' for in every such instance Christ, the only light, has arisen upon benighted souls! Nor are the words less applicable to individual Christians, than to communities. What scatters the darkness of the sinner's heart, when he first receives with joy the gospel-message, but the coming of Christ to him? What recalls the backslider from his worldliness, but a fresh view of Christ? What sheds sensible comfort into the soul of him who has experienced a season of spiritual despondency, but a returning perception of the glory of Christ? Whatever be the season of the believer's spiritual prosperity and joy—whether it be amid sorrows which he is enabled patiently and thankfully to endure; or at death, when his hope of glory is unwavering; or at his admission to heaven, when his joy shall be full—the single and sole strength of his happiness is Christ: nor can he be addressed, in each of these instances in more appropriate terms than these, 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!'

O let me make sure that this day-spring from on high has risen on my heart! It is not enough to have an intellectual apprehension of what Christ is, and has taught. Even the eye of a corpse is capable, so long as its transparency continues, of receiving on the retina the picture of external objects; and so the understanding may take in the whole circle of Christian doctrine, while the soul remains in spiritual death! Nothing short of a *believing* view of Christ as a Saviour, can turn the darkness of nature into the light of peace, and joy, and hope. But O this *can!* A believing view of Christ is a view of God reconciled—of sin forgiven—of acceptance secured—of heaven purchased: and how can the soul that is refreshed with sights like these, continue to wear its prison-garments, or to work in chains! No abiding light, or comfort, or purity, can dwell in the heart till Christ has entered it: but when once He becomes the object of its habitual contemplation and love, perpetual sunshine may settle on it! In a picture of Christ in the midst of his disciples, by one of the ancient masters, the artist has worked out the happy idea of making Christ the central object from which the light streams upon the other figures—so that the group of disciples are in light, only in the degree in which they are near to him, or turned towards him: all that is turned away from Him is in deep shadow. This is a pictorial illustration of the relation in which Christ stands to his people in al.

ages. It is only in the measure in which they look on *Him*, and to *Him*, that their peace, and joy, and holiness abound. Their light, their only light, is light *in the Lord!*

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NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'*Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,*' 1 Pet. i. 5.

SUPERNATURAL aid is not more necessary to enable the sinner to make good his entrance on the path of life, than to preserve him from deviating from it afterwards. Accordingly the believer has the promise of the Spirit to abide with him for ever; and he is encouraged from first to last to rely on divine strength as his sufficiency. In keeping us, however, the Holy Spirit does not supersede the exercise of our own rational powers, or influence these by direct and immediate suggestion. He employs gospel-truths as the means of moving and actuating us. He takes of the things of Christ and shows *them* to our souls. And, in order to render the motives of the gospel influential and operative, he works *faith* in in us—faith being the instrument by which, according to the constitution of our nature, truth is borne home to the mind, and turned into a principle of action. The Spirit thus preserves us in the path of holy obedience by enabling us to exercise faith in the truth as it is in Jesus; or, in other words, we 'are kept by the power of God *through faith* unto salvation.'

The efficacy of faith as an instrument of sanctification, depends not so much upon the mental act itself, as upon its object. Faith moves the will and affections, only when its object is of a nature to actuate them. The belief of a piece of intelligence which possesses no native interest or importance, cannot excite any emotion, or touch any spring of action. But if the intelligence be of vital interest or felt importance, it is sure, according to the law of our nature, to awaken, the moment it is believed, sentiments answerable to its own character—to gladden us, if it be joyful tidings—to alarm us, if it be of frightful import—to kindle gratitude and love, if it speak of disinterested kindness. It is on this principle, that faith in the gospel is necessarily an effective engine of sanctification; for it brings truths to bear upon us which are of a heart-melting and sin-subduing character—truths which possess in their own nature a vast importance, an overwhelming interest; a prodigious moral influence. The paternal care of an Al-

mighty and ever-present God—the disinterested love of a Saviour who once died for us, and ever lives to plead for and sympathize with us—the present and omnipotent help of the Holy Spirit of grace—a hell of unutterable woe prepared for the impenitent—a heaven of unending blessedness secured to the faithful—what truths are momentous, if these are not? what discoveries are fitted to stir the soul through all its depths, and to stimulate to a holy course of life, if these are not? These things may be intellectually apprehended without exciting a deeper feeling than admiration; but to realize them as undoubted facts, and yet not to be solemnized and sanctified by them, may be pronounced impossible. Can love to God fail to spring up in the bosom of him who is firmly persuaded of the divine love to his soul? Can sin fail to be hated and shunned by him who is habitually favoured with a believing view of Jesus dying for his sins on the cross? How should the lies of Satan find credence with the man who believes the truth as it is in Jesus? How should the baits and allurements of a wicked world prevail over the heart that is habitually gladdened with the smile of a reconciled God, and the hope of an unfading heaven? Temptation ceases to be tempting to the man of faith. He lives in communion with a world of purity. He breathes a different moral atmosphere from other men. He dwells apart on the holy and radiant summit of the mount of God, beyond the reach and influence of those motives and objects which chain down his fellows to the dust of the earth. Like Elisha's servant when endowed with powers of supernatural vision, he sees the mountains around him covered with horses and chariots of fire—he sees God's power, and Christ's love, arrayed on the side of his salvation: and how should he refuse to throw himself afresh into the battle of the Lord? Let his faith flag or fail, and Satan may gain the advantage over him; the unseen world being withdrawn from his view, this world of sense and sin may resume the occupancy of his affections. But so long as faith keeps God, and Christ, and heaven, within the circle of things by which he perceives himself to be surrounded, his triumph over the devil, the world, and flesh, is certain! 'All things are possible to him that believeth.'

Why is it, O self-righteous man! that with all thy laborious efforts to attain such a measure of moral excellence as will secure the divine favour, thou art ever falling short of thy hopes, and never able to acquire that confidence in God's love, and that delight in his law, which thou professest to

seek after? Know that it is because thou hast not faith! One believing, heart-melting look at Christ in his matchless love and inexhaustible fulness, would do more to dispel thy hard thoughts of God, and to win thee to cheerful obedience, than a thousand years of such legal and calculating service, as thou art fruitlessly attempting!

Why is it, weak and wavering Christian! that thou art so inconsistent in thy practice, and so clouded in thy prospects—so often without sensible comfort, and so often an opprobrium to the Redeemer's gospel? Know that it is because thou art not habitually exercising faith! Holy affections and purposes can be kindled and kept in flame, only by direct exercises of faith; and thou art chargeable with daring presumption, if thou expectest that the power of God will keep thee unto salvation, otherwise than by bringing it to pass that thy 'faith fail not.'

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NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth,'* Psal. xvi. 8, 9.

NOTHING connected with our Lord's sufferings is more remarkable than his immovable firmness and cheerfulness, both in the prospect, and under the pressure of them. His whole deportment, while on earth, was a living comment on the words which the psalmist here ascribes to him, 'I shall not be moved; my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoiceth.' He foresaw from the first all that he was to suffer, whether from men, from devils, or from his heavenly Father; and yet instead of recoiling from his task, or undertaking it with reluctance, he entered upon it with the most resolute courage and alacrity. He appeared not merely determined, but desirous to suffer. The prospect filled him with exultation, rather than alarm. And his resolution, so far from being shaken when the dark tempest closed around him, only rose into mightier strength with each successive onset of the pitiless storm. 'He steadfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem,' though he knew that there he should encounter ignominy and death. He sternly rebuked his disciples for attempting to dissuade from his purpose. He commanded Judas to execute 'quickly' his traitorous design. He entered of his own accord the garden where he knew that unutterable agony awaited him. He allowed his enemies to drag him to judgment, and to tear his flesh with the cruel

scourge, and to nail him to the bitter cross, and to turn his griefs into mockery, 'though with one frown he could have sunk them all in the gulf of perdition.' And even when he hung on the accursed tree—the victim alike of divine and human wrath, so calm and unwavering was his undaunted spirit, that he grieved more for his murderers than for himself, and expostulated with the women standing around, because instead of weeping for themselves and their children, they wept and wailed for him!

How consolatory to reflect, that the Redeemer bore the penalty of our sins with such resolute zeal and cordial willingness! Ought this not to enhance our admiration of the holy Sufferer—to enliven our gratitude for his mercy—to strengthen our confidence in his readiness to save us? Ought it not also to form the subject of our imitation? 'Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.' Nor can we better evince our admiration of the constancy and cheerfulness with which he suffered for us, than by bearing our own cross in a similar temper—possessing our souls in patience under the various trials of life, and not only 'taking patiently,' but 'rejoicing in tribulation.'

But the temper in which Christ suffered is not more deserving of our imitation, than the motives which enabled him to display this lovely temper. *Why* was it that none of these things moved him, and that his heart was glad, and his tongue rejoiced? He himself tells us, 'I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' He kept in view the glory of God as his grand end; and he confided in the arm of God as his stay and defence. The maintenance of the divine justice and the manifestation of the divine love, were, in his estimation, objects which would be cheaply secured at any cost of suffering; and to these objects, therefore, he cheerfully postponed all regard to his own personal comfort. The assurance of Almighty protection was to him a sufficient reason for dismissing all anxiety as to the triumphant issue of his undertaking; and with this as his reliance, he threw himself unhesitatingly into the arduous course marked out for him. It was thus a supreme regard to the glory, and a confident trust in the help of God, that nerved the Redeemer for his task and sustained him in the execution of it. Let the same holy motives support and animate us! Our trials, indeed, cannot advance the honour of God in the same degree as the sufferings of him who could say, in a sense altogether peculiar and unparalleled, 'I have glorified thee on the earth.' Yet

our trials are not less the appointment of God than his; nor are they less designed to promote in their own degree, the honour of their Author. And nothing can be more certain than that *this* will be their blessed issue—provided we habitually recognize the gracious end for which they are sent, and look up for the promised grace to enable us to sustain and sanctify them. The proportion in which we subordinate our own wills to the will and glory of God, may be confidently taken as the measure of the divine support and approbation we shall receive. Nor can we run any risk of being ever ‘moved,’ whatever be the number and severity of our distresses, so long as we ‘set the Lord always before’ us.

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 TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

‘For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven,’ 2 Cor. v. 1, 2.

By the ‘earthly house of this tabernacle,’ in which the believer ‘groans, being burdened,’ the apostle means the animal structure in which the soul at present resides; and by the ‘house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,’ the glorified body with which it is to be attired at the resurrection of the just. The allusion seems to be to the ancient Jewish tabernacle, in which the ark of the covenant was lodged. When the Israelites in the wilderness were called to break up their encampment and proceed on their journey, the tabernacle had to be taken down, and the ark to be carried by itself. So, the apostle informs us, when the period of our earthly sojourn is ended, the tabernacle of the body must be ‘dissolved,’ and the separated soul sent forth on its eternal journey. When, again, the Israelites arrived at a place of rest, the tabernacle was re-erected, and the ark restored to its original position within it. In like manner, adds the apostle, a time is awaiting the Christian pilgrim, when, having reached the heavenly rest, his body shall be reared anew—‘an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’

That the believer should feel his present earthly tabernacle to be a burden, and earnestly desire to be ‘clothed upon with his house which is from heaven,’ cannot occasion surprise. For, though the human body is admirably adapted upon the whole to be the organ and instrument of the con-

scious spirit which inhabits it, it is yet, in common with the soul, a partaker in the disastrous effects of the fall, and consequently encompassed with infirmities which necessarily render it a clog and incumbrance to every spiritual man.

Is not the body a burden, from its constant liability to pain and disease? How harassing are pain and languor to the mind! and that not only from their tendency to disturb its tranquil and salutary processes of thought, but from their operating as a drag upon pious affections and enterprises of usefulness! To long to throw one’s self into the zealous and animated discharge of duty, and yet to be precluded from it by bodily infirmity!—to be equipped, as it were, with pinions ready for soaring flights of Christian usefulness, and yet to be constrained to dash them hopelessly against the cage of a frail and enervated tenement of clay!—what believer can feel this to be other than a galling thralldom?

Is not the body a burden, from the restraint which it puts on the powers and aspirations of the soul? Our present bodily organs are wholly inadequate to give full play to the inherent energies of the soul. Such instruments as the telescope and microscope by which objects, too remote or too minute to be discerned by the unassisted eye, are made visible, afford decisive proof that the soul has powers of perception far greater than its bodily senses permit it to exercise. And what is true regarding the faculty of external perception, equally holds of our powers of spiritual discernment. What regenerate man is not conscious of longings after a knowledge of divine and eternal things, to which his present *restrained* powers are incompetent? The glimpses of the divine love and holiness which sometimes break in upon his mind, pass like the lightning’s flash; he cannot detain them; and though his soul follows hard after them, and would even go out of the body to regale itself with their beauty, he is ever dragged down to the dust by the clog of his bodily organization. He feels himself—to borrow an apt similitude—like a strong man fettered and hand-cuffed, who must content himself with meditating what he will do when set at large.

Does not the body, moreover, possess various separate interests of its own, which clash and interfere with those of the soul? How many of our appetites have an exclusive reference to the welfare of the body! and how prone are our purely animal propensities, from their clamant and peremptory nature, to usurp and engross those thoughts and desires which ought to be employed by the soul in attending to its own paramount

concerns! Let a man become religious at whatever season of life, he is sure to find his heart pre-occupied by a host of corporeal appetites, which he can only buffet and starve into a surrender. He cannot pray, without having his holiest breathings disturbed and polluted by the demands of carnal desire and bodily appetite. He cannot converse with his conscience, without having the small still voice drowned amidst the loud clamours of the flesh. And aided, as these ceaseless efforts of the mere animal part of his nature unhappily are, by the treacherous and earthward tendency of the fallen soul itself, how can he fail to cry out with the apostle, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

Then the body imparts increased sensibility to the domestic and social affections. Our Lord assures us, that 'in the resurrection there shall be no marrying, neither giving in marriage;' an announcement which plainly implies that the affections which cement the marriage union and other domestic and social relations, are, at least in part, purely animal instincts which are not to survive our present bodily organization. The bitter griefs, therefore, which such affections cause us when they are lacerated by the loss of friends, must be due, in some measure, to the connection of the soul with a corporeal frame; and must fall to be added to the physical 'burden' under which the believer has here to 'groan.' Nor are such griefs a small enhancement of the 'burden.' The sorrow of an unconverted man for the death of a beloved relative, is often a slight and medicable wound compared with that of a Christian. The former, caring little about the eternal destiny of his departed friend, has nothing more than his own personal or family loss to sadden him. But the latter has often the added grief of fearful misgivings as to the everlasting state of the soul that has gone to its place. *This* to the believer is the point on which his sensibility is acutest. Nor indeed can he have a heavier burden, than a heart lacerated by doubts and apprehensions in regard to the salvation of one who was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.

The child of God is thus encumbered with an 'earthly tabernacle,' which is in many ways a 'burden' to him; and being so, what wonder that he should look onward with wistful eye to the time when his spirit shall be set at large, and enshrined in a new and glorious habitation? The hope of enlargement were itself enough to excite earnest longings for the dissolution of this material frame. But it is his privilege to anticipate

not merely deliverance from the drag of a vile body, but investiture with a glorified one. Hope leads him onward to the resurrection, and shows him a house prepared for the eternal residence of his soul, which is as much adapted to develop, as his present crumbling tabernacle is to restrain and cripple his faculties! Once invested in this raiment of paradise, he shall never more know what it is to sorrow, or to suffer, or to die; to labour after what he cannot attain, or undertake what he cannot achieve. The will to do good shall not prove fruitless for want of the power; nor the purpose of holiness remain unexecuted from lack of adequate organs to give effect to it. What a blessed hope! Who would not cherish it? Who would not consent to go out of the body, and leave all the passing attractions of this earthly scene, in order to realize it? Death indeed lies between us and our rest—death! from which nature shrinks with instinctive recoil. But ought we not to forget and overleap the fear of death, in the anticipation of the blessedness which thus stretches away on the farther side of it? Death though a painful way, is still *the* way to heaven; and what though the valley be dark, when its termination opens upon Emmanuel's broad and pleasant land!

#### TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'My flesh also shall rest in hope: for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,'* Psal. xvi. 9, 10.

ST PETER, in his sermon on the day of pentecost, offers the following commentary on these words: 'Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.' The language of the psalmist is thus the language of Christ himself, in the prospect of that resurrection and glorification which were to follow his sufferings and death. As the curse to which Christ submitted as his people's substitute, included the infliction of the mortal stroke which consigns the body to the grave and the soul to a separate state of existence, so it was indispensable, in order to the

completion of his vicarious work, that his body should die, and his soul go forth into the invisible world deprived of those material organs which are essential to its perfect activity and well-being. But this subjection to the power of death was to be but temporary. It was the only remaining effect of the curse which had to be endured, and consequently the immediate precursor of his release and reward. The curse being fully exhausted, it was impossible that he could be holden of the bonds of death. Divine justice had *then* no alternative but to loosen these bonds—to re-unite his soul and body—and by awarding him the public honours of a resurrection, to acknowledge and proclaim the perfection of his sacrifice, and the glory of his character as a Saviour. All this, accordingly, Christ foresaw. And so gladdening was the prospect to his suffering spirit, that for the joy thus set before him he cheerfully endured the cross, despising the shame, and exultingly exclaimed, even in the hour of his bitter agony, 'Therefore my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoiceth.'

This hope of a joyful resurrection which cheered the Redeemer in the prospect of death, may be warrantably entertained by all his followers. For, by raising the Head from the grave, God has given a decisive pledge that he will also raise the members. Not only is the believer's soul united to Christ, and treated by God as a part of Christ, but his body participates equally in the mystical union. His very dust is dear to God on Christ's account. Nor in truth can Christ himself be said to be fully risen from the dead, until the body of every one of his people is clothed in the glory of the resurrection. Believers, indeed, are not authorised to calculate on as brief a detention under the dominion of mortality as their Master. *Their* flesh must see corruption, and *their* souls remain—it may be for long ages—dissevered from their material vehicles. Yet eventual resurrection in an embodied state is secured to them. And it is not less their privilege, than it was his, to rise superior to the fear of the last enemy, through 'the sure and certain hope' of a blessed resurrection.

Not that the happiness of believers is all deferred till the resurrection of the just. No! Death introduces their souls immediately into glory. The intermediate state, though in itself a fruit of the curse, has been turned into a blessing by Christ's passage through it; and in it therefore their souls may enjoy, in the presence of their Lord, a prelibation of the felicity reserved for them at the redemption of the body. Still their happiness is not consum-

mated till the resurrection; the effects of the curse are not finally removed till the resurrection; the end of the Redeemer's mediation is not completely attained till the resurrection: nor can their hope therefore be turned into full fruition, so long as that glorious event is only in the distance. Indeed, the state of departed spirits, blissful as it is, cannot properly be an object of lively hope. We can form no definite idea of the happiness of a spirit abstracted entirely from matter; and the gospel would have done little to endear the prospect of another world, had it merely told us that our souls were to exist in a state of widowhood from their material organs. In the idea of a resurrection, however, there is every thing to kindle hope and excite desire. The felicity of an embodied soul in a material heaven, falls in some degree within the range of our conceptions and sympathies. And in proportion as we feel the burden of a polluted soul, and the clog of a vile body, we cannot but long for the arrival of the time when the perfected spirit shall be united to a glorious and incorruptible body.

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#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him,' 1 Thes. iv. 14.*

FAITH in Christ Jesus—a full belief of his divine nature and dying love—forbids every doubt of the fulfilment of his gracious purposes towards those who have trusted in his name. Has he indeed expiated sin by his death on the cross in our stead, and risen from the grave in our nature? and shall he fail in any respect, in carrying out the glorious purpose, for which he came into the world and became obedient unto death; 'even to bring many sons unto glory?' Shall he return without them, as if foiled in his plan, or failing in his love? If we believe either in his purpose or his power to save, we can never admit any such unworthy apprehensions into our minds. 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.' He shall bring with him a multitude, which no man can number. His glory is essentially concerned in the result. They that believe in him shall be raised by his might, through his merits, and in his likeness. 'Because he lives, they shall live also,' as to their immortal souls; and as he rose from the sepulchre, they shall rise also as to their mortal bodies. His resurrection is at once the proof, the pledge, and the pattern of theirs. 'He

hath abolished death; and no part of their nature shall be left under its power. 'Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept.' 'Christ the first-fruits, and afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming.' The general harvest shall correspond to that which was first gathered. They that are his shall be like him—conformed to his image in all parts of that nature which he hath assumed—ransomed, renewed, raised up and exalted to heavenly places. They shall be changed as spirits 'into the same image, as by the Spirit of the Lord;' and their 'vile bodies shall be fashioned like unto his own glorious body.' Nor does this follow merely as a truth—'a part of the truth as it is in Jesus,' which we receive and rest upon by our faith in him: it follows also, as a consequence of that faith in him by which they live. Believers, by their faith, become one with him in whom they believe; and are united with him as the vine with its root, as the members with the head. As his mystical body, they are animated by his life-giving Spirit; they are 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh;' and this connection nothing can destroy, not even the stroke of death. Their bodies shall be raised up as his was; rendered spiritual and incorruptible as his own now is; fitted for the occupations and enjoyments of his heavenly mansions; brought together with him to be where he is, and to see him as he is.

This resurrection of the body, of the same body, though dissolved into its elements, and dispersed in the dust, is indeed a great mystery, and is declared to us as a mystery. The manner of it is not revealed, and is not an object of our faith. It is the fact only that is made known, and with which we are concerned. Our belief of this fact is at once resolvable into our belief of the power of God. It is not an incredible thing, that God should raise the dead; that he can give, as he hath said that he will give, to every one his own body as easily as he gave to that body its first existence. 'God hath both raised up the Lord, and will raise up us also by his power.'

As believing, then, that Jesus died and rose again, so may we be assured that those 'who sleep in Jesus God will bring with him,' in their bodies as well as in their souls. As he brought back their Lord and Head, so will he bring with him all that are his, as in fact a part of himself; as not only his purchased property, but as his own proper body, from which he shall never more be disjoined. The great Redeemer came into the world to destroy all the works of the devil, to do away with all the consequences of sin, to

repair all the ruins of the fall. 'By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' All mankind, by the Lord's interposition, being placed under a dispensation of mercy, shall be raised from the grave and brought forth for judgment; but to those only who are one with him by faith, can this resurrection be spoken of as indeed a blessing. Of all such he is more especially the representative and the forerunner; and they shall all go 'whither the forerunner is for them entered,' and in the same nature with which he entered. As, in consequence of their relation to Adam, they received the taint of mortality in their bodily frames, and so became subject to death; so, in consequence of their relation to Christ, shall they receive the power of an endless life, and be raised up in their mortal frames in the image of God, in which they were at first created; yea, even in more than its original brightness. 'The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwelling in them now as his temples, shall also quicken their mortal bodies, and bring them forth as temples restored from their ruins, and rendered meet for his service in heavenly places.

Waiting for this redemption of their bodies, and their full manifestation as the sons of God, they rest in peace as on their beds, as in a sleep. Immediately after their departure from the body their souls have passed into glory; 'but their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves,' as in a quiet chamber which he hath consecrated for their use, by making it for a season his own resting place in their nature. Their bodies, therefore, are not to be viewed as cast forth, as done with and thrown away, as a mere mass of corruption; but, having been once the habitation of his Spirit, they are still embalmed by a preserving principle, which shall cause them to spring up from the dust of the earth more glorious than ever. Thus, like seed sown in the ground, they, properly speaking, do not die, but rather pass through a quickening process, and are prepared to spring up again under the life-breathing power of an eternal spring.

There is then nothing to distress the feelings, in thinking of those who have died in the Lord, or in waiting the dissolution which awaits our own mortal bodies. They are then laid in the silent grave, as on a bed of repose, about to take a sleep for a season. They are sensible of no lapse of time, no weariness, no inconvenience or injury whatever; but pass, as it were, a short night in safe seclusion and peaceful slumber, till called forth by the morning of the resurrection, refreshed, renewed,

refined, and reunited to their immortal spirits, in blessedness unspeakable and unalloyed through eternal ages. Then shall be fulfilled the saying, 'death is swallowed up in victory;' and then shall be heard the unceasing song of praise, 'thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

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 TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise,'*  
 Luke xxiii. 43.

IN these few words, spoken in such circumstances, how bright a display is presented to us of the glory and grace of the Redeemer; of the glory of his power to save to the uttermost, and the riches of his grace to all who come unto God by him. At such a moment, when he appeared most destitute of all power to save himself, and was taunted on that account by one of the abjects of the earth; when nailed to the ignominious cross, and sinking under the rage of his enemies; deserted by every earthly friend, and accounted of men to be forsaken also and stricken of God; yielding up his life, and ceasing from all farther contest, as one utterly discomfited and overcome by a strength superior to his own; even at such a moment does he speak of possessing a kingdom and bestowing a place in paradise. Then indeed it was that his right hand got him the victory, and gained kingdoms for his disposal, even in his fall, dealing the mortal blow to the adversary, and saying of his mighty work, 'It is finished.' Then it was that he 'spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them, even on the cross.' In the assurance of this triumph from that very cross, and while yielding up the ghost, did he utter these memorable words, 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' Truly, the weakness of God is stronger than men. 'Though the Lord, as man, was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God, and liveth as God for evermore, to 'bestow eternal life on as many as God hath given him.'

But here we behold, more especially, the riches of his grace, in that, as soon as he receives the power to save, he forthwith proceeds to exercise it, and freely to bestow his crowns of life. Not only may we say, in regard to the merits of his death, and the power of his resurrection, 'That all who sleep in Jesus God will bring with him;' but, in the assurance of his being not only mighty

but willing to save, we may confidently say in his name to them that are dead in sin, yea, to the vilest of them all, that they may inherit, as their portion, all the glories of his kingdom. 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

Such especially is the language of the event here related, of the words here recorded, 'I say unto thee, 'thou shalt be with me in paradise.' Unto whom was this gracious promise made, and made so freely and so fully, without any reserve or restriction, and with so much readiness and compassion? To the thief on the cross—to a poor condemned, deserted, and dying malefactor, in the last hour of his existence, in the lowest extremity of wretchedness. Here we behold a suppliant at the throne of grace, who had no worthiness to recommend him as any grounds of his acceptance, who had wrought only evil in his place, who had nothing to say for himself before his judge, and who could only pray to be remembered in mercy. Here we read of the gracious declaration of the mercy which he sought, granted without any delay, without any condition, without any abatement; granted to the fullest extent, and beyond what he presumed to seek. Not only was he remembered in mercy, not merely released from punishment, not merely encouraged to hope for some favour, not merely raised to a portion of enjoyment, but received at once to the blessedness of heaven, and to the presence of his Lord: 'To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.' We have read in the clearest language, or rather we witness in actual exemplification, the most gracious truth, the most consoling assurance to a fallen and sinful world, the inexhaustible compassion of the divine Redeemer, even to the most evil and unworthy of mankind, whenever they cast themselves on his mercy, and commit their spirits to his hand.

Let no one ever despair of that mercy, either in his own case, or in the case of others, however long they have delayed, however heinously they have sinned. In the salvation of sinners nothing is impossible for divine mercy to grant, for divine mercy to accomplish. At no time is repentance too late, or the prayer of faith unavailing. Every thing in this case, and in the whole strain of the blessed gospel, conspires to prove the consoling truth to men, that when God pleases, he can enlighten the darkest minds, and soften the hardest heart, and humble the proudest spirit, and cleanse the most polluted soul; and thus plant

holy fear, repentance, faith, love, and every heavenly affection in that breast, which before was occupied by the vilest abominations.' To this miracle of mercy then we must look, in our concern for the most hardened, that we may clearly see the power of God's grace, and the proof of its unseen working for the conversion of lost souls. To this miracle of mercy we must point the eye of those who have grown old in sin, and delayed repentance to the last hour; and remind them always that the same Saviour is still ready to pray for them, and the same Spirit still able to pacify them; 'that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.' 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Neither, however, let any one madly pervert this singular instance of heavenly grace, by deliberately delaying to turn unto God, in the hope of experiencing a similar act of his sovereign mercy. There is *one* such case recorded in his word, that no soul may despair of his mercy, when brought at last to seek it in sincerity and in faith; but *only one* such case recorded, that no soul may presume upon his mercy, while now refusing to seek it, or rather rejecting its gracious offer in his word. Not that the Lord will ever refuse to hear a similar prayer, but that the sinner may never have the time, or the power, or the heart to offer a similar prayer. Let all take every encouragement from this case; but let them take, for their instruction, the whole case. See, indeed, the one thief on the cross dying penitent, and heard in his dying prayer; but see also the other, equally near to the Saviour, and equally in need of his grace, dying hardened, and only blaspheming in his death. Let all learn in time to fear, that a thoughtless death is the ordinary issue of a thoughtless life. Let all rejoice in such a trophy of divine grace, encouraging them to draw near; but let no one pervert it into a temptation of the devil, enticing them to stand afar off.

Let us look still farther into the whole of this case, and see that while the Redeemer is ready to save, he is also resolved to sanctify; that while pardoning the sinner he puts away also the power of sin. Before he here said, 'To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise,' he first previously prepared the departing spirit for the enjoyment of paradise. Here we see, in the penitent thief, a true sense of his own sin, a sight of the Saviour's excellence, an open avowal of his own faith, a compassionate concern for a fellow-sinner, a desire to be with Christ, and a humble prayer for his favour; all those essential graces, in short, in embryo, which might have expanded in time into all the duties

of a holy life. Let all this be duly kept in mind, not, indeed, as his work of merit, procuring his admission into paradise, but as the way of his preparation, making him meet for its blessedness; and, while any think of being saved as he was, let them think also of being sanctified as he was.

Let all hear, also, from these words of the Saviour, a loud call both of encouragement and of urgency, thus to prepare for his presence: 'To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.' How solemn the admonition thus conveyed in one brief impressive word, and yet how consolatory to all who listen aright to its friendly voice. How short may be the passage, how speedy the transition from time to eternity? This day, this night, may the soul of any one be required to meet the Lord in judgment, to remain with him in paradise, or to pass on to outer darkness. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, may the sinner be summoned to receive his final condemnation, and the saint be invited to enter upon his heavenly rest. How awful and how urgent the call thus given to watchfulness, to diligence, to patience, to daily waiting for the Lord. 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! how diligent that we may at last be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.'

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 TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

'*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,*' Psal. xxiii. 4.

THERE is a fear of death which all men instinctively feel, and are naturally formed to feel, and are in all reason warranted to feel. Viewed merely as the loss of life, and as a separation from all that we love in life, as the painful dissolution of the mortal frame, and our final entrance into the world of spirits, we naturally shrink from every appearance of its awful form, from every apprehension of its immediate approach. This dread of what may be termed '*the stroke of death*;' the act of dying—the hour of departing, this dread of dissolution, is intimately interwoven with man's present being, and is, in fact, essential to the preservation of his earthly existence; and, however much it may at times be overcome by the power of strong or sudden emotions, it is the deliberate sense of mankind, that death is one of the greatest evils, which, either as an injury or a penalty, they can inflict upon a fellow-creature;

and the voluntary encountering of it, one of the greatest sacrifices which one man can make for the sake of another. 'All that a man hath will he give for his life;' scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.'

But, besides 'the stroke of death,' and its usual dreaded accompaniments, there is '*the sting of death*,'—the apprehension of its future consequences—a dread, not of what may befall the body, but of what may become of the soul—a sense of sin, and of its deserved punishment—a sight not merely of 'death on his pale horse,' but of 'hell following with him.' All this is in truth well fitted to overwhelm the heart of man with inexpressible alarm. 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' In this view more especially it is, that death is our great enemy—our last and worst enemy; the officer of divine justice arresting the transgressor, and hailing him to judgment.

The fear of death in this view, is 'the terror of the Lord—the terror which the Lord at first presented to preserve man from the breach of his holy law—the terror which the Lord still presents, to persuade men to seek a refuge in his mercy from the curse of that law. This is indeed a most salutary fear, and as essential to the safety of the soul, as the instinctive fear of death is to the safety of the body. Generally may it be welcomed as the first symptom of spiritual life in the soul of man; but too generally do men strive to escape from it, or to suppress it, by every method in their power. Yet is it clear to all men, that, shut their eyes as they may, they must be overtaken at last by this sight of 'the king of terrors,' not only sinking under his stroke, but suffering from his sting; and most convincingly have they shown, by their uniform and deliberate practice, how much reason they feel for fearing his last summons—ready to present their thousands of burnt-offerings, and ten thousands of rivers of oil; nay, 'to give their first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul.' 'Through the fear of death, they are all their life time subject to bondage.'

How welcome, in such circumstances, the blessed assurance from the Father of our spirits, that he hath provided a Redeemer to deliver us from this fear of death, and to 'destroy him who had the power of death' As a mighty conqueror advancing to our relief, he is heard proclaiming aloud this his purpose to save, 'O death! I will be thy plague; O grave! I will

be thy destruction;' and inviting all who feel this bondage to 'commit their spirits into his hands,' and to 'fear no evil.' He both possesses the power, and hath purchased the right, to put down our great enemy, and to put away all his terrors. 'He hath tasted death for every man,' and taken away the penalty which death had been commissioned to inflict; and all who lay hold on him with humble faith, he will conduct in safety through the dark domains of their conquered foe. Well then may we say with the Psalmist, '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.' Not only do you then follow in the train of a conqueror, but you enjoy the company of a comforter. You have a power over your heads, which no enemy can withstand, and a presence around your path, which no evil can abide. 'Thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff,'—a rod of iron to dash in pieces all your opposers—a staff of support to uphold your progress through all difficulties. Possessed of all power in heaven and on earth, he secures your safety as his flock, in your passage through the dark valley; and, by his gracious word and Holy Spirit, presents you with the prospect of entering a happy pasture as your everlasting abode. Thus may you walk on your way; not only free from fear, but full of hope—hope in death, and hope of a life that shall never die. 'Fear not,' he hath said to all who seek in him a refuge from their fears, 'I am the first and the last. I am he that liveth, though I was dead, and am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.' He hath lived and died in your nature, and brought it again from the dust of the earth. He hath lain in your grave, and prepared it for your rest. He holdeth the keys of your place of repose, and will open it again, as you awake at his coming. He hath taken possession in your name of a heavenly mansion, and is waiting to assign your portion in his presence. He hath not only gone before as your leader into the eternal world, but also abideth there for ever, as the Lord of that world. As you lay down your bodies in the narrow house, you are committing them in trust to the safe keeping of the mightiest and most friendly hand that you know; and, as your spirits enter the unseen world, you go, not so much to a strange land, as to your native home, where your gracious Deliverer holds the sovereign sway, and dispenses the richest blessings. You are there admitted as his servants and friends to see his face, and to serve him day and night for ever, free from all feeling or fear of evil, and for

ever saying, as the source of all your peace and joy, 'Thou art with me.'

How melancholy the reflection, that multitudes of our fallen race know not at all, or seek not at all, for their departing spirits this sovereign remedy—this everlasting consolation. Knowing well that this awful conflict is awaiting them; and that they cannot possibly escape the power of this last enemy; knowing, also, that they have no security against his approach for a single moment, and that they may meet his summons every morning when they awake, or every night while asleep, at every step which they take, in the midst of every word which they speak; yet who seek no retreat from his terrors—no shield from his sting—no friendly hand to bear them up as their strength gives way—no cheering light to guide their steps through the dark valley—no spot of refuge through the gloom, on which to rest their eye as it closes for ever on all earthly things; but rather choose to go down to the dust trembling and alone, and rushing with reckless want of thought into the deepest shadow of the grave, or sinking in the agony of despair under the mortal stroke of their soul's adversary. 'O, why will ye thus die?'—thus depart in darkness or in dread, when a heavenly light is offered, and an unerring guide is at hand; when a gracious comforter is provided, and a mighty conqueror is arrayed for your protection and peace! 'O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.'

How invaluable the privilege, and unspeakable the blessedness, of those who do know and believe that such all-sufficient aids are awaiting them in their last conflict. What though their frail nature may at times tremble at the thought, or their hearts feel a momentary alarm as it draws near, yet are they able to trust their Lord's promise of strength according to their day, and grace to help in their time of need. The dark valley is to them the path to heaven, and their latter end is peace. They depart to be with Christ; and can calmly say, as they depart, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' They hear his voice, 'fear not, for I am with thee;' and their hearts confidently reply, 'I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.'

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness,' Isa. lvii. 2.*

Of whom speaketh the prophet in these words? Of 'the righteous and the merciful.' But who are these, and where to be found? They are men who know that there are naturally none righteous, no not one, and who feel that they have no righteousness of their own before God; but who have been accepted of God as righteous in his sight through faith in his Son; who are therefore filled with the love of righteousness by the power of his Spirit, and who are led in the way of righteousness to the glory of his name. They are thus 'a chosen generation and a peculiar people,' to whom the merit of righteousness is imputed, in whom the Spirit of righteousness is implanted, to whom the rewards of righteousness are imparted, and who now walk in righteousness as the will of that God, the service of that Saviour, and the way of their own soul's blessedness. They are 'the excellent of the earth,' and 'the salt of the earth,' for whose sake, and by whose means, the earth is preserved and blessed. They are excellent in God's sight; excellent in themselves, and excellent among men. They are excellent in God's sight, as being his work, and the objects of his favour. 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness and his countenance doth behold the upright.' He who is the sole and Sovereign source of all excellence, hath set them apart for himself, and taketh pleasure in their way; preserveth them as his precious things, and prepareth them for higher excellence in his presence. They have thus a principle of excellence in themselves, an excellent and exalted spirit of mind, rising far above the things of this earth, reaching forth towards an eternal world, passing beyond all the little distinctions of men, and seeking nothing less than 'the honour which cometh from God only,' aiming to be made like to the Lord himself in all excellence, to be in his hand instruments of all that is good to all around them. They are thus among mankind examples and dispensers of good as they have any opportunity; planted as trees of righteousness, and yielding their blessed fruits in their season. They are 'the salt of the earth,' seasoning it with grace, checking the progress of its corruption, shedding a salutary influence throughout its moral atmosphere, and saving it from destruction, because they are as a blessing within it. 'By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted;' and for the elect's sake days of

suffering are shortened. For even ten's sake Sodom itself would have been spared.

Yet, like their gracious Lord, they are often lightly esteemed by 'a world which lieth in wickedness;' and when they are taken away, no man regardeth. They are generally the Lord's hidden ones, little known among men, and willing themselves to be as the least of all, the last of all, the servants of all; and often also are they tried with sore troubles, such as their own hearts only know, or sometimes it may be, so as to make them seem smitten of God; nay, forsaken of God. Yet very different is the judgment and purpose of God in regard to them, and such as thus hold them in contempt. This ignorance of their excellence, this indifference to their departure, is only a token that they who are insensible to such a calamity, are themselves ripening for greater calamities, and on the eve of being forsaken and smitten of God. When the example, and exertions, and effectual prayers of the righteous, are at any time made to cease, in any place, or among any people, it is a sure sign that God is ceasing to strive with that people, and is preparing to punish their iniquities. By the very ceasing of that restraint which the presence of the righteous may have in some measure imposed upon the prevalence of wickedness, that wickedness breaks forth with renewed audacity, and the measure of their iniquity is full. And the more suddenly that the righteous are taken away, as if perishing under God's displeasure, the more evident is the near approach of his judgments. They are taken away from the evil to come, just about to come. The ambassadors are recalled, and thereby war is declared. The intercessors have ceased, and, where none are calling for mercy, fury is ready to be poured out. The friends of the Sovereign are withdrawn to a place of safety, and the rebellious are set as a mark for the arrows of the avenger. When the righteous Lot entered into Zoar, then the Lord rained upon Sodom the threatened destruction.

The removal of the righteous and the merciful in such instances of divine judgments on a place or people, is, on the other hand, at once the release and the recompense of these righteous. As merciful men, they are spared the pain of witnessing such calamities; and as righteous men, they are raised to the blessedness for which they were prepared. They are far away from the sight or suffering of any evil, and they are forever secured in the full enjoyment of every good. They now rest as on their beds: and, as the rest of the labouring man is sweet, so do they relish the rest on which they have entered, the more

that they may have led on the earth a life of toil and trouble. 'There the weary are at rest.' Their bodies may, doubtless, be said literally to rest in the grave till the resurrection; but this is only a momentary stage in their progress to the full enjoyment of the entire rest provided for their whole renewed nature in the heavenly mansions. So brief is that period, in comparison with the rest that remaineth, that we may look at once to the period, when the words of the Sovereign Lord are addressed to them from his throne of judgment: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' 'Then the righteous go away into life eternal.' Yet their rest is not that of the dead, but of the living. 'They enter into peace,' into the conscious enjoyment of that happy portion which is the repose of the soul; a blessedness which is above the mere feeling of repose, a positive felicity, which they have been made meet to enjoy—the possession of that which is purely good: a good accomplished after labour, enjoyed in peace, secured for evermore.

Let us then ever keep in mind, that this is not a rest, which necessarily follows from our removal to an eternal world; and that all when they die are not as a matter of course, enjoying such a rest as this. It is the rest of the 'righteous and the merciful men;' the rest of those who have 'feared lest they should fall short of it,' and who have laboured to enter into it; 'who have exercised the patience of the saints,' who 'have kept the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus;' who have at length died in the Lord—who have at least desired to do all this uprightly, 'each one walking in his uprightness—who have been 'upright in their hearts before God, and loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity;' and whose unspeakable blessedness it is (as the words have also been understood) that they are still *walking onwards* in their uprightness—enlarging, in endless progression, their capacity of enjoying their pure and perfect peace—advancing nearer and nearer to the image, to the glory, and to the joy of 'the Lord their righteousness.' How unspeakably precious, how greatly to be remembered, how earnestly to be desired, how incessantly to be sought, by every soul, and for every soul, the mysterious moment of entering upon such a course of walking, as leads onward and onward to so glorious an issue—to nothing short of a place before the throne of the ever-blessed and ever-living God.

## TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God,'* Job xix. 26.

NEVER was fallen man, even for a moment, left comfortless in his misery, and without some 'good hope through grace.' Even before the sentence of his first transgression was pronounced, and his heart made to feel the full penalty which he had incurred, the voice of mercy was uttered, and the glimpse of a restoration was presented. A seed of the woman was promised to bruise the head of the serpent; and even she who was first deceived by the adversary, was cheered with the thought, that she should be made instrumental in his discomfiture. From her mortal body, now doomed to the corruption of the grave, should come forth a Deliverer from all the terrors of that death, which her transgression had brought into the world. The full import of this promise, and the manner in which it should be accomplished, was still very dimly seen; but there was in it enough to banish despair, to inspire hope, to speak peace through the faith of its fulfilment. Gradually was the great redemption brought more clearly into view, when Abraham, the father of the faithful, saw by his faith the day of this Child of promise, and was glad; when Job, the great example of suffering believers, looked to a living Redeemer and was comforted. How very precious and full of consolation this patient saint did feel this blessed hope to his soul, most plainly appears both from the forcible words in which he professes his faith and hope, and from the earnest wish which he uttered that his dying words (as he then evidently thought them to be) should never be forgotten among suffering men, but should be recorded indelibly for their benefit. 'O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!'

It is most important and interesting to observe how altered was the whole strain of his language as a sufferer, from this point in his progress; how, in the very extremity of his affliction, he was enabled, by the prospect of a glorious redemption both to his sinful soul and suffering flesh, to suppress his complainings towards God, and to converse in composure with his friends. How much, indeed, do we find in his memorable words, now so indelibly recorded for our meditation, of the true grounds of every sinner's hope, and of every sufferer's consolation! How distinctly does Job here express his belief of those essential truths connected with man's salvation, which were after-

wards proclaimed in the fulness of time to all the nations of the earth! How distinctly does he express his own need of a Redeemer, and the divine nature of that Redeemer, in whom he placed his trust; speaking of him, not so much as a promised Deliverer yet to come, but as even then living, the living One, and the Source of life, the Author of life eternal; speaking of him, at the same time, as holding a close relationship to himself, as *his kinsman*, his nearest of kin, to whom belonged the title of ransoming and restoring the forfeited inheritance, and avenging on the adversary the destruction of life; speaking, if not of his coming to suffer in the flesh, and of his rising in man's nature from the grave, yet assuredly of his appearing at last in a body that could be beheld with the eye of man, and standing on the earth with power to bring forth man's mortal nature from the grave, to see his glory, and rejoice in his salvation. This was Job's consolation: I know that such a Redeemer liveth, and that he will be my Redeemer, that he will come to ransom his people, and that I shall be blessed, at his coming, with a full relief from all my present miseries. Conscious that he embraced with faith unfeigned the promise of such a Saviour, he was confident in the hope of partaking the promised salvation. That salvation he clearly apprehended, more fully than had yet been testified by any other believer, as extending to the whole nature of fallen man, even to that part of his nature which was most visibly seen to bear the penalty of sin, to decay and die, to corrupt in the grave, and to mingle with the dust of the earth. This hope holds a very prominent place in Job's remarkable declaration; and he dwells upon it with special emphasis, not indeed as forming the essential part of the expected salvation, but as that portion of the truth, which, in his times, most required a testimony to be given, and which testimony would, in his circumstances, be more especially worthy of being recorded, and likely to be remembered. He doubtless placed his happiness, as he distinctly declared, in the assurance of his seeing God, and beholding his face in righteousness, as what the soul only can discern and enjoy. But in this also he rejoiced, that his soul's joy should be full, on finding even the perishing body, which had in this life been its burden and its snare, its object of anxiety, its trial of patience, its cause of sorrow, of adherence to life, and aversion to death, made at last its renewed companion, and the worthy partaker of its perfect blessedness. He looked upon his fleshly frame, covered with sores, from the sole of the foot unto the crown of the head, so loathsome to his own feelings, and

so disgusting to all around him. He saw his skin, the natural covering of his flesh, already consumed, and the flesh itself undergoing, while he yet lived, the very process of dissolution. He looked down to the corruption of the grave, and to the devouring worms of the earth, as soon about to destroy it utterly. Yet, in the strength of his faith, was he here enabled to say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' and that I shall live again by his power, that I shall see him as my God in peace, and behold him, for myself, as my own everlasting portion. Yea, in this very flesh, so rapidly dissolving, and with these very eyes, so soon to be closed in the grave—in this very body, redeemed by his power, raised up, restored, and renewed for ever, shall I see God.

So may all the friends of the Redeemer take comfort under this view of the grave, so revolting to our natural feelings. Though in itself it is more an imaginary than a real evil; yet does it form, by the constitution of our nature, one of the terrors of the grave. It is a part of the penalty pronounced upon sin, and which it is designed that we should feel as a penalty, that the body should not only suffer death, but suffer indignity; should not only be deprived of life, and deposited in the dark prison-house, but should become the prey of the worm, and mingle with the dust of the earth; and all this is only a righteous retribution of man's sinful preference of the perishing body to the precious soul, and conveys an impressive admonition against all sinful pampering of its appetites, and senseless pride in its beauties, to the neglect of the infinitely nobler excellencies, and inculcably higher interests of the immortal spirit.

The dissolution of the body, and dispersion of its very elements, may present also to the eye of sense an objection to its future resurrection, an intimation of its unworthiness to be re-formed and re-animated to an endless life. But to the eye of faith no hindrance stands in the way of its exaltation. The Redeemer liveth, and liveth in our nature, even he who was a partaker of our own flesh and blood; nay, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, our kinsman according to the flesh, the man Christ Jesus, a being consisting of body and soul. The word was made flesh, and, under that mortal vail, manifested his glory as the only begotten of the Father. In that nature he wrought out his gracious work as a Redeemer; suffered in it the ignominy of the cross; submitted in it to the power of the grave; and in it rose again as the triumphant Conqueror of death. No part of that nature, which he thus redeemed, will he leave under the power or in the hands of that

discomfitted enemy. My Redeemer liveth, may every believer say with Job, liveth in the flesh which he assumed, in flesh like mine; and in my flesh, in flesh like his, shall I behold him. How instructive and how engaging the admonition thus presented, to reverence, and to reverence highly, even the perishing body, not as the unworthy rival, but as the inseparable companion of the never-dying soul. As honoured, even in this mortal scene, to be the habitation of God through the Spirit, and as about to be still farther honoured as itself an inhabitant or even a temple in the heavens, let us dread the thought of making it in any measure an instrument of unrighteousness, an agent of the evil one. Let us give diligence to 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' We know that our Redeemer liveth; 'we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' 'Let every man who hath this hope in him purify himself, even as his Lord is pure.'

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory:  
it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power,'*  
1 Cor. xv. 43.

It is the first work of the blessed Spirit to convince the world of sin; and it might seem sufficient for that purpose to point the eye of man to his misery; nay, merely to those miseries which palpably affect his mortal body. The miseries of the soul are less discernible to his sight, and less distinctly felt by his fleshly mind; but those of the body are manifest to every sense, and make impressions to which he cannot remain insensible. The ravages of death, as simply affecting the body itself at all seasons of its existence, in such a variety of ways, by such a multitude of means, and by a power so irresistible, and that not merely depriving it of life, but racking all its senses with pain, and defacing all its beauties with disease; not merely casting it down in its strength, like the mountain oak, or the monumental column, which often remain entire after their fall, and tell to future times the former height of their glory; but sending it away out of sight, changing its wonderful frame, dissolving its whole substance into a mass of revolting corruption, and dispersing its every element throughout creation, as utterly as if it had never existed—all these effects and attendants of mortality, which may be seen and felt by every man, pro-

claim aloud to every ear the existence of some awfully malignant cause. That fatal cause the word of truth distinctly declares to be the malignity of sin, 'the wages of sin is death.' These are its baneful fruits even in respect to the perishing body; and of these only we speak at present, as most clearly discernible by every bodily sense, as most hateful to every natural feeling, and as alone calculated to carry conviction of its evil into every human heart. So may the very prevalence of suffering in man's lot prove the first corrective of the power of sin in his heart; and the mere sight of bodily suffering teach the lesson of penitence to the soul. In all that we witness or endure of mortal misery, in every instance merely of the body's decay, disease, and death, may we see, as it were, a hand pointing to sin as its cause; and hear a voice, even from every silent tomb or open grave, warning us to hate, and shun, and resist, and destroy its power in the world around us, and in our own hearts and lives. So, by the strongest feelings even of our fallen nature, by those of sympathy and self-love, by all the ills that merely 'the flesh is heir to,' by all that we see of them in others, or dread of them in our own case, may we be constrained to 'abhor that which is evil.'

But the more deeply that we grieve under this reign of sin and death, and sorrow at the sight of their desolating ravages, even over all the majesty and beauty of man's mortal frame; so much the more have we cause to rejoice in the glory of its final restoration, and in the full reparation which shall at length be rendered for all its degradation. Let us not limit our views to a part of the wondrous plan, or stop short either at the fall of our race by sin, or at the fall of our mortal bodies by death; but let us learn always to look forward by faith over the whole field of man's progress, and the whole counsel of God's will. Let us not dwell on the seeming severity of the Sovereign judge in the penalty of sin, when we are hearing his gracious proclamation of its speedy and entire remission to all who will embrace his offered mercy. Scarcely need we deplore the defacing power of disease and death over that body, which we may thus behold, in the visions of faith, returning so speedily to life and immortality; nor need we stand long mourning at the taking down of this clay-built cottage, however rudely demolished, when we are called to contemplate, as rising out of its ruins, 'a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'

Let us not perplex ourselves with idly questioning how this can be done, how the dead are raised, 'with what body they do come.' Much

hath God shown us in the wondrous changes which are daily taking place in his visible creation, to help our comprehension of his power in this final change of our own bodies in the grave. Clearly does the apostle here teach us, that the body laid in the grave is only as the seed of the body, which shall be raised in glory. It is not the actual seed which is sown, that the husbandman reaps from his field; but only a similar grain, which has sprung from its decay, and which bears the elements of that seed in its substance. It is not the very same body laid in the grave, which comes forth at the resurrection; but a body unspeakably more glorious, raised by Almighty power from its dissolution in the dust, as the germ which he created at first, capable of producing such immortal fruit. Here indeed all parallel ceases, inasmuch as it is raised up not only a glorious body, but a body indestructible and spiritual. This will be its special glory, that it shall then be incapable of dying any more. Nothing causing death, nothing deserving death, nothing capable of death, shall be found in its frame. 'It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural (an animal body) it is raised a spiritual body.' Let us meditate on the wondrous change and glorious features of the body thus raised and restored, and rendered spiritual.

This body, the abode of weariness, the prey of disease, the incumbrance of the soul, the seat of ensnaring appetites, and the instrument of unrighteousness; this body, rising from the grave by the Lord's quickening Spirit, shall leave there all its weakness, and bring forth with it new powers for its heavenly life. 'This corruptible shall put on incorruption.' This frame, formed from the dust and returning to dust again, so soon exhausted by toil, and requiring to be recruited by daily rest, so liable to pain and decay, so easily injured by innumerable accidents, so often tainted by subtle and malignant disorders, so frequently filled with corruption even while it lives, and so certain to become the prey of the worm at last—this corruptible thing, quickened again by the Spirit of the Lord, shall put on a glorious form, resembling the light in beauty; free from all languor and pain, liable no more to injury or decay, full of unceasing vigour and health, fitted to join in the services of angels and the felicity of heaven. 'This mortal shall put on immortality,' never more to tremble in the apprehension of dissolution, or to feel the stroke of death, or to be stretched out a breathless corpse, or to be torn away from interesting

duties, or to be put out of the sight of weeping friends; but, under the power of the Lord of life, shall become spiritual in its nature, the pure dwelling-place of a glorified spirit, capable of seeing the Lord as he is, and of serving him for evermore. How glorious such a transformation, and how welcome such a promise; laying down corruption, to take up incorruption; laying down weakness, to take up strength; laying down defilement, to take up purity; laying down mortality, to take up immortality. This is the crowning excellency of all these glories, that they are imperishable; and this is the summary of them all, that, 'as we have once borne the image of the earthy, we shall then bear for ever the image of the heavenly.' To His glorified body we are warranted to look, as at once the proof and pattern of our own, as 'the first specimen of immortal man'—'a glorious being, over which death hath no more power, which will subsist in undecaying youth and splendour, when the heavens are no more.\* This divine image let us desire even now, if possible, to begin to bear fully in all its features; and, as looking forward to be clothed with a similar glorified body, so labour to be animated with the same heavenly mind that was in him, and so to be not only admitted 'to behold his glory,' but also enabled to 'enter into his joy.'

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 TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'His Lord said unto him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'*  
 Mat. xxv. 23.

WHOSE gracious words are these, and to whom are they addressed? They are the words of the sovereign judge, and the compassionate Saviour of the world; and are spoken with infinite condescension to those of his own creatures, and of his own redeemed, whom he hath honoured to love and serve him. How worthy is he to be served as the Lord of all!—how happy all they who are in any measure privileged to serve him!—how unspeakably glorious the recompense provided in his mercy for them as his servants! He hath all authority in heaven and on earth; and it is proclaimed, as the supreme law of the whole human race, that 'all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.' He hath

all excellence in himself to deserve this universal honour and obedience; 'in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead'—all the glory of the Father. He possesses all possible special claims to our utmost love and service; '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 and ever.' The time will come, when the acknowledgment of his worthiness shall be the universal song, when 'every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are on the sea, and all that are in them, shall be heard saying, Blessing, and glory, and honour, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Well indeed might we feel the glory of his exaltation to be so great, as to feel our unworthiness of being permitted to serve him; unworthy either that he should come under our roof, or that we should be taken into his household, were it not so clearly the will of God and our calling. To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. 'He died for all, that they might live; that they should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again; wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.' Nothing, indeed, is too small that he will not receive as a service, when done to serve him. 'Whosoever,' he hath himself said, 'shall give you a cup of cold water, in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.' No one is too humble in condition to be allowed thus to do him service; and even the despised slaves among men are exhorted by his apostles to consider themselves as the servants of Christ, 'doing the will of God from the heart;' nay, called to 'adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.' Nor are even they, who have shamefully degraded themselves by serving the vilest of all masters, shut out from becoming his servants for ever; 'being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.'

How gracious this view of the Lord's service; a service into which all may enter, and find every man his work; and more gracious still, in that it is a service which all may fulfil, or rather find the means of fulfilling, while desiring to serve him. No soul of man is excluded from entering; no soul that enters oppressed; nothing required of any one above what has been given. The great

\* Robert Hall.

principle of the service is the same in all ; and such as the poorest, the feeblest, the lowest, the youngest may attain in the highest degree, and be found in the foremost place. That principle is simply *fidelity*, that each be found faithful to his Lord in the things committed to his care ; 'do faithfully whatsoever thou doest.' It is to feel ourselves to be his servants—nay, his property—bought by him with a price—bound to him by every tie—blessed only through him in every stage of our progress. It is to make it our chief aim to honour and serve him in all that we do—to please him well in all things ; not merely doing the thing commanded, but because it is his commandment ; not doing it grudgingly, and as against our will, but cheerfully and from the heart ; not doing it slothfully and superficially, as just to save appearances, but with a ready mind, and with the ability which God giveth. It is to do it also in the way and manner that he directs ; not according to our own liking, or by means of our own devising ; but agreeably to his own instructions, and after his own example ; if possible, as he hath done, or as we have reason to think would have done the same. It is, last of all, to desire and to seek, as he enjoins us, his own guidance and help in his own service ; as he hath himself said to all that come to him, 'without me, ye can do nothing ;' 'Lo I am with you alway ;' 'abide in me ;' 'ask of me ;' 'my grace is sufficient for thee.'

It is not, then, of much moment, *where* we may be placed, or *what* we may be called to do in his service ; but solely with what spirit of faithfulness we do his will, and finish his work. All are on a level with regard to this power of approving themselves in his sight. 'He accepteth according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not ;' and he proclaims it as a rule in his kingdom, that 'he who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.' In this principle of faithfulness, we are all equally concerned, and all equally called to exercise it in all that we do. Let us apply this principle to ourselves in all that he hath put into our hand, or given us any power to do ; and see that we live, not as if we had no master, or were our own masters, but as his stewards and servants ; 'not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and rose again.' Whatever it be, possession, or power, health, strength, talents, time, knowledge, substance, any power of doing good, of persuading others to do good, of praying God to do them good—'As every man hath received the gift, so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak

as of the oracles of God ; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.'

How gracious that Lord whom we are called to serve, in the encouragement which he imparts, in the recompense which he provides for all his faithful servants ! How far beyond all that they could ever deserve, or presume to expect, even that which he himself enjoys. What was specially the joy set before him, for which he did so much, and in which he invites us to be partakers ? The joy of giving glory to God, by bringing souls to his glory ; and this joy all who serve him may even now be privileged to taste. In all that thus gives glory to God, or gains good to man, there is a blessedness to be enjoyed ; 'in the keeping of all his commandments there is a great reward.' 'Great peace have they that love his law ; a joy unspeakable in the thought of his love, and in the hope of his glory.' There is a present blessedness in the very thought of serving such a Master, in the assurance of his presence and protection, in the endeavour to do any thing that may please or serve him, in the hope of receiving his gracious commendation, in the prospect of being received at last where he is, 'where his servants shall see his face, and serve him day and night,' and sing his praise without ceasing. How lightly may we hold all approbation or opposition from men, from all creatures, from all worlds, in comparison with these words from his mouth : 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' who would not serve thee ? with all that we have will we serve thee. With thine only can we serve thee. 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do.' Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

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TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord,'* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

ON the Lord's part there is no discharge from his service, and, on the part of his faithful servants, there is no desire to leave it ; they find his yoke to be easy, his burden light, and his service perfect freedom to their souls. They become no longer servants but friends, and are made partakers of all that is his. They are treated by him as brethren, and even made joint heirs of his inheritance. He said to them freely,

'All things are yours;' and, when he makes the supposition of their going away, it is the instant answer of their souls, 'Lord, to whom can we go but unto thee? thou hast the words of eternal life.' They are thus 'stedfast and unmoveable,' faithful unto death; 'nor do they merely wish to remain with him, but to render him more service, to increase their labours, and to abound therein more and more; nay, to be *always* thus abounding, 'growing in grace,' 'pressing always to the mark,' 'shining more and more unto the perfect day.'

This abounding in the work of the Lord follows, we may say, infallibly from the very nature of the service, and from the constitution of our own nature. Having once tasted that the Lord is gracious, there is a hungering and thirsting for more of the heavenly food. The appetite here 'grows by what it feeds upon.' The soul, advancing in excellence, enlarges its capacity as well as its desire for more. All this follows also from their Lord's increasing claims upon them that serve him. We cannot number his benefits, nor measure his loving-kindnesses. These are renewed every morning, and new obligations laid upon us every moment to love him more, and serve him better. We are made to feel that our most abounding labours can never keep pace with his abounding mercies; and that, though we had done all that was our duty to do, we are still only unprofitable servants. With the powers even of angels, and the ages of eternity to serve him, we shall never be able to requite the Lord for his goodness; but ever must it be our duty our desire, our delight, to 'abound in the work of the Lord.' 'Wherefore,' we may well say to one another in these words of the apostle, 'be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

This we may know, if any thing can be known. Whether we *are indeed* labouring in the Lord, or labouring as we ought to do in such a service—this we may not know, at least so confidently as we would wish to know it; but this we may assuredly know, that if so be that we truly labour to please and serve him as our Lord, it shall not be *in vain*. This is a figure of speech to express more strongly the very contrary to its being in vain, to intimate that nothing shall be more full, more satisfying, more certain, than the blessed return or recompense of this labour. It shall not be in vain on your part, that is, your labour shall not prove ineffectual through your inability to complete the work given you to do, but you may be assured of strength from your Lord himself to

fulfil your portion of service. It is himself 'who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' His own hand is ever stretched out for your help, and you have only to ask his aid. This help he giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, never reproaching any for their great need of it, or their frequent asking of it. Every power that you put forth on his work becomes stronger in his strength; and your very apprehension of failing, at any time, insures your success by making you go the oftener, and trust the more to his power. He hath said to all that serve him, 'my grace is sufficient for you;' and you may say always in humble confidence, 'I can do all things by Christ strengthening me,' nay, 'I will glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.'

This assurance of strength for our task, and even some prospect of its successful accomplishment, is not altogether sufficient encouragement in any labour, unless we have also in view a suitable recompense of our toil, after the work is done, otherwise our labour would be empty or *unprofitable*, and so far therefore 'in vain.' But here especially is our labour in the Lord encouraged by its gainfulness, its exceeding great reward. In itself, indeed, all our labour can merit nothing at his hand, and cannot be accomplished without his help. But it is his good pleasure to connect with such labour the blessedness which he hath fully purchased, and freely promised, and to proportion it to the measure of our work of faith and labour of love which we show to his name. 'Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap; he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.' How great as well as gracious is this recompense of reward, as our encouragement to abound in his work. It is *immediate* and at hand. This service from the first is pleasant, and in the very work there is instant enjoyment. 'Godliness is profitable for all things, even for the life that now is;' a portion of the recompense accompanies the labour, and increases with every day's service. 'Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in his ways.' It is *exceeding great*, its value is incalculable. Its 'merchandise is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold, and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared to it.' It is 'an exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' which shall yet be revealed. It is *certain* and *sure*, depending not upon the turns of human affairs, the stability even of nations, or the power of any created being, but resting on the promise of a God that

cannot lie, 'with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning, of whose words not one jot or tittle shall pass away, till all be fulfilled.' Of that promised reward, and of the Lord's power to bestow it, 'he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he raised him from the dead, and made him Head over all things to the church.'

Knowing all this, believing all this, being already in the Lord, and loving your Lord, and labouring in the Lord, (for to such we now speak), 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.' Be not weary in such well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not.' Be not slothful in such labours; for, according as your sufferings or services in the Lord abound, your consolations shall abound also. Keep ever in mind that, of all labours, this is the most productive, the only labour under the sun, which shall not be 'in vain,' of which not any portion shall fall to the ground, not even the intention of the heart to fulfil it shall fail. Even, then, as traders or labourers for gain, let us see where our true profit is to be found. Let us not be seen, like simple ones, 'spending our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not;' toiling most for the meat which perisheth, and least for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. But rather, like persons of enlarged views, who look forward to the end of things, and beyond this life of vapour, let us learn to seek early, to seek diligently, to seek at all times, and above all things, the unsearchable riches, 'a treasure in heaven,' the 'better and the more enduring substance.'

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 TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known,'*  
 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

OUR present views of spiritual and heavenly things, of all that relates to the essential excellencies of the divine nature, the mysterious processes in the works of creation, the springs and purposes of the events at any time in progress in the order of providence, the depths and issues of the glorious plan of redeeming grace, the final state and full felicity of the saints in the heavenly world—the knowledge of such things is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it.' At no time, indeed, hath God left himself without a witness; and much of 'the invisible

things of him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' Yet still have we daily reason to feel and to say, 'touching the Almighty,' his infinite perfections and secret purposes, we cannot find him out; and even of his visible creation, after our utmost researches into its extent, uses, and relations, are we often constrained to say with the same devout worshipper, 'Lo these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him.' The book of inspiration hath indeed shed a blessed light on our darkness, in all that concerns our spiritual state and duties; and we are not left to lament the want of any knowledge necessary for our soul's salvation. But still are there many things, which we do not know at all; and even what we do know, we know only in part. The heavenly truths most clearly revealed, are, for the most part, revealed to us only in a general way; and of many particular points, the reasons on which they are founded, the manner of their influence, we know in a measure nothing at all, or at most so little, as scarcely to deserve the name of knowledge. Even in reading God's own declarations of what he hath done in the general government of the universe, and for the glory of his name, or in our personal experience of his dealings towards us as individuals, or others around us and connected with us—we are repeatedly called to adore in humility what we cannot penetrate; and to exclaim with the apostle, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.' With respect especially to the eternal and unseen world, the felicity and glory of the redeemed, the particular sources from which their happiness shall flow, the peculiar circumstances in which their glory shall consist, the precise way in which the Lord will communicate himself and his blessedness—these are all subjects, which we know only in part, or rather which we 'see only as through a glass, darkly;' as dim and broken reflections from the surface of a mirror under an imperfect light.

All this, however, is nothing more than what we have reason to expect, and it is not possible that the case should be otherwise. It is no more than what reason teaches us to expect, that our finite capacities should be unable to comprehend the schemes of the infinite mind. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' It is no more than what we might expect beforehand, that we should be unable, not merely as finite, but as fallen creatures, to enter into the thoughts of the

holy Lord God; as the gracious Redeemer said to his disciples, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' It is no more than what our ordinary practice in life dictates; and, as it would be neither practicable nor proper to make the child aware of the reasons for every step in his teaching and training, or the soldier acquainted with the grounds of every order and movement in his service; neither would it be suitable, nor perhaps compatible with our spiritual training and believing obedience, that the Most High should take us into his counsels, and 'give account to us of his matters.' It is no more than what he has a right to require, that we should acquiesce in his declarations and dealings, on the ground of what we do know of his thoughts towards us; though we see them only in part, that we should learn to take his simple word, and trust his gracious intentions; saying always in the confidence of children, 'even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' It is more especially our duty thus to rest satisfied in the wisdom and goodness of his darkest dispensations, when we have his own promise, that they shall afterwards be all clearly revealed, and fully vindicated; thus graciously intimating, that they are now concealed from our view merely because we are not yet capable, or would not now be the better of knowing them; and that they are all not only right and good in themselves, but such as we ourselves shall finally approve to have been so. 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' 'Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.'

It will thus form no small part of the occupations and enjoyments of the heavenly state to be making continually fresh discoveries of the counsels and character of the supreme Jehovah; and to have, at the same time, the consciousness that this will prove to our souls an inexhaustible source of delightful contemplation. Then shall we have indeed turned aside from all other objects and interests to see this great sight, and to behold with exalted adoration and enraptured astonishment the traces of his glory, and the tokens of his goodness in ever-varying and endless succession. But more especially shall we then be blessed with a sense of the peculiar presence of God himself, shining every where as the constant light of the heavenly world. 'They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.' God shall then be the all in all, the entire and unceasing object of their

contemplation. They shall no longer see him darkly through any distant vision, or dim outward symbol, but shall have an immediate view of his excellencies; they shall see him face to face, 'They shall see him as he is.' How sad the state of those blinded souls, and how unsuited for the heavenly mansions, who have no spiritual sight to behold him who is invisible, who see nothing of the blessed God in the glass of his works and of his word, and who have no desire to draw near to him in his visible temples, or learn to say in devout earnestness and affection, 'thy face, Lord, will we seek.' 'Lord, lift on us the light of thy countenance.' Thus desiring to turn away their eyes from his glory, and even to hide themselves from his sight, they shall at last have their own depraved wish fulfilled, and 'shall be cast out into outer darkness,' and 'punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.' O, let it rather be 'the one thing that we desire of the Lord, and that we will seek after, that we may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, that we may behold the beauty of the Lord;' and that he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, would shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 'With thee, O Lord, is the fountain of life; in thy light may we see light;' and 'walking in the light, as thou art in the light, may we have fellowship with thee the Father, and with thy Son Jesus Christ,' now and for evermore. Amen.

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'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.

THE end of our faith is the salvation of our souls, and this salvation can be completed only in a spiritual and eternal world. 'A new heaven and a new earth' are promised as the future habitation of the redeemed; but the blessedness there provided for them is at the same time spoken of, as something which is above their present power to comprehend or to conceive. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be;' and the things which are to be seen and heard in the heavenly paradise, are declared to be such as are unspeakable in the words of man; nay, such as it would not be allowed for a man to utter. Its blessedness

is therefore represented to us by figures or similitudes, comparing it to those things, which, though not really the most excellent in themselves, men are disposed to consider as the most precious or glorious acquisitions; such as golden crowns and shining garments, treasures inexhaustible, inheritances incorruptible, thrones of glory, rivers of pleasure. But more especially it is described by negative terms, by exemption from things evil, by the assurance that no such evils shall in any measure ever be found in that blessed abode. These evils are what all mankind more or less feel; and are able to understand the blessedness of feeling them no more, of being secured from them for ever. To be at rest from toil, to be at peace from trouble, to be at ease from pain, to be exempt from sorrow, to be secure from dying—these are blessed reliefs and exemptions, which our very feelings in the body, and fears in this life, make us capable of understanding, and appreciating, and desiring—ready often to say with the Psalmist, ‘O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.’ ‘*There shall be no more death,*’ even in its mildest shape; no more departing from things that have pleased us, from persons who are dear to us; no more dread of those more appalling forms and accompaniments of death, which make him the king of terrors and the executioner of divine justice; no more sight of ghastly disease, mangled limbs, or garments rolled in blood; nothing to hurt or destroy in all the holy place. *There shall be ‘neither sorrow nor crying;’* nothing to cause grief or call forth weeping; no more sorrow of sympathy for the sufferings and oppressions of fellow-creatures; no more sorrow of affection on account of the unkindness or misconduct of friends; no more sorrow of the soul at the sight of transgressors, or under the sense of our own sinful nature; ‘sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away.’ ‘Neither shall there be any more pain,’ no more feeling of any suffering in glorified bodies of the saints; no wearisome nights on a bed of disease; no tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day; no inhabitant among them saying I am sick; no sense of weariness, of cold and nakedness, of scorching heat or of pining want; ‘They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.’ ‘The former things have passed away; all things causing such evils have come to an end; and there can be no more experience of them where no cause for them exists. ‘There shall in no wise enter therein any thing that defileth,’ no more sin and no more curse; ‘God shall wipe away all tears from their faces.’ They

are no longer in a dying world, or in a weeping world, or in a wicked world, where there are daily so many occasions of sorrow to the heart of the believer; who, the more he has of the mind of his Lord, is the more like him ‘a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs.’ But not only are all such things passed away, so as not to exist, so as not to be experienced, but even so as not to be remembered as reasons for sorrow, or at least so as to be swallowed up and lost amidst the surrounding sources of unceasing blessedness to the soul; ‘the former things’ shall not be remembered nor come into mind. Not only shall there be no cause for tears to flow, but God himself shall dry them all up for ever—shall not only remove every new cause for weeping, but shall open such views of all past reasons of sorrow, as to change them into grounds of rejoicing. He has trained them as his children, and chastened them in his affection, and suffered their tears to flow for their good; but now, that these days of trial are past, he removes all the traces of their grief, and turns their very mourning into joy, and makes them rejoice from their sorrow. ‘The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.’

But we must not confine our thoughts of heavenly blessedness to mere freedom from all present evils, or to those views of it which are drawn from earthly similitudes, of which even earthly minds may be glad to hear, and to which they may look forward with satisfaction as good things to be enjoyed. But let us ever remember the pure and spiritual character of all the happiness that is there enjoyed, and the proper sources from which it flows. It is not merely that there shall be no tears; but that God is there present to wipe them all away: it is because God himself will dwell with them, and be with them, and be their God. It is not merely that they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; but because ‘the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne’ shall there feed them as his flock, and lead them unto those living fountains of water; and so God, in such ways, by such means, ‘shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.’ It is not merely being delivered from all evils for evermore, but being for ever with the Lord our deliverer, that shall form our future blessedness. It is to be where he is, to see him as he is, to love him as he is, to be like to what he is; it is, as he himself hath expressed it, to behold his glory, and to enter into his joy as our Lord. In our desires of a heavenly portion, let us never forget that to learn Christ is the way to heaven; and, in all our thoughts of its blessed-

ness, let us bring the whole into one bright point as its sum and substance, viz. that it is 'to be with Christ.' Let us never imagine that we can have the spirit of that heavenly society formed in any measure in our souls, if, in our anticipations of its felicity, we are overlooking the presence of him, who is the Lord of that heaven, the light of that heaven, the life of that heaven, the object of adoration and praise to all who dwell in that heaven above. To him let us now learn daily to ascribe all the hope that gladdens our hearts—the hope of such a blessedness as our eternal portion. 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' 'Blessed be he that cometh in name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!' Thus honouring him in our hearts and before men, as the author of our eternal salvation, we should be daily preparing to join the company of his saints in casting their heavenly crowns before his throne, and singing their eternal song of praise: 'Thou art worthy; for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.'

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses;'* 1 Tim. vi. 12.

To the greater part of the human race the whole of their life on earth is nothing else than a continued fight, a hard struggle for subsistence, an unceasing conflict with want and suffering. Few at least there are, in any condition of life, who are known to finish their earthly course without encountering, in some measure or other, under some form or other, the host of enemies ever ready to assail their rest or peace. Every human being, it may be said, merely in regard to things temporal, has a fight on hand, a conflict to carry on, for the preservation of life, for procuring the means of life, for the attainment of what they hold to be the blessings of life. This is a sort of fight, which cannot well be called either good or bad in itself, the unavoidable struggle of the natural man for the supply of his wants or the gratification of his desires. Often, indeed, is this mere animal fight rendered, by the manner in which it is carried on, an evil fight, an act of aggression against the rights and comforts of others who are engaged in the same warfare;

an act of daily rebellion against the will and the claims of the great Sovereign of the world, in which they live; a wanton spoiling, it may be, of all his good gifts to themselves, or a cruel desolation of all the blessings that he gives to others; a frenzied attempt to resist his mighty power, to defeat his purposes for good, to accomplish their own destruction.

There is a very different warfare, however, which all are called to enter, and to pursue, with all their courage and perseverance, a contest for the welfare of the soul, as well as for that of the body; a conflict with the enemies of God and man, a noble resistance to all the powers of evil; a righteous contending for all that is good in the life that now is, and also in that which is to come; a struggle that may well be called a good fight, good in all its objects, good in all its means, good in all its effects, good for all who are engaged in its toils, or who are concerned in its success. It is 'the fight of faith.' It is truly so called, and must be so carried on, if we would gain the victory, and secure the prize. It is the fight of *faith*. It is a warring for such blessings as faith only can enable us to discern; a wrestling against such enemies as faith only enables us to overcome. 'We walk by faith,' we war by faith, and not by sight. 'This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.' We have to watch and war, not only against things seen, against flesh and blood, against an evil nature, and an evil world, but 'against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;' enemies who can be discerned and defied only by that faith which is 'the evidence of things not seen.' We have to watch and war for blessings which we do not now see, but which we hope for, and can be upheld and encouraged in our contests only by the power of that faith which is 'the substance of things hoped for.' We have to watch and war by a strength above our own, and which we can apply for and apprehend only by that faith with which we 'see him who is invisible,' and are united to him who is our help: 'Who is he that overcometh, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' By this faith it is that we keep before our minds much stronger motives, and higher hopes, and better blessings, than what the gain of the whole world can present. By this faith it is, that we can fix our thoughts on the unspeakable glories of the invisible and eternal state, as our chief object of pursuit, and as in all reason the most worthy of our utmost exertions. By this faith it is, that the amazing love of the most high

God, manifested in the work of our soul's redemption, through the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ, is pressed upon our hearts in all its constraining power, as our supreme law and rule of duty at all times. By this faith it is, that we have ever present before our inward man the realizing view of our gracious Redeemer, as our all-sufficient Defender and Leader in the good fight, 'the Captain of our salvation, made perfect through suffering,' and so calling us, both by his claims upon us, and his example before us, to suffer with him, and for him, that we may finally and for ever reign with him: 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.' This is the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the exceeding great reward of all who war this good warfare, even a crown of glory which fadeth not away, and which the Lord himself will bestow at his appearing; 'the free gift of God, even eternal life, through Jesus Christ.' This gift so precious is not, indeed, to be purchased by our money, or our merits, or our many labours; but it is 'the promise which God has freely promised' to them that love him, and which he hath sent his Son to bestow on as many as receive him. O! then may we not say to every soul of man, receive him, as himself the unspeakable gift of God to man, and as bringing with him nothing less than the gift of eternal life to your souls. Stand ready to receive what he is so willing to bestow. Press forward to seek from his hand what you so much need to secure. Lay hold with all your might of the offered gift, even of eternal life, and 'hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.' Let your grasp of it be as desperate as that of one who is struggling for his life, and who will not loose his hold except with his life. For, indeed, 'it is not a vain thing, it is your life,' a life alone worthy of the name, a life of heavenly blessedness, a life of immortal existence.

And to every one who may be addressed, like Timothy, as a 'man of God,' through faith acquainted with God, at peace with God, aiming to please God, may we still more especially say, Hold fast the profession which you have made before many witnesses, and endure all hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, worthy of the Lord who hath called you to glory, and to virtue. Remember how much his glory and your own good are concerned in the issue of your welfare; how you are made as a spectacle to angels, and to men; and how many are interested

in the triumph of your faith. Resist, then, the great adversary, 'be stedfast in the faith,' and give no place to his temptations, or his threatenings, no not for an hour. 'Flee all those hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction and perdition, and follow after righteousness, and godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.' Fight your good fight with those heavenly weapons which your Lord approves, and provides, and promises to make effectual. 'Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.' Listen to your heavenly Leader's voice, and let his cheering words be continually sounding in your ears. 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith.' Quit yourselves like men, be strong, 'strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' assured that you can do all things through Christ strengthening you, and shall be more than conquerors in all things through him that loved you.' Look to your Leader's example and follow his steps, through evil report, and through good report, through life and in death. Like him despising every shame, and enduring every cross; though like him you should at last yield up your mortal life, you then, like him, conquer in death, and receive from his hands the crown of life, and sit down with him for ever on the right hand of God.

#### TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand,'* John x. 27, 28.

ONE of the most beautiful and expressive emblems, employed in sacred scripture, to describe man's condition as a fallen creature, is that of lost sheep, sheep that have gone astray. Other emblems imply our guilt and rebellion against God; but this expresses chiefly our misery and danger in ourselves, as wandering from God, and seeking our good from the things of this world: 'All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.' The emblem, in its natural meaning, is remarkably descriptive of man's inability to secure himself from the miseries of his spiritual estrangement and aversion from God. A sheep that is lost is peculiarly helpless and exposed, incapable of finding its way to the fold or the flock, which it has left; neither swift enough to flee from its various enemies, nor strong enough to resist; liable to a multitude

of dangers, of which it has no experience or apprehension; and, unless speedily recovered by the care of the shepherd, sure in some way or other to be destroyed. This its rescue and restoration is the apt similitude of our redemption by the great Shepherd of souls, who 'came to seek and to save that which was lost.' He fulfils all the offices of a good Shepherd in this work which was given him to do, and which he gave himself to do; but there is one point, in which he did more than what any shepherd can ever be imagined to do, and in this, therefore, the comparison utterly fails, namely, in that he gave his life for his sheep. A shepherd among men may expose his life to risk, for the sake of his flock; as when the young shepherd of Israel threw himself upon the lion and the bear, and, at his own peril, plucked his sheep from their mouth; but the gracious Redeemer, as the good Shepherd, came deliberately, and on purpose, to suffer death for his flock: 'I lay down my life for the sheep: no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.' He made himself, as one of the helpless and unresisting flock, an offering and a sacrifice unto God, that they might go free; 'He was led like a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

Now to this flock—the church of God, which he hath 'purchased with his own blood,'—he continues to fulfil all the offices of a great and good Shepherd, till he carry them safe through the dark valley, and bring them all to the heavenly fold, where they shall for ever go out and in, and find pasture, in the full enjoyment of that eternal life which he hath given them. In this his office as the Shepherd of our souls, there is indeed presented to our minds the most engaging and affecting view of his care for our safety, and compassion for our misery, and condescension to our infirmities; even more, in some respects, than in the similitude of a father's watchfulness and labours for his children's welfare; inasmuch as a family may grow up, and guide themselves, and even support their parents in their turn; but a flock is always helpless, and continually dependant on the shepherd's care. In no words can the Redeemer's care, as a Shepherd, be so truly and beautifully described as in those of his own Holy Spirit in the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel, xxxiv. 6, &c.

The Lord is thus to his people, in a spiritual sense, what a shepherd is to his flock: 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd,' he is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. For this office he

possesses every requisite qualification in the highest degree, and fulfils its duties in the most effectual manner. 'He is mighty to save,' and though they are so feeble in themselves, and surrounded with so many adversaries, seeking to devour them; not one of them shall be lost, and no being is able to pluck them out of his hand. Though they are found in every place, and are every moment requiring his aid, yet he is able, by his divine presence, to watch over all and every one of those committed to his charge, or who cast themselves on his care: 'He calleth his own sheep by name.' He *feeds* them as a hungry flock, vainly seeking their souls' happiness in the barren wilderness of this world; leading them to the pasture of his word and ordinances, feeding them with knowledge and understanding of their true good, and giving them 'the meat which endureth unto eternal life.' He *guards* them in their defenceless state, from all things that would do them harm; making all things that befall them work together for their good; and enabling them to walk safely amidst the powers of darkness that surround them on every side, and seek their destruction every moment. He *guides* them in their readiness to go astray; warning them as by a voice behind them, 'this is the way, walk ye in it;' and, when wandering at any time from his paths, and made to feel their need of his help, he is at hand to hear their cry, and to bring them back to his fold, and to restrain them by his gracious influence on their hearts. He does all this also, not only as the great Shepherd, but as a *good* shepherd; knowing their weakness, and touched even with a feeling of their infirmities, going before them by his own example, and encouraging them to follow his steps; nay, 'constraining them by his love; strengthening them by his grace, carrying the feeblest, as in his bosom, and gently leading along those that are heavy laden with their burdens. In all this also he is *faithful* to the charge which he had undertaken. Having loved them as his own he loves them to the end, and nothing shall be able to separate them from his love, having come to seek and to save them, when they knew him not; he will never leave or forsake them after having brought them to know his voice, and to obey his call; but will carry them on 'from strength to strength till every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.'

How great the blessedness of having such a Shepherd as the object of our faith and trust, and of being able to rejoice in the sense of his superintending care and unchangeable love. How precious such a persuasion to every soul of man, when truly

feeling our weak and defenceless condition, even in our earthly pilgrimage, and our lost and ruined state as spiritual beings. How precious such a persuasion, founded not upon our own worthiness, but upon the Lord's faithfulness, enabling us to say with the apostle: 'I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'

How important also to consider and keep in mind the character which he himself gives of his flock, and which many, he tells us, who now appear as the sheep of his hand shall be found to want, when he shall come, as the last act of his office, to separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. This character is generally, that we welcome him as our Shepherd; that it may said of us: 'Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd of your souls,' and that we be, indeed, saying each for himself, 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant;' 'Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.' And it is farther, that we wait on him for all the direction which we need; that we give heed to hear his voice, and show that we know his voice, and follow him as he calleth us. So may we be warranted to say, 'The Lord is my shepherd;' and so may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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 TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'* Mic. vi. 8.

At no time hath God left himself without a witness, or man without a guide; and more especially in his revealed word hath he clearly shown us what is good, and as clearly charged it upon us as his will to make that good known (both its good tidings and its good counsels) to every living soul on the face of the earth. This he hath done with authority, and hath the fullest authority to do. He hath shown it, both as his sovereign will, and as our supreme good; not as a matter submitted to our choice, but as a message sent down for our obedience; not merely pointing out the good and right way, that we may walk in it if we please; but saying with authority which we

must not presume to question, as well as with a regard to our good which we cannot question, 'this is the way walk ye in it.' As in himself the source of all excellence, and possessed of all power, he has an essential right to rule over all inferior natures, so that enlightened reason would make it their wisdom to learn and follow his will; but especially, as the author and upholder of their existence, he holds the most unquestionable title to their entire submission, and to their utmost service. We must feel at once, that we are not only made by him, but made for him; and that, merely as his property, it must be the grossest injustice to withhold our allegiance and obedience, in whatever he hath shown to be his will. Not only as indebted to him for our existence at first, but as dependent on him for its continuance every moment; we are made to feel his authority over us, to do with us and to direct us as he may please. As his creatures, we are always in his hands, and entirely at his disposal. Our whole existence, with every enjoyment which it brings, hangs upon his sole will and sovereign pleasure. If he hide his face, we are miserable; if he withdraw his hand, we are nothing. Vain man may indeed imagine himself to be his own master, and affect independence of his Maker, saying in his heart, or acting as if he said, 'Who is Lord over us?' But this is nothing else than the madness which is in his heart as a fallen creature; nothing better than the illusion of the maniac, who speaks of himself as a king, and tosses about the straws in his cell as his subjects.

Not only, however, hath the most high God the most rightful authority to show us his will; he hath graciously shown us 'what is good;' and his holy will, made known to us, is just the way of our own true happiness. He alone indeed hath the ability, as well as the authority, to show us what is good; as he best knows the form of being which he hath given us, and the means most conducive to its well being. We may thus be well persuaded of the suitableness of his law addressed to the children of men, merely from what we are able to discern of his wisdom and goodness in the provision which he hath made for the welfare of the several inferior creatures around us. So that whatever aspect any of his commandments may, at first sight, bear to our apprehension, it would become us to be satisfied, and to say with the apostle, that it is 'holy, just, and good.' Such indeed has been proved to be its character by the experience of mankind, by the experience both of those who have found that, in forsaking his commandments, they have for-

saken their own mercies, and followed their own misery; and in the experience of those who have as convincingly found, that, in keeping his commandments, even in the degree in which they have been able to keep them, there is a great present reward. Whenever men think and feel otherwise, it is only in the enmity of the carnal mind against God, and not from any defect of goodness in his commandments. Whenever they are disposed to regard his law as over strict or spiritual, to reject that as evil which he hath shown to be good, to rebel against that as grievous which they should welcome as most gracious; it all proceeds from their own blindness and corruption, and only proves the disordered state of their fallen nature. What is sweeter than honey to man's natural sense of taste? And what is our conclusion when any man rejects it as nauseous, and declares it to be bitter? Not surely that honey has lost its savour, but that he has lost his soundness of health. Such indeed, in the case of natural objects, is his own conclusion. Of these he has knowledge sufficient to feel, that the change here is in himself, not in the honey; and so, often has he, even in his natural conscience, an apprehension of the goodness of God's law in itself—an approbation of its precepts, when observed by others in regard to himself, and a conviction that it is the best rule of duty for all men, which it would be their happiness to follow; and a general conformity to it of his own laws and regulations in society. But when charged with our duty to obey it as God's holy will, in all its spirituality and purity, in our whole heart and life; or when burdened with the fear of God's displeasure on account of our sins against it; then do we begin either to question its authority and excellence, or to substitute something else in place of this perfect obedience which it requires, and which we feel ourselves unable to render. It is to man in this state, and in danger of this error, that the words are addressed, 'he hath showed thee, O man, what is good.' It is to man awakened to some sense of his obligation, and yet of his inability, to worship and serve God—sensible of his duty to 'come before God,' sensible of the glory and majesty of 'the most high God,' sensible of his unworthiness and guiltiness in the sight of that God, as requiring some great atonement or offering on his part, wherewith he may come with acceptance; anxiously inquiring after some way of his own devising to gain that acceptance; and as in this state willing, if he could, to go beyond all ordinary acts of worship, to give all that he could be supposed to possess: thousands of burnt-sacrifices, rivers of oil-offerings, the very fruit of his body, even his first-born, 'for the sin of his soul.' To man in this state, a state to which every soul shall at last be brought, a sense of guilt and apprehension of wrath, which all shall feel when standing before his judgment-seat; to man, now trembling as a sinner, and inquiring as a suppliant, the gracious message has been given, the way of peace proclaimed. 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;' showed this all clearly and fully in his revealed word, showed it to all to whom that word has come, and to whom it is his charge to send it; namely, to men at large, to all mankind, 'his good and acceptable and perfect will.' He hath given to them a law, which is entirely and unchangeably good, the transcript of his divine nature, the source of happiness to his rational creatures, the instrument of their sanctification as sinners, the rule of their duty to himself and to one another, the eternal law of righteousness, the essence of unceasing good, which never can be altered, and in place of which nothing can be substituted. 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good,' and nothing can ever be put in its place as good to thy soul, nor canst thou ever be set free from the love of it as the supreme good of thine own immortal nature. This is the summary and the substance of what he thus requires, requires in all its extent, requires at all times, and never can cease to require of all living souls: namely, 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.' He hath showed thee, O man, how thou mayest come before him, and stand before him, and rejoice before him, even for evermore. And that not by making void what he thus requires, but by establishing it more firmly than ever as his will; not by setting thee free from the love of it, but by instilling the love of it as the very life and joy of thy soul; not by directing thee to bring any offering to stand in place of this love of it, but by providing an offering, which binds the love of it upon every heart, even by 'the Lord our righteousness,' who hath fulfilled all righteousness, and who forms all who receive him as their Lord to the love of all righteousness. 'This man,' as the prophet had already said in God's name, 'shall be the peace.' He hath made our peace by fulfilling in our stead what God requires; but now prepares us to enjoy this peace, by renewing our souls to the same love of all that God requires. He shows us what is good, and all who have learned of him, have learned, or rather are learning, to love him with their whole souls: to love what he did, to love what he now does, to love what he now is, to love to become daily more like to himself, even to him who said, 'Lo, I

come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.' And of all who embrace through him God's covenant of mercy, it is as expressly written in the volume of the book, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.' This then still is, and ever will be, the language of their's as his people, and as their Lord's was, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.' 'I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved.' 'O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day.' 'O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' He hath showed thee, O Christian, what is good, showed it in him who alone is good; and what doth the Lord still require of thee, or if not required, what shouldst thou require of thyself, but 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' not as thereby gaining thy salvation, but as thereby glorifying thy Saviour.

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TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,'* Heb. xi. 6.

NOTHING of that good which God hath showed to man can be sought, nor any part of what he requires be duly rendered, 'without faith;' without faith it is impossible to please God; nay, without faith it is impossible for any desire to please God to exist in the heart, or to continue to influence the practice, and to be carried out with any measure of perseverance. The first thought of coming to God to offer him any worship, to yield to him any obedience, or to seek from him any good, must be founded upon some principle of faith. He that cometh to God with any view of pleasing him, 'must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' He must have some realizing sense, such as faith only can present to the mind, of God's invisible being, spiritual presence, and overruling providence. This can be maintained only by the power of faith, as the evidence of things not seen, as the eye by which we are capable of seeing him that is invisible. But, as coming to God with any view of pleasing him, there must be also a persuasion of his willingness to receive the services of creatures such as we are, and some way of their receiving a reward from his hand. This can be known only by his own declaration of his

will to that effect; and this declaration from God can be apprehended only by faith as a reliance on the testimony of God, and an assent to the truths which he hath revealed—a resting both upon God's veracity in what he hath affirmed, and his faithfulness in what he hath promised.

The first inquiry in the heart of fallen man naturally is, 'wherewith shall I come before the Lord?' how much do I stand in need of his forgiveness for sins that are past, and on what ground can I hope for his mercy and favour? Or, supposing that forgiveness received, what can I be able to render as a service, with which he may be pleased? 'what shall I do to inherit eternal life;' or, supposing it revealed, as here expressed, that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, when can I say that I have sought such a reward so diligently as I ought? The more clearly that any one discerns the excellence of the law of God as holy, just, and good, and the more deeply that he feels his obligation to obey it in thought, word, and deed, the more may he be discouraged to seek the reward of that obedience which it requires. He either contents himself with yielding a reluctant servile submission, or he renounces the task in despair as above his strength. He regards the law with enmity, as a hard service, and the lawgiver with dread, as 'a consuming fire.' Here then is the power of faith in presenting to sinful man in these circumstances, not any testimony of his pleasing God, or being able to please him by his own walking or working; but the testimony of God himself, the testimony of Jesus Christ, of a new and living way for his access to the most high God, and acceptance in his sight; nay, of a reward from his Father in heaven, 'the reward of the inheritance,' provided and promised to all them that believe his promise, and 'this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life.' This is the testimony which faith receives as the truth of God, and on which it rests as a warrant to seek to please God, and in which it rejoices as the assurance of a reward from the hand of God, namely, that 'God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood; that he then declares the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, and yet his righteousness in such remission on the ground of that propitiation; that he is thus at once 'just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' By this faith in Jesus does the sinner receive a testimony, and rejoice in the hope that he may please God, not by any merit of that faith, or of any thing proceeding from that faith; but for the merit and through the mediation of him in whom he

believes, and with whom God is ever well-pleased. There also is the testimony of Jesus himself, on which the sinner rests as his warrant to come to God; namely, that he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, 'and that him that cometh he will in no wise cast out.' Having thus come he receives farther the testimony of Jesus, how he ought to walk and to please God, and how he may find grace from God to work in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Farther still, from the same testimony of Jesus, he is able to apprehend by his faith, as the substance of things hoped for, the glorious nature of this recompense of reward, laid up in store for them that love him; and so to 'press forward to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

Thus does faith, looking to the power, and grace, and promises of the Redeemer, animate every soul of man with the testimony, that he may, indeed, please God, and find him a most gracious rewarder. This faith alone presents to sinful man sufficient encouragements to think of pleasing God, and in the very nature of these encouragements, the most suitable motives to please him more and more as a happy service. Looking by faith to what God is in himself, and what he hath done for us; to the infinite glories of his nature, and to the transcendent love of the Redeemer, we receive the most exalted views of our obligation to please him, and experience the most transforming influence of things not seen. Looking by faith to the things hoped for, to the reward of the inheritance, we reach the gates of the celestial city, and view by the same faith the paradise of God, and the multitude of the redeemed, and the glories of the eternal state; and are constrained to exclaim, 'Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God.' Faith thus worketh by the power of the world to come, and by the love of the Lord whom you serve. Living by this faith, we are constrained to 'count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord;' to live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again.' We thus learn not to calculate how little may please him, but to consider how much we may do to serve him. The law of our God and the love of our Lord will then be in our heart, and our heart's desire and prayer will be to know all that he hath showed to us to be good, and to do all that he hath declared to be his will. However high that will may be above our strength, however contrary to our natural inclinations, however opposed to our earthly interests, requiring

the surrender of a 'right eye, or a right hand,' we shall nevertheless feel our duty to please him, and shall wish, not to bring it down to the level of our corruption, but to raise our souls to the purity of the heavenly precept, 'to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.' 'Lord, increase our faith;' may it 'grow exceedingly;' may we 'look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen;' may we never cast away our confidence which hath great recompense of reward, neither may we rest satisfied with the thought of having obtained this precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; but may we 'give all diligence to add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness and charity; that we may be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

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#### TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Isa. viii. 20.*

HE that cometh unto God must believe that he is; and he that would please God must welcome his own instructions as to the best way of pleasing him. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;' and without such a faith as receives and rests upon that word, it is indeed impossible to please God. To that word faith must look, as the sole and supreme rule of the truths to be believed, and of the duties to be rendered. 'To the law and to the testimony.'

By these terms is the divine word very generally and very suitably denominated; 'a testimony' from God himself, pledging his own veracity in the declaration of those truths which we are concerned to believe; and 'a law' from God on high, pronouncing by his own authority those precepts which we are called to obey. Nor was this merely a voice of words spoken, to be passed from one human being to another, and preserved as they best could for their guidance; a word which might have been changed, forgotten, or lost; but 'a scripture,'—words written or recorded, to remain indelible and unaltered; always at hand to be consulted, and to be re-called again and again to remembrance. 'Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;' and not only spake, but wrote as they were com-

manded, that we might believe. 'The Lord said to Moses, Write thou these words, for after these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel;' and to Habakkuk, 'Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.' 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.' It is most clearly, therefore, at once our privilege and our duty to know 'the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works;' to look to them at all times, and in all circumstances, with steadfast faith, as a light shining in this dark world, to cheer our hearts; as a lamp put into our hands, to guide our steps.'

It is *complete as a directory*, containing all that is essential for us to know concerning God, and all that is necessary for bringing us to God. Nothing is to be added to it, and nothing is to be diminished from it. It is *infallible as a standard* of truth and duty, and to its decision, without any appeal, must be submitted, without reserve, all our opinions, reasonings, desires, and actions: 'to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them; no morning dawn, but only leaving us in the darkness of night, or leading us into deeper darkness and distress, farther away from God and out of the paths of peace. It is *authoritative as a law*, and alone capable of influencing the hearts of men amidst the storms of passion and the conflicts of temptation. Its sovereign word, 'thus saith the Lord,' with its solemn sanction of eternal weal or woe to all who receive or reject that word; this voice of the Father of our spirits and the Judge of the universe, speaking from heaven, penetrates to the heart and conscience 'like a two-edged sword, quick and powerful,' cutting short all delay, and compelling instant obedience. It is *clear as a rule*, and such as no humble believer, who sincerely desires to follow its counsel, and earnestly prays for the promised guidance, can fail to understand in its great and leading points of faith and practice; 'good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way.' 'The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way.' 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.'

'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.' Let us here mark particularly what it is that constitutes its perfection and excellence, viz. its suitableness and efficacy for accomplishing the purpose for which he sent it,

the conversion of the soul to God, the soul even of the most simple-minded among men. It is not to be regarded as a mere matter of knowledge, to be thoroughly learned in all its parts, as a system of doctrine, or a record of events, or a collection of sayings, to dwell in the memory, to be uttered with the lips, to be professed as a creed; but as a principle of spiritual renovation, to be hid, in the heart, as its comforter and purifier, speaking peace, purging from sin, and transforming into the image of God.—'Sanctifying by the truth,' and 'renewing by the power of the Holy Ghost.' Thus may the simple among men, those who are lowest in the learning of this world, and only as babes in understanding, be made 'wise towards God,' and walk in his light; just as the humble labourer among men may rejoice in the natural light of the sun, and go forth under its shining to the work of his hands, as effectually as the deep searcher into the things that are made, who can trace the courses of the heavenly luminaries, and take as it were to pieces the very beams of light which they send forth. The simple-minded believer, thus looking with unfeigned and unreserved credence to the sure testimony of the Lord, finds a stable foundation on which to rest his hopes for eternity; 'thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' Every word of God thus coming to his mind, with all its sacred authority and sanctifying power, carries at once the firmest conviction and fullest consolation to his soul: 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' 'Be it unto me according to thy word.'

Let us especially keep in mind the claims of the most high God to our implicit acquiescence and obedience, in all that he hath addressed to us in his word; and our duty, as his rational and accountable creatures, to go to its pages in a teachable and humble spirit, and to make it the rule and standard of all our principles, affections, and actions. Let us desire to say at all times, with the Psalmist, 'My heart standeth in awe of thy word;' and let us dread the thought of in any measure neglecting its great salvation, making light of its gracious invitations, and above all, making a mock of any of its words of grace and truth. How heinous the guilt of those, and how heavy the judgments denounced against those, who deliberately pervert the right ways of the Lord—'who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness.' 'Because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel; therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched

forth his hand against them and smitten them.' To every soul it is said in his name, 'receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart.' 'More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey comb.'

If such be in any measure our views of its excellence and preciousness, let us see that we give heed thereto according to its words, and open our hearts to receive its converting influence, and comforting promises, and holy precepts. Let us hold fast by its 'sure testimony' as the anchor of our souls, that we may neither be weary in well doing, nor moved away from the hope of the gospel. Let us be careful to draw daily from its pages, as from an inexhaustible fountain, fresh supplies of the living water which it contains; and to repair duly to all its appointed ordinances of grace, as 'wells of salvation' to our souls. Let us prize the written record, 'the scripture of truth' as a heavenly mine of unsearchable riches; as the last of our possessions with which we should ever consent to part; as the best gift that we can ever have the power to bestow; as the precious legacy of the Lord, who died for us; as the special conveyance, by his death, of our title to an incorruptible inheritance. So may we be enabled to enter fully into the sentiment of the devout Psalmist, and to say with unceasing and increasing thankfulness, 'the law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver.' 'Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.'

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TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law,' Deut. xxix. 29.*

THERE are many 'deep things of God which no created being can fathom; such as his own essential nature and manner of existence, and mode of acting upon his creatures; and, even to the highest of the angelic hosts, it may be said, 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' 'He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it.' There are many 'deep things of God;' at least, connected with his perfections, and providence, and purposes, which, however known by higher orders of beings, we have not the proper faculties and means of knowing, and cannot possibly know in our present

state. They may be known to us hereafter, and they may now be known to principalities and powers in heavenly places; but they are utterly beyond the reach of our present apprehension; 'it is high as heaven, what canst thou know; deeper than hell, what canst thou understand?' There are other 'deep things,' or at least 'secret things,' which, though possible, it would not be suitable or proper for us to know; such as the purposes of God in the works of his providence, in the case of nations and individuals, or in our own future progress and condition in this life, or in the peculiar manner of our existence in the world to come; things which it would be incompatible with the ends in view to make known, or which it would be injurious to our own peace to know. 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.' 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.'

All such deep things, or 'secret things,' belong to God; many of them of necessity, as what he alone can know, and all of them as his province, as alone entitled to judge what should be revealed or retained, and so as proving his very pre-eminence and independence. 'It is the glory of God to conceal a thing,' and thus his creatures should have reason to adore his sovereignty and sufficiency in himself: 'how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.' 'Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?' They belong to God as essential to his government of the world, and as training us to due humility of mind in his presence, and submission of our will to his authority, to receive the truth which he is pleased to make known, though we see only a part of it; and to trust in the righteousness of his dealings, though we see not all the reasons on which they rest; and to yield obedience to all his precepts, though we know not all the uses which they serve. They belong to him of right, as his property, to impart to his creatures what portion of knowledge he pleases, and to give them the prospect of more as he may judge best for their happiness. And such, it may be presumed, will be one great source of happiness in the eternal world to all spiritual beings, to be always receiving more and more knowledge of himself, and of his excellencies, and of his glorious works; and yet to feel that the fountain of such blessings is inexhaustible, and that infinitely more yet remains to be learned and enjoyed, receiving eternally out of his fulness fresh light to behold his glory, and farther reasons to rejoice in his love.

To attempt to reach those secret things which

God hath withheld, is at once a presumptuous impeachment of his goodness in so withholding them, and a rebellious endeavour to attain to them against his will. Such daring inquiries might well provoke the divine judgments, and do ordinarily bring their own punishment in their train; overwhelming often the proud reason which rushes into the depths of God's infinity, or at least swelling the heart with a foolish conceit of superior knowledge, and always involving those who are guilty of them in the most pernicious and perverse disputings, to the subversion often of their own faith, and to the hindrance of all godly edifying. But 'vain man will be wise, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind;' and there is no small hazard of falling into this snare of the tempter, inasmuch as 'the secret things' which belong to God, and 'the things revealed' for our use, do in fact border so closely upon each other, that it is very easy to pass from the plain path of the one into the deep abyss of the other. The great truths of salvation are made known simply as *facts*, without any account of the reasons for their existence, or the manner of their operation. The simplest of these facts, or rather of the ideas which they express, such as the being of a God, is a profound mystery; and every thing connected with the will or worship of an incomprehensible being, must lead into the depths of mysteriousness. To clear up their darkness, we are tempted to penetrate a little farther; and so are plunged into a deeper obscurity, and by all our labours to remove the difficulties in which we are involved, only 'darkening counsel by words without knowledge.' Thus some are fond to be wise above what is written, wishing to impose along with it their own explanation; while others are too wise to receive what is written, because they want along with it a sufficient explanation. But the silence is as instructive as the language of scripture. Its truths must be apprehended by humble faith; and they disdain to be comprehended or modelled by our proud reason. They only are truly wise, who keep close to that which is written, and who say of all attempts to go beyond it, in the humble language of the Psalmist, 'such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it.' But the things revealed comprise all that is necessary for us to know; and nothing is kept back that could be profitable unto us. Both the way of salvation, and the rule of life, are most clearly made known, and most carefully repeated for our instruction and encouragement. Many a single chapter, nay,

many a single verse, contains the substance of what is essential to our peace, and indicative of our duty. The perfections of God, and our obligations to love and serve him; our character as sinful creatures, and our inability to render due obedience to his will; the way of our acceptance in Jesus Christ, and the promised aids of his Holy Spirit; the duties which we thus owe to our heavenly Father and blessed Redeemer, and to one another in our several stations and relations in life; the dangers which beset our souls in the way of life, and the means of grace which are provided for our use and edification.—These things are all plainly revealed and pressed upon our attention, as things which belong to us as a privilege, and which it behoveth us as a duty to know; and to remain slothfully inattentive to such knowledge, as if it was of no value, to be willing to know *less* than what is revealed, is as insulting to God as to attempt to know *more*. 'Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame.' Nor are they to be regarded as things merely to be known, but as all meant to be practised and revealed, that we may do all the words of this law. 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' 'Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say.' 'If ye love me keep my commandments.' They are revealed that they may be remembered. They are of universal interest, and of perpetual obligation. They are to be held fast as our own high privilege; and to be handed down to our children as their best inheritance.

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 TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.'* John xv. 4.

'YE believe in God,' said the blessed Redeemer to his disciples, 'believe also in me;' and it is manifest to all who believe God in his word, that it is the will of God and the work of God, that 'we believe on him whom he hath sent;' this is his commandment, 'that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.' This was the work which was given him to do, viz., the work of man's

redemption; and which he finished on the cross, both by his propitiatory suffering, and by his perfect righteousness. But how is this redemption applied to our souls? and how are we made partakers of the benefits which Christ thus purchased? By the power of his own Spirit in our hearts, 'working faith in us, and so uniting us to Christ.' This faith is the connecting bond or point of contact, if we may so speak, between the Saviour and our souls. 'Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood;' and being justified by this faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are thus 'found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' But Christ, as a Saviour, saves his people from their sins; not merely from the debt of sin, but from the death of sin; not merely making them partakers of his salvation, but making them meet for the enjoyment of that salvation; and this he does by the power of the same Spirit, and by means of the same instrument; 'sanctified by faith, that is in me,' 'purifying their hearts by faith.' 'God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.'

Not only, then, must we be found in him, but also abide in him, and by the same faith which brings us into this justified state, must we both be preserved therein, while we live here on earth, and prepared for eternal life in heaven. Never must our faith lose sight, or lose hold, of him who is our soul's life; and our connection with him must be as close and constant, as that of the branch with its root. As the branch of the vine can bear no fruit, except by its close connection and continued communication with the root, and the regular supply of nourishment through the stem on which it grows; so neither can our souls preserve a saving interest in Christ's merits, or experience the sanctifying influence of his grace, unless by the exercise of an abiding and living faith in him, as the sacred source or root of all heavenly blessings and spiritual life to fallen man. *An abiding and living faith* it must be, in order to bear any fruit, for his heavenly Father's use. A dead branch, though apparently adhering to the stem of the vine, yet, having no living principle in itself, nor channel of communication with the root, must remain altogether unfruitful, as well as altogether unseemly; and is doomed to be taken away, and cast into the fire. Thus must our faith, not as a mere outward profession, but as an inward principle, continue to draw from Christ, and through Christ,

as our root and stem, a sufficient stimulus for its own support, and a supply of nourishment for the production of fruit. 'He is full of grace and truth;' and 'of his fulness we must all receive, and grace for grace,' grace after grace. In this way only can we live in the Spirit, and grow in grace, and bear the fruits of righteousness, viz., by the lively and habitual exercise of faith towards the Saviour, as the source of all heavenly blessings to our souls. Faith not only maintains the soul's reliance on the merits of the Redeemer's death on the cross, but carries its views within the veil, to behold what he is still doing on his throne in the heavens. It thus beholds him ever living to make intercession, ever able to save to the uttermost; continually carrying forward his gracious plans, and communicating his heavenly blessings. It thus brings near to the soul all those sanctifying truths and constraining motives, which produce the spiritual fruit of holy affections and grateful obedience. In proportion to the strength and increase of this faith, does the believer abound in such fruits of righteousness to the glory of the heavenly husbandman. Through faith, as the spiritual organ, does the great Sanctifier show to the soul things invisible, and convey to the soul influences from above, thus at once invigorating its graces, and increasing its fruitfulness. Thus, in Christ Jesus 'nothing availeth but faith which worketh by love;' and, in the sight of God, no obedience is pleasing but what is thus 'a work of faith, and a labour of love shown to his name.'

But however we may apprehend or explain the process, such, our Lord declares, is the effect of the union and intercourse with him, which constitutes a genuine disciple: 'He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.' 'Without him we can do nothing;' but, with 'Christ strengthening us, we can do all things.' 'So must Christ dwell in our hearts by faith,' and so must we 'live the life which we now live in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God.' So must we connect our expectation of any blessing from God with the thought of Christ, as its Author to our souls; and offer every service to God only through Christ, as our Advocate with the Father. So must we continue to look to him, not only for the gift of eternal life, of which we are so unworthy; but also for the preparation to enjoy a heavenly life, for which we are so unfit. So must we look to him, not only for the first principle of spiritual life, but also for the daily support of the life of God in our souls. So must we consider our true life, in all its functions, as hidden with Christ in

God; and desire always to say, in all that forms our Christian life on earth, 'Not I but Christ liveth in me.' So, 'when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.'

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 TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God,' Ezek. xi. 19, 20.*

THE blessed gospel of Christ, as a dispensation of divine mercy, is at once a glorious manifestation of the abundant grace of God, and a triumphant display of the power of God and the wisdom of God, in all its parts, and throughout the whole of its progress. In this new covenant, to which all previous dispensations were only preparatory, he hath made the fullest provision, not only for the entire pardon of all sin, and the enjoyment of inward peace, as his free gifts to all who embrace its terms; but also for their holy obedience, final perseverance, and eternal salvation as his people. Even to 'principalities and powers in heavenly places,' is thus made known the manifold wisdom of God in harmonizing all the moral perfections of the Godhead, and magnifying to the utmost the authority of his holy law, while proclaiming the free forgiveness of all sin to a race of polluted and rebellious creatures. While it is to the praise of the glory of his grace, that sinful men are accepted in the Beloved, and receive even 'the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will;' it is made equally manifest that he hath 'abounded towards them in all wisdom and prudence' to the glory of his holiness, by the renewal of their fallen nature into his own image, and their visible love and service as his obedient children. Both by the change wrought in them, and by the mercy shown to them, they at once experience in themselves, and manifest to others, that the whole of their salvation is 'to the praise of his glory;' and the most adorable wisdom and prudence have been conjoined with unspeakable grace, in forming and executing the holy plan of man's salvation.

The source of all, and the cause of all, that is thus done in man's salvation is the sovereign will and free grace of God himself; no necessity of

nature imposing it on his part; no worthiness or act of merit attracting it on our part; nothing but his own good pleasure; 'not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;' 'I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.' He thus secures their obedience to his law, not by some external force on his part, constraining them to alter their course, or by some seeming show of conformity on their part in the mere actions of the life; but by an inward principle instilled into the very frame of the soul itself, from which, as from a fountain of living water, shall flow forth a pure and perennial stream. As himself a spiritual being, and the Father of the spirits of all flesh, it can only be by a spiritual worship and service, that any suitable intercourse can be maintained with them as rational and immortal creatures—that they can be formed to be his people, and that he can be felt to be their God. Such a spirit he puts into them, so different in all respects from what is naturally to be found in any man, that it may justly be called, and really is, a *new spirit*; not new faculties or means of understanding, but a renewing of the spirit of the mind; a new bent or direction to all their powers and pursuits and pleasures, so as to lead especially to new views of all those things that concern our work and well being in regard to an eternal world. Nor is it merely a new train of *thinking* on these things, a new creed of religious belief; a new course of religious observances; but also a *new state of feeling*, a change of heart, a *heart of flesh*; a heart no longer obdurate and insensible to the claims of God, and the concerns of eternity, feeling nothing, and fearing nothing; but a heart alive, and open, and sensitive, and easily made to feel an awe of God's glories, and an apprehension of his mercies, an anxiety for his favour, and a sympathy for other souls, either as already impressed, or as needing to be impressed, by similar thoughts and feelings. Nor is it merely a new train of *thinking* and a new state of feeling which constitutes this spiritual renovation; but a new course of *acting*, proceeding from this inward change, and proving its secret influence; 'that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them,' receiving henceforth the whole of the law of God from his mouth, reverencing all its commandments as his, and because they are his; continuing in them, as our walk and course of duty, while we live; and carefully doing them, as he may impart the power and the opportunity.

Let us mark the plain and pure doctrine of the divine word on this momentous subject of spiritual renovation; and preserve it distinct in our minds from all human reasonings and illustrations connected with it. These interpretations, whether true or false, wise or foolish, affect not at all the matter of fact, so explicitly testified, namely, that all must undergo a great spiritual change, which the Spirit of God alone can produce, before they can be numbered among his people, and be blessed by him as their God, 'I will put a new spirit within you, and ye shall be my people.' Let us observe also, and remember always, the close connection existing between the several parts of the new nature here described; and guard against the delusion of supposing that we may attain any portion of such a change, without aiming after the whole; that we may observe God's statutes, without undergoing any such change of heart; or that we may have experienced the renewing of his Spirit, while neglectful of his statutes, and inattentive to his commandments. A practical regard to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, is the natural fruit of the heart being right with God, the surest proof that a saving change has taken place, the settled purpose of God in effecting such a change, 'I will put a new spirit within you, that ye may walk in my statutes, and do them.' All reason, scripture, and experience point to a holy life as the best and fittest evidence of a renewed spirit; and to which the Lord himself, as Judge, hath declared, that he will point the attention of the whole world, as evidencing those who are his people, and who shall be with him as their God, for ever and ever. Whatever other marks may be thought of, this is the highest, and the surest, and has been justly denominated 'the sign of signs.' 'All graces do join together but to frame and fashion the soul to obedience. Then, so much obedience as is in your lives, so much grace in your hearts. Therefore ask your hearts, how subject you are to your Lord in your lives.\*'

#### THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye,' Acts iv. 19.*

THERE can be no question among those who believe the word of God, that it is one of his

statutes and ordinances to respect the authority, and obey the laws of the civil government under which we live; and that civil government, under some form or other, is itself a permanent ordinance of God, and essential to the very existence of society. It is specially enjoined upon his people, that every soul be subject unto the higher powers; and that we must thus be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. In this duty it becomes us cheerfully to acquiesce, as so clearly the will of God as well as conducive to the good of mankind; and to cherish the principle in our hearts, as in all merely temporal matters invariably binding, rather than to indulge in framing or fancying cases in which we would be warranted to refuse such obedience. In all that concerns only our worldly interests and comforts, it becomes the Christian to exercise such submission to the uttermost, and to take patiently the spoiling of his goods, the infliction of bonds and imprisonment, or even the sacrifice of life itself, rather than to maintain actual resistance and rebellion against those powers, which are ordained of God.

But neither, on the other hand, can there be any question, that there is an allegiance and obedience due to God himself, with which no authority upon earth, or fear of man's wrath, must be allowed to interfere; and that we are not only warranted but bound by the same principle of conscience, to carry our resistance, so far at least as to refuse compliance with their commands, when clearly contrary to the divine statutes and ordinances;—when requiring us either to withhold what we believe God has commanded, or to commit what we believe he has forbidden. 'If a case were supposed, in which a governor were to require one of his subjects to perform an action, which would be a breach of the divine commandments; then the subject, whatsoever consequences might await him, must refuse compliance, because God is at all risks to be obeyed rather than man. Were the governor to require a proceeding to be carried into effect, which the laws of the land forbid, the duty of the subject would be, not to obey: for, under God, the law is sovereign. The governor is bound no less than the subject to obey the laws of the land, and it is only by virtue of these laws, and according to these laws, that he is authorized to require obedience.' (Gisborne's Sermons). 'God has a prior claim to our obedience, which no human interference, no relation which may be formed between us and others, no promise or contract can invalidate. Those, therefore, who refuse to comply with the unlawful orders of their superiors are not disobedient

\* Edwards on Religious Affection.

subjects; in such cases they are not subject.' (Dick's Lectures on the Acts). 'The laws of men ought not to be obeyed, when they require those things which are contrary to the commandments of God: "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." We may, indeed, be mistaken in our judgment, and our scruples may be groundless; but conscience is our immediate rule of action, and no human authority can justify us in violating its decisions, whatever painful consequences may come from adhering to them.' (Thomas Scott).

Nay, in all that immediately concerns the worship of God, or the meaning of his word, we are bound even to exercise a sensitive jealousy of every interference of man between our own consciences and the Father of our spirits; and that just because mankind are more ready to surrender to the fear or favour of their fellow-creatures those duties which they owe to God, than those which they owe to one another. It is specially worthy of observation, that the more direct examples of such resistance, on the part of God's servants and people, recorded in his word, refer entirely to the purity of God's worship, and the authority of his word, in which every man must be guided by the dictates of his own conscience, in the face of the highest human authority, and the clearest meaning of the existing human law. Such was the case of the three young Jews, who refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image; of Daniel, who refused to restrain prayer to God, in obedience to the decree of Darius; and of the apostles Peter and John, who refused to refrain from preaching in the name of Christ, at the command of the Jewish rulers.

'Whilst the multitude, in every age, nation, and rank in society, are servile in compliance with the will of their superiors, and ready to obey any laws about religion, which conduce to their outward ease, safety, and emolument, without fear of God, or regard to conscience; there are a few witnesses for the truth, in the most degenerate times, who dare to be singular, and to venture all consequences, in obeying God rather than man. These will be sure to meet with malicious accusers, especially if the liberty, favour, or property, which they enjoy, be worth envying or coveting. Their enemies will speciously profess themselves to be the only loyal and dutiful subjects to their prince, and zealous for his welfare, and honour of the law, and the quiet of the realm; and they will represent the pious scruples of the servants of God as arising from contumacy, contempt of authority, and disaffection to the government; and as deserving of the severest punishment denounced by the

most cruel laws. They will not, if they can help it, let persecuting statutes remain unexecuted; and they will plead, that, if the religious tenets of the persecuted do not deserve punishment, yet their obstinacy and contempt of legal authority do. Thus princes have often been wrought up to the highest pitch of rage and fury against their most useful and inoffensive subjects, and their most faithful servants; and Christians have been dragged as the vilest malefactors before kings and rulers, and put to the dreadful alternative, either to risk the everlasting wrath of God by deliberate disobedience to his commandments, or to suffer every torture which the infernal rage and cruelty of man can devise. They, who have been long accustomed to be obeyed with unreserved servility, and to overpower all opposition, can scarcely conceive of a power above them, or a God able to deliver his servants out of their hands; but their impious boasts and proud menaces are real kindnesses to the persecuted, who need not be careful or fearful in answering, under such circumstances. Indeed, these fiery trials will not suit the superficial and hypocritical. Their fear of man, and love of the world, and want of fear or love to God; and above all, their want of faith, will concur in rendering them apostates in the time of temptation, nor will every real believer be able to stand with serene and unshaken fortitude, when first cast into such a trying situation. But the Lord will strengthen his people's faith in the time of need; and firm reliance on the divine wisdom, power, truth, and mercy, together with peace of conscience, and an assured joyful hope of heaven, will gradually compose their mind, and determine them to venture all consequences, rather than to sin against the Lord. He is as able, as he was in ancient times, to preserve the lives of his servants in the most imminent perils, to support them under the most exquisite sufferings, and abundantly to recompense all their losses for his sake. A firm persuasion of these truths will fortify the soul against temptations to prevaricate or to be ashamed of Christ; for no plea of necessity, danger, obligation, or example will be sufficient, if we deliberately break God's commandments, for the sake of temporal safety or advantage. We should be *meek* in our replies, even when exposed to the most unmerited injuries, "Not rendering railing for railing," for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God; but we must also be *decisive*, that we will obey God rather than man, and take the consequences.' (Thomas Scott.)

## THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The works of his hands are verity and judgment: all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness,'* Psal. cxi. 7, 8.

THE supreme authority of the law of God may be ultimately rested upon his absolute power to execute all his pleasure; and hence may very rationally be argued, the madness of deliberately acting in opposition to his will, or of allowing any human authority to set aside our obedience to his commandments. But, though it is indeed a serious consideration, never to be forgotten, that 'the Lord doeth according to his will, and that none can stay his hand;' yet never is that will exercised in a mere arbitrary manner, without any regard to what is right in itself, and conducive to the good of his creatures. He is indeed 'excellent in power,' but also, as it is added, 'in judgment and in plenty of justice;' and the supreme authority of his law rests not so much on his *power to enforce*, as on his *right to receive*, the utmost reverence and obedience of all his creatures.

This right is founded upon his own inherent excellence, as not only the highest but the best of all beings, deserving the entire esteem and love of his rational creation, and worthy (if such a supposition can be made) of being entrusted from their own free choice with the uncontrolled direction of their entire interests, for time and eternity. 'The Lord God omnipotent reigneth,' 'but he sitteth on the throne of his holiness;' and hence it is said, 'let them praise thy great and terrible name, for it is holy.' 'Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool, for he is holy.' Besides this *inherent right*, founded on his own essential excellence, the most high God holds an *acquired right* to the entire submission and exclusive services of his creatures, as being nothing more than a return of justice and gratitude for his unspeakable and innumerable benefactions, as the Author and upholder of their existence, and of all the happiness which that existence imparts. Though no such return were required, the inquiry and the resolve of every righteous soul should naturally be, with the Psalmist, 'what shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits toward me?' 'thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes, and I will walk in thy truth.'

There is still a farther view of the law of God, which at once exalts its claims, and constrains our obedience; and that is, its own excellence and beneficial effects, its suitable-

ness to our state and capacities, its reasonable and gracious demands, its tendency to diffuse order and happiness throughout the whole creation. While able by his power to compel our submission to his will; while competent by his excellence to frame an universal law for his creatures; while entitled by his bounties to require the utmost services of which we are capable; he prescribes precisely such a rule of conduct, as it is our own best interest and enjoyment to observe. This we might well be prepared to believe, though we should not be able fully to discern, or may not yet actually experience all the blessedness of its precepts. But clearly does that law approve itself to our acceptance as 'holy, just, and good,' even while we may feel our inability to fulfil all its demands; and our chief excellence and enjoyment, as spiritual beings, must ever consist in discerning more and more clearly, in all its parts, the most attractive displays of God's holiness in himself, and of his care for our happiness. Let us ever rejoice then to believe and to say with the Psalmist, 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' 'Thy testimonies, that thou hast commanded, are righteous and very faithful.'

The law of God, thus founded upon his own perfections, and framed for the good of his creatures, must be immutable, as his holiness and his goodness. It is an emanation from himself, a faint resemblance of his glory and grace: 'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.' Can it for one moment be imagined, that he should withdraw 'this glory that excelleth,' or fail in what he hath purposed, or change in his proclamation of what is right and good? There is blasphemy in the very supposition: 'He abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.' But to abrogate or alter the moral law would be to deny himself; to deny his excellencies and his claims, and his counsels. It would be an apparent intimation that God was not so gloriously lovely and excellent, so worthy of all possible honour, admiration, and gratitude, adoration, submission, and obedience, as the law had represented him to be; or that man had at length ceased to be under those obligations to God, or to stand in those relations to his Maker and to his neighbours, from which the requirements of the law at first resulted. 'The Lord may, consistently with the immutable perfections of his nature and the righteousness of his government, reveal truths before unknown; he may abrogate positive institutions or appoint others; he may order various circumstances relative to the law in a new manner, according to the different situations in which his rational agents are placed; but the love of

God with all the powers of the soul, and the love of our neighbour as ourselves, must continue the indispensable duty of all reasonable creatures, however circumstanced, through all the ages of eternity.' (Scott). All his commandments are sure, 'they stand fast for ever;' and all the vain reasonings and daring rebellions of sinful man, from the beginning to the end of time, against the authority and stability of the divine law, shall prove only as the idle dashing of the waves, as they break themselves into foam upon the immovable rock—the Rock of ages; and joyfully may the believer say, in adoration of its eternal excellency and obligation: 'Concerning thy testimonies I have known of old,' and all shall know at last, 'that thou hast founded them for ever.'

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil,' Mat. v. 17.*

THE essential holiness and eternal obligation of the moral law, instead of being in any respect relaxed or rendered void by the gospel dispensation, are explained in clearer terms and enforced by stronger motives than before; and no greater delusion of mind, no grosser perversion of the blessed gospel, can be conceived, than the vain imagination that the Son of God came into this world to set aside the authority of the law of God, as the declaration of his own holy will, and to set any of his creatures free from the obligation of obeying its precepts, as their own highest excellence. He came not to destroy the force of any one of its claims to our reverence, but to fulfil all its righteous demands; that thus he might magnify and make it honourable in the sight of all spiritual beings, and establish its power for ever in the hearts and consciences of his people. This he did by his own teaching and admonitions, —explaining the pure and spiritual nature of its precepts, and pointing out their application not merely to the outward act, but to the entire frame of the mind, and the inward desires of the heart. This he did by his own life and example; yielding to all its parts that perfect obedience which it required, making its meaning more intelligible, its beauty more attractive, its excellence more manifest by such a living visible representation of that holy practice which it prescribes; and at the same time showing distinctly, that all this was done for our initiation, that we should

follow his steps—that we should desire and do our endeavour and make it our prayer, to walk even as he walked, to have in us the same mind which was in him, and to purify ourselves even as he is pure. This he did, by satisfying its inflexible holiness, and sanctioning its irreversible righteousness, when he bare its full penalty in his own soul and body on the cross in the sight of men and of angels, that he might purchase pardon for the transgressors; and thus impressing the heart of every believer in his atoning sacrifice, with an awe of its equity and excellence, more profound and abiding than the obedience of all who ever lived, or the punishment of all who had ever offended, could have done. Thus hath the Lord our righteousness, by his pure doctrine, his perfect obedience, and propitiatory sufferings, exalted and established the moral law as an immutable standard of holiness to all beings; never to be abrogated, so as to relieve us from the obligation to obey it; and never to be altered, so as to render its precepts more easy to be obeyed. By all that the Son of God hath done for man's salvation, there is no change whatever in the divine law itself; and, in place of its glories being obscured by the grace of the Redeemer, it is borne on high by his cross in all its undiminished majesty and unsullied purity—invested even with holier attributes and enjoined by higher motives, than what all the terrors of Sinai could impart.

There is unquestionably a most momentous change effected by the Redeemer, in regard to our situation as transgressors of the law; a change of infinite wisdom in its contrivance on the part of Almighty God, and of unspeakable grace in its importance to fallen man, by one and the same means, saving our souls from its curse, and securing its precepts from our contempt. By the righteousness of his life rendered in our nature, and by his suffering unto death endured in our stead, he hath purchased for all who believe in his name an exemption from punishment, for which the law could make no provision; and a title to eternal life, which no obedience of ours could have merited. These blessings we are invited to seek for his sake and to receive from his hand—not as an indulgence bestowed at the expense of the law, but as an inheritance procured by his honouring of the law; and we cannot possibly go to him for an interest in these promised blessings, without seeing at what expense they were purchased; without beholding the honour paid by him to the holy law of God, and without feeling our obligation to honour it as he hath done. That law we receive, as it were, anew from his hand, as now changed by him from

an enemy to a friend; as no longer an object of our dread, but of our desire; as not only as much as ever the will of God to us as his creatures, but as farther the counsels of a reconciled father to his children.

We are never without law to God, and are more than ever under the law to Christ. We still see in him that law confirmed in its authority over us by all that he hath done to save us from its condemning power, and commended to us in all its commanding power, as the will of his heavenly Father—increased instead of lessened by the unspeakable gift of his Son for our salvation. We no longer think of our obedience to it, as gaining favour with God; but of God's free favour in Christ, as claiming our utmost obedience. We no longer aim, by any work of righteousness on our part, to merit our soul's salvation; but we delight to bring forth those fruits of righteousness, which are through Christ our Saviour to the glory and praise of God. We look to it no longer as a law of works, requiring our obedience, that we may escape its curse; but as a law of love, guiding us as a rule of life for our good here, and conforming us to the likeness of our Lord for our glory for ever. We hear the voice of the holy law as much as ever, saying to us in its majesty, 'Do not this great wickedness, and sin against God;' and, at the same time, the voice of the blessed gospel, saying in its mercy, 'do not this great wickedness, and crucify the Son of God afresh.' We hear, in the name of the Redeemer, the solemn charge, 'cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;' and, at the same time, the gracious entreaty, 'I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.' We hear in the words of the Redeemer the promise of his own Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, as the abiding power of our purification from all evil, and of our producing all its fruits of goodness, righteousness, and truth; sanctifying us wholly in our whole spirit, soul, and body, blameless for his coming and presence. We hear and see and feel in all this 'the love of Christ constraining us to live henceforth, not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again.' We are called to 'love him who first loved us.' 'This,' we feel, 'is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' This voice of the Lord we hear, 'if ye love me, keep my commandments.' In this one precept is now comprised, and by this one principle is now accomplished, 'the fulfilling of the law.

### THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,'*  
Rom. viii. 3, 4.

THE holy law of God was originally given to man as a rule of life, and as giving life. Its clear and constant sanction was simply this, 'this do and thou shalt live;' 'the soul that sinneth it shall die.' But man has sinned, and is under this condemnation of death by the law; man is corrupt in his fallen state, and is unable to render obedience to this law. The law itself makes no provision for such a case. Perfect obedience is the invariable demand of its precepts; and condemnation the inevitable consequence of transgression. In this law there can be no change; and by this law life cannot now be given, or be gained. This arises not from any defect in the law, but from its absolute excellence. It is founded on the essential perfections of God as the lawgiver; adapted to the rational and spiritual nature of man himself; interwoven with the eternal relations of things which God hath established. It cannot be withdrawn, without admitting that it is wrong—in some degree unholy or injurious; without unsaying all that God hath said, and undoing all that God hath done, as good for man. It takes no notice of repentance, which, though agreeable to the spirit of the commandment, can never be admitted by any law, as a compensation for disobedience. It cannot be satisfied with what has been a sincere though imperfect obedience; for that is a rule so vague and varying, as to be nearly equivalent to a repeal of the whole law, or at least to an acknowledgment of its actual requisitions being unreasonable or oppressive.

But even these measures of obedience to the holy law of God, man, through the weakness and corruptions of his fallen nature, is both unable and unwilling to render. There is an enmity in his heart against its pure and spiritual precepts; and a disinclination to admit its righteous claims, or to receive it as the sovereign rule of his heart and life. The more closely that its precepts are applied to his conscience, in all their authority and excellence; the more bitterly does the spirit of rebellion rise up in his heart, and the more resolutely does he require in his vain reasoning, that its commandments be abolished or relaxed: 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not

subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be.' But the law can make no allowance for this disinclination on the part of man to receive its righteous precepts, or rather for this disposition to hate its purity, and resist its authority. For this is the very evil thing in the sight of God, which forms the spring and the aggravation of man's opposition to his will. Thus, by the law, man in his fallen state cannot be justified or accounted righteous in the sight of God; and this the law was weak and unable to effect, not through any thing defective in itself, but through the weakness and corruption of man himself. And one great use and effect of this holy law being proclaimed to the children of men is, to make them feel this their inability and depravity, and so prepare them to seek life by another dispensation, a dispensation of pure mercy and free salvation.

This way of life and peace to sinful man the most high God, in his infinite grace, had previously provided, and now in the fulness of time hath proclaimed, by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. This mission of the Son of God in man's nature is at once a manifestation of grace, and a mystery of godliness, imparting that life which the law could not give; and imparting it without any infringement of its holiness, or abatement of its influence. This is accomplished by the wonderful fact of the Son of God becoming man, appearing in the likeness of those who had sinned, and in a capacity for suffering the penalty due to their sin; and, by the infinite value of the sacrifice which he offered for sin, hath so clearly condemned sin, or displayed its evil in the sight of God, as to admit of its now being forgiven; and so completely fulfilled all the righteousness which the law required, as to merit for his people that life which they could never have gained by that law—thus not only rescuing them from the condemnation due to their sin by bearing its curse, but raising them to the reward of righteousness by fulfilling it in their stead.

But much more even than this has been accomplished, by what the Son of God hath done in the flesh—not only satisfying the law by his sufferings, and fulfilling it by his obedience, more than the sufferings or the obedience of the whole world could have done; but bringing even those transgressors, whom he thus sets free from its curse, and saves by other obedience than their own, to feel more deeply the evil of sin in themselves as a transgression of the law, and to fulfil more devoutly all righteousness in their own persons, as obedience to the law, than the law itself

was able to effectuate with them by any power or persuasion of its own. This the law could not do—this through their weakness, corruption, and enmity could not incline and enable them to do; but this their faith in what the Son of God hath done in their name and nature, brings them to do, binds them to do, and blesses them in doing. They condemn in their flesh, and cast away from their flesh, that sin which made the Redeemer suffer; they love that righteousness, and long to have wrought into their souls that righteousness, which their Lord so glorified and exemplified in their stead. They no longer live in the wilful 'fulfilling of the desires of the flesh and of the mind;' but learn to love the ways of holiness, and labour, to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, nay, to 'grow up in all things as a habitation of God through the Spirit.' Thus the law, beheld through faith in the Son of God, is seen to be disarmed by him of its curse, and honoured by him as our guide; so that we can look to it with complacency as the standard of holiness, and take it as the rule of our conduct, and examine ourselves by its precepts, as the test of our progress, and follow its directions as our preparation for that eternal life, which is now purchased for us by the fulfilment of all its demands.

Let us, then, understand aright the purpose of God's sending his Son in the flesh; not to secure for us a continuance in sin, but to show us the condemnation of sin; not to free us from the law of righteousness, but to fulfil in us the love of righteousness for his sake who dwelt among us, and by the power of his Spirit dwelling in us. Let us be on our guard against the delusion of supposing, that we may receive the Son of God as our Saviour, without receiving the Spirit of God as our Sanctifier; but, while we rejoice indeed to believe, that 'there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;' let us rejoice also to experience, that, 'if any man be in Christ he is a new creature;' and so be willing and well-pleased to 'walk in him in newness of life, not after the flesh but after the Spirit.'

## J U N E.

## FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly: and the Lord gave them unto me,' Deut x. 4.*

GREAT and grievous are the evils which are continually arising, even under the light of the gospel dispensation, from men's ignorance, inattention, and indifference respecting the holy law of God; and nothing can be more unscriptural and injurious, than to speak or do any thing, that is derogatory to its inherent and immutable excellency; that tends either to lessen the evil of sin as a transgression of its precepts, or to weaken the obligation of conformity in heart and life to its whole letter and spirit. By the power of this law, indeed, no man can now be either justified or sanctified; either accounted righteous, or rendered righteous in the sight of God; but still is this law, to all rational creatures, the perpetual expression of the holy will and mind of God respecting what man ought to be, before he can be finally blessed. In this view it is uniformly presented to us in every portion of his own inspired word. The form, or the numbers, or the terms of its precepts may be varied; but its essence, authority, and excellency, are in all circumstances the same; and have never, in any measure, been relaxed, or repealed, or rendered questionable, in God's revelation to his creatures. To the children of Israel, though now unable through the fall of Adam to fulfil its demands, the law was proclaimed as well as to our first parents, as spoken from the mouth of God himself, and with increased, instead of diminished circumstances of awful solemnity, and absolute authority. To all the children of men, who had none of the special privileges of God's chosen people, even to those who sit in the deepest shades of heathen darkness, it has been proclaimed by the Son of God—in words of grace indeed, and with his glories veiled, but still with the high authority of the only begotten of the Father, whom all men are commanded to hear and honour as the Father—with increased, instead of diminished declarations of its

purity, spirituality, and perpetual obligation, nay, with the plainest and most positive warnings against the deep delusion, and daring presumption of detracting one iota from its preciousness, and permanency: 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.' To all who have come to the Son of God as subjects of his kingdom, the greatest of its teachers, even when describing man's natural resistance to God's holy will, do most carefully and continually proclaim, that the 'law is holy, just, and good' in all that it requires; and that it will be the aim, as it is always the happiness, of all who have received, through faith in Christ, the victory over its condemning power, to 'delight in the law of God, after the inward man.'

This holy law, in the hand of God's Spirit, is the sovereign instrument of bringing men to Christ as their propitiation, by convincing them of their past sins; and also of keeping them near to Christ as the source of their peace, by making them feel their daily sinfulness. The more closely, therefore, that we apply this heavenly test and rule to our hearts and consciences, our doings and desires, the more shall we discern the grace of God in our redemption, the preciousness of Christ as our righteousness, and the loveliness of Christ as our pattern; and the more cordially shall we rejoice in the hope set before us, of being 'changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' The more that we are assured of having received the kingdom which cannot be moved, let us desire the more earnestly to receive grace, 'whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.' Let us cherish, at all times, a deep impression of the infinite majesty and holiness of that God with whom we have to do; and walk before him in all our ways, humbly conscious of our own unworthiness, weakness, and sinfulness. Let us feel the danger of deceiving ourselves in any case, as his professing worshippers; and of dishonouring, in any respect, that holy name by which we are called. Let us desire, and do our endeavour, as one great preservative

in this course, to have the law of our God in our hearts, as explained and exemplified by our Lord, as applied and impressed by his Spirit, that our 'footsteps slide not.'

Let us dread the thought of living in wilful ignorance of that rule of direction for our daily conduct, which the Lord of heaven and earth hath graciously put into our hands; but give earnest heed to know fully, and to apprehend aright, every command from his mouth; that our 'understandings may be quick in the fear of the Lord,' well 'exercised to discern between good and evil.' Let us not rest satisfied with merely knowing the law, however completely, or even with having our thoughts familiar with its precepts; but study to fix our souls with reverent attention upon its slightest intimations of duty, ready to answer to its call, and to 'run the way of its commandments.' 'As the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so let our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.' Let not this our studious anxiety to obey be only as the trembling service of the slave, who dreads the penalty of neglect; nor even as the sedulous labour of the hireling, who looks only to the recompense of his toil; but as the affectionate obedience of children, who delight to please the parents whom they love, and desire to anticipate what may be agreeable to their wishes. Let us labour so to identify our happiness with the honouring of God's holy law, as to make it 'our meat and drink to do his will;' and in the earnestness of our endeavour to fulfil it to the utmost, let us keep our hearts continually open to the influences of his promised grace, to 'work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' 'Let thine hand help me, for I have chosen thy precepts.' So shall it be according to his word, that 'none of our steps shall slide,' and that we shall have 'the peace of them that love God's law.' 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.' 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.'

## FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets,'* Matt. xxii. 37—40.

In these few words of the blessed Saviour is presented an inexhaustible subject of the deepest and most delightful meditation to all mankind, to all moral natures, to all rational creatures throughout the universe. Here is a summary of the whole moral law, the law of all moral beings, the spirit of all religion, presenting, in its entire form, and terms, and essence, such a combination of excellencies, that it might suffice of itself to prove the book which contains it to be in truth the word of the living God. It is worthy of our highest admiration, as an exhibition of divine wisdom; of our humblest adoration, as a manifestation of divine goodness; and of our most cordial acceptance, as the means of our own happiness. It comprises the whole law in two short precepts, or rather in one simple principle. The commandment in fact is one; and is only apparently divided into two, according to the ultimate classification of its objects, viz., God and his creatures. There is but one injunction expressed, 'Thou shalt love;' and, in another form of this summary there is no repetition even of the words: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.'

It is impossible to form a summary of duty in fewer words; it is impossible to find a principle of duty of larger compass: 'This law of the Lord is perfect.' It is short, and easily remembered; plain, and easily understood. It is, at the same time, most comprehensive, and applicable to every branch of human obligation: it is in fact universal, and extends to all beings in all worlds. It is suited to the most intelligent, as well as to the most ignorant of the human race; and is binding upon the highest, as well as the lowest of God's rational creatures. It is so exalted a standard, that the highest of the angels cannot do more than what it requires; and yet so reasonable a requisition, that the humblest child cannot be taught to do less. It is, in short, the code of the universe, comprised in one brief word, and resting on one sovereign principle: 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.'

How excellent also in itself this one essential

element of love, as the universal law, so entirely consistent with all the dictates of our rational nature, and so emphatically commending itself to every one's conscience. It is nothing more than the dictate of enlightened reason, and the feeling of every well regulated heart, that we should love most the being who is most excellent in himself, and who hath shown most love to ourselves. The very nature of this commandment is a token of this his love, and a claim to our obedience. How amiable the Lawgiver! how gracious his law! that, in demanding our obedience—which he must demand as the governor of his creation, he should demand from us that, above all things, that in fact alone, which makes obedience an easy task, and a happy service, namely, the love of himself. Nothing can be more gracious than the condescension of the most high God in asking our love, and so showing his love; and thus taking away the appearance of authoritative law and enforced obedience; it is the language not of a ruler to his subjects, but of a father to his children. It is in fact an invitation to seek the highest honour and happiness of our rational nature, put forth to the noblest exercise of our faculties and affections, an exchange of love with the blessed God. The commandment itself is an instance and an expression of God's love to his creatures, while it demands our love in return. Its import is plainly this: I love you as my creatures, and desire to impart the utmost happiness that is possible for your nature to attain; and, as the only way of doing this, I require your highest love to myself. In proportion as our souls rise in the love of God, they rise in the enjoyment of their own good; and his command to love him with all our heart, is only an invitation to fill our hearts with the happiness which this love imparts; for 'he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.' It is, in one word, the same law which God hath given to himself; for, 'God is love.'

Like unto this first commandment, or rather flowing from it as a necessary consequence, is the second part of the divine law; 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Loving God, we must love his creatures for his sake; and loving like God, we must seek the happiness of others, as far as we have the power. This love of our fellow-creatures is founded on the natural dictates of reason and conscience; and flows in fact from the desire of our own happiness. In the desire of our own happiness, we desire that others should regard us with love, instead of hatred; and should do us good, instead of evil. We must feel it to be congenial to the desire of our own hap-

piness, that the most high God should interpose his sovereign authority, and charge it upon others, as his will, that they love us as they do themselves, and seek our good as they seek their own; and can we fail to feel how right and good it is, that we should do the same that they are required to do, and that we desire them to do to us?

Let us observe, especially, the use and excellence of this summary and substance of the moral law, as a standard of duty, by which to examine ourselves before God. By every word, indeed, that proceedeth out of the mouth of God ought we to examine our hearts and lives, as subject creatures, and as redeemed sinners; but this sum of the ten commandments is peculiarly suited to serve the purpose of such a test, inasmuch as it puts aside the mere form, and presents the full substance of the law; as it drops the letter, and seizes the spirit, of the commandment. The pharisees and formalists of old, who looked no farther than the letter of the commandment, supposed that they were able to keep the law; and 'trusted in themselves, that they were righteous.' But the summary of the law shows at once its spiritual nature; and directly demands, not the mere outward act, but the whole affection of the heart. It says not merely thou shalt obey, but thou shalt love the Lord thy God; not merely thou shalt observe the precepts, but thou shalt offer thy heart. Hereby then let us test the sincerity of our heart before God; whether we do in truth desire to obey this commandment; whether we, indeed, approve all the words of this law; whether we cordially consent to the law that it is good; and actually long to love God, and our neighbour, as perfectly as the precept requires. The unrenewed mind dislikes this perfect law; desires to lessen its strictness in the self-righteous thought of obeying it sufficiently; or deceives itself by the fatal delusion of being now relieved from all obligation to obedience. The believing soul, on the contrary, approves of the very precept, which condemns him as a transgressor; and longs after such a change in his own heart as would conform his whole life to the law of his God, and the example of his Lord. Hereby, also, let us try the extent of our actual obedience, and see daily, as we all must see, how far we fall short of this most reasonable service, the love of that Being who is so perfectly lovely, and who hath so loved us; and how much we offend against that love of our fellow-creature which would go so far, if universally cherished, to diffuse peace and happiness throughout this lower world. Thus may we continually see our guilt, and sorrow for

our sin; keeping our souls suitably abased in the sight of God, and suppressing all emotions of spiritual pride before men. Thus may we remember always our need of a more perfect righteousness than our own; and seek more earnestly the promised supplies of heavenly grace in all our times of need; and rest more simply our soul's entire dependence on him who 'hath come in the name of the Lord to serve us.'

SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;'* Exod. xx. 2.

THE blessed God hath manifested, even to his rebellious creatures, the most unmerited condescension, compassion, and loving-kindness; remonstrating with them as a friend, intreating them as a father for their good; 'come now, let us reason together.' He hath graciously willed their happiness, and given them a law which is their own good. He hath farther shown them that it is their good; and appealed to their own reason, and conscience, and experience, in proof of its universal excellence, merely as the way of their own proper, and perfect, and permanent felicity. It is not, therefore, an unsuitable or unlawful motive on our part to seek our own best interest, in the love and practice of all God's holy commandments. It is his own counsel to us to do so: 'it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.' It is, at the same time, a most essential view of God's holy law, that we are bound to yield our utmost obedience, as an acknowledgment of his absolute authority to require our obedience, without rendering us any reason, and as a just return for the unspeakable benefits which he hath already so freely bestowed—without any reference to any future good, which may flow to ourselves from that obedience. It ought fully to suffice, both as a reason and a persuasion in any commanded duty, to be assured that it is God's will, and to be reminded, as he has himself reminded us, of his own claims to our obedience. 'God spake all these words: the law given is a declaration of his will. 'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' His own essential nature and relative character—what he always is, and hath already done for us, forms our obligation to obey that will. 'He is the Lord: the self-existent, the independent, the ever-living source of all beings, and

of all good. I am that I am, 'Jehovah.' He is the great and only Potentate, from whom all power proceeds, and to whom it all properly belongs—the King of kings and Lord of lords; alone entitled and qualified to sit on the throne of the universe which he hath made, and to give laws to the creatures of his hands. He has the fullest right to dispose of us as his property, and to direct us according to his good pleasure, and to receive our submission in all that he may require. 'Of him, and through him, and to him are all things;' and to him therefore be glory, as to him belongs the glory for ever. No claim can be conceived to be so clear, so strong, so complete, so convincing, as his right to our entire submission and service, to all that we have or can do; for without him we are nothing, and have nothing, and can do nothing.

'He is our God.' He hath not demanded, though he might justly have done so, a mere blind submission on our part, but hath graciously sought our willing service. He hath entered into special relations with us as his people; condescending to admit us to a spiritual intercourse with himself as his rational creatures, and hath pointed out the way in which we may worship and serve him, and at the same time promote our own excellence and happiness. He hath taken us into his household, prescribed our services, and promised a recompense; and, inasmuch as we have professed to receive his word, and to observe his ordinances, and to seek his favour, we have chosen him as our God, or rather allowed his claims to our worship and obedience. We are thus under still stronger obligations to walk as his people: and to seek the favour and advance the glory of that God, who hath so graciously pledged himself to be our everlasting portion and exceeding great reward.

He is more especially our Redeemer. He hath, in his abundant mercy, provided for our deliverance from a bondage, unspeakably more wretched and hopeless than that of Israel in Egypt: namely, our souls' subjection to the guilt and power of sin, the fear of death and hell, the thralldom of the evil one as our special adversary and oppressor. He hath raised up for us a horn of salvation, a powerful Redeemer, mighty to save, who hath broken the power of all these our spiritual enemies, that we might be spiritually free to go forth to serve him, as the Lord our God, 'without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' We have thus been redeemed, not merely by an act of power, by an outstretched arm, as in the case of Israel; nor merely by the payment of a price,

by some corruptible thing, as silver or gold in a slave's release; but by the precious blood of Christ, as the offering and outflowing of divine love to our lost and ruined souls. By this redemption we are not only set free to serve him, and therefore more bound to serve him, but also better enabled to serve him with acceptance, to offer up what his redeemed people only can do, spiritual sacrifices and services, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ.

Let us then clearly discern, and constantly keep in mind, what is our holy calling; what the practical end of the gospel salvation; what the ultimate aim of our being redeemed from the curse of the law, the dread of death, the bondage of the devil: namely, our increased obligation to keep all the words of God's law. Let us carefully observe, that we have three reasons placed before us by the Lawgiver himself for obeying his commandments, and that all these reasons concur together to the same end, to strengthen his claim and our duty. Surely, after reminding us of all his claims to our reverence, love, and obedience as the Lord, and as our God, and on the ground of all that he has given us, and done for us in these relations; it cannot be that he should mean to tell us, that because he is now also our Redeemer, therefore we are set free from these his other claims over us, and not bound to keep all his commandments; that we may, therefore, live in sin, in the neglect or transgression of his holy precepts, because 'we are not under the law, but under grace.' What grosser delusion of mind and perversion of heart could well be imagined, than to turn all the reasons for obedience into a release for licentiousness. What is the sum and the spirit of the divine law, as given by the blessed Saviour, but love to God—the love of our whole heart. Do we lie under innumerable obligations thus to love him, as our creator and preserver, as the Lord our God? And do these obligations receive no addition, or even become less, because he is also our Redeemer? Are we to love him less, just because we are made to know and believe, more than ever, the greatness and graciousness of his love, wherewith he loved us? Altogether different, absolutely opposite, is the sentiment of all God's redeemed people, of all to whose hearts the gospel of his grace hath come with any measure of purity and power; and the more clearly, that they see that they have been delivered from condemnation, the more deeply do they feel their obligation to walk in newness of life, to serve in newness of spirit, to 'yield themselves unto God as alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God.'

SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end,'* Psal. cxix. 33.

THERE is a constant tendency in the heart of fallen man to 'hold the truth in unrighteousness,' or at least, to rest satisfied with 'the form of godliness, while denying its power;' and hence it is so often the case, that many who profess to believe the gospel of Christ—who are acquainted with its truths, and attentive to its ordinances, yet appear so little desirous, so far from diligent, to be conformed in heart and in life to its heavenly spirit and holy precepts. Even in those who do not overlook the purifying influence, and the practical injunctions of the divine word, nay, who readily admit and advocate the solemn obligation under which all are brought by their knowledge of God's will, and their belief of his mercy through a Redeemer, to serve him in all the ways of a holy obedience—there too often prevails a spirit of slothfulness and self-deception, which makes them rest satisfied with seeing this to be their duty, and saying in words how much they feel it to be so, while they put forth no earnest endeavours in the work, and present no fervent petitions for the aids of heavenly grace. The truly devout worshipper of God's glorious perfections, and humble believer of his transcendent love through the Redeemer, while feeling the overwhelming force of his obligations to glorify that God and Saviour in his body and spirit which are his, is, at the same time, so deeply conscious of his daily deficiencies, and his utter inability in fulfilling the will of his heavenly Father, and requiting the love of his compassionate Saviour, that, along with every sense of his duty, the prayer for help to fulfil it rises in his heart. Nay, so far is he from desiring to evade the keeping of his Lord's commandments, or to excuse himself for neglecting them, that he dreads the thought of overlooking them in any case; and he prays, not only for strength to do what he does know, but for teaching, that he may know what he ought to do. Of this devoted desire to know and to do all the will of God, a most engaging and instructive example is presented to us in the devout breathings of the inspired Psalmist: 'Shew me thy ways; O Lord, teach me thy paths; lead me in thy truth.' 'Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift my soul unto thee.' 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.'

It has been remarked, particularly, how often in this psalm he prays to be taught God's statutes; and how we thus perceive, both his own

earnest desire to learn the will of God, and his deep conviction of the value of divine teaching. But it is particularly observable, that he thus prayed, not merely for a general knowledge of what God had revealed to all in his word; but for special direction in the application of what he already knew, or in the discovery of what was his own duty, in contemplating God's dealings with him, or conducting himself among his fellow-men, so as to please God. While avowing before God his sincere desire to please him, and conscious that he could say in truth, 'with my whole heart have I sought thee;' he is far from soothing his soul with this assurance, or sinking into self-confidence; but expresses at the same time his dread of departing from the living God: 'O let me not wander from thy commandments.' While offering praise to God, adoring his perfections, dwelling on the thought of his essential blessedness, he neither rests in the sentiment of barren admiration, nor puts the empty sounds of praise from the lips in the place of the service which he owes; but, as beholding the high claims and holy character of the God whom he worships, he desires the more to discover and to do what may be pleasing in his sight: 'Blessed art thou, O Lord; teach me thy statutes.' While dwelling especially on the multitude of God's mercies, and the display of his graciousness towards all his creatures throughout the whole earth, and not failing to remember also the more incalculable manifestations of his mercy to the rebellious race of Adam; he is so far from seeking, in the thought of such mercy, a refuge from the obligation to keep the divine precepts, that he makes it an occasion for the very opposite purpose, and prays: 'the earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy; teach me thy statutes.' While acknowledging the goodness of God in general, and even the good fruits of affliction in disposing his soul the more steadily to the keeping of God's word, he pleads not for any remission of duty, on account of what he had suffered, or as having sufficiently learned by his sufferings; but desires, as an additional instance of the divine goodness, to be still farther taught the way of his commandments; 'thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.' While pleading for deliverance from the oppression of man, and for the shining of God's countenance upon his soul; he thinks not of separating his safety or his peace from the discharge of his duties, but still prays for the best teaching to the end: 'Make thy face to shine upon thy servant, and teach me thy statutes.' While speaking of his having chosen the way of truth, and of his

desire to run the way of God's commandments, he drops no hint of wearying in such a race, or of any wish to be released from this course; but desires to be instructed fully for the purpose of persevering to the last moment of life, in what he understood to be his duty, and experienced to be his happiness: 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.'

Let us continually keep in mind our own concern, and cherish it like the Psalmist, as our own purpose, to follow the Lord fully; and while calling Christ Lord, to do in all things 'the will of his Father, and our Father, of his God, and our God.' Let us seek to maintain in our hearts a deep sentiment of reverence for the authority, and will, and glory of that God whom we serve; dreading his displeasure, and desiring his favour above all things, and at all times recollecting that his holy and heart-searching eye is inspecting our inmost thoughts and most secret acts. Knowing well our readiness to forget, both our obligations to do his will and our need of his gracious aid, in what we wish to do, let us beware of leaning to our own understanding, or trusting to the teaching of man; but seek continually, and seek earnestly the teaching from above, the teaching of the Father of our spirits, who knoweth what we most need to learn, 'who teacheth us in the way that is best for us, who teacheth us not only to understand, but to do his will, who teacheth us to profit, and leadeth us by the way that we should go.' Let us consider seriously the heinous guilt of neglecting to seek such teaching, and of making so little improvement of what he hath so clearly and so carefully taught us, by 'line upon line, and precept upon precept.' Let us especially recollect how often we have known to do good, and have not done it; and sinned against the clearest light of his precepts, and the strongest convictions of our own consciences. Let us learn to commune with our own hearts, and let 'our spirits make diligent search.' 'Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.' Let us especially open our whole souls to his own teaching; and make it our prayer with the Psalmist, with our whole heart: 'Search thou me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

## THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

'And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them; I am the Lord which sanctify you,' Lev. xx. 8.

AGAIN and again does the supreme Lawgiver confirm the authority of his statutes, and command unreserved obedience, by adding these words, 'I am the Lord,' 'I am Jehovah;' no language of man can express the essential nature and infinite glory of God; and no similitude is able to convey any suitable conception of them to our minds. Not even an adequate name can be found to distinguish, and to declare the peculiar exaltation and excellence of the Godhead: 'Wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret?' And when God declared to Moses the name by which he was to be made known, it was in fact such a name as implied, that no words, used and understood among human beings, could supply a suitable name. God said unto Moses, 'I AM THAT I AM;' thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'I AM hath sent me unto you.'

This name expresses the unsearchableness of God's nature as if it had been said, 'I am that I am;' 'I am that which you cannot be told, because there are no words to tell it;' and that which you cannot understand, because you have no faculties to comprehend it: 'I am that I am.' We thus best express our apprehension of God's natural perfections by such words as intimate that he cannot be comprehended, namely that he is *invisible, infinite, incomprehensible, unsearchable*; and the more knowledge that we do attain of his glorious nature, we thereby only see the more that he is *incomprehensible and ineffable*; that, in the words of Moses, 'He is that he is.' This name, however, distinguishes the Most High sufficiently from all beings, by declaring his *independence and self-existence*. 'I am,' I am the only God that has any existence. 'I am God, and besides me there is none else'—not only no God, but no being. 'I exist,' and there is no other existence, except what proceeds from mine, and depends on mine alone. He alone is in himself *being*; all others are in themselves *nothing*: 'All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity.'

This is not merely a sublime saying, but is a sound calculation. No proportion can be imagined, nor any comparison instituted between God and his creatures, between *being* and *not being*. Though all beings, who are in themselves nothing, were joined in one, they could not make up the lowest term of number, and could not be set down as one, or as any part of one, reckoned as above nothing, in comparison with him who is

infinite and self-existent. This name, 'I am,' 'I am Jehovah,' expresses also his *unchangeable and eternal duration*: 'I will be that I will be.' I always had, and always will have, the same self-existence. Never can there be supposed any thing, or course of things, to affect his nature, or to alter his will, because there never can be any being, or any power put forth by any being, except what he gives and upholds. This name, 'I am,' 'I am Jehovah,' declares God's *absolute perfection and sufficiency*. As the only being who has existence in himself, he thus alone has, and has without limit or change, all the perfection that can be in any being; and that perfection he never can have more or less; but has it always in himself, has it always as his own; 'there is no power but of God;' 'there is none good save one, that is God.' 'Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above; 'of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.'

Most clearly then does it follow, in all right and reason, that unto God as Jehovah, as the source and support of all being, belongeth the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. He possesses, on this ground alone, an unalienable right to universal dominion, worship, love, and obedience. He is entitled to make his own glory the ultimate end of his creating other beings; and to require, that their being, derived from him, and dependent on him, should be subordinate and subservient to his. This plain right it behoveth his rational creatures to acknowledge, and to propose to themselves the same end in all their works, that they may render 'the glory due to his name.' He is entitled to bestow that existence which is his own, in whatsoever form he pleaseth, and to order the condition of all beings in the way that he sees to be best. Should any thing that he hath formed presume to demand, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' the sufficient reply would be, 'I am Jehovah.' He is entitled to prescribe such rules or laws as he knows to be best suited for preserving the various orders of being that he hath made, and for promoting the ends which he had in view in their creation. This he alone can know how to do, and may justly expect his creatures to believe, that he will do in the way that is right, and wise, and good; but should any inferior being presume to question his authority to prescribe such a rule or law, the sufficient reply would be, 'I am Jehovah.' He is entitled to regulate, according to his will, the worship and service which they shall render to him, and the duties and dispositions which they should exercise to one another. He alone is able to

judge what is suited to every state and condition of the creatures whom he upholds in being, and governs for their good, as he is able to enforce the observance of his statutes by sufficient securities and sanctions—to fulfil both his promises to those that obey, and his threatenings against those who resist his will; and should any created being, forgetting that he is a creature, affect to be above such laws and precepts, and admit the vain imagination of asserting such an exemption, saying even in thought, 'Who is the Lord that we should serve him?' the sufficient reply would be, 'I am Jehovah.' 'Ye shall keep my statutes and do them, I am the Lord.' Such statutes I am entitled to give; such statutes I know to be good; such statutes I am able to enforce. I am Jehovah; who art thou that answerest against God? 'I am the Lord which sanctify you.' I have set you in your place as the creatures of my hand. I have set you apart, in your own order of being, or I have separated you for special services in my world, and for special sources of happiness to yourselves. I have given you statutes to accomplish my purpose in your being, to keep you free from what is evil in my sight, to make you pleasing to my holy nature, 'I am the Lord which sanctify you; sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God.'

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THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God,' Lev. xx. 7.*

THE most high God makes over to his people, in a covenant-grant, all the blessedness of his own nature, as far as they can be made capable of enjoying it. His general promise is, 'I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;' and this implies a promise, to impart to them all the requisite qualifications for sustaining this peculiar relation to him as a people, especially for enjoying eternal life and happiness in his presence. He hath promised to prepare their souls for this blessedness, by sanctifying them wholly, by making them 'partakers of his holiness.' 'There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.' The sanctification of the believer for God's service is as much a part of the covenant-grant as his justification in God's sight, and it is as explicitly promised as the result of his grace, 'I will sprinkle clean water upon you;' 'A new heart also will I give you;' 'I will put my Spirit within you, and

cause you to walk in my statutes.' He alone is, and can possibly be, their portion or proper felicity as spiritual and immortal beings; and in order to enjoy this portion in his presence, they must be renewed in his likeness; must be made holy in the same way as he is holy. Hence it was so repeatedly charged upon the people of Israel, as the type of the spiritual Israel, 'ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy;' and so also is it enjoined upon all who hope for grace through the revelation of Jesus Christ; 'as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.'

It is the same holiness or moral excellence, which forms the glory of God himself, that he communicates to his people, and calls them to follow after; to be holy in the same way, 'even as God is holy.' It is to hate what he hates, and to love what he loves. It is to seek after a conformity to the perfect character of the blessed God, as exhibited in the example of his Son our Saviour, and as commanded in the precepts of his spiritual law. But it is the necessity, rather than the nature of holiness, which we are now contemplating, 'Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy.' The holiness of God is not only the rule, but the reason for holiness in his people. They are required to be holy, not only *as* he is holy, but *because* he is holy. To this end he chose them, redeemed them, calls them, and renews them, that they 'should be holy and without blame before him in love;' that they should be happy in his favour and service in this world, and in his more immediate presence in the world to come. All man's unhappiness or misery springs from the loss of his original righteousness or likeness to God; and all our happiness or blessedness consists in the restoration of that holiness; in our being 'renewed after the image of him that created us.' This is more especially essential, inasmuch as that happiness consists in the contemplation of God, and in communion with God, and in the enjoyment of God as our soul's portion for ever. We must feel a love of holiness, and follow after holiness, in order to be capable of *contemplating* with complacency the glories of God's holiness, manifested in our soul's redemption from sin, and in the character of the Son of God as our Redeemer by the merits of his holiness. We must feel a love of holiness, and follow after holiness, in order to be capable of *communing* joyfully with him in our spirits, walking comfortably with him in our duties, worshipping acceptably before him in his ordinances: 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!' We must feel a love of holiness, or

rather must be made holy, in order to be capable of *enjoying* the happiness of the heavenly state, not as in itself forming our title, but as constituting our meetness for that 'inheritance of the saints in light.'

Holiness indeed, is always and every where, the healthful state of the soul, without which it can have no spiritual enjoyment; and as being a conformity to the will of God, is already an approach to his nature and blessedness. In as far as it is attained and can be exercised in any soul, it is already the spirit of heaven in that soul, and imparts a portion of the happiness of heaven even upon this earth. To be made perfect in holiness, is in any place to have heaven in the soul. But, as heaven is also a place, where holy spirits are brought together, where holy occupations only are to be found, where the presence of a holy God is more immediately to be enjoyed; it is thus manifest, that holiness is the indispensable qualification for heavenly happiness; and to be placed in the heavenly state, would be actual misery to any soul that had acquired no love of holiness. There must be a transformation in the soul of man, previous to his translation into the heavenly world; and the holiness to which the blessed God here calls his people, is just this transformation begun. But there is a special feature of that holiness in man as a fallen creature, which must form his future happiness, or at least by which he must be prepared for that happiness. As souls that have been redeemed from a state of misery, their happiness must have a connection with their remembrance of that state, and the means of their restoration. It must have a peculiar reference to the glory and grace of the Redeemer; and must consist (as it is indeed described in scripture as consisting) in deep humiliation and devout gratitude, in ardent prayer and unceasing services 'to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain.' Let us learn therefore, as at once the principle and pattern of our obedience, to look with the eye of faith and love unto him who is now 'sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high,' and to run with patience, and perseverance, and cheerfulness in the way of God's commandments. Let us pray for his heavenly grace to enlarge our hearts to desire and to aim after higher attainments in holiness; as obedient children, delighting to do the will of our Father in heaven, and rejoicing in the assurance that every act of such obedience is only an addition to our own happiness. 'Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, let us press toward the mark

for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;' 'though faint yet pursuing, though daily falling short, yet following on to know and serve the Lord;' 'waiting always upon the Lord, that we may renew our strength;' holding fast by the assured hope, that 'in all things we shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us;' to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

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#### FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,'* Exod. xxxiv. 6.

THESE doings of God are very wonderful. The scenes in which he reveals himself from heaven have an awfulness in them, which cannot fail to impress any heart, however hardened, even in hearing the record of those scenes, given us in the scripture, read. And when we peruse that record ourselves, we cannot but feel a solemn impression made upon our spirit. Let me not be deceived by this, most gracious God! Let me not account this, as if it were token or evidence of true faith toward thee, or of spiritual life in my soul. The whole congregation of the children of Israel at mount Sinai, every one individual of that great multitude, experienced a deeply solemn awe; and no wonder, when the majesty of God, and his supremacy over them, was revealed by such fearful and manifest tokens. And yet, O how few true believers in God were among that vast multitude! How soon, and how entirely did they again forget God, and how daringly did they rebel against him! And is my natural heart better than theirs? Has it not given already ample evidences of its being the same evil heart of unbelief? Truly, if I trust to it, or to the impressions made upon it occasionally by perusing or hearing the holy word of God, it will deceive, and betray, and destroy me for ever.

How glorious the character of God! O how adorable, his everlasting, uncreated, and unchangeable perfections! I would draw near, confessing the darkness and insensibility to his glory that possess my natural heart, and bear rule in my alienated, earthly mind; and my own unspeakable need, as a fallen, ruined, and guilty sinner, that the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, would draw near to me, and that, as he has been hitherto long-suffering toward me, not dealing with me as I have sinned against him, he would in his abun-

dant goodness, and according to his truth, deliver my soul from this darkness, and shine into my mind with the light of the knowledge of his own glory, in the face of Jesus Christ; and draw my soul into believing communion with him through that new and living way which is perfected in the adorable person, and in the finished work of his own well-beloved Son. When the mind is subdued from the waywardness and vanity of its own imaginations and thoughts—to ponder and to reflect upon the being, and perfections, and character of God; O! what a scene of unspeakable wonder and glory is presented before it! The mind cannot traverse the scene, it is unsearchably vast, boundless, and infinite.

'How great, Lord, are thy works! each thought  
Of thine a deep it is;  
A brutish man it knoweth not;  
Fools understand not this.'

And is not this the character which we realize in ourselves? this foolishness—not understanding the works of God, and not rising up in our thoughts, even of his most glorious works and manifestations of himself, to consider his adorable and glorious perfections? But blessed be his own great name, as he is here proclaimed to his servant, so is he manifested to the sinful children of men. It is from himself the revelation of his glory comes to the soul.

'Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words, and in deeds;' (Acts vii. 22.) but it was not by the force of his own abilities, by the power of his own learning, that he came to the knowledge of God, and to have such wonderful communion and intimacy, even of friendship with God. It was by the wonderful dealings of God's gracious power with *him*. Alas! all learning, and all wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge, will but harden the heart, and keep it alienated from the true knowledge of God, until the day of grace and of power come, when God, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, sends forth his Spirit to breathe upon the dead, and darkened, and alienated mind; and by the word of his truth, and with his mighty power, arrests the soul, and brings it to consider God, to remember him, and to turn to him.

But is not this the divine and gracious proclamation which is sent forth from heaven to the sinful and rebellious children of men? Is not the Lord God passing by us every day, and by his words and his works of wonder, so declaring himself to us, and beseeching us to regard himself, and to taste that truly he is gracious? Is he not by the works of his grace especially, so calling upon us, by the voice and works of

his beloved Son revealed from heaven, God manifest in the flesh? As Moses was summoned to come up into the mount, and there to commune with God, and had the gracious promise given him that there God would reveal himself to him—(see chap. xxxiii. 18—22)—so are we invited, not to ascend mount Sinai, 'that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more,' (Heb. xii. 18, 19) but to Sion, to Calvary, to that place where God is manifested, taking vengeance on sin in the person of the Surety, and proclaiming peace and salvation by his blood to them that are nigh, and to them that are afar off. Blessed be the merciful and gracious Lord God, that this is the invitation of his grace; and that the word of his promise is sure. May my soul be drawn thither by the drawing power of his own mercy and grace; may I learn to know his name, as shining forth in the person and in the cross of Christ. And as Moses ascended mount Sinai with the tables of stone, to have the law re-written upon them by the hand of this gracious God, may I be brought nigh with my heart of stone, that it may here be renewed, and the law of the Lord inscribed and deeply and surely written upon it, to be no longer forgotten, no longer forsaken—the love of God in Christ constraining my soul into filial, and humble, and devoted obedience. Carry thou my soul, O most blessed and gracious Spirit, to the contemplation of the Lord Jesus, that I may behold in him the Lord God, merciful, long-suffering, and slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth. God is now revealing his name. He is holding it forth in this our sinful world, by the tidings of the gospel. O! the hardness of the human heart, the rebellion of us sinners—what monsters of ingratitude to God are we, and how is his mercy, and his goodness too, testified, in our still having the gracious invitations addressed to us! How abundant in sottish, brutish ignorance, brought into the soul by sin; the blinded votaries of idol gods! How obedient the heathen nations to the forms of that idolatrous worship! What degradation and misery in their ways; what cruelty in their rites of blood! And yet when the way to God, the one living and true God, is proclaimed from heaven to *us*, who are so highly favoured—alas, what a drawing back of the heart and soul! what despisings of heavenly grace and truth! Lord, thou who art merciful and gracious, let me not be among the number who hear and who obey not; speak thou to my soul in power.

Let the day come to me, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, proclaiming salvation, and when they that hear shall live. Let the knowledge of thee, through Jesus Christ, prevail in my soul, by thy gracious Spirit's power; that I may be ever with thee, in believing communion here; and that by thy continued and everlasting grace, I may be preserved unto thy kingdom of glory.

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FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life;'*  
 Luke i. 74, 75.

HAVE I endeavoured this day to remember thy great name, O Lord, and to contemplate thy glory? Thou knowest. And I have now to present before thee my wretched and helpless condition. I am without strength, when I would direct my mind toward thee; my mind is ungovernable, and vain, and earthly; and other thoughts, and imaginations, and desires, than such as would lead me to thee, come in, and obtain the mastery over me. These surely are my enemies. Are they friends, that would separate my heart from my God? And when I think and consider now, what can these thoughts, and imaginations, and affections do for me; whither shall they lead and conduct my never-dying soul—when I consider, as I would now desire to do, in thy presence, what can these objects, on which these thoughts and affections of mine are set, do for my soul—I feel, and I now confess before thee, that they cannot profit me—yea, I do most clearly see, that they will destroy my soul for ever, if I do continue under their power. Alluring and pleasing as is their aspect to my earthly mind, verily they are mine enemies. Grant to me, that I may be delivered out of their hand.

God is, indeed, merciful, good, and bountiful, to all his creatures. He has placed us in a world that is full of his goodness. He bestows upon us from day to day of his benefits. It is not in those objects that the evil is; but it is in our own hearts, and in our souls. What a direful enemy to the soul is sin itself in its very nature! Does it not testify this in the mind, and heart, and spirit, when it restrains them from being exercised in considering God, or in thinking, or meditating upon him? This being of sin is within my heart, and O how powerful, how deceitful,

how manifold its workings. It lays hold of the creatures of God, and it turns them, in the mind, into instruments of rebelliousness in the sinner's hand against the God who made them and us, and who bestows his creatures upon us, that we might glorify him in the use of them. It makes us to love the creature more than the Creator. It blinds the mind, concealing from its view the glory of God, even his very being. It prevents the mind from beholding our own relation to God as his dependent creatures. It perverts the understanding altogether, and sets us astray from God. Yea, it has brought the mind to be at enmity against God—to grudge to him his eternal, and righteous, and holy sovereignty—the strictness and the purity of his law, his eternal dominion; and it makes the mind to think of God with dread and with suspicion, and even with dislike and hatred of his adorable perfections.

We seek not communion with God, but rather to hide ourselves from his presence; what a fearful condition for the creature of God, the rational, the immortal creature which God formed in his own image, and to whom he has given an immortal soul! But this is not all the evil. Sin has made the soul guilty before God, by its pollution. It has led the soul into positive rebellion against the Creator. The creature is become a rebel against God! Awful thought! It has led me to transgress thy law, O most holy and righteous God, times and ways innumerable. Yea, what is my whole life, from the most inward thoughts and imaginations of my heart, to the most manifest deeds of my conduct, but one continued scene and course of disobedience to thy holy and perfect law!

Does not all this deserve thine eternal wrath? Yea, Lord, and thou declarest that such must be the sinner's eternal portion. Surely this sin is the enemy of the soul; and because it is thine enemy, and mine, it exercises this mastery over my wretched spirit, preventing me even from thinking of thee, or considering who and what thou art in thyself, and what thou wouldst have me to be.

Whence, O Lord, this evil, this enemy of the soul, this wickedness in the heart, this enmity against thee, evidently possessing mastery over my wretched, rebellious, and guilty spirit? Surely an enemy hath done this! Thy blessed word is the truth. Thou hast shown the origin of this in the heart. It is the working of Satan, whom thou hast cast forth from heaven, because of rebellion against thee. And is it true, that I am the slave of Satan and sin, in bondage to those horrid and awful enemies of the soul? Is it true, that I,

wretched sinner, in serving them, am destroying myself, and become the enemy of God? But can I stand before thee and deny it? Lord, it is true! God be merciful to me a sinner!

The evil affections of my mind are the produce of this sin, the works of these enemies in the heart. They go forth not after God, to serve him, but after vanities, and after objects forbidden to serve those vanities, and to dishonour the Lord God, by giving them the place due to him alone in the soul. Why, O Lord God, do I fear, with a slavish dread, even to think of thee, and to draw near to thee, or that thou shouldst be present to me? It is because of guilt. Let me ponder this; let my soul, here before thee, consider it. I deserve thy wrath; and the body of guilt—the amount of criminality that lies upon my soul—that is what drives me from thy presence. This it is, that causes dread of thee, O most righteous and holy God. Undertake thou for me; and in the multitude of thy tender mercies, be pleased to deliver me out of the hand of mine enemies. But can I consider thy grace, and salvation, and the glorious deliverances thou commandest for ruined souls, and the glorious liberty to which they are brought, without the world, and its objects, and its vanities, coming in, and turning my heart away from that blessed and precious salvation? Sin hath made the world mine enemy, and even its lawful objects, I confess before thee, that these, have dominion over me; that my earthly mind cannot rise above them, nor shake itself free from them: yea, and connected with these vanities, that my heart is filled with thoughts and desires with respect to thee, and to my fellow-sinners, that are altogether contrary to thy holy law, and deserving thy wrath. Grant unto me, O Lord, that I, being delivered out of the hand of these mine enemies, may be brought to serve thee, in holiness and righteousness before thee, all the days of my life. Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, that there is One stronger than all our enemies; and that he came in the greatness of his strength to seek and to save that which was lost; that he delivers them that were bound; that he opens the eyes of the blind; that he sets the prisoners free.

How great is thy goodness, God of salvation—how rich is thy grace, how precious thy love, in Jesus Christ thy Son! Bring me, I most earnestly beseech thee, to know, to behold, to understand this; that it may assume in my mind the chief place; that it may have dominion in my mind; and that my wretched mind may be renewed; and that filial love to God may become its ruling principle, its constraining law, its

wanted habit. The grace of God, let that be sufficient for me; the strength of God the Saviour, by which he overcame, let it be exercised on my behalf; that he may take me unto himself, to his own service, as his own redeemed captive, adopted into his family, in the abundance of his loving-kindness, and made the child of grace, the heir of glory, to be conformed to his own image, to be one of his spiritual family, who shall enter into his kingdom of glory, and serve and love him for ever there in righteousness, in perfect holiness, throughout eternity. Lord, thou didst reveal the Saviour and his salvation to sinners before—thou doest it still. Do it in me: and let my soul know the constraining power of thy grace, and have experience, to thy praise, in the deliverances which thou commandest for Jacob.

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#### FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou shalt have no other gods before me,'* Exod. xx. 3.

SURELY the heart of man is indeed a heart of stone, unfeeling, impenetrable, senseless, hard, and resisting, with respect to God, and to the receiving of his knowledge, or the acknowledgment of his being or his dominion. How great and marvellous were the works of God to the people here addressed! How awful the manifestations of his being and supremacy which he made to them! Was it possible, that any one of the hundreds of thousands of Israel that came forth out of Egypt, could ever cease to feel, to remember and know, that verily he is God, and that there is none else besides him? When he condescends to say to them, 'I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;' we would suppose that God was uttering a truth which they could not but already know and feel, in the most penetrating and thorough manner, in their inmost souls. They had seen in Egypt much idolatry—a whole nation esteeming themselves learned, wise, civilized, powerful, and mighty, indeed above all other nations of earth, bowing down to idols and serving them—changing 'the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,' (Rom. i. 23.) But they had seen the mockery that God, the true God, had put upon all these things, when his mighty arm was revealed to deliver his people from bondage. They had beheld the mighty

doings of the Lord, the stupendous miracles he had wrought; and the nothingness of all other wisdom and power to withstand the working of his hand. And while all this was revealed, in terror and destruction to the enemies and oppressors of the children of Israel, it was the wonderful mercy of Almighty God to themselves which they peculiarly experienced. It was on their behalf that God's almighty arm had been revealed, his divine faithfulness in his promises to their fathers confirmed, established, and ratified, in his works of wonder. And would they not now trust him? Was it likely that any one of them would ever think of there being any other God but this one true, almighty, and merciful God, who had so revealed himself to them, and had delivered them out of the hands of those who hated and had oppressed them? Alas, fond and foolish conceit, to think well of our own hearts! Lord, what is man! What a monster of vile ingratitude, what a rebel against thee! Could any commandment than this be more reasonable? Was it not already sanctioned to their very souls, by the most signal and wonderful sanctions? 'The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity,' (Psal. xciv. 11.) They had even already forgotten God, they had murmured against him; and soon did they show, yea, even ere this commandment was yet issued from the glories of his presence that rested on the mount of Sinai, that idolatry was in their hearts, and that they regarded not the true God; that they were still unreclaimed by all the doings of his hand toward them.

There is much that is penetratingly instructive in the very form of the literal precept. 'Thou shalt have *no* other gods before me;' or, 'Thou shalt *not* have any other gods before me.' This looks to the heart within, beholding the proneness that is there, in the evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God. It speaks to a rebellious heart, while it speaks in mercy and love. There *is* the proneness there, to forget and to deny God; yea, there is the enmity against him, which rebels against his holy authority, and tramples his benefits and his mercies under foot. God remonstrating with the sinner, and by his mercies, by his manifested kindnesses, by the evidences of his wonderful and his sovereign love, is a sight of wonder, proclaiming his mercy to be over all his works; but proclaiming also, that there is the deep principle of rebellion against *Him*, in the fallen and debased, the guilty soul of man.

And here, God speaks to them personally—*thou*. He takes them one by one, letting none

escape. 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' It is in the individual heart that the evil is, the root of bitterness, the poison of sin, the disease of unbelief, the source of all practical ungodliness, and actual sin. To the individual heart the commandment of God is addressed.

But taking this commandment in its most literal sense, if we consider the state and the history of the whole world ever since sin entered, do we not see cause why this commandment should take precedence of all others in God's holy law? Idolatry is the reigning outward sin, the universal and prevailing evil; the open and bare-faced denial of the true God which he beholds rising from his own fallen rational creatures, insulting his majesty, and destroying the souls of his intelligent and moral subjects. And all this, when we trace its progress to the source of it all, we trace to the individual evil heart, that likes not 'to retain God in its knowledge,' (Rom. i. 28.) This is the evil tendency of sin, and its proofs are sadly multiplied.

Think, O my soul, is it not thine own self, to whom this commandment speaks in the words of divine, almighty, and eternal authority? Is not this the evil disease of my heart—denying God, putting the remembrance of him away from me, and rebelling against his authority and his will? If there be in me what grudges the strictness of his requirements, is not this the same as to wish that God were otherwise than he is—a God more accommodating to the sin that is in my nature? Behold then the source of all error, the source of all idolatry, in the individual soul polluted by sin, and become the enemy of the one living and true God. Surely the first, and the most important of all truths, is, that there is a God; and that with that God I have individually to do. This commandment therefore stands at the head of God's moral and unchangeable law. It is its true place. The eternal importance of the subject itself demands this. The cause of God's glory requires it. The sin that has assumed the mastery over the soul demands too, to be met by this most solemn and awful requirement. And the transgression of this precept in the heart produces, as its bitter and evil fruit, the habitual, the practical violation of every other commandment of God. Here, then, let the sinner and God meet. God challenging this as his eternal and rightful claim of supremacy: the sinner denying it to him, not acknowledging God in his heart, not liking to retain God in his knowledge.

And art thou guilty, my soul, of breaking this commandment? *Guilty!* The word is but faint and feeble to express the amount of my guilt. Let

God write it in the face of heaven against me, in flames of fire more awful than blazed on Sinai's summit, and let him say to me from heaven, in voice of louder thunders than made Sinai quake—*Thou art the man!*—and all would but set forth the fact, the awful truth, of my individual guilt. Let my soul ponder this—let my stony heart be broken and melted to feel it. What have I been ever doing but breaking this commandment? What was all the idolatry of Egypt, or of the nations of Canaan, compared to that of the natural heart, from which those outward abominations resulted—that guilty preference given to every other object above God, by which he is denied, his holy name and being, treated by the soul even as if there were no God?

But here, blessed be his own gracious name, here he offers himself to the soul, as God in covenant through Jesus Christ, to be *my* God. He hath wrought, and he hath put on record, greater wonders than those done in Egypt—a greater than Moses is here—the Lord Jesus Christ, having overcome the enemies of the soul, having made atonement for guilt; and God is in him reconciling the guilty to himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. Let my soul know thee, O Lord, as thou art revealed in the Son; and embracing him as the way unto the Father, may thy Holy Spirit, baptizing my soul as with fire, melt the heart of stone, and make it a heart of flesh on which thy laws shall be written—and let me not be satisfied without that experience of thy saving grace which enabled thy servant to say, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man,' (Rom. vii. 22.)

#### FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God,'* Heb. iii. 12.

THE heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings,' (Jer. xvii. 9, 10.) No man had more deep experience of the human heart than the apostle Paul. He was a chosen vessel to the Lord; and the Lord tried him, and proved him, and made him jealous over himself with a godly jealousy. It is he, we have every reason to believe, who here, by inspiration of the Spirit, is addressing 'the brethren,' and giving them this salutary caution and warning from

God. It is a strange and unaccountable thing, that while we may be convinced of our own natural unbelief, and feeling the evil and guilt of it, and crying to God for deliverance from it, we may still be found cherishing unbelief at the same time. The human heart is as the chambers of imagery spoken of by the prophet in vision. After he had seen many evils, his omniscient guide leads him onward, saying, 'Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do,' (Ezek. viii. 13.) When God's gracious voice and commandment reach to the soul, offering himself in Christ to be our God and Redeemer; and when the soul, acknowledging its own guilt and its need of an Almighty Saviour, turns to the Lord Jesus, then the heart feels its own unbelief, and its inability to trust in Christ. It seeks deliverance from the power of this unbelief, and grace to overcome it—the enlightening and revelation of faith, showing to the soul the glory and all-sufficiency of the Saviour. Every believer has cause to bless God that this revelation is given in such measure as to keep the soul waiting upon him. But while God is so gracious, how unworthy the returns made, even by believers, to his loving-kindness and his tender mercies. Not to speak of the numerous backslidings which they have to lament, and which hinder the growth of their souls in spiritual life and holiness; even at their best estate, and in their best frames, how much is there remaining with them of a self-righteous tendency and proneness? The object of faith is Christ; and it is surely unbelief which carries the mind to take its comfort from any other object or source. But there is such unbelief in them, that it will break forth into exercise when they are but little aware of its existence. They cherish it unknown to themselves: and were not God indeed the God of infinite compassion, and of long-suffering—were not he who is their Surety in covenant, and their Intercessor in heaven, their *merciful* High Priest; their own deceitfulness of heart would consume them, and bear down the life of godliness in their souls, and reduce them, while outwardly professing the faith of Christ, to a dead formality, an unworthy and base hypocrisy of spirit. While they complain, and with cause, of the weakness of their faith, the darkness or dimness of their views, there is in their hearts what would make merit to themselves of their own complaints and longings.

And should that tendency to depart from the living God, as he is revealed in Christ, be permitted to have the ascendancy, and they permitted to build on any other foundation than that which is

already laid, their souls would be lost, the waters would cover them, they would sink beneath the stream, or be carried away by this evil current of their own unbelief, and natural pride of heart. It is needful to the soul to be aware continually of this its own evil tendency; to watch unto prayer against it; to wait upon the Lord for increase of grace, for enlightening power by the Spirit of truth, the Teacher and Comforter, to abide upon the soul, to show to it more and more clearly and largely the glory of the Saviour; to reveal to them his covenant, to bring them within its bonds in the experience of their souls, as the only place where there is room and liberty, and where their souls, in the knowledge and experience of faith and hope, can really prosper. This tendency of the heart, as the power of evil still existing in them, ever and unweariedly seeks its opportunities to have exercise; yea, to have its own unholy dominion. How great is their need to be upon their watch-tower, and jealous of their hearts with a godly jealousy.

But though unbelief takes this special shape with those who are quickened to follow after God, O how many are the other shapes in which it also appears! It is so deeply seated and rooted in the soul, that, however often rebuked by the manifestations of the divine goodness, it will still again spring up and trouble them. In the times of the believer's prosperity, whether temporal or spiritual, it will seek to turn him aside. The world will come in and claim dominion again in the affections. This will deaden the soul and darken the understanding. In times of adversity and trial, it will seek to overwhelm the soul with suspicions, and doubts, and fears. In the hour of temptation it will seek to divert the mind entirely from God, and from every believing view of him which the soul had ever received. Its shapes are so many, its places in the heart so hidden, its power is so subtle, that, in one word, we may be sure that it is exercising its power whenever we are found not aware of its presence, and not watching against its experienced movements and wiles. It is that principle on which the author of evil lays hold, claims as his own, and knows to be his own in the believer's spirit. But the blessed and omnipotent Saviour has a stronger claim, and he has full dominion to assert his claim to the soul which he has redeemed by his own blood, and he will shortly bruise Satan under his people's feet. Many have been the promising appearances destroyed by this spiritual blight. True, it cannot destroy the 'incorruptible seed' of the kingdom, when that is sown by the great Husbandman's

hand. But how are we to know whether that seed be really in us? It must be proven by its growing up; by our being drawn nearer and nearer to Christ, as our all and in all. 'Faith which worketh by love,' is the principle of spiritual life in the soul. It draws the soul to Christ; it quickens it into filial obedience. It makes the soul quick-sighted in detecting in itself that which is contrary to his honour and glory, that which dishonours him. How great is the soul's need to have this principle strengthened, watered, refreshed, invigorated every day and hour, by the Spirit's influence and power through the truth applied to the heart. How near does Christ bring himself to the soul! and O how needful that he should come in, and take up his abode in the heart; that being continually present there, he might be honoured, and his blessed name truly known of us; that we might be devoted to his service and glory. Nothing but the Spirit's testifying power can make the heart even to desire this. And when the heart does not desire it, surely it is the evil heart of unbelief that prevails, in departing from the living God.

O, my soul, what hast thou, this day, been seeking and desiring most? What hast thou chiefly been engaged in? Have I not cause to dread the power of this powerful and destructive enemy? Has it not been assailing my spirit? Have I not been ensnared by it? 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!' Destroy the evil heart—renew it by thy gracious power. Draw me, that I may run after thee. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. Let not this sin rule over me; but let grace reign through righteousness, abounding toward me, and setting my soul free.

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#### SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever;' 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.*

BLESSED be God, who is to his people the God of their salvation. They are pursued by their spiritual enemies; in this world they have many tribulations: Satan may gain advantage over them; but he is overcome, and he gains not their souls as his prey; they are delivered from the destroyer's power. What a large, and varied, and

profound experience had the aged monarch of Israel, when he delivered this address to his youthful and promising son! He could tell, that God indeed had been his refuge and his strength, his strong tower and his salvation. And according to the preciousness which he had experienced to be in the ways of God, in the loving-kindness, and mercy, and faithfulness of God toward himself, so does he now inculcate upon Solomon the knowledge of God, as the one thing needful to him.

There is real sublimity in this view of the aged believer, testifying to inexperienced youth the importance and value of faith in God. There is spiritual beauty in the spectacle of the aged and experienced believer, in counselling youth, giving to the first and the great commandment of God's holy law the place of pre-eminence, which is given to it of God himself in that law. What a signal proof have we here, that the effect of grace is to conform the spirit of man to the law of the Lord. How often does the royal Psalmist testify his own delight in that law, and here he gives, as if his dying testimony, to its excellency and perfection.

It is very probable that the youthful prince who is here counselled, had given every satisfactory proof to his parent of a docile temper, of an inquiring and vigorous mind; that he had been devoting his mind and his time studiously and earnestly to all those mental pursuits, the knowledge of which became his station and prospects. No doubt he was afterwards specially endowed with knowledge and understanding; but when we hear it declared of him that he was 'wiser than all men;' that his 'fame was in all nations round about,' that 'he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes,' (1 Kings iv. 31, 33) one is led to believe that he manifested from earliest youth an earnest desire of knowledge, and an aptitude to learn, while his ruder and more turbulent brethren were given to lower or more unworthy pursuits. It is viewing his character in this light, which gives peculiar emphasis and impressiveness to the counsel now addressed to him by his aged parent. However gratifying to parental affection might be those indications of future eminence, the godly parent remembered, and knew, and felt, that 'one thing is needful.' *Know thou the God of thy father!*

We cannot question, but Solomon had been giving a becoming attention to the instructions of piety which the father had doubt-

less been communicating to him. How frequent is this, in the character of the young; this general regard shown to the duties of godliness outwardly, in obedience to parental instruction and example, while there is nothing decided appearing, to show that grace has truly turned the heart to God. A certain young man could say to Christ, 'all these things have I kept from my youth up:' his deportment had so much amiable and lovely in it, that it is even said, that 'Jesus beholding him, loved him;' (Mat. xix. 20, and Mark x. 21) but yet, when the heart was put to the test, it betrayed its ignorance of God and of Christ. The young man made choice of the world, and forsook Christ. Alas, how many a youth of hopeful promise follows the sad example; 'the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.' The counsel of David to Solomon shows the godly jealousy of the pious parent over the soul of the promising son. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' David longed to see this decidedly manifested in his son. '*Know thou the God of thy father,*' goes to the heart, and intimates the necessity of heart-knowledge, of faith in God. Well did the venerable king of Israel know, that this alone is the truly precious knowledge. Solomon was already, we may believe, rendering outward homage to the God of Israel; but until this saving-knowledge came into the soul, he could not serve God 'with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.' O, no! the service of God is but weariness after all, however decently observed, till this saving knowledge possess the soul in effectual power.

There is a hardened legality of spirit, into which youthful habits are very apt to form themselves when converting grace has not come, even when preventing grace may still restrain from outward denials of God. The godly parent, here, is, as if fearful of this, warning his beloved son, that 'the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts,' not to be satisfied with formalities, or with dead works, but to *know* God, that the heart may be perfect and truly sincere in his service. He encourages his beloved child by the promises of the grace and goodness of God: 'If thou seek *him*, *he* will be found of thee.' He will reveal himself to thee, and thou shalt have the witness in thyself of how precious his grace is, how glorious his character, how excellent and exalted the privileges of his people, compared to which all the glory of thy earthly kingdom is but vanity and a shadow; and it will be to thee but a snare and sure destruction, without that faith in God which purifieth the heart,

and overcometh the world. He warns the son of his love, that God reigns over all, that he indeed is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; that as he raiseth up, so he can cast down. 'If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.' How awful the consequences which are here threatened! How solemn the warning; and how impressively felt by the gracious parental mind. This end to the soul, the contemplation of it to those whom we love, if we be under grace, must surely awaken our deepest anxieties on their behalf.

We may indeed well estimate our own condition, by the interest we feel in the spiritual and eternal welfare of those especially with whom God has brought us into near and close relationship; and most of all, those whom God solemnly commits to our care. Here is a specimen and example, then, of the believing parent's solicitude, and of his earnest, anxious counsel. O, how solemn, how precious a trust is the parent's, how great its responsibilities! An inspired apostle says, concerning those who were his children in the faith, 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you!' (Gal. iv. 19.) And surely when grace reigns in parental affection, this must be peculiarly experienced with respect to those whom God has given, to bring up for him. We see this anxiety realized in the aged king of Israel. He was delivering over into the hand of his son, indeed a royal and splendid worldly inheritance. He had great and many promises from God respecting this his son. The son himself was promising, dutiful, and meek. But all was as nothing to the godly parent, without his son truly *knowing* the Lord. He urges him to seek this faith in God, from God himself, and presses this upon his conscience and heart by the most solemn and urgent considerations. It is grace in the heart that will give authority and power to parental counsel. It breathes a holy unction and fervour into the very language employed. The parent indeed cannot give grace; but grace will give earnestness, and authority, and influence to the parent; and why do so many parental counsels fail? Is it not because of their languor and coldness, the little elevation or steadiness of aim with which they are given.

Parents require a double portion of grace. Their duty is arduous. But the believing parents' privileges are high; the promises given them are great and precious. What is the scene upon which youth is entering, without the saving knowledge of God in their souls, but a field of blood, where immortal souls perish under

the power of evil, a world that lieth in the wicked one!

Let the habitation of youth be sanctified and consecrated to God. Let his claims there be made known, and urged upon the youthful and tender mind. O, let parents seek the grace by which God may be indeed known of themselves, that they may be witnesses for him to their children's hearts. It shall not be in vain, whatever be the present discouragements. And do not these discouragements arise by neglect of duty, by opportunities lost, by time, example, and precept sacrificed to the world, or lost by conformity to it? O for the believing heart, the spiritual mind, the realizing view of God in Christ through faith, that there may be faithfulness to him wrought in all our relations and offices. My soul, know thou the God of thy father. That will give thee strength for duty, wisdom profitable to direct, and counsel in every time of need.

#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice,' Deut. xxvi. 17.*

THE works which God had wrought for Israel were great and marvellous indeed; and solemn were the services in which they acknowledged his goodness, and promised and vowed to serve and obey him.

But let me here ponder, and think, and consider, the works which God hath wrought for his New Testament church, within which I have been born, in which I was early dedicated to God, and in which now I have my professed standing, as believing in God. What were all the wonders and the miracles done in Egypt, in the Red sea, in the wilderness, in Jordan, and among the nations opposing Israel, great and marvellous as they were, compared with the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh? This is the bond of the Christian church, the foundation on which it stands, its meaning, its life, its glory—the Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel—God with us! Lord Jesus, have I known thee indeed? Have I this day avouched thee to be God and the Saviour—my Lord, my God, and Redeemer? I have prayed, was it to thee? I have read of thy blessed word; did I search for thee in it? I have called upon thy

name, in presence of my fellow-beings; and was it in truth?

How solemn are the services of godliness, in their very form and aspect, from the most secret to the most public, and open, and sacred; the creature approaching the Creator, and professing to hold communion with God! How awful the expression, 'God is not mocked,' not to be mocked! How express his declarations of divine and holy displeasure at unbelieving approaches made to him! How wise, how needful the counsel of David to Solomon, '*Know thou the God of thy father!*' God revealed, known in Christ, is the true object of all Christian worship. What has drawn and urged thee, O my soul, to draw near to God! Has it been the faith of Christ, the knowledge of thee, as revealed in him? or, has it been the desire of such knowledge, the feeling and burden of an evil heart of unbelief, and seeking deliverance from it, and the light of the knowledge of his glory to shine into my soul, and to make me obedient to himself in love?

There are ordinances and means of grace, in which God commands and invites sinners to seek his salvation; and in the use of which he promises to bestow it. In waiting upon these, we avouch the Lord to be our God, we are professing solemnly our desire to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice. What sincerity is there in many of these solemn approaches to God? Alas, how much insincerity! Is it the sole desire of God's salvation that draws multitudes to the house of God on his day? Is it this desire that urges to the performance of private, perhaps of secret, formal duties? God knoweth the heart, he searches the soul's inmost purposes and thoughts. How large the professions made of seeking the Lord in these means! Were they all in sincerity and in truth, we were indeed a blessed people, and so avouching God to be *our* God, he would avouch us as his people—his divine blessings would be poured down upon us from heaven—holiness to the Lord would be inscribed upon us, and iniquity would hide her head ashamed. But can we believe that such a desire has obtained a place in the hearts of thousands, and thousands who professedly worship, and avouch the Lord to be their God? By their fruits ye shall know them. And is not the displeasure of God recorded against those whose 'fear toward him is taught by the precept of men?' Surely it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. What dishonouring of the Saviour in the professedly solemn assembly! what despisings, what rejectings of his

grace, his truth, his person, his offices, his dominion! Ponder, my soul, and reflect what it is *thou* hast been doing. Have *I* been seeking God, the living God, and his salvation? Each one must give account of himself to God.

But there are ordinances of God, appointed by him for the solemn purpose of his own believing people to approach him in them, and to make profession before him, in presence of heaven and earth, of God, of angels, of men, of devils; that we take him in Christ to be our covenant God; the salvation which he has so graciously provided, that we do gratefully and unreservedly accept; that we surrender ourselves in soul, and body, and spirit, to his service and glory; that we renounce the world and its vanities; that we take the whole counsel of God as our rule and our law; that we are constrained by the knowledge and faith of Christ, by love to him, thus to surrender ourselves to his service, and that we accept him, yea, that we have chosen him as our *all* and in all; and that God, in him, is now our God, and to his voice that we shall hearken.

And is God to be mocked? Has the soul been brought truly into this service? Shall God accept bodily exercise for the service of the heart? How vain, how impious the thought! Can the mind conceive of dishonour done to God, of Christ Jesus the Lord of glory being more dishonoured, in any possible manner, than by such avowals, such professions, such solemn vows and engagements, and the heart uninfluenced by his knowledge, the soul unmoved by his love! Is he, indeed, the omniscient Jehovah, beholding this, in the individual soul: these solemn, these most solemn professions made, and in the heart his grace and salvation despised and rejected, and must he not frown in righteous and holy displeasure on the unbelieving worshipper? Great is his forbearance, marvellous is his long-suffering; but the awful day of retribution is nigh at hand. The believing soul receives the Lord Jesus. What a glorious privilege! Lord, how precious is thy grace, that grace, in which thou hast said, 'Deliver from going down to the pit, *I* have found a ransom!' Thou hast given thy beloved Son for sinners, and shall we refuse to give ourselves to him? God forbid. Let all others forsake thee; yet will not I.

Such, indeed, is the true believer's purpose of heart. But what need of grace to sustain it, and to carry it forth into exercise. The whole counsel and will of God are before thee, all brought nigh to thee, his ways, his statutes, his commandments, his judgments—the word is nigh to thee. But where is the heart to receive it?

Has not the Lord Jesus all dominion and power? Blessed be his glorious name, he is exalted far above all principalities and powers; he can subdue all things to himself; and I would cleave to him as the Lord my righteousness, the Lord my strength, that he may be with me; my Surety, my Stronghold, the Uplifter of my head.

May the divine Spirit dwell with me in my soul, testifying of him, and causing me to hear his voice, and may my heart be sound in his statutes by the all-sufficient operation there of his quickening and his sanctifying grace. 'In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' That is the experience of his believing people. But in him is their sufficiency and their strength. That people he has created for himself, and they shall show forth his praise. This must be their service, as it is, indeed, their high and their blessed privilege. Let this be their soul's occupation, and care, and delight. His grace is abundant, and he giveth liberally, not upbraiding. Blessed are they who wait upon him. His commandments are not grievous, but joyous to those who know him in truth. In communion of faith with him, they renew their strength from day to day. In their straits he is nigh to them, and in all their tribulations his comforts delight their souls. He is their merciful and their faithful High Priest who hath passed into the heavens, and is there making intercession for them; and sending them strength and deliverance, and they shall not faint. The knowledge of God in Christ is the life of the soul here—the life of faith, which has its fruits unto holiness, and the end everlasting life with God in his kingdom.

Let this blessed light prevail in my soul more and more; let me be found waiting on the blessed God, for its increase and power, that my walk may be worthy of thy high vocation wherewith thou callest me, and that thy name be not dishonoured by my conformity to the world, by my denying thee, whom I have vowed to serve and to follow.

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SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,'* Matt. iv. 10.

THE artifices of Satan in tempting the Saviour are peculiarly instructive, as showing to us, from our great enemy's knowledge of the hearts of men, the sins that do most easily beset us; or rather, which, by the corruption of our nature, are most deeply rooted and stablished in our souls. The

counsels of this great enemy of God and men are thus defeated, by the stratagems which he employed in assailing the great Captain of our salvation. The believer in Christ is warned and admonished, and made to cleave the closer to him who hath overcome the evil one, for strength to resist the temptations, which, as he presented to the living Head, so will he also present to all the members of Christ's mystical body. The father of lies uttered falsehood in saying that he had power to give all the kingdoms of this world to Christ, or on the conditions proposed. They belong to Christ himself, he it is who created them, and it is the providence of God, in him, that rules and governs them all. Satan is called the prince of this world, not because he has the moral or providential government of the world in his power, but because he rules in the hearts of those who are of the world, and under its power; and because, having overcome man, he has power over their fallen and ruined souls, to present to them worldly objects in alluring and attractive colours, causing sinful affections in the heart to close with such worldly objects as the ultimate and the highest good which the unbelieving mind perceives, or takes knowledge of.

How solemn, and how humiliating and fearful the reflection, that while we hold in our own individual mind the world, or worldly objects, as those on which our affections are most set, it is this prince of the world that rules over us, and that we are his subjects, his captives, his slaves! And yet this is the state of every individual soul not savingly acquainted with God in Jesus Christ.

There can be no greater delusion than to imagine ourselves worshippers of the Lord, as our God, if the knowledge of him, as he is revealed in Christ, has not been the means of drawing our souls into that worship of God which we render to him. Believers have the experience of this in their own hearts. The world and its objects have natural ascendancy over them. The divine excellencies of Jehovah's being and character are not discerned by them, until, by his abounding and sovereign grace toward them, they are convinced by the Spirit of truth of their own sin and misery, and enlightened to behold the character of God, shining forth in the counsels of redemption, and in his divine person, who was God manifest in the flesh, and who came to seek and to save that which was lost. It is true, the mind may have indistinct and dim perceptions of the being of God, in its natural and fallen estate. The testimony of revelation may impress this upon the natural understanding.

But under such impressions, where there is nothing more, there is no real worshipping of God. He is to the sinner's soul rather an object of dread, and aversion, and terror, in hearing of him. There may be fear, slavish fear, compelling the sinner unwillingly and reluctantly into bodily acts of homage; but that is not the true worship or service of the Lord God.

There is no truth, after all, more perceptible to human reason, than that there must be a supreme Creator of all beings and of all things. But who he really is, what are his perfections, and character, and will, this is altogether, to the human mind, darkened and estranged from God by sin, the subject on which the foolishness and the corruption of the mind becomes most manifest. It were a subject more of curiosity than profit, to inquire how far the immediate agency of Satan is concerned in those ideas of the supreme Being, which are embodied into the various forms of idol-worship, and heathen superstitions, with which the world is so filled. That it is employed is a matter clearly revealed to us. But that this agency is peculiarly exercised in blinding the minds, and in hardening the hearts of many, of multitudes, who have been favoured with the light of a revelation from heaven, is most expressly declared. 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,' (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) What a fearful scene presents itself to the mind, when we think of all the earnestness, the anxieties, the care, the diligence, and strivings, with which the objects of this world are pursued; and then, the cold and lifeless acknowledgments of God, that are made even by many of those who profess to know the Lord God, the God of the bible—God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Consider whether this God has really become to thee the real object of thy worship. Is it toward him that thy mind and spirit, thy thoughts and affections, find the readiest out-going; and is it in the contemplation of him thy heart findeth its highest enjoyment? If not, art thou then the true worshipper of the Lord thy God? What are the objects to which thy heart and affections are chiefly surrendered? It must be either to the objects of this world, or to God. And what more express than the declaration of the Lord Jesus: '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,'

(Matt. vi. 24.) 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' (1 John ii. 15.) Now, when the blessed revelation of God is brought nigh to us, the perfections of God manifested by it, testified of to our mind, challenging our reverence, and most humble submission to him as the Lord of heaven and earth, the God with whom we have to do, in his holiness and justice, in his eternal sovereignty and dominion; why does not the heart tremble before him, and why is not the creature drawn to acknowledge the divine and Almighty Creator? It is because the world has power over the soul, and the prince of this world subjects the soul to its objects; preventing it even from considering God, or the testimony brought so nigh concerning him.

And when the goodness, and mercy, and love of God to sinners in Jesus Christ are testified to your mind, how is it that you are not drawn to God in gratitude, and love, and willing submission? It is because this world is loved by you more—its objects and its occupations, its pursuits, and its pleasures, and cares, so possess the heart, that there is no room there for thoughts of God, or for the considering of his claims upon you. Now, the sinful mind may seek to disguise these parts of its own actual history from itself; and to clothe them over with palliations of its own devising; but this state of heart is a state of real, and the worst kind of idolatry. You give to the creature the respect, the esteem, the place in your heart and affections, due alone to the Lord God. Instead of serving him, and him only, you serve the world with your spirit and body. This is rebellion against God, it is guilt to the soul, and the soul's continuance in this state ensures its everlasting ruin. How contrary to the voice of nature itself is this state—to the nature of things, to the supremacy of the great and eternal Creator, that he should be so despised; and to the nature of the immortal spirit of man, that it should devote itself to things which perish with the using—which cannot profit the soul, and forsake the true source of all blessing and happiness! But such are the bonds in which sin and Satan have bound us down, prostrating the soul to the service of vanity, and making the mind its own destroyer.

The grace of God bringeth salvation. God is revealed in Christ reconciling sinners to himself, and delivering them from this bondage and guilt. Blessed be he who came in the name of the Lord to save us! The enemy did indeed cast us down from our excellency. But He hath overcome this

enemy. And we are now called to worship the Lord God, as God in covenant by Jesus Christ bringing salvation. From the depths may we cry to him; and he will send his help from above, and deliver us as the prey from the terrible one. Draw near, worship him, call upon him as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ—that his power may abide upon the soul, and set it free, and bring it nigh to serve the Lord God, and him only, knowing his goodness and glory, and having confidence toward him through Jesus Christ, to perfect in the soul the good pleasure of his goodness, to rescue it from the enemy, and to prepare it for eternal glory.

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SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;  
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,'*  
Psal. xxix. 2.

It is a grievous thought, a most painful reflection, that the remembrance of God should be shut out from his own works: that his divine wisdom should have no acknowledgment, no homage rendered to it, no submission given to it; that his power which has created and which sustains all things should be despised, and even defied; and that his most bountiful goodness should have as its return from a world filled with its provisions, ingratitude and rebellion.

He hath not left himself without witness.

The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth forth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge concerning him.

What mind can look forth on the glorious scene which creation now unfolds, without feeling that God, the Almighty God, is present by his works? The heavens above testify of him, declaring his infinite power and wisdom; and abounding goodness is proclaimed in every thing that is now beheld on earth. Inanimate creation itself seems to rejoice, and to be glad at the presence, and in the goodness of the all-wise and Almighty Creator. Can I tread upon the springing herb, upon the painted flower, upon the nourished earth, without being rebuked for a heart insensible to the glory and goodness of God, the Almighty Creator? Lord, 'what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?' He is the only rebel against thee in this world, where thy creative hand hath placed him, surrounded with such glorious manifestations of thy wisdom, and power, and good-

ness. 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' Were there nothing else to draw the soul to God, but the goodness of his hand in his creative and providential bounties, are these not more than sufficient to condemn the ungodly spirit, the earthly heart, baser than earth itself, that forgets him? Do not all these wonders proclaim, 'I am the Lord thy God!' I have wrought, and fashioned, and framed all these things, and thee too, child of the dust, heir of immortal destiny; my hand sustains them, and thee in the midst of them; and forgettest thou God thy Creator?

O my soul, put not away from thee, any longer, these serious, these solemn, these precious reflections, for they are, indeed, thy life. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.' The soul continuing in its spiritual ignorance cannot give to the Lord the glory due to his name. What is a nominal worship, what an outward profession, when not founded upon, and arising from a real knowledge of God in the heart, what can it be, but a mere mockery of God, and as entirely a deceiving of the soul itself, it is as a mockery of him.

When the apostle Paul came to the city of Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he beheld the city wholly given to idolatry. 'For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you,' (Acts xvii. 23.) This is a fixed principle in all real, spiritual, and divine worship, that no glory can be given to God, without the true and real knowledge of God being established as an active principle in the soul.

How many and divers are the motives and views that may draw men to make an outward and formal acknowledgment of God! It is an overwhelming thought, if all the worship we have hitherto been rendering to God, has been rendered from other motives than the true knowledge of him in the soul itself. God has not been glorified in any, in all such worship. Nay, he has been most grievously dishonoured. Has the inscription upon the altar at Athens been found upon all the worship which I have hitherto rendered? Let me now make settlement of this awfully important question, between God and my own soul; and let me not be deceived as to the reality of my own personal condition before him! Surely the soul cannot give glory to God, without actively obeying his will, without being really engaged in this as the true business of life, and without the light of the knowledge of his

own glory so shining into the heart, as to render this knowledge of God a fixed principle there. He cannot be served or honoured, no glory is given to his name. He is not remembered by the soul—the understanding is not exercised on the moral and eternal perfections of God, as any real object to which the mind is subject. Such a principle, then, is what the mind requires, to have it, and to have it habitually in exercise. Many, and impressive, and clear, as are the manifestations which he gives of his own glory, there is a principle of darkness in the soul which rejects these manifestations, and refuses to be instructed by them. He is indeed the God of glory. O how glorious his divine and adorable being and character, when in the plenitude of his goodness, and wisdom, and love, there is a way ordained and established by himself, in which this principle of evil can be subdued in the soul, and his own knowledge brought into it, and made to prevail in it. May not every human being truly feel, that there is need of such dealing with himself; such divine teaching, such divine power to come to the soul, as would really dispel its darkness, and bring in light, and change the practical character of the inward and outward man—so, that, as God had been formerly forgotten and dishonoured, he might now be remembered and glorified in a willing and filial obedience? The name of the Lord is truly revealed, his being and his character made known, by the Lord Jesus, instituting, and perfecting in him this most glorious way, in which divine grace is brought so to operate mightily, and effectually, and savingly upon the souls of sinful men.

We give, then, unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, when we seek him unto ourselves, that he should, as God the Spirit, through the Lord Jesus Christ, so work mightily in our own souls. This is the grace freely and fully offered to us in the gospel of our salvation. This is the attitude, even of our beginning to glorify God, our so coming to him, and so waiting upon him, for this grace, to deal savingly with us, and to renew us in the spirit of our mind. 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' And it is when this divine power touches the soul, that it is made obedient. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' The holiness of the Lord, his justice and his righteousness, are fearful to the soul, and there will be enmity in the heart against them, and that enmity will rule, until this blessed power come; and then we shall truly see the beauty of his holiness, and worship him as he is then

revealed to the soul in that glorious and heavenly beauty and majesty.

And as the psalmist here is calling upon men of every degree, so to worship the Lord in his sanctuary, and among his people, so let me seek, that I may be joined in spirit to those who are so made the subjects of divine grace, that I may have communion with God himself, by Jesus Christ, through faith, and fellowship with all his saints;—for while the soul is not thus savingly instructed, it can have no communion with God. What is God making known to us, by all his works, and especially by the glorious works of his grace, but that he seeks us so to be brought nigh to himself? He is saying to us by all these: 'I am the Lord thy God. I have given myself to be your God and Redeemer in the person of my beloved Son. O! how inexpressibly great the claims of God in Christ upon us! upon me, as an individual soul, thus to give glory to his name! Let me give myself to God—surely it is my reasonable service. It is the true happiness of the soul to be permitted, and to be enabled so to glorify God. How adorable the holiness of the Lord. How sublime his eternal purity—and how high the exalted state of those who are made partakers of his holiness, by the crucifying in them of the body of sin, and by the transforming of their souls, even to bear his image, in his imitable perfections.

Is it not on this, that our souls should be fixed, as their best and highest attainment. And giving to the Lord the glory due unto his name, is now to put our trust in the word of his gracious promises, and to wait upon him, who will also do it. When the soul is quickened to behold the glory of the Lord, it shall be changed into the same image, more and more, by the indwelling power of him who begins the blessed work; and then the soul's increasing delight shall be, to give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; and to worship him in the beauty of holiness.

#### EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;'* 1 John ii. 3, 4.

THE mind of man is incessantly occupied, and most commonly upon objects external to itself. Its habitual exercise is to direct itself to objects from which it expects to derive profit, or plea-

sure, or happiness. It seeks knowledge of such objects. It is not satisfied with any summary kind of knowledge concerning them, but seeks to have experience of the value, or excellency, or goodness that is in them. It is in this way that the minds of men are engaged from day to day, and from year to year, while their time is passing speedily away, precious time, which bears with it as it comes, and as it departs, an awful amount of responsibility to him who in his great mercy and kindness bestows it.

What is man? What is his destiny? What is mine, an individual human being? Am I made for this world only? Have I not within this my frail body of dust, a being that is immortal, dwelling? My soul is my being, and my body, my frail body, is but what philosophers call an *accident*, or a certain fact, or quality, or circumstance, connected with this soul, which is my proper and real being. The soul could exist without the body at all. There are spirits without bodies—angels; and the soul, which is my true being, shall yet, and I know not how soon, pass into the spiritual and eternal world, to live there without any connection with the body, until the morning of the resurrection; and even then, after this *mortal*, that is, the body, shall have put on immortality, it shall be a very different body from what it now is. If indeed in Christ, it shall be raised up a glorious body, fashioned like to Christ's, and have no longer any interest in the objects with which it is now connected on earth.

Now, why should the mind be occupied, and so exclusively occupied, with things of an earthly and temporal kind? The connection that the soul has with them all, is but transitory, and incalculably short, at the very best. 'What is a man profited, should he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' This earthward course and tendency of the mind, of all its desires, and thoughts, and imaginations, and affections, is a sore and a destructive evil. 'They that are of the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.' But if we live after the flesh we shall die—the soul shall die—that eternal death, which is to be eternally separated from God, and to be for ever the object of his just and eternal wrath. Then, to have true knowledge of God, is the one thing needful. Without having this in the soul, it is now already separated from God. It is an alien to God, a stranger to him, and also an enemy. The greatest, the most precious knowledge, is to know the Lord. The soul is dependant upon him for blessedness, for happiness, for true peace, and for all lasting enjoyment. But

many imagine themselves to have knowledge of God, when they have it not. Their minds are not exercised in beholding, or in considering his glorious excellencies, his eternal perfections, or in realizing their own dependence upon God, or his eternal supremacy over them, or his righteous sovereignty. He is the fountain and source in himself, of all good. Do I know this? Do I realize this in my own soul? Let me consider this. Let me watch my own mind in its continual workings and occupancy. Let me examine whether it be towards God, and to the remembrance of his name, my mind is tending, or going forth. And if it be not, then I am surely 'spending my money for that which is not bread, and my labour for that which satisfieth not.'

Now the soul being brought to have true knowledge of God, will then know his will. That will of his is expressed in his holy commandments. He shows to us, by these, what manner of persons he would have us to be. Alas, how entirely different are we, from what God so expressly seeks that we should be! But if we be walking onward from day to day, in our own earthly desires, and vain imaginations, not seeking to be conformed to the will of God, not desiring to do his commandments, or to obey them—it is made known most clearly in this part of his divine testimony, that we know not God—yea, that we have *no* right, no saving knowledge of him at all! Of all subjects that can ever occupy the mind here, in this life, this is the most important. Let it be received and treated as such, and not put away. Are you saying that you *know* God? Are you not making this profession, outwardly, in the world, and by joining with those who call themselves believers, or Christians, in the visible church? And is this a *true* profession which you have been making? Let the word of God himself judge it. His Spirit, here, by the apostle John, makes the case to be a very plain one indeed. If one say that he knows God, and keeps not his commandments, that person 'is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' We ought, in connection with this most important testimony, ever to bear in mind, that saying of the Redeemer, 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' (Matt. vi. 23.) Every one, mostly, will say that they have knowledge of God; or they will say that they *trust* and hope that they have it. It is too evident, that beneath such a profession, there lies much uncertainty concerning themselves, and their personal state and condition. Undoubtedly, from the nature of the heart that is in us, its depth of deceitfulness, there may be difficulty, by examina-

tion of it, to know, what its real state may be, with respect to God. But he who trieth the reins of the children of men, here gives us a test, a true test, by which to make sure of the matter. We must judge ourselves by our fruits, not by what we feel, but by what we really do. We cannot do any thing, even think a good thought, in a spiritual and acceptable manner, without our being first brought to *feel*, to apprehend the knowledge of God; but all our feeling is mere deceitfulness, unless it have brought us also to *do*—to act, as 'seeing him, who is invisible.'

Am I then, keeping the commandments of God? Is this my daily, my habitual effort? And are my efforts springing from the real knowledge of God, prevailing in my soul, and that knowledge producing love to God, and this love drawing me into filial obedience? That is the believer's state—that is the practical character of real believers, as set forth in the word of truth: 'No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' (Matt. xi. 27.) It is then, through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, by the soul being brought to have him manifested to it, that God becomes truly known. This true knowledge of God, as he is revealed by Christ, *will* bring the soul truly to have love to God, dwelling in it, and rising more and more into power over it; and this love is known by its seeking actively to obey the will, the commandments of God. Surely, then, we have here a test by which we may judge ourselves. The believer's life cannot be a life of inactivity or slothfulness; neither can it be one of idle and vain sentiment, or empty feelings; it must be one of activity and of energy. The true desire of obeying God's commandments, of keeping them, will set the mind to watch over itself, and to watch the outward deeds and goings also; trying habitually whether these be in accordance with the commandments of God. Now, is this *my habit*? Is this *my walk*? Consider this, O *my soul*. Be not thou deceived!

Blessed God, of glory, and of grace, thy service is perfect freedom. The obedience of thy commandments is not from slavish fear, with those who *know thee*, but thy love, when they do know thee in truth, is shed abroad in their hearts; and this makes their obedience, as it is their aim, also their delight. All those who know thee in truth, have the witness within themselves of the truth of the adorable Redeemer's testimony: 'My yoke is easy, and my burden light.'

## EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight,'* Exod. xxxiii. 13.

MOSES had been called indeed to an arduous as well as a great undertaking. He had already experienced its difficulties. But he could also, at the time here referred to, say, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.'—'The Lord giveth strength unto his people.' According to their day, so shall their strength be. It is a salutary exercise to consider the walk, and the trials, and the hardships of those, who now through faith and patience inherit the promises. When we consider, and realize in our mind's view the difficulties which Moses had to encounter and bear, we cannot but also realize, that his faith in God must have been peculiarly strong, realizing, appropriating, and firm. Yet was it not the grace of God, that very grace, of which he now so earnestly seeks increased manifestations,—was it not that divine grace which made him what he was? And so also shall the same grace be made 'sufficient' for every one truly turned to seek the Lord, and to walk before him in newness of life.

And although no believer, perhaps not one in the church of Christ to its latest day, may be called to the like arduous undertaking, outwardly, to which Moses was called; yet every one of them shall feel, whatever be their outward lot, that of themselves they are indeed insufficient; and that by grace alone they can be sustained, delivered, and comforted. They shall have their own burden to bear, in the path of spiritual obedience, their own cross to take up, their own anxieties and fears to endure, and to overcome.

And their own individual dependence upon the grace of God must be realized by them, in their experience, just as certainly as Moses, here, is seen realizing his need of 'more grace.'

We see in the history of Moses a parallel to what must occur with every soul whose face is set truly Zion-ward. How stiff-necked, rebellious, unbelieving, and earthly-minded, the multitude of whom the care and guidance had been laid upon him! And when saving grace comes to the soul, and awakens it, it will experience, that even within itself, there are hosts and multitudes of evils truly unsubdued, rebellious, and disobedient. Affections, passions, thoughts, imaginations, all of which are evil, and that continually. Were the believing, awakened soul, even in a

desert, solitary, alone, surrounded by no 'evil communications' from without, its experience would be,—'the good that I would I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I do.' But more than this also comes upon it. The believer will have to say, with the prophet of old, 'I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.'

The relations in which the believer stands with the world, become snares, and trials. The soul's communion with God is interrupted by them. Impressions of divine objects are weakened. And, alas, the evil affections inherent in the heart itself are awakened, called into unholy exercise, and felt to be strengthened by that exercise; and the spiritual views of the soul darkened, and clouded: iniquities, it must confess, do prevail against it. Though the soul may have to say, 'Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,'—though it did expect, that more deep and abiding impressions should have been made, by what it had spiritually seen, and felt, and learned, such expectations are too frequently, grievously disappointed;—the world from without, and evil principles from within, have cast down the soul, and leave it in heaviness and in fear. But where grace reigns, where it has been given, it will teach the soul, still to wait upon God, and that for more grace.

Now, O my soul, what hast thou, this very day, experienced and learned? How have the manifestations of his own goodness and mercy and grace, which the Lord gave thee, in days past, this day, drawn thee to himself? Has not the world indeed prevailed,—has it not been turning thee aside,—has it not been weakening thy spiritual life; and what hast thou drawn from its communications and pursuits, but spiritual apathy, and insincerity of purposes toward God?

Let me not remain for another hour, in this backsliding condition. O, let not my soul let go its view, or its hold of God, revealed in Christ Jesus, as my God. Where is there a remedy to be found for these evils, but in God himself, and in his abounding grace? Let me draw near to his throne of grace now, and let me seek in the same spirit as animated the soul of Moses,—Lord, show me now thy way, that I may know thee. Let thy grace so come to me, that I shall not lose sight of thee, in my daily conversation and walk. O, make thou that grace sufficient for me, and in my soul. Vouchsafe to me, altogether unworthy as I am of the least of thy mercies,—yet through the blood of atonement shed for remission, take away

my sins, and let thine own glory be so revealed in my heart, the believing view of it so implanted in my spirit, that it shall prevail to the subduing and the crucifying of my sinfulness, and to the keeping of my soul 'unspotted from the world.' Let me feel, in that blessed revelation according to thy grace, the greatness of that end to which I am called by thee in thy glorious gospel. Quicken me now to call upon thee, and preserve my soul in the habitual attitude of waiting upon thee as the God of my salvation, that I may know thee in truth, that I may find grace in thy sight, and that thy grace may reign in my soul, through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ.

Where this grace does reign, the fulfilment of God's gracious promises in Christ will be found needful, necessary, the one thing needful. Moses had the promise of an angel to go with him; but he seeks to know this, to have the experience of it in full reality. Blessed be the name of God—there is a greater promise—the angel of the covenant—the Lord Jesus—to abide with his people, and they abiding in him, shall not faint or fail. He is 'the way.' O my soul, know thou this way, and walk in him, and in communion with God through him.

#### NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me; for there is no saviour besides me,' Hos. xiii. 4.*

How lamentable this history! How perverted and unworthy, and base, the returns made by this people to God, for his multiplied works of loving-kindness, and almighty power, manifested by him in the midst of them. They had set up idols, in place of the living God; yea, they had multiplied their idols,—lying vanities, the works of men's hands, and had refused to acknowledge that God who had been their God from the land of Egypt, and who had made it so clear in the midst of them, that he alone is God indeed, and that besides him there is no Saviour. It is sorrowful to think, that through the multiplying of sins and transgressions, on the part of those who were so highly favoured of God, sins of the deepest dye, sins the most expressly forbidden, under sanctions so solemn, and so clearly of divine and eternal authority—he should have in this manner to expostulate with his backsliding, rebellious, and unthankful people. And here, in those wonderful, long-suffering expostulations,

how adorable is the mercy of our God! Truly his mercies are over all his other works, in wonder and in excellency; if we think at all of the creature's demerit and worthlessness, and of God's divine and eternal glory in his own uncreated being.

Alas, the people of Israel are not, in all this wickedness, singular. How clear the word he has sent to us! How marvellous are his works, how adorable and unspeakable his grace in Christ Jesus; and how wonderful his condescension and his love in drawing near as God the Spirit to an individual soul;—dealing with it, and causing the light of the knowledge of his own glory to arise as the day-star, in the individual heart. And yet amongst those who have been so highly privileged, how true it is, that many of them walk, even contrary to all this! Have we followed the light which he gave us, the truth which he has made us to feel to be the truth indeed? Have we not been guilty, with Ephraim, of setting up idols in our heart, of giving to created objects the homage in heart and affections that was due only to God! How prone to this is the evil heart of unbelief; and how have we yielded ourselves to its dictates, and to the dishonouring of God and the ever blessed Redeemer! We said that we should never forsake the Lord; that verily he was God, and our God: but, O how unfaithful the conduct, how inconsistent the personal walk! The word of God has been following us, addressing us, God revealing himself by it to the soul; and yet in the face of all this, we have been forgetting him, and giving to the creature the glory and the service due to the Creator alone. The kind and merciful dealings of his providence have ever been following us,—yea, God going before us in them, sustaining, protecting, delivering us, and doing us good, from day to day unweariedly, both when we yet knew him not, and by his dealings in word, and providence and grace, so overruling our lot, as to cause us to see somewhat of his own glory, and of our need of his own sovereign mercy and grace in Christ Jesus.

He hath indeed shown to us, and can we deny it, 'that which is good,'—the riches of his grace in Christ, his willingness, not that we should perish, but that we should remember him, and turn to him, and that he should bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. And yet, have we not to confess acts and habits of a practical idolatry? He has not visited us according to our sins. His long-suffering has been greatly extended towards us. He hath frequently in kind-

ness and in faithfulness warned and admonished us.

How has my mind, notwithstanding, been exercised?

Here, God says, as on many other occasions, 'Thou shalt know no God but me.' Not only that we should not give the homage and service to other objects, due to himself alone; but that we should not seek to know any object so as that it might draw the heart from God himself, or from the supreme reverence due to him. And yet the heart inquires after objects to set up as idols there. The very dispensations of the kind providence of God, by which he was sustaining even our temporal lot, and securing our privileges, and multiplying our comforts, we have, alas, abused, as so many ways of departing from God, and have set up the mercies which he bestowed, as idols on which we lavished our heart's affections, and by which, the love which we thought we had to God, waxed cold indeed. It is of his mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

And what are these objects which have so turned us aside, which we have so sinfully set up as idols to ourselves, and as objects of esteem and regard, more than God in Christ. Are they not vanity? What can they profit us? What can they do to the soul? In themselves they are vanity. To the soul they are snares—they can be, and they will be, if followed, the means of its everlasting destruction, alienating the soul here from God, and preventing its preparation for the kingdom of God in heaven.

An idol, indeed, is nothing—in any spiritual sense. And how cruel the self-delusion practised, of esteeming it, as if it could do me good, as if its possession could benefit my immortal soul. O! how glorious is God as a Saviour—the Saviour, to forgive such iniquity, and transgression, and sin! The riches of his grace are indeed unsearchable, when he is yet ready to forgive, and still waiting to command the blessing upon me a sinner, of such aggravated guilt.

The soul must be turned from idols to serve the living God. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. My soul, draw near to God—O be humbled under his mighty hand, confessing thy sins. And may that grace in its sovereign abundance, so quicken and strengthen me, that I shall forsake all things, and truly follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth.

## NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,'*  
Psal. xiv. 1.

THIS shows to what an evil extent, to what a rebellious and degenerate condition sin reduces the soul, that creature of God which once bore his own image! There is much that is very awful to contemplate in this fact, in any soul of man being brought to such a condition as to say this. It is said *in the heart*. This clearly signifies that it is a *wish*—the wish of the individual here represented, that there were no God! We read in the scriptures of angels that sinned. We read that there was war in heaven. And the angels who rebelled were cast forth from the kingdom of glory, and reserved they are in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day. They had said in their heart what is here expressed. They wished that there were no God to rule over them, and that they themselves should be exalted even to the place of God.

This is the very nature, the essence, and the real being of sin in the soul. It is the sin which we inherit by nature, through original apostacy. We carry it with us in our own hearts. And by every exercise which sin has, which is given to it, this, the being of it in the soul, is actually strengthened, and the sinner becomes more foolish, more audacious, more rebellious in practice, the longer that sin is cherished and indulged.

When, contrary to the admonition of conscience, to the declarations and warnings of the divine word, the mind sets up to itself idols, lying vanities; to which it renders the homage, and service, and affections due to God alone, it becomes more and more hostile to the claims of God upon itself. It cannot now bear that God should demand any service, any real service of the heart from it. It is giving the whole of this to the idols which it has set up, and thinks it an interference that God, and not these idols, should demand its services and its affections. The sinner becomes 'mad upon his idols;' and here is the madness—here the height of foolishness—wishing that there were no God. How fearful is this condition! An immortal soul, dependent upon God, and by his divine goodness sustained; yea, by his divine goodness and grace called, and invited, to be made a partaker of the favour and of the kingdom of God throughout eternity, spurning those gracious offers, those eternally precious and glorious privileges, which have been purchased for it by Jesus Christ, and preferring, What? Vanities, lying vanities, which

cannot profit; objects which in their very nature are positively nothing; which have no spiritual existence, no enduring quality in them at all—and wishing now its own separation from God, and that there were no God to interfere with its own maddened pursuit of such empty and vain objects.

But this is a wish. It is said *in the heart*. It is not even an imagination; it is not a mere thought. It is a *wish* of the degraded and foolish soul. It is not an exercise of the understanding. No! If the wretched, infatuated soul, permitted itself to exercise its understanding on the subject, it could not but perceive truly that there is a God. Yea, and this *wish* is in opposition to the understanding and the conscience. It is the not wishing to retain the knowledge of God. The voice of reason is perverted. It is rebelled against. It is put to silence. How like a fool is this conduct! It does render man, a fool in the most true sense of that expression. He may not be a fool in the world's estimation. Far from it. He is active and eager, intelligent, shrewd, keen-sighted; perhaps signally successful and prosperous in this world's pursuits. He is obtaining from the men of the world the tribute of their admiration, for his success, and his expertness in this world's business. Perhaps he is the object of envy to many a neighbour of the like worldly heart with himself.

But the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; and with respect to God, how clear it is that such wisdom is foolishness indeed! Can a wish of the heart make God cease to be! Can such wishes affect the eternal Being, the supreme and eternal perfections of the one living and true God? Can the united wishes of all his creatures, should they all be thus rendered rebellious against him, once affect the eternal throne of the omnipotent Jehovah! The word of his power, the breathing of that almighty power, could, in one moment, annihilate their united and contemptible union, and cast them down, wretched apostates from God, into eternal torments. But yet this 'fool' proceeds to act as if even his wish had had effect upon God himself—he proceeds to act as if there were no God, and as if God had no right to demand any homage, or service of the heart, or of the life, from him at all!

And is not this the very picture brought out to our view by the adorable Saviour, in the description he gives of the rich man in the gospel, whose lands brought forth abundantly, and who said to his soul to take now its case, in the multitude of its possessions, in the wretched gratification of his own polluted and degraded

appetites. And what was the issue? 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.'

O how dreadful that state in which the mind is, when it becomes as if the interest of the soul that there were no God! And yet, what are the elements that are by nature prevailing in my individual soul? Are they not such as will soon bring me to this condition, if they have not brought me already? What have I obtained from my pursuit of the world, but this spirit of alienation from God—the strengthening of it in my own very heart?

Blessed be the God of salvation—for ever blessed be his name, that he has ordained salvation from this fearful state! And how unspeakably great is my need of the Almighty Saviour, who has put himself in the place of sinners to overcome the wicked one, to deliver souls from this cruel and destroying bondage. May that Saviour be made precious to my soul, according to my soul's need of his divine grace, and of his almighty strength—of his perfect righteousness, that the guilt of my iniquity may be washed away, and that in him, through union with him, I may become a new creature indeed, and may be delivered from a present evil world. My soul, wait thou upon the Lord: verily, thou art God, the God of my health, and I will praise thee.

TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence,' Job xxxi. 24.*

How innumerable the forms assumed by the deadly evil of sin, in its exercise, in its actings in the hearts and minds, in the doings of sinful men! They do not wish to retain God in their knowledge; and the being of sin in the soul, the very nature of which is to oppose the will of God, to set up its own inventions in direct contrariety to the will of God, leads them forth, each in his own way, to despise and dishonour God. We read of times, when, in the face of all that God had revealed concerning himself, men set up idols of wood and stone, the work of their own hands, and worshipped these as if they were gods. And who were the guiltiest in all this? The very persons, the very nation to whom God had given the clearest and the most merciful manifestations of himself. The natural mind must have something which it prefers to the true God, as an object of its real esteem and regard; because, alas, the love of God is not there, but its very oppo-

site. Can there be any such folly as this; can there be any greater crime! And can there be insensibility compared with that of the soul which is in this fallen and wretched condition, remaining dead to the sense of it, and unappalled by its guilt or its danger! Many indeed have been the devices by which the enemy of God and of men, has taught men to dishonour God. How many kinds of idolatry are there with which the world is filled, and has been filled ever since sin entered, alienating the soul, and causing it to forsake God, the fountain of living waters! But among all these, none is more besetting in our times, and in our nation, than the making of gold our hope, and saying to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence.

What avails it, that the light of the glorious gospel hath chased away from amongst us, as a people and nation, those idols of wood and stone to which many of the nations of earth still yield their blinded homage; if the soul has set up other idols in their room, which draw forth the affections into their service, and alienate the heart from the God who is by the gospel revealed to us?

Truly the god of this world still blindeth the eyes of them who believe not, to cause them to make gold their hope. The acquiring of riches is the pursuit of our nation, of our day especially—the spirit of covetousness is awake, and active, and powerful. Where do we not meet it; and where can we look to find exemption from the foul infection manifested, even in those who profess the gospel of the grace of God, by which life and immortality have been brought to light? O is not the mammon of unrighteousness receiving the homage and worship due to the living God; when in pursuit of it the counsels of God are forsaken, his ordinances despised, his day profaned, his worship neglected in the closet, at the family altar, and in his sanctuary?

And are there not many indeed who do all this, and are not ashamed: who glory in their shame—and if only they prosper in their search for gold, making it their confidence, exalt themselves, and by the most public course of their practical life are saying, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him? 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.' This is the blessed Saviour's counsel, and he hath given himself to be the food of the immortal, the guilty, and ruined souls of men. Alas, how despised and neglected—the great salvation, the adorable Redeemer himself!

And what receives the love that is due to him, in the following after which men are seen so occupied, so hurried, and so earnest and eager? It is gold. They are seen bending their souls to the idol. Nothing else has such a place in their heart. The outward forms of idol-worship may be wanting, as they happily are; but the spirit of idolatry marches forth undisguised on our streets, penetrates into every privacy, and is seen marking our places of business for itself, and stamping them with its seal.

God sees the heart, and to it he is looking. And surely, the heart occupied with its plans of gain, with projects of wealth and of riches, with its hopes of gold as the hire of its devotion, and as its own highest enjoyment to possess it—surely this heart is the very seat of an idol-worship—it is the temple of mammon, where the idol reigns. 'My son, give me thine heart,' is the gracious commandment of God in Christ. It is the word of his own invitation. But when pursuing the world, its profits, its benefits, its advancements, its dreams of honour, of aggrandizement, and luxury, how fallen, how cast down from its excellency the immortal spirit which God has given, how dishonoured the Creator who gave this spirit to man.

It is indeed the grace of God which alone can deliver the soul from these entangling snares with which our path is so beset on every side.

Let my soul seek this grace, so abundantly provided, and so freely offered in Christ the Redeemer. If I profess to know the Lord, am I not denying him if I seek not this grace at his own gracious and bountiful hand? Let the fine gold not enter into my soul as its idol. Let the Lord of glory come to his place, and reigning over me by the manifestation of his own glory and goodness, let my soul be kept from the idolatrous sin and pollution. Divine grace can keep the world in its place. Let gold be my servant, but not my master, my idol, my confidence. The good Lord direct my goings, and manifest himself to my soul, that I may be kept from the pollutions that are in the world through lust, this lust of the eye, this vain pride of life, this boasting in my shame—my subjection to that which perisheth with the using. May I live in holy dread of the contaminating power, and may my resort be the God of salvation, who giveth strength to his people.

## TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows,' 1 Tim. vi. 10.*

THIS testimony of God is not easily credited by those who see not into their own hearts, who know not their deceitfulness, and their exceeding earthliness, and subjection by nature to the things that are earthy. It is trial that makes manifest that which is in the heart. The believer himself may frequently in this be deceived. He may judge himself to have overcome this love of money, and he thinks that there are still sorer evils, which have yet to be overcome in his soul. But when he is tried, alas, how unlike that which he hoped himself to have been. Disappointments in the matters of this world's business affect him more deeply, than even the consciousness of sin, the very sin of loving money. When he has many mercies left, and many benefits still remaining to him untouched, does not, too often, a slight worldly loss, occasion more disturbance to his mind, than the loss of communion with God? It throws him back from the seeking and relishing of that communion. It makes him to look more upon that which is lost, than upon all the mercy of God, and all the goodness which yet follows him, and makes him, alas, practically to undervalue and slight the eternal inheritance to which he is called, and for which it is his chief business here to prepare.

And how gentle and mild are the reproofs of our Father in heaven, when often he, in the dispensations of his all-wise providence, is but demonstrating to us, the evil of our seeking the living among the dead—blessing, or peace, or security in that which is but vanity in itself, and vexation of spirit to those who follow and pursue it with their heart. And while the love of money is seen producing the sore evil of separating man from his God, transgressing the first and the great commandment, producing all manner of spiritual evil in the blinded devotee of money, hardening the heart against the voice of God in his providence and in his grace, despising that grace, and making gold his idol—equally numerous indeed are the constantly occurring violations of the second commandment, which is like unto the first, that are soon produced by the love of money. Those who dwell in unity are separated, and made enemies the one to the other, by the desolating power of this evil affection. Very brothers are turned into mutual foes. What quarrels, what

hostilities, what bitter enmities, and wraths, and strifes, and evil speakings, the love of money produces!

These are evils which extend their influences, like the infection of deadly disease, far and wide. The individual mind is debased and polluted by them. It cannot have access to God, while under the power of these evil affections. It spurns the offers of his grace—it spurns the counsels of his redeeming love. It seeks not to itself the pardoning mercy of God, and it desires not that the sins of others should be forgiven.

There is no manner or measure of actual sin, but the love of money will lead to. It is not, of course, meant here to be said or implied, but there are many 'evils' in the world, not produced by the love of money as the immediate moving cause. But it is distinctly meant, that this evil and earthly passion, which bears in its very essence a denial of God, and a rejection of him as *our* God, will become, and *does* really become the root of all evil, to that soul, which is ensnared by this unholy affection. If we look to the history of individuals, and in whatever rank or sphere of life—when this lust obtains power, it ruins every religious principle, yea, every moral affection. It withdraws the soul, it turns it away from the love of God, and from the love of men also. The foul idol is reared in the mind, and like Moloch of old, it devours and consumes all that comes within its reach.

And if we extend the survey, to the history of families, of communities, of nations; are there any evils, which have not really been produced by the love of money? The Lord of glory himself, when on earth, was he not betrayed by it—this lust in the heart of an earthly-minded, an unfaithful disciple? And how numerous and sore are the evils now produced by it daily! And when we see it working its fearful consummation of practical and hardened ungodliness in the minds and character of those who have never been seriously impressed at all with the truths of religion—may we not trace the evil to this passion in the minds of their parents, and guardians, and relatives, who perhaps, from love of money, neglected the souls of those committed to their care?

For the love of money, youth is exposed to every temptation; and placed, every day in circumstances, and devoted to pursuits and associations, where God is forgotten, denied, and blasphemed, and every divine ordinance trampled under foot. But it appears, and, alas, how frequently realized, that those on whose minds, salutary and promising

impressions had been made, have, by the love of money, 'erred from the faith.' The mind has been turned aside from every impression of good made upon it, by the power of this evil affection. The light that would have conducted to everlasting salvation, in the soul, has been extinguished. There is no excellency, no reality now, seen, in any thing spiritual or eternal, by the mind where the love of money has obtained the ascendancy. It is drawn back, into a course of backsliding first, then of hardening, then of defiance to the counsels of God, and of his truth; and this issues into practical infidelity, and then, perdition! O, how piercing indeed to the soul, when the world turns upon the wretched sinner—the devotee of ungodly gain, of inordinate desires and ambition, and shows its own real emptiness, perhaps riches doated upon taking to themselves wings and flying away, how piercing to the soul, the reflections of its own blindness, its own maddened career of earthliness and ungodliness! Indeed without any of those vicissitudes occurring to which every thing worldly is so continually exposed—what can come into the heart where the love of money reigns, but sorrows, piercing sorrows, when the futility of acquired gains is experienced—the total insufficiency of these to bestow the simplest blessing or benefit upon the very body itself of the individual who has given his body and soul to the vain and profitless pursuit. Must he not feel the wretchedness of the choice he has made? What is he profited? What can he grasp? *All* that he grasps is but increasing his torment, his anxieties, his cares, his burden—and hardened as he may have become, the thoughts of a coming eternity will force themselves upon his earthly mind—and terrors will seize him. A voice within will still testify, that for that which he now knows to be *nothing* but truly vexation of spirit, he has forsaken God, and turned his back upon the counsels of the Eternal. He has no enjoyment in the life that now is; and the very idea of a life to come, is an announcement of indescribable and unsupportable terror to his guilty, abject mind, piercing it through, and the wretched soul made thus the victim of its own idol. The conviction of sin has returned upon the soul that erred from the faith—the truth of what has been despised and rejected is now renewedly seen, but the heart is hardened against it, and the abuse of multiplied mercies and long-suffering is felt to incur the righteous wrath of that God who hath declared, that covetousness is idolatry, and that the covetous cannot inherit his kingdom.

Let me ponder my own danger, in a world

filled with this destroying and deadly lust. Shall I pursue, shall I cherish the soul-destroying evil? God forbid! The grace of God teacheth to deny worldly lusts—and here is one of these, the root of *all* evil. Blessed be God, to me that grace is offered. O, my soul, wait thou upon the Lord! May his grace enable me to see the reality and the excellency of things divine and eternal: may it quicken my soul to follow after them, labouring not for that which perisheth with the using, but for the bread that came down from heaven. And as the love of money is the root of all evil, let the proof of that love being crucified in my soul be manifested, in my using this world as not abusing it, but caring for the great end of my being, the glorifying of God here, and to be fitted for the enjoying of his kingdom for ever. May my treasure be in heaven, that my heart may be there also. And may I ever consider every mercy received from God truly as his own, and myself as his steward of whom he shall require an account.

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ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God,'* 2 Tim. iii. 4.

THE pleasures of the world are here meant. What are these? Ask thyself what are those pleasures derived from worldly objects, associations, and pursuits, which draw thine own heart from the remembrance and from the love of God. We need no detailed descriptions of what those pleasures are. We have all gone astray from God, 'each in his own way.' Let me ask my own soul, what is *my* special way, in which I am so led astray from God day by day, in my thoughts and words—yea, am I not too in my deeds, by the pleasures of this world? Surely, when I cherish these pleasures, to the exclusion of God from my mind, I am a lover of pleasures more than a lover of God. This sad love in my earthly heart sets up its own idol, in the pleasure it seeks enjoyment from, and God is denied by me then, as *my* God. Alas, does not this love of pleasure unfit the mind for the serious, the solemn, the truly profitable duties of godliness and religion? Have I not experienced this? And shall I continue to yield obedience to this fearful tendency? This is not giving the heart to God. It is refusing to give him the heart. Whenever this love of pleasures seizes the soul, the mind at once becomes carnal. There is much exercise in it then, which is very fearful to contemplate. It is ready to

spurn the spiritual demands of God's holy law—it does spurn them—the claims of God, as the God of salvation by Jesus Christ are also despised. This is fearful. And the movements of his Holy Spirit, upon the conscience and heart, by the truth, these are quenched—the mind loving pleasure, occupied with the pleasures of this world, is enmity against God! In very deed, and to the full extent of its own consciousness, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, in this state. This carnality is the bitter fruit of the inordinate love of worldly pleasures. It is bitter indeed. The awakened soul is thrown by this into a backsliding, a hardened state. It is rendered unfit for communion with God, yea, and unwilling to seek it. The throne of grace is forsaken; prayer is restrained; its spirit is quenched in the soul.

This matter requires close and faithful searching of the heart.

If you keep away from such searching, and be unfaithful in prosecuting it—if such searching of the heart have become distasteful to thee; tremble for thy safety; the love of pleasure more than the love of God hath already seized thee, and is carrying thee away. Think, O think, endangered soul, and consider that God is supreme. Lay to heart what it is that he offers thee; to be to *thee*—thine own God; to rule supreme in thy heart, and in all thy affections. Hast thou closed with the offer—the gracious offer—of himself in all his fulness to be *thy* God, in the fulness of his own love, in the fulness of *all* the spiritual and eternal blessings which that love can bestow? And wilt thou be a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God? Is he now supreme in thy affections? And if thy heart now condemn thee—what, alas, excludes God from the throne of thy heart's affections? Is it not the love of pleasure? Look to it well—and be faithful—make no slight work of this. Search out thine idols. Carry them forth to be consumed by the power of divine grace in thy soul, the baptism of the Spirit, the baptism of fire, consuming them, and drawing thy soul to him who loved it with an everlasting love, and who gave himself for the souls of sinners, to purify them from all this spiritual uncleanness and idolatry.

O! shelter not thyself in vain boastings of thy outward correctness of deportment, of thy habitual acts of formal worship, of thy consistent and careful outward profession, which may secure to thee thy good name among professing Christians. This will not avail thee in the day of accounts. The great work to be wrought by

divine grace in the soul, is, to bring the *heart* to God, and to bring God into the *heart*, to reign there supreme, as is most justly due. Here is the soul's true and most real enjoyment. And while the love of pleasures prevails, that enjoyment can never be known, and the soul is deceiving itself, when satisfied with having a name to live.

Ah, the tendencies of the heart are all towards those pleasures. The power of sin knits the very soul to them; and it is alone the divine power that can 'loosen thy bonds.' The power of God the Spirit works that faith in the soul, which reveals to it the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, drawing the heart to *him*, and glorifying him in the heart. This divine principle, while it reveals the glory of God, will enlighten the mind to behold the vanity, and the criminality of pleasures which an unbelieving world call innocent, harmless, allowable, and refined.

Harmless! when they withdraw the heart from God—when they render man the very enemy of God! My soul, come not thou into their secret, who reason in this way; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. Seek the faith which overcometh the world. Flee formalities, by which God is dishonoured; yea, mocked, while pleasure is the idol—the god that receives homage from the heart. Draw near to God—wait upon him according to his word, his grace will quicken thee; and will enable thee to say, I am crucified to the world. Without this, God is not yet become thy God.

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.'* Phil. iii. 18, 19.

It appears by the writings of inspiration, that in the very first ages of Christianity, yea in the very times of the apostles themselves, many made profession of believing in Christ, whose profession was most unsound. And if such was then the state of the visible church, how much more so must it now be! At that time, the profession of the Christian name, generally, carried with it reproach, shame, danger, and the loss of all things temporal, even of life itself. It may appear strange to us, that in such circumstances, there

could have been any unsound professors of Christianity at all. But when we consider the matter more carefully, and brief as is the record of outward events and circumstances which the New Testament history affords, it does clearly disclose to us, that there were circumstances even in those times, when gain could be made of an appearance of godliness. The church had its periods of outward peace and security. Then, it was easy to make an outward profession. And how much more easy still, it is become in our own day! And it appears that many in the apostle's days, urged by selfish, earthly, base considerations, maintained such a consistent outward profession, as to impose upon real believers. And how is this, that one can maintain outward consistency of Christian character, and be yet an enemy of the cross of Christ? How can any one be said to be an enemy of the cross of Christ?

Let this be understood as a matter of the most vital importance. We have only to inquire what was the grand design of that most marvellous of all transactions—of all the works of God, the crucifixion and death of the Saviour; and if any one be practically opposing that design, then he is an enemy of the cross of Christ. 'The Word was made flesh'—Christ took to him our nature. He suffered and died in our nature, that by his doing this, God might declare his everlasting righteousness, his eternal hatred of sin, that he might show forth the excellency of his own perfect law, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin; while in the sufferings and death of the Redeemer, a way might be perfected for delivering sinners from the eternal punishment which their sins deserved, and for bringing them back to God, from out of their sinful and alienated state, and making them heirs of his kingdom. God declares to us in the cross of Christ, in his beloved Son suffering once for sin, suffering the anger and wrath due to it, that he hates sin with a perfect hatred.

Now, if we receive not this intimation concerning our own sinfulness, if we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we persist in cherishing those affections and habits which are contrary to the divine law, notwithstanding of this manifestation, we are enemies of the cross of Christ. The Saviour's sufferings, the accursed death which he endured—these proclaim, and with a voice more loud, a manifestation more clear, than if countless thousands of worlds had been in one moment consumed because of sin—that God will by no means clear the guilty, that the violation of his holy law cannot go unpunished; when he who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, standing in the room of sinners, could

not escape the infliction upon him of the divine anger. And surely he is an enemy of the cross of Christ, who rejects this testimony, and is found going on in his trespasses, disregarding the work of God wrought by the Saviour, acting as if this manifestation had never been made or given.

But here is the love of God to perishing, guilty sinners, also made known. Here is the offer of perfect redemption from sin conveyed and brought nigh to the sinner. The Son of God endures the chastisement of iniquity, that by his stripes we might be healed. The gracious design of his cross, while manifesting the holiness of God, the majesty of his law, is, that he might bring sinners to God, that he might draw them to him. And they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, who oppose this most gracious design, with respect to themselves; and who refuse to seek that grace, which through the sufferings and death of the Saviour on the cross, is now freely offered, that they might be redeemed from all iniquity, and purified, and consecrated to God, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. They are the enemies of the cross of Christ, who are not in, the exercise of their souls, closing with the offers of this abounding and most marvellous grace.

How easy is it to name the name of Christ, to be called a Christian, to be a member of the visible church of Christ, and to be esteemed a Christian in the world! But if we be not brought to the cross of Christ, through faith; if we do not there learn righteousness; if we be not, in the believing view of it, truly made willing to follow the Saviour in the regeneration, to take up *our* cross and to follow him, who by his own death on the cross purchased for sinners salvation in all its blessings, and now freely offers that salvation to us each one—then are we the enemies of the cross of Christ. And it appears, that the most earthly and low considerations can prompt and induce men, to assume the name of Christians! Many, it is to be feared, know not why, or how they have assumed the name at all. It is customary, it is creditable among men; it is discreditable not to have our name among those who are esteemed Christians. But in the absence of true faith, there are other motives which have influence in the heart. O, my soul, learn thou thine own, and see to them; lest thou too be found an enemy; and while naming the name, the glorious name of the Saviour, remaining under the power of the most unholy, the most debasing sins, which alienate the soul from God, and which incur his displeasure—yea, that anger and wrath revealed

by the cross of Christ against all unrighteousness of men.

Should one not be sensible of having assumed the name of Christian from any such base motives as are here named, though it is to be feared there are persons who do so, yet if the soul remains under the power of unholy affections, while naming his name, they are the enemies of his cross.

And what a scandalous idol is sensual appetites! How wretched and fallen a state for the rational and immortal soul to be fallen into—to have the satisfying of these as the great object of desire, that in which the highest enjoyment is sought! This is brutish. Sin has indeed made base fools of men, when it so reduces them to the level of the beasts that perish. How insulting to the Majesty of heaven, to that God, who by the cross of Christ, is showing forth his everlasting love, to thy perishing soul, and offering to make thee an heir of eternal glory in heaven, if thou be found thus denying God, and even forgetting that thou hast a soul! The language of inspiration is clear, and decisive, and plain. And it is true as it is plain, and simple, and forcible. And if deaf to the gospel's voice and entreaties, to the manifestations of his glory and love, who died on the cross to purchase salvation for thee, and thou seeking thy good, and rest, and enjoyment, in the pleasures of sense, in the satisfying of thy bodily appetites from day to day—then, thy god, miserable soul, is thy belly. Thou art not serving the Lord Jesus; thou art not reconciled to God, but an enemy of the cross of Christ. O, how wretched an idol is this, which thou hast set up to thyself in opposition to God, even the God of salvation revealed by the cross of Christ! The end of this *must* be destruction.

And yet, when we consider this subject, when we see many calling themselves Christians, and esteemed in the world as Christians, taking no delight or pleasure in spiritual objects or duties, but glad and rejoicing in their earthly—their bodily gratifications,—alas, is not the description here given sadly realized. Do they not glory in their indulgences, and pride themselves on their power of gratifying them, and on their success in doing so! It is too true. The world may gloss over this manner of life by names of fancied and proud refinement; but these are God-denying glosses, which cannot bear inspection, even in the sight of men; and how infinitely less in the eyes of an omniscient and holy God. Men are seen valuing themselves, yea, and valuing others too, by the extent to which they can

carry this indulgence of their bodily appetites. They will like the Pharisee of old, even thank God that they are not as other men, drunkards, profane swearers, sabbath breakers, dishonest in their dealings,—that they are men of honour, worthy citizens, benefactors to their poorer brethren by their own luxurious living. But the living God judgeth righteously—and while it belongs not to men to judge each other, the prerogative is his, who seeth the heart, and judgeth not by the outward appearance. And when the individual soul is not really engaged in seeking the salvation of Christ, through his cross, not intent upon that greatest and highest end—that one thing needful, as *its own* highest and most habitual aim; but intent on these sensual ends, it may escape one idol, it may even resist the love of money as its immediate object, but devoting worldly gains to the satisfying of the flesh, fulfilling the lusts thereof—and glorying in that end, it glories in its shame—in that which degrades, and stupifies, and pollutes the soul even here—this other idol the satisfying of the flesh, is set up, it receives the homage due to God; and thus continuing to walk, the end must be destruction. Learn, O my soul, in the believing view of the cross of Christ, to flee such lusts, such base idolatry, such soul-destroying habits, and to live above the world in communion with the glorious Redeemer, even in things lawful, but which are not expedient. Learn, that the friendship of the world in this spirit of mind, is enmity with God. The soul cannot prosper, unless overcoming such snares of the wicked one, whereby he lies in wait to deceive.

May divine grace enable me to walk circumspectly.

#### TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?'* John v. 44.

HERE is another idol set up, and demanding, alas, receiving, the honour and glory due to God alone. The individual soul may escape many of the outward pollutions that are in the world through lust. It may imagine itself, to have overcome many of these, or under impressions and belief of the truth as it is in Christ, to be contending against them, while still there may be another idol, very close-shrouded in the soul, lying concealed in the secrecy of the heart, and yet the more reserved, that it is the more secret, and exercising more

power and dominion over the soul, the more secret its dwelling-place in the heart. Such an idol is the love of self, and self-seeking. This evil principle is most deeply rooted in the human heart. Not more natural to us is it even to breathe, in a bodily sense, than it is to seek honour to ourselves, self-exaltation, and to seek it the one from the other. Sin has cast out from the soul the knowledge of God. We act, even in all things, following our natural dispositions, even as if there were no God. It is very awful to consider the extent of rebellion against God, to which sin has led us. It has made us desirous and eager to grasp to ourselves the honour which is due to him alone. We put ourselves in the place of God! God indeed is gracious. Through Jesus Christ, by him crucified, he offers to raise us up, to bring us to true honour, by delivering us from our sins, by renewing us in the spirit of our minds, by sanctifying us to himself, and by fitting us for glory, and honour, and eternal life with himself in heaven. For this end Christ came. For this end he is freely offered to each one in the gospel. But, alas, the heart seeks honour in a very different way. We seek and receive honour one of another, and rest in that as if it were our chief good. This is idolatry of self—it is self-worship. It is the most insidious form of a spiritual idolatry. How wide-spread, how powerful, in its operation is this idolatry of self! How extensively are the customs, and manners, and fashions of this world, and its maxims, based upon this, as their very principle. What are all the maxims, and what men call their laws of honour and of fashion, but a practical and wide-spread manifestation of this sin; not indeed a willing confession of it, but a stout-hearted avowal, that men prefer their own honour, and the receiving of it, one from another, to the honour that cometh from God only.

Did we look to this in the exercise of a spiritual understanding, we could not but see it as the spiritual leprosy of the soul, separating those who are under its power from the communion of saints, and from all true communion with God. The Lord Jesus proclaims what the spiritual homage is, which is due to God. He was himself, in his own spotless and perfect life upon earth, a perfect example of what it is to render this homage, and love, and obedience to God. He sought not, he received not, honour from men. He took all that honour at its true value—esteeming it as nothing, and as worse than vanity. He showed this example to men. He propounded and taught the truth—the principles upon which this is the true honour of the creature, to be sub-

ject to the Father of spirits, and to live for ever. But those to whom he came, with his doctrines and example, despised and rejected him. They believed him not. They were so shut up from the knowledge of the true God, so hardened in their own unbelief and earthliness of mind, in their own carnal pride and self-seeking, that his heavenly doctrines were repugnant to their souls, and his heavenly, his meek, his holy example, repulsive to their pride; altogether contrary to their desires of self-exaltation.

If he had undertaken and offered to raise them into worldly honour in the presence of their fellow-men, in the esteem of the world, then would they have gladly received and followed him. But their hearts being set in them on that self-exaltation only, he informs them, that that principle in their souls, prevailing with them, ruling over them, blinded them to the truth, and prevented them from believing in him, who showed and declared the truth in his own doctrines, and person, and life.

Now, what are professing Christians better than those who are here addressed by the Saviour, while this worldly principle remains unsubdued in the soul? And O how obviously this self-seeking and pride, proclaim itself to have all the vanity and guilt in it, of real idolatry! What could an idol do to bless its blinded worshipper? And what will it avail the soul at death, that we have stood well with the world, with our fellow-men—that they respected, or even honoured us in life, should they have even exalted us to the very summit of earthly glory and praise?

Do I bear about with me an immortal spirit, which is soon to return to God who gave it, the God who only can bless it? And when this my spirit does so return to *him*, what then avails all the honour that has been rendered to me by mortal men like myself? Will this make my soul acceptable to God? Nay, that I have been seeking honour to myself, and from men—exalting myself—this shall abase my soul in his sight, shall condemn me at the judgment, shall leave me there, carrying the mark of God's enemy upon my very spirit, and shall procure the sentence against me of eternal condemnation. And yet, great, deadly, fearful is the power of this destroying idol in the world—what worship of the great, of the noble, of the rich in this world—what seeking of honour to self, by obsequiousness to them! What seeking of something like equality with them, that they should honour us, that we should be honoured by them! This does blind the mind, it hardens the heart, it lays an arrest on the faith of the gospel in the soul,

upon all right perception of spiritual truth, and spiritual realities. And into every sphere and condition of life this vain and guilty idolatry enters. It is *the* prevailing sin of the age we live in—the god of this world blinding the eyes of them who believe not, and making them to seek this honour to themselves, by some mode of self-exaltation, and conforming themselves to those immediately above them. It is alone the powerful revelation of faith, that can overcome this in the heart—this evil power of worldliness and of vanity, and that will bring the soul to see the truth and reality of all that which is brought to light by Jesus Christ, and to follow after that honour that cometh from God, by him—that restoration of the soul to the favour of God, which his righteousness bestows, that deliverance from condemnation which his sufferings have purchased, that restoration to purity of heart, to the love and true filial obedience of God, to which his grace can restore the alienated, earthly, and polluted soul. This prepares the soul for eternal honour and glory with God himself in his kingdom. O! how high the privileges of the children of God. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, says the church, that we should be called the sons of God! Were we truly realizing this through faith, it would conform us practically to the example of the meek and lowly Jesus. It would bring us to self-denial—a practical denying of this self-seeking. The true believing view of Christ would reprove this sad, this heinous spirit of self-idolatry in the soul, and would bring in the love of God into our own hearts; and would crucify us to the world, and the world to us. We would see the vanity of the creature in the knowledge of the Creator's glory, and our heart would be brought to seek the honour that comes from him only. It is dishonour to the soul, it is the worst bondage, to be under the power of this deceiving and false spirit, which puts the creature in the Creator's place. It subjects the soul to eternal shame and ruin. O! may my soul realize this day, what I am, and what are all the objects to which my natural heart would lead me—may I wait upon God for his saving grace and strength, that I may truly seek the honour that cometh from him only, as my only and my all-sufficient portion; and may the knowledge of Christ the Redeemer prevail in my soul, by the ministration of his Spirit with the truth, that I may walk in his light, and feeling myself the creature of God, fallen, indeed, by sin, and become rebellious, yet, invited by the abundance of his tender mercies to be an heir of his kingdom, may I honour *him* in his sovereignty and his love.

Let me render honour to whom honour is due in the world, as his appointment; but realizing myself as less than the least of his mercies bestowed upon me, may I seek to be conformed to his will, and not to this world, and as the one thing needful, to be transformed by the renewing of my soul through his grace, to be found in the Saviour, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

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 TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost,' Acts xii. 22, 23.*

WHAT a practical and awful illustration of the sin reproved by the Saviour in last morning's exercise! Herod sought the honour that cometh from man. His sottish and impious flatterers sought honour or profit, or both, to themselves, by rendering to Herod this stupid and blasphemous tribute of their praise. Behold the end!—wretched Herod!—the most insensible of men can understand thy misery—the wrath of the Eternal has laid hold on thy very body, and it is miserably consumed. The wrath of God is revealed against thee!

Yet what are even the bodily torments of the wretched Herod, but an indication and sign sent from heaven of that anger due from a righteous God to those who seek their own glory, and who refuse to glorify God? It is in the eternal world, that this wrath, this infinite wrath, is poured forth on the soul, and on the body too, when again at the judgment-day they shall yet be united. The sin of Herod cherished in the heart deserves that wrath. It is committed against an infinite God. It involves infinite guilt. It must be visited with an infinite punishment. Pride goeth before destruction. God resists the proud. And in the dispensations of his holy providence, God thus warns impenitent sinners of the end that must await them in their course of rebellion against him. 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' This is largely manifested in the world. It is not in this instance only that God by signal judgments from heaven, has rebuked the pride and vain-glory of men. He is long-suffering in his dispensations for most part. But the respite is short, if we duly con-

sider it. Time is on the wing, its conclusion is nigh—eternity is at hand, when the proud and hardened sinner must appear at the judgment-seat of God—that God to whom he refused to submit, over whom the sinner presumed in his madness to exalt himself, taking to himself the glory due to God alone. These men were found robbing God, to please Herod. It is God who rules over all, and over the princes of the earth, the high and the exalted of this world. He turneth their hearts as the rivers of water. Herod's clemency was of great worldly consequence to those men. It was God who disposed, for his own sovereign purposes, the heart of Herod, to be kindly and forbearing, or perhaps merely just, in this instance. They gave not God the glory. They gave it to Herod. He scrupled not to take it to himself. He encouraged them by this in their blindness and blasphemy. They robbed God. He accepted their robbery. His sin is in a spiritual sense, what is termed in human laws reset of theft. He received the applause—it was grateful incense to his lofty pride. He was willing to be worshipped as God! How fearful is the issue!

How plain and forcible the declaration herein implied, that God will not give his glory to another—that he sees and marks the sins in which this is done, and that he will not let them go unpunished. It is a most unbelieving misimprovement of such intimations as this, to think of them, as if God were changeable, yea, as if he were such a one as ourselves, who may do such acts as this, inflict such punishments as this, in particular instances, or at certain times, or upon certain persons, and not upon *all*, guilty of the same sin:—that though he so punished Herod, he will deal more leniently with us, and with others. He is the righteous, the holy, the unchangeable God. And these intimations are made to us, as proofs of his hatred of sin, and the certainty of that punishment, which though delayed for a time, is yet sure to overtake it.

And in all the terribleness of Herod's punishment, what do we see, what ought we to learn, but just the consequences of pride, ambition, and vain-glory. His body is eaten of worms. How sad and revolting the spectacle to flesh and blood! Yet what do all the objects of a worldly ambition, what do all the gratifications of sense, what do all the idols of the worldly and ungodly mind, but turn upon the soul, upon the mind and spirit, and their presence consume its peace, its health, its soundness, and corrode and devour it with bitterness of anguish, when the wretched soul subject to them in life, mad upon its idols,

draws near to death, and judgment, and eternity. Yes, all those objects shall be even worse to the soul, than the worms destroying Herod were to Lis wretched body—they shall be as scorpions, tormenting the soul, while it feels itself hurried away, and finds itself now departing hence, and going to meet with an offended, omnipotent God.

Beware of the sin of Herod. Beware of the sin of his flatterers. Have I never received with gratification the praises of men, when they seemed to forget in bestowing them, to whom they were really due? Have I this day, been guiltless in this matter? Nay, how can I but be, in intercourse with my fellow-men, guilty of it, when by nature I am so prone to seek the honour that cometh from them, unless I be found in the knowledge and love of God, sanctifying him in my heart; and devoting myself and my all to his glory's cause. Alas, this very sin, of taking to ourselves the glory that is due to God, cleaves to us, and does most easily beset us. And in the acknowledgments made to benefactors, most justly due in their place, even in the exercise of gratitude and respect, most justly due for benefits received—how prone is the mind to forget the hand of the Lord in the dispensations of his goodness, and to give to the creature the glory due to God only!

Beholding and feeling the supremacy of God in his works of providence and of grace, would not make us thankless or ungrateful to men when they do us good, but would enable us truly to be grateful, and would bring us, in a believing spirit of love, to seek more and more their spiritual and eternal welfare. We are beset on every hand with dangers, and grace alone can uphold and deliver us, and can make us followers of God by Jesus Christ as dear children, glorifying him in all things, as our Father in heaven. O, let me never be satisfied, but in beholding and feeling the claims of his grace upon me, that I may live to his glory.

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me,'*  
Matt. x. 37.

WHEN the mind has been awakened and enlightened in such measure as to feel the evil of sin, and to realize the danger of those sins that do so easily beset us; yea, when we are brought earnestly to seek deliverance from them, there are dangers so

nigh to us, that we are slow to perceive them yet, and that because of their very nearness, and of the aspect they bear, as being things allowed, lawful, and expedient. We are placed in the providence of God in several earthly and temporal relations, the one to the other. These relations produce corresponding affections. The beneficent Author of our being, by whose hand we are fearfully and wonderfully made, has implanted those affections in the human heart. The exercise of them is not forbidden; it is commanded. But the exercise, and the excess of them, are very different things. And what is the excess, the *undue* exercise of them? It is, when the objects of those affections occupy the heart, more than God and the Saviour; when the cherishing of them receives from us more heed, more actual service of the heart, than God himself receives as the object of our reverence, and love, and obedience.

And the blessed Redeemer here explains this folly, while he affectionately warns his people of their great danger, in the exercise of their lawful affections. He takes the endearing relations of this life, and he speaks in words that cannot but come home to the conscience and soul of those who have even begun to know him in truth. In whichever of these relations, then, or if in each and all of them, the good providence of God has placed the believer, let him realize his own danger, and beware of the sin, the sin of loving father, or mother, or son, or daughter, more than God. No obligations of a temporal kind can equal those of children to parents. No human relationship can demand such returns. They cannot be more than fulfilled in any case, whatsoever the special circumstances be. The commandment of God sanctions this. It confirms the full extent of filial ties. But there are higher obligations even than these. We owe our parents themselves to God, and our own very being. Our parents, whatever their love to children, whatever the faithfulness and the tenderness of their duties, cannot save a soul. Their love, in this, let it be even the warmest Christian love, is in itself altogether unavailing. But the love of God, the Father of our spirits, the former of our bodies;—*that* can save us; and it hath made the abundant provision. The love of Christ is stronger than death. He gave himself up to the death, to endure for ruined souls the punishment due to their sins; he underwent the wrath and curse of God, to procure the soul's salvation from everlasting death and destruction.

Am I, then, realizing these claims? Parental love may desire, that the soul of the beloved child

should inherit the knowledge of God, the faith of Christ, and through him all the principles of spiritual and eternal life. Alas, how unavailing of itself. It cannot reach to renew the heart, to take away its natural unbelief, or to instruct it savingly, or with converting power. But the love of the Spirit brings him even into the soul, the guilty soul, to convert it, to enlighten it, to renew and to sanctify it by the effectual operation of his saving grace, and by revealing Christ in the soul.

Blessed, adorable Saviour, thou hast purchased all these eternal, unspeakable blessings to undone souls like mine;—helpless and perishing, and shall I give the preference, even to an earthly parent? May thine own grace prevent it, may it put and keep me in *thy* love! And if thy providence have placed me in the relation of parent to children, loved as my own soul, blessed Lord, deliver mine from the idolatry of their inordinate love. Thou hast commanded me to care for them, to make temporal provision for their wants, to nourish and cherish them. The excess of this my heart's affection toward them, even were all my other sinful departings from thee, and from the giving of glory to thy name, rebuked and crucified—the excess of this affection, would lead me to forget, and to deny that Lord and Saviour, by the knowledge of whom alone both they and I can be saved:—it would lead me to dishonour thee by a life of worldliness, and of ungodly pursuit of earthly benefits.

The grace of God truly bringeth salvation. It places every thing in the place justly due to it. It nobles the human affections. It graces and dignifies the exercise of the affections, keeping them subject to God. It makes his people desire not only temporal benefits to those on whose behalf their affections are exercised; but raising the soul to the knowledge and contemplation of spiritual and eternal objects, it draws forth the soul's affections, in seeking an interest in these, as the good part, that cannot be taken away, to those toward whom the legitimate affection is cherished.

Do I resign these the objects of my love and regard, to Christ? Yes, surely, I must, if I do love him more than *them*. But if I love *them* more—then I deny *him*, and the calls and offers of his grace, and all my cares and toils will only tend to bring those who are committed of God to my care, into the same destroying snares as I myself am caught by. Keep me back from presumptuous sin, O Lord, in loving these more than thee; and cleanse me from secret faults, in which I am so prone to deny thee. Make me what thou wouldst have me to be, by thine own grace, that thine own love

may be shed abroad in my heart—that I may feel continually my obligations to thy redeeming love, as God in three persons; and that it may be truly and constantly the prevailing desire of my soul—that whatsoever others may do, as for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord.

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THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come,' Luke xiv. 18—20.*

THE grace of God dealing with the soul, is like an invader beset on every hand with active enemies. It is indeed, as Christ was himself, personally in the world, opposed, and persecuted. He came to his own, and his own received him not. And when his saving grace establishes any true spiritual principle in the soul, and that principle seeks its own exercise, it is opposed, and if grace itself, the everlasting fountain from which the principle comes, hinder not, the begun principle must be overborne and extinguished. The great business which grace has to do with the soul, is, to cast forth its idols, to redeem it from their guilt and their power, to bring, in one word, the soul to God—that he may be in truth and reality *the* God of that individual soul, and the soul his, by the exercise and power of redeeming love. This divine grace has greatly abounded toward sinners of mankind, and especially, may we say, to *all* who are within hearing of the gospel, and within the reach of its merciful and gracious invitations. God is by the gospel addressing himself to sinners every day, setting the way of salvation before them, and testifying to them by his word, what the salvation is which he offers, the preciousness of its blessings, and their need to receive them. And it is a truth beyond all controversy, that this message of reconciliation, fraught with blessings to men, does come nigh, very nigh to individual souls, by the gospel's outward and commanded ministrations, in private and in public.

Whether it have yet taken effect upon the individual soul, is the question of utmost importance. Even with those upon whose souls it has taken no saving effect, in whom nothing of the good work is yet begun by it—there is

felt a distinct conviction of its truth, and of their own need to receive its blessings.

And when these invitations and offers press themselves on the understanding and conscience; when the mind fully realizes, that supreme heed to it is necessary; it is even then alas, that sinners, 'with one consent, begin to make excuse.' They are occupied with the world, and its pursuits engross their thoughts and their cares.

We find the Saviour here, exposing these excuses, detecting them, as it were, while by this parable, he is loudly calling upon every one, to take heed to themselves. The instances given are just examples of what passes in the minds of hearers of the gospel message.

And we have especially to remark and consider, that the occupations here stated are 'all lawful. There is nothing sinful in the engagements themselves. They are all such as believers may be engaged in. But there is, notwithstanding, deceit in making them an excuse. God does not by the gospel desire that we should 'go out of the world;' but he invites and entreats us, to be separated from its ruling power. The sinner feels, that by giving heed to the gospel's real offers, he would be detached and separated from the element in which he loves to breathe and to move—the element of this world's ascendancy over him. It is his own love of this element, his own enmity to the power of the gospel that dictates and prompts the excuse. Cannot the gracious God who calls him bless his basket and his store, and is it not that God who does verily bless him already in his person, in his bodily health, in his temporal lot? But he is unwilling, if we may so speak, to have any personal, direct, and immediate business *with* God. He might prosecute every worldly calling, and have his heart engaged in seeking the Lord; but this latter, is what he dislikes.

O, how futile, how deceitful, how false, these excuses! We hear persons, thus complaining, or stating in mitigation of their felt guilt, in disregarding the gospel, in refusing to make real business of seeking salvation, that they have no time. They are so pressed with its occupations!

Pressed! it is by the power of sin, of the enmity of the carnal mind, that they are pressed, and restrained, and retained by their own consent in their spiritual bondage, in their alienation from God. God grants them the time, he bestows upon them the means of grace, and they refuse instruction, they decline to seek the Lord. They dislike the whole subject-matter of the gospel; and thus they reject the counsel of God, against themselves. They *have* the time; but they have not the

desire, or the heart, or the will, and they will not seek this preparation of the heart from God. All this is brought out and realized in the sinner's practical doings, when he is found avoiding God in secret, neglecting the means of grace, refusing to pray—despising the word—and perhaps all the other ordinances of the gospel.

Why go *now*, and see the piece of ground? Is there any danger of losing it? And why, sinner, wilt thou hasten and hurry to thy occupation of earthliness, and refuse first to seek the Lord? It is because of thine own enmity to God, and to all that pertains to his glory. This thy sin shall find thee out, and shall condemn thee in the righteous judgment of God. Why forsake God, why deny to seek his salvation, for going to prove thy five yoke of oxen? Just because thou seekest not to be engaged in the service of God.

And it appears that those with one consent making such excuses, carry the same spirit of mind with them into every relation of life. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, instead of acknowledging God, and surrendering themselves and their all to him, and rejoicing to have communion with him, in all their undertakings, and in all their relations, they put away from them the claims of God, as if they had no need of his blessing, or guidance, or grace.

Stop, O deceived soul, and consider thy way! Stop, and think for once, solemnly, upon the God with whom thou hast to do, and upon the endless eternity before thee; and despise no longer the offers of redeeming love to thy soul. Wretched are those relations entered into, without the counsel and guidance of God being asked.

This last excuse is the most guilty of all. It is the most important step in this life; and instead of seeking to be brought by it nearer to God, to serve and honour him, in the institution of his own merciful and beneficent appointment, his authority and his blessing upon it are alike despised. O, how the soul is hardened in these progressive steps of a daring impiety! The world indeed may prosper for a season, but guilt is accumulating, and will yet speak forth in a voice of awful and overwhelming terror.

But, believer, consider thou also thine own danger. Cleave to God with full purpose. Let not the world detach thee from God, or allure thee away from communion with him, through the means and ordinances of his grace. Cleave to these. It is in and through them, that God commands the blessing, by Jesus Christ, upon the souls of his people. O, watch and pray, lest thou enter into temptation, and lest the world and its pursuits obtain ascendancy over thee. It seeks to

regain that ascendancy, wherever grace is seeking to dislodge it from the heart. Wait upon the Lord, and he will give thee strength; yea, I say, wait thou upon the Lord, O my soul!

FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!'* Isa. xxxi. 1.

THERE is sin here reprov'd, to which the heart is naturally prone. It is not unfrequently, alas, a sin of those to whom God has shown much of his loving-kindness and mercy.

One would suppose, that God had shown so much of his own power and goodness to the children of Israel, that they or their children's children should never have thought of seeking any other aid than his in the day of their trouble, any other safety than the strength of his Almighty arm, in the time of their threatened calamities, or in the presence of all their enemies. So, however, it was, that they sought help from Egypt, the last quarter to which we should suppose they would ever think of applying. Was it any failure in the faithfulness of God toward them that caused them to do this? Were they straitened in him? No! assuredly. But it was their unfaithfulness to God, in his covenant—it was this that brought their calamities upon them; and it was this that made them now look toward Egypt for help. Moralists tell us, that if we injure an individual, doing him wrong, we hate that very person more than others; and it is thus, with respect to God. When his Spirit has been striving with us, when we have received convictions of duty, and of our own danger as sinners; when an individual has been constrained under a sense of guilt, and apprehension of coming wrath to seek the Lord, and to give heed to his word; when he has been brought really to feel, that there is reality in godliness, and that his interest is to pursue it—and when yet again sin prevails, and he yields to its allurements, and ceases to wait upon God—then assuredly it will happen, that such an individual will experience more decided hostility and enmity to the power of godliness in the soul, than if he had never felt any conviction of sin at all.

Because of his own unfaithfulness, not only is the power of sin again strengthened within him, but there is real and positive enmity to God's

authority, and to the invitations and offers of his grace, quickened in the heart, and brought into very fearful activity.

How does such an individual do the same thing spiritually, as that which the children of Israel are here stated to have been doing? He conforms to the world—he seeks countenance and support to himself, not from the openly wicked, at least in the first instance, but from those who pay a formal outward homage to godliness by their stated bodily services. He sets up to himself *their* standard; he measures himself by their measure. This he does, when he has felt so much as to enable him very clearly to perceive, that such persons have no living and real regard to the interests and the subject-matter of true and vital godliness. He will still seek to consort with them, valuing their communion, because it is worldly, and avoiding communion and fellowship with the godly, because he feels that they are spiritually minded. He will seek to satisfy conscience with the performance of literal duties, and to build his hopes on his own performance of these.

This is truly to go down to Egypt for help—such an individual may endeavour to satisfy himself, in thinking that such persons are 'many,' that they are reputable in the world, that they perhaps have a name, even in the visible church, of being worthy persons, well-disposed, laudable in their outward doings, and are possessed of much name and much influence in society. But, alas, when secret convictions are stifled, when light received is sinned against, when conscience is trampled upon, and the workings of the Spirit quenched—there is nothing in such a course but 'woe.' Idolatry has begun it; the love of idols; and if persisted in, everlasting confusion and shame will be its end. It is an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the God of salvation, and such a course of conduct *is* to forsake him.

O! my soul, watch. If one idol obtain the ascendancy, this downward course is before thee. It is a broad way, and many walk in it. Flesh and blood may relish it for a time; but it is not the way of peace.

Others there are, who take offence at the humbling truths of the gospel when they are first presented. They have never once allowed themselves to lay the subject-matter of those truths to heart at all. They are filled with prejudices, and the more that the truth is pressed upon them, their prejudices are the more kindled into active enmity. They have recourse to the wisdom of this world—they seek defences to themselves in their carelessness of God, and of gospel truth. They lean in their

hearts, even to infidel opinions, though they may not perhaps dare to avow them. They are silent on all matters of practical godliness, and they eschew every duty of godliness in private especially; or if haply they pray, it is with a decided preference to their own wisdom, not looking to the word or counsels of God, but hardening their hearts against them. And what produces this? It is the love of sin, the love of the world and its pleasures, and vanities, its associations, and honours, and gains. They feel themselves supported and defended from the *attacks* of truth by the multitudes that live as they seek to live themselves. They rejoice in the weaknesses, and failings, and backslidings of those who have been making professions of godliness. This course is indeed a course of 'woe.' But such is the world's expediency, in all matters of true and real godliness. They seek their strength from sin, their counsels from sinners, and not from God. They go down to Egypt for help.

Whatever I have hitherto experienced of the truth in its power—in that experience there is no safety to my soul. How many did 'run well' for a season, and yet have been hindered and led astray, and turned aside from the way of salvation. It is said of the righteous that God is their strength. The Lord Jesus is the righteousness and the strength of his people. Cleave thou to him, my soul, and prove the all-sufficiency of his promised and offered grace to keep thee from falling; he is my fortress and my rock, and in him let me trust—the God of my health—may his name in me be praised.

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FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin,'* Isa. xxxi. 6, 7.

How merciful and gracious is our God! To the backslider he speaks in accents of mercy and of beseeching intreaty. How great is that mercy which does call upon us to turn to him. 'Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord.' 'I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.' '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.' Ah, when we consider what we have been, in the

spirit of our minds, even during one day, how great is our need of being turned, and brought back to God! What can we for one hour engage in, but the evil heart is found departing from the living God, by the power of its unbelief and its earthliness. How high our professions, our solemn professions, in private and in public—and how unworthy our practical conduct!

The daily life is a daily and an hourly shortcoming. The impressions made are effaced by the world, by its associations and objects. Ere we yet think of our danger, sin is committed, because its principles still abound in the heart. 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.'

Let me approach the throne of heavenly grace, where the glory of God appears above the mercy-seat, as the righteous and the sin-forgiving God, through the merits and intercession of the crucified and exalted Redeemer. It is here alone, that I can receive the mercy to pardon, and the grace to help in time of need. Have I not, this day, forgotten the Lord, and has not the world and its objects and relations assumed the place of ascendancy in my spirit? And shall we sin because grace abounds? God forbid. Let the grace of God speak to my soul, and persuade it into nearness and closeness with God in my walk. Lord, search thou and try me, make known to me the evil ways that are in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Enable me to look, and to see what my idols are—let me behold them in their true shape, as they are seen of thee to be my idols. Let my soul behold them revealed in the light of the knowledge of thine own glory, to whom all love and obedience of the heart and affections are due—and then, and then only shall I hate them, and cast them away. Ah, if mine be a real turning to God, from whom all have so deeply revolted—they shall be thus beheld, whether they be silver or gold, or whatever allurement. Let the guilt of serving them be brought home to my conscience by the revelation of faith:—Lord, leave me not under their power. In the heart there is deep deceitfulness; and I think I perceive why it is that the Lord thus speaks of idols of silver and idols of gold. I know that I have idols, yea, that my deceitful heart does turn aside after objects which I know to be vanity, to be but of little value, even in a worldly sense—objects that I regard not even as any way essential to my temporal lot, or to my personal gratification. I have seen, and felt, and proven their vanity. But still even by these I am ensnared, from day to day. These are my idols of silver—O, let grace come, let strength from above be ministered,

that these may not separate me from God, nor destroy thus my communion with him.

But, alas! there are idols of gold—objects that are more highly prized by my vain and earthly and ungovernable affections, and which I can scarcely think of, but they come, I fear, as if into competition with God in my soul, and they turn me aside continually. When shall I hate them as idols—when shall I feel the actual guilt of cherishing them in my soul, and preferring them to God as *my* God? Subdue, O Lord, my soul, into the love and obedience of thine own good and gracious will; for thou offerest thyself to me, to be *my* God in Christ Jesus, and that I may truly be thine.

I desire to hate the idolatry that is in my heart. I feel that there the evil root of bitterness is. God bestows upon me many precious mercies and gifts day by day—he continues me by his goodness, in many endearing relations—and, O, why turn these into idols—why imagine that in these objects my good and my true enjoyment consist? It is unbelief—it is the darkness of sin—the evil of its very nature in my own soul which causes this. Those objects, my possessions, my relations, my children, my friends,—they are thy good gifts, thou bountiful and merciful Giver—the sin is mine, that turns them as if into idols of gold—which I think most precious, and hesitate to turn from as idols, and to derive my highest enjoyments from God. But as idols—teach thou me to cast them from me—to be crucified to the world, and to be devoted in heart and spirit to thyself.

O, let me not judge as if I had already attained—as if I had already apprehended that for which thou dost apprehend thy people—until I be enabled day by day to sit very loosely to every created object—to hold them only as such, and not as my portion—to esteem them as thy gifts, and thy property committed to me as thy steward—to occupy whatsoever thou art pleased to bestow, as talents of thine own! O reveal to my soul of thy glorious majesty, that I may worship and serve thee in truth—and that other lords may not have dominion over me. Reveal to me the holiness of thy character, that I may, in the exercise of filial fear and love, continually fear to offend thee, glorifying thee as the God of my salvation and health, who hast condescended to look down in mercy upon me a miserable, ruined, and guilty sinner, and to send thy well-beloved Son to seek and to save me. Let me not depart from thee. Reprove me in thy mercy, but not in thy wrath, for my innumerable backslidings; and by thy grace unite my heart to love and fear thy name

continually. That grace the Lord will give. Sinner—seek him, call upon him while he is near. Believer, who hast acknowledged thy sins to God—draw near and wait for this grace, until thy soul experience its true, and real, and sanctifying power.

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?'* Job xxxi. 4.

YES, assuredly, this is the truth. Job felt this. The Spirit of the Lord made him to see and to feel it. The believer has, with Job, the witness concerning it in his own soul. But it may be rebelled against, and the deceitfulness of sin causes it to be lost in the mind. There is nothing in which sin may be more easily detected than this; whenever it begins to be cherished in the heart, it rises up, as if a thick mist before the eyes of the understanding, even although in some effectual measure it may have been spiritually enlightened—the soul's perceptions of the being of God, even his very existence, are hindered, obscured, darkened, and as sin proceeds in its secret workings—God proportionally, then, is forgotten; and then it is but one step to his divine authority being acted against—his claims upon the soul—these now are no longer realized, and sin is then committed.

The one holy, living, and true God is cognizant of every step of this sinful and guilty process. While this is secret, that the mind itself scarcely perceives its own workings, and, indeed, does not perceive them at all—God beholds all that is now going forward—and every step by which the soul is turned aside from following him, and from glorifying his name by a life of faith. Now, let it never be forgotten, as proof of the work of grace in the soul, that it brings the soul more habitually to realize the being and the perfections of God, and to feel his omniscient eye upon itself in all circumstances, and in every place. Let every professed believer inquire and know, whether this realizing power of faith is making advancement or progress in his own soul. Is it felt by you, in your going out, and in your coming in? Let not this matter remain in doubt or uncertainty. Prove it. Know yourselves whether ye be in the faith.

It is only by this advancement in the knowledge of God, that he can be glorified by you. 'The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.'

To the unconverted sinner, the soul still at enmity with God, such a recognition of God presents no attraction, nothing desirable. Nay, he would dread it, and does dread it, just because he is ignorant of the glory of God, and seeks not the teaching that is from above, to instruct him.

If you can follow your own desires, without this recognition of God in your heart, you have truly cause to fear that you have not yet been reconciled to God. He sees thy way and manner of life. He counts all thy steps. And if thy steps be taken without this recognition and knowledge of God prevailing in thy mind, then art thou not serving or glorifying God. How can he be served or glorified but in the exercise of such knowledge concerning himself? It cannot be. And when the soul is brought into this real spiritual and saving knowledge of God, having this abiding and living sense of his presence—not saying in words merely, but feeling and realizing: 'Thou God seest me,' then, at each step, it will inquire—it will be an inquiry of the heart—what am I now doing—what step is this which I am about to take, which I propose to myself, or to which I am urged? Is it a step that will bring me nearer to God? Is it a step by which his name will be glorified in and by me? Is it a step on the way to heaven, or one that may lead me further astray from God, incurring his displeasure, and dishonouring his glorious name?

It is but vanity and deceit to imagine concerning ourselves, that we have taken God to be our God, if we be found practically strangers to such a believing view of him, or to such communion with him.

And again, if we have taken God to be our God indeed, we can trust in him—that he can, and will bless and sustain us in our ways. We can trust, that it is by abiding in his fear, by keeping, so to speak, within sight of his holy omniscience, we shall be preserved from falling, and from all evil. He sees our ways, he counteth all our steps; and can he bless us, in that wherein we sought not to be seen of him, in that which we desired to conceal from God? Nay, the believer will not seek to conceal his ways from the Lord, or if he be overtaken by sin, through its deceitfulness and power, to forget the Lord, and to take his own way—God will soon manifest to him, that his ways *have* been seen, and all his steps counted. He will visit his own people with the rod—their sins with chastisements. They procure these to themselves, by their forgetting the Lord, as their God and Redeemer. And hence, the sorrows of his peo-

ple, their perplexities, their frequent darkness, their experienced burden of guilt, and of indwelling sin; their feeling as if they were left almost to themselves, and as if God had forsaken them. Blessed and glorious God, how precious is thy grace, and thy faithfulness. Thy people forget thee; but thou forgettest not them. Thou watchest over them in thy love—thou chastenest them for their good. But let me learn the true knowledge of thee continually. O! vouchsafe the Teacher and the Comforter to come to me, and to abide with my erring and wayward soul, that I may be kept nigh to thee. Teach thou me, thou blessed and gracious Spirit, to see my own ways in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God—in the face of Jesus Christ—to know thy will, and to delight in doing it. In the exercise of this heavenly wisdom, may I be found counting all my own steps, walking circumspectly, not as fools do, but as the wise, made wise by thee, and redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

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FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,'* Heb. iv. 13.

'He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall he not correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.' God is the Father of lights, and with him there is no darkness at all. O! how vain, how worthless, many empty professions made by men of their believing in God! Is there any thing pertaining to the very being of the Godhead, more consistent with reason itself, one would say, to believe, than that he is omniscient? And yet, what is there, of which men are practically so ignorant, so forgetful, so utterly and entirely careless! Reason's power is boasted of—we call, and we think ourselves to be, wise; but alas, truly the thoughts of men are vanity. Reason is powerless, to bring in the realizing of God's omniscience into the heart.

And how can we presume to say, that we

believe in God, when we walk from day to day, and from hour to hour, without realizing or feeling that his omniscient eye is upon us. O! how much less can we be said to have received him as our God in the way of acceptance, to be united to him in the bonds of faith and of love, if so be, that we thus walk, even as if God did not behold us; if we desire not that he should behold, that he should search and try us, but rather, that we should withhold from his knowledge the thoughts of our heart, the words of our mouth, and the works of our hands.

O! my soul, examine thyself, and be admonished of thy own actual condition with God. Be not satisfied with the empty profession of the world, as if that were faith. What I find here recorded concerning God, is a truth to be realized, and experienced in the minds of his people. And do I not find the true people of God recording their living experience of it, as the psalmist does: 'O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue but, lo! O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.' The psalmist experienced the difficulty of this attainment to flesh and blood, its contrariety to the power and the habits of natural understanding. Yet he sought the power, which alone can raise the soul to this spiritual attainment—that grace, which through the merits and intercession of the adorable Saviour, is purchased for blinded, apostate, rebellious sinners, and which the blessed Spirit bestows; this precious enlightening of the eyes of the understanding, this bringing nigh of the soul to God. How earnestly the psalmist pants for this! 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; 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.' Ah, how soon are effaced, by the empty vanities of the world, the impressions thou receivedst in the sanctuary of God, the views there bestowed upon the soul; yea, when it even rejoiced in that light! And is not this the great source of actual transgression, as if the license which sin takes to itself in the earthly mind, this sad forgetting of God, this sad practical, prevailing unbelief? Not more is it the happiness and the glory of saints in heaven, that they see God as he is, than it is the safety and the peace of the believer in this wilderness, that he should see the king in his beauty, and the land that is afar off. All creatures

whatsoever they be, are not only seen, but searched of God; with him there is no darkness at all.

Sinner and saint are seen and searched, by the omniscient eye of Jehovah. Sin in its most secret guise is seen by him, in its remotest workings, as well as in its most overt acts. The lurking idol that is seated in the secrecy of the soul, his omniscient eye is fastened upon it. O! for light in my soul, to be habitually alive to this most solemn truth, this first principle of the true and real knowledge of God.

And he is called, 'the God with whom we have to do.' And is it not with him I have to do, in all things? Is he not my omniscient Judge, the righteous Judge, who judgeth righteously according to his omniscience—not according to the outward appearance. He is the God who made us—who sustains us; and who graciously calls sinners, to be unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works—to abhor that which is evil, to cleave to that which is good. In present business, whatsoever it be, if I realize that I have to do with the world, in its relations, and dealings, and interests, and cares—ininitely more have I to do with God. Let my soul learn this, let it be ever found under the living power of this blessed knowledge. I have to do with him now, for grace, saving grace—through his beloved Son. He offers freely this grace to my individual soul—and O! if I turn away from him, what must the end be? How just the condemnation! I shall have to do with God in judgment—when every secret of every heart shall be revealed. And when shall that judgment be, with respect to my individual soul—when it shall enter the eternal world, and stand unclothed of this mortality at the judgment-seat of Christ? 'The day or the hour knoweth no man'—the when, the where, or the how—this most awful message shall come, the irresistible mandate of him with whom *now* I have to do, and who then shall pronounce the irrevocable sentence, and my soul receive its unchangeable, eternal portion.

Lord, this very day now past, what is my evidence that I have received of thy saving grace? Has not my stupid, earthly heart gone astray from thee—has it not forgotten thee? Sin has separated the soul from God, from his knowledge, and then from his fear and love. But thy precious grace, O thou God of salvation, brings back the soul to thyself, to walk before thee in newness of life. This is the object of thy marvelous love in Christ Jesus—so to redeem the soul. O! in me, is grace working this blessed effect? Is thy Spirit dwelling with me, and teaching me truly

to know thee? Do I desire to know thee, and to realize habitually thine omniscience? Sin must be prevailing, where this is not desired? Blessed God, blessed Saviour, blessed Spirit, Teacher and Comforter, thou seest me—all things are naked and open unto thine eye. Thou knowest my need of grace—to enlighten and quicken my soul. Even so, come, in thy love and power—and enable me to walk in the light of the Lord.

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SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people,' 2 Cor. vi. 16.*

THE thought indeed is very awful, that an individual of the human race, soul and body, should be the temple of the living God! Yet so it is, with every individual believer. God takes possession of the believer to himself. In that day of power, when his Spirit comes to the soul, he calls the soul and body to this high and glorious privilege, this exalted, this holy station, this wonderful rank. The Lord God claims but his own creature, and O, how graciously does he make, yea, and enforce the claim,—for the creature's own everlasting and perfect happiness. 'Thine they were,' says the blessed Redeemer, of his chosen disciples, and of every one of his people who shall ever be gathered unto him, 'and thou gavest them me.' O, what a scene does this temple present, when he comes!—'a den of thieves!' Every affection, every power of the mind, every act of body and mind together robbing God of the glory due to his name, and giving his praise to idols! Every affection that rules in the heart has been till then, excluding God from his own place, from his own temple, and turning the soul into a scene in which he is continually dishonoured and denied, and rebelled against, and causing the body to be in all its acts and doings an instrument of unrighteousness to disobey and dishonour the God who formed it, and who has placed in union with it the precious, immortal soul.

Think, O my soul, upon this awful, sublime subject, and solemnly ponder it! Do not let go the thought, as if it were but a vain imagination. Seize, O my soul, the glorious and everlasting reality that is here; and thou blessed Spirit of truth, and grace, and power, bring thou me into full view of the reality; and enable me to adore and praise the God of my

health, who in his own everlasting love has been pleased so to visit his people, and so to ordain for them salvation, and honour, and glory.

The Lord hath redeemed his people! The Lord Jesus has given himself for them, to raise them up: 'He remembered them in their low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever.' The exclusive, the sole business of the temple, is the service of God; and the place it is, where his glory is revealed, seen, beheld, and his name adored. Have I been thus apprehended? Have the buyers and sellers been yet expelled? Am I consecrated to this holy service? Is it my delight and my purpose to render it? Have I experienced the constraining power of divine love, thus drawing my soul to God, thus casting forth the other lords that have had dominion over me? But here is the relation in which his redeemed people stand to God, as *their* God. *Ye are* the temple of the living God. And can this relation indeed be formed, without the soul experiencing the drawing power, of which the blessed Saviour speaks? Surely it cannot. He is lifted up from the earth; but am I drawn to him? No man cometh unto the Father but by him. In the days of his flesh, he came into the temple on earth, and what majesty must there have been, even then, in the divine Saviour's presence, when his bitter enemies could not, dared not oppose him! And so is it still, when he is manifested to the soul—there is submission, there is godly fear, there is love awakened—his enemies flee before him—the temple is consecrated by his presence—it becomes a temple, dedicated to the service and glory of the Father by him the Beloved. There is a surrendering of ourselves to God for this glorious end, to which the believing view of Christ constrains the soul.

There is in this a reality, a full reality of experience, of desire, of purpose. So was it with an apostle, when it pleased God to reveal Christ in him; *immediately*, he informs us, that he conferred not with flesh and blood. And again he says, 'The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.' Has this come to be a reality with me? Without this, how can I think, that I am yet raised to the high and holy estate and privilege here set forth? And surely the thought is overwhelming, that in the temple of the living God sacrifice should be offered to idols, in his own very presence—where he dwells!

To what objects are my energies of mind

and body directed? Think of this, my soul, now, while it is yet called to-day! Do we not sacrifice to idols, when the great end is forgotten, and when meaner and lower ends are pursued as our ultimate object and aim? Meaner!—to make comparison is scarcely lawful. How utterly, how utterly unworthy the beggarly elements of this world, however laudable in the sight of men the pursuit, when they cast forth the remembrance of God from the soul, and bind it to the service of earth, yea, of lusts and pleasures, which have as their author and origin, sin, and the very author of sin himself!

This temple, if indeed consecrated to the Lord, he purifies more and more—he cleanseth, he builds it up spiritually to be the habitation of God, through the Spirit. It is by the presence of Christ the Redeemer there, that this is effected—he dwelling in the heart by faith. Then the hope of his calling prevails, and whoso hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure. The covenant is manifested to them, in its fulness, in its perfection, in its everlasting bonds, made strong in him who is its living head. God is become the God in covenant of those in whom the Son is thus revealed, and in whose souls he dwells by faith, and they are his redeemed people. O my soul, expect not the comforts, the joys of the divine life, till thou hast been brought so to accept the Saviour; that must go before thine abiding in him. And, 'except ye abide in me, and I in you,' the Saviour himself declares, 'ye can do nothing.' Why is my soul so far off, so earthly, so darkened? Grace, divine power, is offered, is promised! Let me draw near, let me never depart, let my soul now, wait upon God, and not let him go, until he have blessed me, revealing his Son in me, and bringing my soul and body to be a temple where his glory shall be revealed, and where he shall ever be served, with the sacrifices of thanksgiving, in the obedience of love.

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SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Little children, keep yourselves from idols,' 1 John v. 21.

How full and overflowing is the love of the Spirit! We admire the beloved disciple, who leaned on the Saviour's bosom. Our very hearts seek to be knit to him, in the fulness of his tender affection, and his very endearing character. But O, how prone are we to forget, that all his loveliness of character and of utterance, is but the

reflection of that everlasting love, which dwells in its divine fulness with God! This apostle had nearness, peculiar nearness through the Spirit to the Saviour. It was *there*, that his soul was moulded into this heavenly element. It was there that he caught the language of heaven; and it was thence that he carried forth to address the church, those words of tenderness and of love, on which he so delights to dwell. He was changed into the same image which he beheld so clearly, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord. Blessed apostle, peaceful and happy wast thou, even in thy desolate banishment—even then didst thou lean indeed on thy Saviour's bosom, by the power of faith. But O, adorable fountain of love, and truth, and grace—the God of mercy, of tenderness, and compassion, thus addressing thy children as God the Spirit, through thy servant, so blest, himself, in thy love.

If we have been drawn, and turned to God, these accents of love will fall upon our hearts, as dew upon the tender grass, to invigorate it, to make it spring and grow. 'Little children!'—the appellation is tenderness itself. The Redeemer is watching over them with more than a parent's care. He sees their feebleness, he knows their weakness, he remembers that they are dust. He beholds their inexperience, the foolishness that is yet bound up in their hearts—he pities, he loves, and he delights to succour them—he carries the lambs in his bosom. Surely to be interested in this love is the high privilege of the soul—to be without an interest in it is deepest misery.

And here let me learn, the cause of the warning, the ground of the faithful and tender admonition. Here there is intimated, the strong tendency of the foolish heart to idols. O will not the love of God persuade me, to give myself wholly to him!—to be devoted to his service, and to his glory's cause. Those whom the beloved apostle was here immediately addressing, were surrounded with heathen examples of idolatry; and that idolatry continually accompanied, indeed its abominable service consisting of, sinful indulgences, sensual gratifications, inordinate pleasures, and enticing allurements.

Think, O believer, what is the scene of thine own habitation and converse. What beholdest thou in the world around thee? Is it the love of God prevailing, and purifying, and drawing the souls of men to him, to be his temples? Ah, no! Is not the world itself the great idol to which homage is paid, and service rendered—the souls of men bowing down to it, their very bodies its abject slaves! And is there no principle in my soul, to

draw me into the tainted current—to allure me into their temples, to lead me into the paths wherein destroyers go? Alas, I am as they are. In me, that is in my flesh, verily there dwelleth no good thing. If grace have been given me—if my soul have indeed been turned to the Lord—O how feeble am I—how prone to frustrate the grace of God! And, behold here, the tenderness and compassion, the meekness and gentleness of the Saviour, condescending in his infinite love, to beseech me, to call me by this endearing appellation, as the parent the helpless, inexperienced child, the little child, who would soon injure, yea, destroy itself, but for the parent's care. O let me hear thy voice by the hearing of faith, day by day, hour by hour, and let my soul be warned by thee, thou Shepherd of the sheep, thou Keeper of Israel, to flee from idols, and from idol worship—to keep myself from these, that I be not polluted, that I grieve not thy Spirit, that I bring not shame on thy name and thy cause.

And what does the world pursue? What would my earthly affections, my evil passions urge me to seek? How vain its treasures!—What is a man profited, should he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? What will those treasures avail, whether wealth, or luxury, or honour, when this life's consummation shall have drawn near? Do I seek my happiness even in the friendships and associations of this world, and of its society. I thank thee, who hast given me friends, and who hast put the spirit of kindness into their hearts—I would acknowledge these blessings as thy gifts and mercies, and I am less than the least of them all. But O, raise thou my views above those which centre upon the world, and above those ties that would bind me to earth, and that would separate me in practice and habit from thee as my God in covenant. With thee let my soul have true communion, to keep me from idols.

Where is the earthly friend who will warn me as thou dost? Where is the worldly companion who will faithfully tell me, when he sees me occupied with the world, and forgetting God? Ah, no;—it is not with the world that such counsels are to be found. 'They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.' 'He that is of the earth is earthy, and speaketh of the earth.' 'The world loveth its own.' I am drawn and allured by my own earthliness. Let me not blame the world for my short-comings, my backslidings, my too sadly frequent idolatries—let me blame myself, my own earthliness. Lord, I cannot carry them that are of the world to thee—else thou knowest, gladly

would I;—let *them* not carry me away from *thee*, or from soul-refreshing communion with thee. 'Be ye separate, saith the Lord.' They cannot sympathize with me—they may deride me—yea, I may be had in derision—but keep thou me from idols.—Draw me, that I may be denied to self, to worldliness, to vanity, the world crucified to me, and I crucified to the world, and my soul growing up in spiritual life, through communion of faith with thee, as my covenant God, my Redeemer, my Sanctifier.

'Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.' God is love. To have him as my God and my portion for ever—let this be the desire of my soul—my fixed purpose of heart—and weak, erring, frail and feeble as I am, and prone to wander—O keep thou me by thy grace, from idols. Let thy grace prevail, and by it, I shall keep myself from idols, thou art the God of salvation to bestow this grace. O my soul, cleave thou to the Lord. 'Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.' In thy strength let my confidence be, and I shall be strengthened in thee.

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SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved,' Psal. lxxx. 19.

'I AM the Lord thy God.' 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' This is not a mere announcement of a speculative truth. It is not merely the issuing of a commandment. It is a merciful and a gracious offer; yea, and it is a most gracious promise, and a most bountiful promise. The Lord God is revealed from heaven. He was so to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and by all the works of wonder which he had wrought on their behalf, having brought them 'out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'

It was God, thus revealed to *them*, who was now offering himself, if we may so speak, to be God, and was calling them into his worship and *their* service.

But this is the gracious law of his eternal kingdom, that his people should be blessed in him, by being brought nigh to him, to have him, the true, the only living and true God, as their God, and that in him they should have all blessing, and eternal glory.

And now, O Lord God, thou art revealed from heaven, in the person of thy beloved Son, in thine eternal and unspeakable love, opening up, through the rent veil of his flesh, the way of access to thyself, for guilty and perishing sinners, and the way in which thou comest to them, and dwellest with them, and in them. The way is perfected, yea, it has been perfected from eternity in thy covenant that could not, and that cannot be broken; but now it is also perfected in its revelation, and this thy most gracious offer, and invitation, and command, and promise brought to the very door of my heart. 'Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.'

When I consider, Almighty and most gracious God, thy doings, thy grace, the counsels and the works of thy love, the high and holy estate to which thy love in Jesus Christ is now offering to raise me up, to be thine, and that thou shouldst be my God, and my soul and body thy temple, and that I should dwell with thee for ever, I am overwhelmed with shame, and confusion of face, because of my unbelief, my ingratitude, my rebellion against thee—my unfaithfulness in thy covenant, my innumerable backslidings, and my wrath-deserving idolatries.

Blessed God, thou hast been offering to me thine own Almighty grace, to turn me unto thyself. I have felt my need to be turned to thee; verily other lords have had dominion over me; and hast thou not made me to see their vanity, and the guilt of my doing service to them that are not gods—that rob thee of the glory due to thee, and that have in them no reality, no good, no power to bless, but indeed power to deceive and to destroy the soul, by separating it from thyself.

Thine everlasting and glorious gospel is proclaimed to me. The word is nigh unto me, even in my mouth. I have solemnly professed to believe and to receive it—yea, have I not tasted and felt of its truth and its power; but alas, how have I turned aside, how have I forsaken thee as my God, times and ways without number! In my very professions, in my most solemn, and in my most secret approaches to thee also, even then, hast thou not seen in me the evil forth-goings of sin, the wretched baseness of an earthly mind, as if truly betraying thee to thy face, and provoking thee to anger against me! I have not been humbled because of this. I have not acknowledged to thee my transgressions as I ought to have done. I have cause to tremble before thee—and were not my heart harder than the nether millstone, it could not but be melted into shame and contrition before thee! I have been led aside by the power of a present evil world. I have loved

strangers, and after them have I gone. Thy divine and eternal authority I have not felt, I have not retained the living sense of it upon my spirit within me: mine, indeed, is a most deceitful heart. The divine claims of thy love, the divine person of thy beloved Son, who is God over all, and blessed for ever—who gave himself for sinners, who calleth me by his word and Spirit, who calleth me, yea by his own sufferings, by the blood of his covenant, to thee as God and my God, to have all blessings in thy favour—him, alas, how have I disregarded, how have I practically disowned as *my Lord*! His love, I have deep cause to fear, has not been winning me into thy service, and has not been stablishing my soul in the new life, which is by faith on his name.

I would come unto thee. It is my heart's defections before thee, I would confess as my burden, and the source of my darkness, my sin and my iniquity in thy holy sight. The world knoweth it not. My very professions of thee before the world have been accompanied with much sin of the soul; impurity in thine eyes, holy Father, impurity of motives, of principles, of actings, undetected by the keenest eye of human observation, thou hast seen and known in my soul. 'Turn us again, O Lord of hosts.' Turn thou me, and I shall be turned. I feel, that at every moment, I have unspeakable need to address to thee this prayer.

There is here a spirit of hope and dependence upon God expressed, as well as the need of his divine power experienced. And, O Lord, shine thou, by the light of the knowledge of thy glory, into my soul—that this hope in thee may be kindled, and that it may be exercised in my truly coming unto thee. Thou hast been known of all thy people in every age, as the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins. How distressing the thought, that we should despise that pardoning mercy and grace of thine, by not cleaving to him with full purpose. O cause thou thy face to shine; let my soul be so filled with the light of thy knowledge as God revealed in Christ Jesus, that I may indeed be saved, that the indwelling power of sin may be rebuked and crucified in my soul, by that blessed and glorious light, that God in Christ may indeed be *my God*, and that I may walk in communion of love with him, who loved his people, and gave himself for them. The bonds to draw, are in thine own eternal love—the power to subdue thine enemies, in thine arm of Almighty strength. All dominion in heaven

and on earth is given into his hands who was dead and is alive again, and who liveth for evermore. May I behold thee, blessed Jesus, by the revelation of faith, that I may indeed be kept from the power of evil—that God may be my God, in thee the Mediator, by union with thee. Let this be proven, as the condition and state of my soul, in my being saved from the power of those manifold iniquities that prevail against me.

I would render thanks unto thee for the throne of thy grace being rendered accessible, and for the Spirit of grace and of supplications which thou hast promised to pour forth. May it be my portion to be visited with that Spirit, and under that guidance, waiting upon thee, though with groanings that cannot be uttered, let my waiting eyes be toward the hills from which cometh my aid—and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, lead me, and guide me, and so strengthen me, that I may have no other gods before thee, but be thine, and thou mine, as my everlasting portion.

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SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore,'* Psal. xvi. 11.

How slow to learn is the human heart, in all that belongs to the character of God, and to the marvellous grace that is with him, whereby sinners are saved! 'I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.' As the God of salvation, we behold him fulfilling this promise to his people; and they, receiving this gracious accomplishment of the promise, are seen following after him, receiving him as their God, and putting their trust in him, to perfect all that concerneth them. How largely do we see this trust and confidence exercised and expressed by the psalmist! '*Thou wilt show me the path of life.*' He had experienced his own slowness to learn, his proneness to forget, nay, his incapacity, as of himself, to take knowledge of this glorious path, the path of life. *Thou wilt show me!* Here is filial confidence in God. The psalmist addresses him as his own God. The hope that maketh not ashamed is here—it is in lively exercise. He had experienced darkness in his own mind; but he trusted in the Lord, that by his Spirit with the word of truth, this path should be shown him. '*Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.*' '*Light is sown for the upright.*' It is the experience of

every real believer, that God is good and gracious, and therefore that he teaches sinners in the way. In themselves they have but darkness, their unbelief makes them to doubt, and to be in uncertainty, and in fear. But light ariseth to them. The ministration of the Spirit is glorious; and it comes to the soul, in a way that it knew not, and which the blessed experience of it alone can reveal. This is from God in the channel of his everlasting covenant, through the mediation and intercession of him who is indeed the light of the world.

Darkness may be experienced, and yet not this confidence in the Lord. *Thou wilt show me the path of life.* It is here we are weak, prone to faint and fail. Alas, we seek the light in ourselves, instead of looking to him the Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh down. And yet, blessed God, while thou givest me thine own word of truth, how dark and empty it is to my needy soul, till thy Spirit shine upon it, and *with it*, into my heart! O! let me be rebuked for the sin of my presumption, in trusting to my own understanding, and in not seeking thy guidance, in not looking to thee, and not trusting in thee; in not seeking from thee thine own light with thy truth, to lead and to guide me, and to show me the path of life. I am prone to trust in creature helps, in means, in duties, in ordinances, even in thy servants proclaiming thy truth, and not in thyself, as my God in covenant, from whom alone cometh the true light. I would confess to thee, this my sin, my natural proneness to it continually. It is *thy showing*, which will bring the path of life truly before me, and which alone has power to guide me to it, and to establish me in it.

And O! how glorious, how soul-satisfying that path is, when shown by the Spirit of God, by his own word to the soul—the path and the way of God coming to seek and to save that which was lost! The Lord Jesus—he is the way—he hath opened, perfected, and consecrated for ever, the path of return to the sinner from death to life, even life for evermore. I feel, I acknowledge before thee, that the knowledge of him in my soul, is indeed the path of life. I acknowledge to thee, my proneness to lose that which thou givest of this light and knowledge concerning him.

I would trust in thee—I would renounce renewedly now, before thee, my sinful confidences, and cast myself upon thee for thy Spirit's guidance to my soul, to reveal thy Son in me, and in the knowledge of him, I shall have safety and peace. Other means may give natural light and know-

ledge, but with those merely, I have the witness, the sore witness in my soul, that I cannot glorify thee as God, and *my* God.

I am wearied and vexed with my deceitful heart, my abuse of privileges bestowed by thee. I would come unto thee for thy precious healing, and enlightening, and quickening power—the eye-salve, by which I may truly see. It is cheering and comforting to behold the experience of thy blessed people. Under the burden of their toils and their conflicts, their wanderings and their errors, when thou causest thy face to shine upon them, they know the path of life; yea, and they understand the path of duty also—they then trust in thee, with increase of filial confidence, and even in the midst of experienced darkness, still they are enabled to stay themselves upon thee as their God.

This warfare with darkness, with sin, with the power of darkness, shall soon have an end—the time is drawing on, when though now we see as through a glass darkly, we shall see face to face, and that which is imperfect shall be done away. There is joy even now, when thou causest thy light to shine into the soul—and soon the shadows shall flee away—and when this mortal shall have put on immortality, there shall be darkness no more—all will be light; we shall know, even as we are known. In thy presence there is *fulness* of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. O my soul, look forward. Behold now the path of life—it is opened up to thee by him who cannot fail, and who maketh thy life, thine eternal life sure: 'Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.' I would commit my spirit into thy hands, to be taught by thy Spirit, blessed God, that receiving thee daily as my God, bringing salvation, I may walk in thy light, and as it becometh the children of the light and of the day, glorifying thee, in my spirit and in my body which are thine, waiting for thy salvation, and kept by thy power through faith, expecting the glory that is to be revealed at thy coming.

## EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments;'* Exod. xx. 4—6.

THE Lord uttered his voice from mount Sinai, and gave laws and ordinances to Israel. Some of these being ceremonial were intended for the Israelites exclusively, and to be of temporary endurance, others were designed for mankind generally, and to be of universal and perpetual obligation; of this description are the ten commandments, which were written by the finger of God, and are recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. Whoever reflects on these statutes, must be persuaded that they are at once worthy of God to inculcate, and man to observe. They are founded on the divine nature and character, and they are fitted to promote the prosperity and happiness of mankind.

The first commandment respects the object of worship, the second the form of worship which the Almighty claims; the first maintains the stability and glory of Jehovah's throne, the second preserves the purity of the ark in which he dwells and the temple in which he is worshipped. It sets itself against the very semblance of idolatry in the worship of God, and hereby inculcates the service that is suitable to his perfections, and becoming his great name. The language of the Eternal is so unambiguous and authoritative in regard to idol worship; and there is in it what is evidently so dishonouring to God, as well as debasing to man, that one can scarcely account for its being countenanced or practised by rational beings. And yet the very issuing of the precept bespeaks the tendency of the human mind to it, while the history of the world records its universal prevalence. It is well known that idolatry has, in all ages, prevailed in heathen countries, and that not merely among savage and rude tribes, but amongst people the most civilized and refined, verifying the truth of the apostle's declaration, Rom. i. 21—23, 'Because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;

and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.' The Egyptians were notoriously addicted to all sorts of idolatry—and hence it is that the Israelites, though taught of God, though a distinct, and separated, and chosen people, by commingling with the inhabitants of Egypt, became familiarized with their corruptions, and acquired that deep-rooted propensity to this condemned and irrational practice.

This commandment consists of two parts: 1. The precept. 2. The sanction or enforcement of it.

God knows the perversity of the human heart, and therefore in issuing this injunction he has guarded against all misconception. The language of the precept is so very particular and minute, that nothing but a determined unwillingness not to be taught, would lead men to misinterpret it, and so authoritative is it, that nothing but a determined opposition to the authority of God would lead them to evade and set it aside.

*Thou shalt not make.* Thou shalt not invent or imitate the invention, thou shalt not make, or cause to be made—thou shalt in no way whatever be accessory to the corrupting of divine worship by any resemblance, image, or device that would tend to lower the Creator, or degrade the homage that is due to God.

There is a gradation in the language that is employed. Thou shalt not thyself make such images for worship—thou shalt not bow down to them though made by others, however tempted or solicited so to do, nay, thou shalt not pay them any kind of respect, much less worship them, or offer sacrifices unto them.

We have next the sanction, or enforcement of the precept. In this sanction Jehovah addresses both men's fears and their hopes, and thereby plainly manifests his abhorrence of this sin. As it is a violation of that covenant relation that God held with the people of Israel, it is not wonderful that he guards this commandment with the strongest and most fearful sanctions. Not merely is the existing generation of idolaters threatened with personal destruction, but by their sin they involve their posterity in their crime, and of necessity in their punishment. A fearful consideration this to any parent who feels for his offspring.

Though God will not punish children with eternal destruction for the iniquities of those who gave them birth, yet the history of his providence proves that temporal distresses are often the effects of parent's sins. And when children, as

was the case with the Jews, make parent's sins their own, the judgment falls more heavily upon them. All the righteous blood that was shed from Abel downwards, our Lord says, came upon the men of his generation, Matt. xxiii. 35. And to this hour the Jews are, in the righteous administration of God, experiencing the curse and suffering for the sins of their fathers, who put the Lord of glory to death.

But while Jehovah threatens, he also promises. Whatever temporal judgments may be inflicted on children on account of their parents' sins, if improved they shall redound to their spiritual advantage, and end in their everlasting happiness. And then if parents eschew evil, if they do love God, and keep his commandments, the mercy of God, even to thousands of generations, shall follow their children. A good man leaves an inheritance to his children, and the influence of his piety is felt, and the favour of that God whom he worshipped as his God, and the God of his seed, is experienced to a distant period, even to latest generations. God has not forgotten the faith of Abraham, nor the covenant with the father of believers. There is a most striking illustration of the promise that is made to repentant Israel in Ezek. xxxvii. 25: 'They shall dwell in the land which I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt, and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children's children for ever.'

In meditating on this precept of the law, let us lay to heart, and be deeply humbled on account of the fearful depravity of man in his natural state. When left to himself, and unaided by divine light and grace, he acts in opposition to the plainest dictates of reason and conscience; and even with God's word in his hand, he, in spite of all the divine threatenings and promises, sets himself in opposition to the positive will of God, and that too in the very homage which he pretends to offer to him. O how debased, how sinful, how miserable a being is man in a state of nature!

In meditating on this precept of the law, let us always bear in mind the spiritual import of the commandment. Ever let us remember that all formality and hypocrisy in worship are prohibited—that it is ours to conceive of God according to the revelation he has given of himself—to realize his presence by faith, not by fancy—to tremble at the thought of low and carnal conceptions of him—to fall before him with the most profound reverence of his awful majesty, and the most fervent gratitude for his divine mercy in Christ Jesus—to worship him who is a spirit in spirit and in truth.

## EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law,' Deut. xxxii. 46.*

MOSES, the Jewish lawgiver, had now nearly executed his commission, and was about to resign his trust into other hands. He was not to be allowed to cross the Jordan and take possession of the goodly land. He was merely permitted to take a view of it from the top of mount Pisgah, and then to be gathered to his people. But his zeal for Jehovah's glory, and his desire for Israel's weal, were manifest to the last. In this book we find him contrasting the goodness of God with his people's ingratitude, denouncing the dread vengeance of heaven in case of disobedience, and then in the name of Jehovah pressing upon them an uniform and steadfast adherence to all that had been revealed and commanded.

In meditating on the words of this verse, we cannot fail to notice the extent of the requirement that is therein expressed. 'All the words which I testify'—'all the words of this law.'—Limited to the period when Moses spoke, the field was wide; but carried down to New Testament times, it is much more enlarged. While we have a clearer, we have an additional, word of prophecy, and although the issue of our research is the same with that of Old Testament believers, yet much has been revealed to us of which they were ignorant, and therefore the ground over which we have to travel is much more extensive. But the desire of Moses here is to guard those whom he addressed against narrowing God's revealed word, whether in faith or practice—it is to teach them to have respect to all God's commandments, and to regard them as all alike binding. The requirement bears upon all that Jehovah has uttered and recorded by his servants, from the dawn of revelation, whether in the form of doctrine or precept, faith or practice, duty or privilege, promise or threatening, the blessing or the curse, all that respects his duty to God and man, his hope and his destiny. Oh what an immense, what an immeasurable field stretches out before us!

Though a child of God will not complain of the extent of the divine requirements, regarding all that the Almighty says and commands to be good and right, rejoicing in the extent of its disclosures, the breadth of its requisitions, the comprehensiveness of its obligations, exclaiming, 'Oh how love I thy law, it is my meditation,

all the day;' yet it is not so with all, there are many who would cast into the shade some parts of the divine Record. There are certain doctrines which they would keep out of view, as mysterious and unintelligible; certain precepts which they consider as less obligatory; certain hard sayings which they would have either softened or explained away. 'God writes the great things of his law, but by many they are counted as a strange thing.' It is to be noticed, however, that the Almighty makes no difference respecting his communications. His revelation of them shows the importance of all, bearing, as they do, the divine stamp, they all become essential; having *I will* written over them, they all become obligatory. Who would cancel what the Lord has written! who would discredit what the Lord has revealed! who would disobey what the Lord has commanded!

'Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you.' Much is included in the exhortation, here urged with such affectionate earnestness. It intimates that all the words of this life should be studied with care, rooted in the judgment, treasured up in the memory, and should reign in the affections to the exclusion of every subject of an inferior nature, and that we should cleave to them with full purpose of heart. And, surely, when the vast extent of the ground over which we have to travel, in studying the divine record, is taken into account, the depth of these subjects that do present themselves for investigation, and the importance attaching to the knowledge and reception of them, we may well set our hearts upon them, summon all our faculties, stir up all the energies of our mind to the attaining a practical knowledge of them. There are depths there, which it will require an eternity to explore; treasures there, which it will require an eternity to disclose; and enjoyments there, which it will require an eternity to exhaust.

'Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you.' Though the words without the things signified by them, whether the declarations of the law, or the promises of the gospel, will be of very little importance; yet we are in danger of falling short of the object, if we neglect the words. The revelation of God is not more essential than that we set our heart upon it—'Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear.' It is ordinarily by the words that Jehovah utters; that light, and power, and peace, and purity, and comfort, are conveyed to the heart; and, therefore, we must set our hearts upon God's words, they must be laid up in the heart, that

our thoughts may be daily conversant with them, may be employed about them, and thus the whole soul may be brought to feel and to act under their influence and impression. May we constantly be crying out with the Psalmist, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.'

The object of Moses is not merely to instruct and impress those to whom he now spoke, but that the great things of the divine law should be handed down from father to son, and should be observed to latest generations, even while sun and moon should endure. As they are of universal benefit, so they are of perpetual obligation. Therefore, he says, 'Ye shall command your children to observe to do all the words of this law.' As the law of God is immutable and eternal, not shifting and varying like the institutions of man, and accommodated to the change of circumstances and of times, so whatever in the form of belief and practice was obligatory on parents, was also binding on their posterity: and as there was no more effectual way of perpetuating the knowledge and the fear of God than parental instruction, the divine lawgiver calls upon parents to impart to their children the knowledge that has been communicated to themselves. Every one who reads his Bible, must be convinced that there is no duty more generally and more solemnly inculcated than parental tuition. It is what is due to their offspring from their natural guardians, and no godly parent, no father or mother, who feels the power of religion, and who is animated with a proper affection for his child, will neglect it.

The good seed ought to be sown, religious knowledge ought to be imparted, divine principles ought to be implanted, a holy example ought to be set, fervent prayers should be raised to heaven, and every means should be employed to pre-occupy and impress the tender mind of the young with the love and the fear of God. Would that this course were pursued in the domestic circle, and that parents were fully alive to the eternal salvation of the young immortals committed to their charge! Grace is not hereditary; but parents may confidently anticipate, that, if they perform their duty, God will perform his part; that if they 'train up their child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it.' And oh, what legacy can be bequeathed equal to the knowledge and the fear of God! and, surely, of all entails, the entail of family religion and piety is the most invaluable, the most to be coveted.

#### NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,) lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image,' Deut. iv. 15, 16.*

HERE Jehovah urges his own conduct as a dissuasive to all idolatry and image worship. When God gave the law on mount Horeb, the people heard the voice of words, but they saw no similitude, no manner of similitude. Indeed what representation can God give of himself, or of any spiritual intelligence to creatures encompassed with sense? How is it possible that what is purely spiritual, and therefore not visible by the eye of sense, can be represented by any thing that is sensible? 'No man hath seen God at any time: he dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see. To whom then can ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him?' Although Moses was favoured with a fuller revelation of God's will, and held more intimate communion with him than any other man or prophet, still it was spiritual communications that he enjoyed; and when this eminent servant of the Lord, longing for closer access to Deity, more bright and engaging displays of the divine perfections, and a stronger pledge of divine favour, earnestly said, 'I beseech thee, show me thy glory,' what did Jehovah say? 'Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live.' No where, but as reflected in his works, or revealed in his word, can we, in this world, see the glory of God. To see him as he is, is reserved for the beatific vision in the world of spirits.

Although the people of Israel were solemnly warned never to forget the awful solemnities they witnessed on mount Sinai, to take heed lest they should allow to depart from their hearts the things which they had seen all the days of their life, yet we find that with equal solemnity, and in words nearly similar, they are warned and interdicted against fashioning any graven image, or the similitude of any thing whatever, such as the carnal fancy might suggest, through the medium, or by the aid of which they might offer homage to the great Majesty of heaven and earth. 'Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image.'

It is often urged in vindication of this practice by those who countenance the monstrous absurdities of the church of Rome, that these images are not worshipped, but that the cere-

monies and representations in use are employed as helps, that they are fitted to make divine worship more intelligible and pleasing to the young, more impressive to the common people, and more attractive to all. Under this impression they have acted; and thus, as has been stated by an eloquent writer, do they foolishly imagine that 'the more pomp they can lavish on the rites of worship the more is their devotion to God manifested; and by engaging the outward senses the homage of the heart is gained.' But what is the meaning of such language and conduct? Why, it is just this, that the great God has not been sufficiently explicit and full in revealing his will to his creatures, in declaring how he is to be worshipped; that man is to utter what God has left untold, and to eke out what is defective in the divine communications. In every thing relative to divine worship, God alone must dictate; we are not left to our own views of expediency in subjects of this nature, and we call upon any one to examine carefully the multiplied and varied declarations of the Almighty here and elsewhere, and to say what verdict he can bring in regard to the usages and worship of the popish church, but that it is guilty of the grossest idolatry. No one can reconcile their practices with the plain and unambiguous language of the word of God. The words of the Eternal are peculiarly solemn and emphatic, 'Take good heed lest ye corrupt yourselves.'

Could a greater insult be offered to God, or more daring impiety be manifested by man, than when the Israelites fashioned the golden calf, prostrated themselves before it, sacrificed unto it, and said, 'These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt?' Yet not more daring, not more profane was the conduct of Israel then, or in her times of grossest idolatry, than is that of our modern Christian idolaters. It is not merely a setting aside the positive, the unalterable command of God, but it is an extinction of that light that the Almighty Creator has kindled in the bosom of those whom he formed after his own image. How grievously have they corrupted and defiled themselves; they have changed the glory of God into an image made like unto corruptible man. No wonder that ignorance, and profligacy, and vice prevail to such a degree in those countries that are purely popish; no wonder that vital godliness has decayed, and that morality is at the lowest ebb. They have dishonoured their God and Redeemer, they have corrupted themselves. 'O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!'

In meditating on the words of this text, to use the words of a late writer, 'let us guard against every corruption and neglect in God's worship; against yielding to the spirit of the world, the influence of fancy, the power of superstition in religion. Let us guard against a blind veneration for what is old, a childish fondness for what is splendid, a restless pursuit of what is new. Let us continue steadfast in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Let us stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. Let us take heed to the things which we have heard, and beware lest our minds should be drawn away, or corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.'

Ever let us distrust our own vain reasonings, and our gross imaginations in regard to the divine nature and worship. By faith and prayer let us draw our knowledge from revelation alone. And in our acts of worship let us ever draw near through Christ, and trust in his blood, and derive from his fulness the wisdom, the grace, and the strength that are needful.

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#### NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God,' Deut. vii. 25.*

How very jealous is God of his own honour and glory, and especially in what regards the worship he demands of his creatures. In reading the books of Moses and the prophets, one cannot fail to notice how the sin of idolatry is singled out, forbidden, denounced, threatened, and punished. It is compared to spiritual adultery, by which the marriage covenant is violated, and that love and faith which unite parties is extinguished and broken. One would almost say from what is recorded respecting it, that it is the sin of sins, a sin above all others, and the sin which above all others God abhors.

Israel had lived amongst idolaters in Egypt, and they were soon to be brought into contact with idolaters in Canaan. Their passion for idolatry had been already felt and manifested, and therefore it was to be feared that when they entered Canaan, unless they exercised the strictest vigilance over their own hearts, they might be induced to follow the abominable practices of that idolatrous country. The Lord, therefore,

in mercy cautions them and charges them. They were to be the executioners of the divine vengeance against the inhabitants of that land, because of their gross wickedness, and they are peremptorily commanded, not merely to destroy the people of Canaan, but to destroy their graven images—to abhor and put away from them the precious metals of which they were fashioned, and not to allow the smallest vestige of idolatry to be admitted into their dwellings, lest they should be contaminated thereby.

The images of the heathen deities were made of the most costly and valuable materials—nothing was reckoned too precious for their adornment; and the temples of modern idolatry are adorned in the same manner. The whole aim of popery, the whole tendency of its worship, is to fascinate the outward man, to please the eye, and to gratify the ear. It endeavours to strike the senses, it appeals to the imagination in every possible way; but alas! alas! all that is spiritual, godly, and sanctifying is neglected. When and where does it appeal to and let in light to the understanding? When and how does it captivate and purify the heart? 'The church of the Escorial,' says an eloquent writer, 'is one mass of marble, gold, and precious stones, relieved by admirable pictures, and rendered holy by the presence of some four or five hundred vases, containing relics of every possible saint or saintly object. The rapacity of the French disturbed the identity of these fancied treasures, for while they carried off many of the golden vases, they scattered their unlabelled contents in confusion on the ground, to the great perplexity of the blinded devotees. How long will men worship the offal of the charnel house?'

Can there be life and spirituality in that church, which, in defiance of God's word, in contempt of all that God can promise or threaten, pretends to worship a pure and holy Being by such abominations? Can there be vitality in that church, which in its worship degrades the ever-blessed Redeemer, the Emmanuel, God with us, by ranking him in his mediatorial character and advocateship with the very creatures of his own power; yea, in the court of heaven advancing the influence of saints above that of the Lord Jesus Christ?

While God has most unequivocally prohibited, and by his denunciations testified his displeasure against idolatry in every form, he has also most signally punished it. Israel was taught what a bitter thing it was, in the judgments, which, by their own hands, were executed on the Canaanites. Themselves, though the covenant people of

God, suffered most grievously on account of this sin, and the heaviest visitations of Heaven that overtook them were for their idolatry. And God will not allow this sin to remain, this engine of Satan to be employed for ever in any church, or in any quarter of the globe—the curse of God rests upon it, and the blight of heaven shall fall upon it. What measures God in his providence may take for its subversion—when or how it shall be finally overthrown, he alone to whom all time is alike, knows; but overthrown it shall be, uprooted it shall be. 'The Lord shall consume it with the Spirit of his mouth, he shall destroy it with the brightness of his coming.' In surveying the hideous mass of heathen idolatry, and popish superstition that overspreads such a vast portion of the globe, the heart may well sicken, and in anguish of spirit we may bewail the fearful desolation, but there is no room for despair. God shall send forth the rod of his strength out of Zion, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and the triumphant shout shall be raised, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen.' Yes, every stronghold of Satan shall be overthrown—the idolatry of benighted Gentile nations, the impositions of the false prophet in the East, and the corruptions of the man of sin in the West, shall all be subverted and fall before the light of truth. Aye, the churches of the Reformation, many of which retain still some of the rubbish of popery, and all of which retain less or more of the rust of corruption that adheres to every institution that is human, shall be purged. It may be by a fiery trial, it may be by severe judgments, by the fan in the Almighty's hand, for Zion has invariably been redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness; but it shall be accomplished, and they shall be stripped of the garment spotted by the flesh. Oh that our own church, the church of our fathers, which has much to bewail on account of past unfruitfulness, barrenness, and apostacy, may in God's good time be delivered from all her difficulties, purified from all her defilement, and be rendered more eminently instrumental in advancing the Redeemer's kingdom and plucking brands from the burning.

In meditating on these words, let us regard them as a warning against spiritual idolatry, against every thing that would displace the Almighty from the throne of our affections. An image for worship we are not likely to fashion; before an image, however costly, we are not likely to fall prostrate: but is it not possible to transfer our affections from the Creator to the creature; may we not be ambitious to 'lay up silver as the

dust, to make gold our hope, and to say to the fine gold, 'Thou art my confidence.' Covetousness is idolatry—and that man who is the slave of this world, who is fired with the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, and makes the world his portion, is as much an object of aversion to the pure mind of Jehovah—is as far from the kingdom of heaven as is the vilest idolater: the blind deluded worshipper of a false God.

#### TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand,' Ps. xcvi. 6, 7.*

God abhors all idolatry and image-worship, and he every where denounces it in his word as the accursed thing. 'O do not,' says he, 'this abominable thing that I hate.' Still he does not liberate man, or relax his obligation in the least degree from paying homage to his name. Jehovah has a righteous claim to the homage of his rational offspring, and he demands it. Universal creation is summoned to show forth his praise. The seraphs cease not day or night to extol him who sits upon the throne. Inanimate creation, in mute expressive silence, proclaims his wonders; and shall man, the representative of his Maker on earth, of all the creatures of God the most indebted, be silent? No. 'All thy works, O Lord, shall praise thee, and thy saints shall bless thee.' 'And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.' Spiritual worship, the homage of the heart, is what God specially demands; and without this, no oblation, however magnificent, is of any avail. 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? But man being possessed of powers of body as well as mind, and these, being alike the gift of God, and having a mutual influence the one upon the other, must all be consecrated to his service. As it will not do for any man to satisfy himself with the outward form of worship, while the spirit is wanting, so neither may any one flatter himself that he is a true worshipper, under the pretext, were the thing possible, that the heart is taken and the feelings engaged while the outward homage

is denied. Both are demanded, and both are necessary. 'O come, let us worship, and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.' Still let us bear in mind, that external homage is no longer valuable and important, than while it is the handmaid to devout feeling; that the outward form, be it what it may, must be sanctified by the veneration, and awe, and affection of the heart; by the holy, and exalted, and sublime thoughts of God which are cherished. Let this consideration influence us in all our approaches to God; and oh, let us beware of 'drawing near to him with our mouth, and honouring him with our lips, while our hearts may be removed from him.'

While every act of worship must be pure and simple, removed from all that is superstitious, befitting the majesty and glory of him whom we adore, it must also be in perfect accordance with his will. By the law and the testimony we must be guided here, as in every thing that enters into our duty to God. Every religious observance must be engaged in, not because it has the sanction of public authority—not because it is of long established usage—not because it comports with our ideas of fitness and propriety, but because it has the approval of the King of Zion—because it has 'Thus saith the Lord. written over it—the Amen of heaven establishing it. It is because men have departed from this course, because they have lost sight of the divine enactment, and ceased to listen to the voice of the Eternal, that they have been led into those gross absurdities in worship by which individuals and churches have been characterised.

That worship that we render to Jehovah under the Christian dispensation, if we listen to the great Head of the Church, is, to a mind that seeks for light, improvement, and comfort, simple, affecting, and deeply interesting. The reading of the word of life in private, and the preaching of the gospel in public, the praying to God in the closet and the family, and the praying to him in the sanctuary, the expressing of our thankfulness and joy in the song of praise, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, are the leading acts of worship which the Head of the Church has instituted. And when these are engaged in with the spirit that their nature and importance bespeak, without those accompaniments of human invention by which they are corrupted, and which actually tend to distract and lead away the mind from God, when the Lord alone is sought in them, and when the Spirit of God accompanies and blesses them, how pleasing and

profitable, how refreshing and sanctifying, do they become! Well may the soul, knowing their value, long, like the Psalmist, for their recurrence. Well may he thirst, and pant, and faint for the courts of the Lord.

But in every act of worship, as it is with God we have to do, and before God that we appear, there is, or there ought to be, a constant reverential awe of the divine Majesty, a realizing by faith the divine glory, a sense of the infinite distance there is betwixt the great *I AM* and the creatures of the dust, a deep feeling of our own depravity, and sinfulness, and worthlessness, how much we are in danger of his wrath and in need of his mercy; therefore, there ought to be a bowing down and a kneeling before the Lord. But we never can engage aught in the solemn exercises of devotion, whether in public or private, unless we have a just apprehension of the character of that great Being before whom we fall prostrate, and also bear in mind the relation which we hold to him. Let us then never forget that 'he is our Maker, that he is our God;' that 'we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.' Every one may recognise him as his *Maker*, his Creator, his Preserver, his Upholder, his Benefactor; but can every one say, He is *my* God? Can every one claim a personal interest in him, a covenant relation to him? Can every one say, He hath restored my soul? Alas! alas! many know nothing more of him than that he is their Maker, and even this they do not acknowledge. Becoming homage, however, cannot be paid to him till we can say, He is *our* God: and this never can be done till we view him in another character, the Lord the Redeemer; till we are brought nigh by the blood of Christ, till we look to him, and he looks on us in the face of his Anointed. How cheering is the consideration, that the great God is our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, that every child of God can go boldly to the throne, crying, Abba, Father. There is hereby an element introduced into a Christian's worship of which David knew little, comparatively; and there is a note in a Christian's song of praise which even angels cannot raise. They may celebrate the praises of the Lamb that was slain, but they cannot, and none but the Christian can, sing this song: 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory for ever and ever. Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests.'

TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,'* Phil. iv. 6, 7.

EVERY one feels that this is the wilderness through which he is travelling; that he is born unto trouble; that he is a pilgrim and stranger on the earth. There are difficulties and perplexities, privations and wants, sufferings and sorrows, temptations and dangers connected with his sojourn here, all the fruit of sin, and from which there is no exemption, on the part of any one; they are the lot of fallen humanity. There are trials both of a temporal and spiritual nature, circumstances affecting us both personally and relatively, wants in the issue of which the weal of the church and the community at large are involved, which cannot fail deeply to interest and affect the mind. And that man would be more than a stoic, who did not forecast in his mind what might happen. There is, however, a care and perplexity both in regard to present and coming events, in regard to ourselves and others, in regard to both body and soul that is inordinate, disquieting, distracting, torturing. This arises from distrust and unbelief, and therefore it is sinful, and must be guarded against.

And what a blessed remedy is provided against all such feelings and fears. And what is the remedy? It is prayer, humble, believing, fervent, persevering prayer. 'In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' This is the remedy that unerring wisdom and unbounded love provides—this is the course that he suggests who has all events under his control, and who has all time under his eye. And this is the stronghold to which the people of God invariably flee on their every emergency—the Lord is the counsellor and friend to whom they betake themselves in their every doubt, perplexity, and fear. When Jonah's soul fainted within him he remembered the Lord, and his prayer came in unto God, to his holy temple. When David's heart was overwhelmed, he betook himself to the Rock that was higher than he.

And what a privilege is it that we can draw near to the throne of grace, that, through the mediation of Christ, we can go to God with the confidence of children to a father. All that creates solicitude or apprehension, all that is an

object of desire or hope—whatever relates to our temporal or spiritual concerns, whatever regards our families, our friends, the church, or the nation, is to be brought before God in prayer. Every thing, whatever be its nature, its magnitude, or even its minuteness, in which the creature's weal or woe in time or eternity is involved, is to be made known to God. Yes, every child of God can disclose the every secret of his heart, can make mention of that before the mercy-seat that he would not for worlds reveal to his dearest friend on earth, and can assure himself of the sympathy, the compassion, the interposition, the aid of the Almighty. In going to God in prayer, we do not seek to acquaint him with what he does not perfectly know; but he will have us express our entire dependence on him, he will have us to pay this homage to him, and in this way he will make us sensible that he is the hearer of prayer, and glorify his own name in listening to and granting our requests.

In meditating on these words one may say, I can easily perceive how an individual oppressed with want, or struggling with misfortune, or bowed down with disease, or overwhelmed with sorrow—how a sinner, conscious of guilt, and beset with temptations, and labouring under corruption, and on these accounts filled with anxiety, perplexity, and fear, is called upon to cast his burthen on the Lord, to breathe out his fervent petition before God. It is natural and befitting that he should pray, and supplicate, and entreat, with an importunity that will take no denial, a perseverance that will admit of no repulse for a change of circumstances—it is becoming that he should deprecate the evils that are felt or dreaded, and implore the blessings that are needed, and gratefully acknowledge the mercies that have been conferred, and the deliverances that have been vouchsafed; but how is he in his prayers to mingle thanksgiving in regard to *every thing*? Yes, it is the will of God concerning us, that in *every thing* we should give thanks; and no prayer is acceptable to God without the ingredient of thanksgiving. In every thing we may be thankful. When afflicted, we may be thankful for the expected benefit flowing from affliction; when tempted, thankful that God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able; when conscious of guilt, thankful that we have been aroused, and that there is a remedy provided; when we fall into sin, there is cause of thankfulness, that we were not cut off in the very act of sinning, that we did not die in our sins. Thus are we in every thing to give thanks.

And what is the benefit flowing from thus

seeking to God in humble, believing, fervent, persevering, thankful prayer? 'The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.' Mark here the union betwixt duty and privilege, precept and promise, prayer and peace. The connection is close, the effect is certain. And O what a blessing is this! Nothing short of heaven is comparable to it: it is heaven begun, heaven in the soul. What heathen sages so highly magnified, and their philosophy in vain sought, the religion of Christ imparts, the believer in Christ possesses. O! what a privilege is prayer. 'A soul in converse with its God is heaven.' And what is this boon? It is peace. It is an inward, admiring, adoring sense of God's forgiving love—a serenity and calm proceeding from the believing apprehension of God being pacified to us, and reconciled through the blood of his Son; it is a tranquillity and composure of spirit arising from all the swellings of passion, the tumults of fear being stilled, and the experience of light and grace imparted to the soul. It is the comfortable sense of the divine favour here, and a well-grounded hope of the enjoyment of God hereafter. This peace is the 'peace of God.' Wonderful thought! It is a state of mind of which God is the author and the bestower, and which consists in his being with believers, and in them—it is a divine *peace*, such a serenity as reigns in heaven—such a peace as possesses the divine mind to the extent that is compatible with man's condition on earth. This peace '*passeth all understanding.*' It is such as the Christian understood nothing of prior to his experience of it; and it is that, now that he hath experience of it, which he can neither conceive aught of its value, nor express suitably its excellence, or explain fully its nature. And ever let us think and adoringly remember through whom, and for whose sake, this and every blessing in time and through eternity is ours. It is through Jesus Christ. He is the purchaser, he is the custodier, he is the bestower of all. To him be glory for ever and ever.

#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

'*Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions,*' Matt. xv. 6.

THERE is a natural pride and presumption in the human heart, which leads many to suppose that they can improve the lessons of heavenly wisdom, and the institutions of sovereign and divine

appointment. Because their feeble understandings cannot comprehend all the designs and purposes of the Almighty, in this enactment and that, in this and the other revelation of his will, and because this and the other injunction, although issuing from the throne of the Eternal, does not comport with their ideas of worship and obedience, therefore they mutilate and enlarge just as suits their own fancy. It was this spirit that gave rise to those traditions, that prevailed in our Lord's days, which the Jewish teachers regarded as of equal authority with the law of God, and by which they made void the law, yet which Christ reprehended with such just severity, in many parts of the gospel history.

Those traditions are enforced still; and it is because modern Jews hold to them with equal tenacity as they did in their fathers' days, and because these traditions are, in many parts, directly opposed both to the law and the prophets, that so little impression has, to this day, been made upon them by the preaching of the cross. Those who have lately come into contact with Jews tell us, that in arguing with them from the prophets, when you can tie them down to the simple truth, the plain revelation of God's will, they find the ground upon which they stand untenable, and they do feel that if the mere word of God, which we hold as the alone rule of faith, is exclusively to be adhered to, and appealed to, then their sentiments, in regard to the Messiah, cannot be maintained, and they must of necessity yield. But then having recourse to the unwritten law, to their talmuds and traditions, which they regard explanatory of the written word, and of equal authority, they resist the truth, they are confirmed in their prejudices, they refuse to listen to the plain word of life, and the veil of error and delusion remains untaken away. And what an evident and palpable proof is this that human traditions, and the law of God, cannot subsist together; that if the one is true the other must be false, and that till such time as simple truth is allowed to operate, and all that it discountenances is swept away, error and all its soul-destroying attendants must prevail. How evident the truth of Christ's declaration, that human tradition must make void the law of the Eternal.

It is the same spirit of pride and presumption which operated with the Jews, that has led the church of Rome also to maintain that certain doctrines have been handed down from apostolic times by tradition; that these traditions ought to be added to the holy scriptures, full and entire, to supply their defect. Thus it is that they have set aside, or corrupted, or invalidated the

pure doctrines of the word of life, placed those on a level with or even above them, that are of a most questionable nature, and degraded the whole revelation and worship of the living God. It might have been naturally expected that our Lord's views respecting Jewish traditions, and the language contained in this text, would have guarded all Christians from pursuing a course so plainly at variance with his will; but the most authoritative language will not restrain men of corrupt minds. Now what is this but to be wise above what is written—but to proclaim that man is wiser than God—that the worm of the earth is to dictate to the Almighty Sovereign of the universe in what manner he ought to be worshipped and obeyed? It is scarcely possible to conceive presumption and impiety more daring than this. Would that the words of our great Lord had been listened to when he adds: 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;' God's presence and blessing alone can render ordinances profitable, and that blessing is promised, and will be vouchsafed to the institutions of his own appointment; but no where is the blessing promised, or can it be hoped for, to inventions that are at variance with his own recorded will.

We are taught by daily experience that when an individual is withdrawn from the simplicity of the faith, and listens to the suggestions of a proud understanding, an unsanctified heart, and a vain imagination, it is hard to say to what excesses in sentiment and practice he will be carried; he flees from opinion to opinion, from fancy to fancy, without any fixed principle to guide him, any anchor to sustain his soul amidst the fluctuations and the war of opinions that prevail, till he is entangled in the mazes of error, and landed on the dark barren shore of unbelief. And as it is with individuals so it is with churches. Once question the validity and sufficiency of the word of God as a rule of faith and manners; once admit that additions may be made to the divine record, and there is no end to innovation; one arbitrary and designing man, one dictatorial and carnal council, laying claim to infallibility, may merge the pure word of life by carnal inventions; and thus it has fared with the church of Rome. For what is it that has given rise to all their errors, their soul-destroying doctrines, their absurd usages, and will-worship, but because they have taken away the only key of knowledge, have buried the unadulterated word of God in the rubbish of unwritten, unauthorized traditions? Their opinions and practices cannot bear the light of truth, and therefore they have shrouded it.

Like the Jews they have rendered the word vain by their traditions. The word they may, like the Jews, retain, but it must speak as tradition directs, and though in theory it may be made a rule of faith only equal to scripture, in practice it becomes a rule of faith paramount to scripture.

How long this mystery of iniquity shall be allowed to work; how long the man of sin, who in sovereignty has been allowed for so many ages to delude and enslave such a vast portion of Christendom, shall be permitted to hold his sway, we cannot say. But this we can say, that of whatever duration his reign may be, it shall not be perpetual; for the Spirit of God teaches us that however firmly he may seem established by human power and human policy, his dominion shall be utterly eradicated. Truth shall beam in upon men's minds with resistless energy, and its most formidable enemies shall fall before it. O let us stand fast in the doctrines of the apostles—let us reject every spurious and false opinion, let us pray earnestly to be kept in the love of the truth, and for that humble and spiritual mind which, through divine grace, is the best preservative against every fatal delusion.

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TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it,' Deut. xii. 32.*

This prohibition was by the Jews considered merely as warning them against making the slightest alteration of the text or letter of the law, and we have reason to bless God for such a view being taken of it, for it has preserved entire and incorrupt the sacred books. It has deterred even those who most openly violated the law, or explained away its meaning, or contended with each other about religious opinions and practices, from altering, adding to, or taking from the scriptures themselves the least jot or tittle. But this comes far short of the true meaning of the words. They have a reference not merely to the letter, but to the word and the worship of God—to man's belief and man's duty. And Moses, it may be observed, uses precisely the same words in Deut. iv. 2, in regard to the divine statutes that he does here in regard to divine worship. Nothing was to be added, as if it could be rendered more perfect; nothing was to be taken away, as if any part were superfluous. To add any thing to the command of God as binding on the conscience, and essential in religion, is affronting his

wisdom, as the diminishing any thing is insulting his authority. God's law is perfect, his worship is perfect, his work is perfect, his word is perfect; his commandments concerning all things are right. The solemn words with which the book of the Revelation is closed may with propriety be applied here: 'I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book.'

We cannot help noticing the uniformity of God's testimony on this subject. The Spirit utters the same language in the book of Proverbs that is expressed in the words on which we are now meditating. 'The word of God,' it is said, 'is pure. Thou shalt not add unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar,' thereby intimating that nothing must be added to or withdrawn from the record of eternal truth on any pretence whatever, nor under the sanction of any name, however great. No claim to infallibility, no authority of fathers or councils, no traditions of elders, no reasonings of philosophers, no dreams of enthusiasts, are to be listened to. It is in this way, by liberties taken with the divine record that heresies and false sentiments of every kind have arisen. Such innovators are declared to be liars; they now are lying under the displeasure of God, because of their falsifying and corrupting God's word, and they shall be subjected to final condemnation. How cautious should this make those who venture on translations of the scriptures, lest, by their conjectural criticism, they should be found corrupting instead of amending; yea, how guarded should those be who are called to expound the sacred scriptures that they utter nothing that is not in exact conformity with the plain undisputed will of God. Let them beware of saying, 'Thus saith the Lord, albeit the Lord hath not spoken.'

In following out the meaning of these words, and making a practical application of them, it may be asked, how do they bear on our own faith and practice? Is there not a disposition, if not to enlarge, at least virtually to mutilate some parts of the word of God? Is there not an unwillingness to believe *all* that the Lord hath revealed? It is the case that some of the profound mysteries of religion are too hard to be understood, and because we cannot comprehend them, therefore we question their utility, we set

them aside; and thus in as far as these incomprehensible truths are concerned, we actually suppress what is revealed and commanded. Such a course is very much akin with that of the Jews and papists in regard to their traditions. But it should be borne in mind that, were there no difficulties in divine revelation, we might question whether it descended from heaven; for in treating of things divine, it must of necessity treat of many subjects that lie far beyond the reach of the human intellect; of truths that are so mysterious, as to be placed beyond the capacities and comprehension of even the highest intelligences. There are mysteries in revelation which may require an eternity to explore, and may lead even those who stand in God's presence, after myriads of ages shall have rolled away, to exclaim in adoring wonder: 'Who by searching can find out God?' The grand question is, Are they revealed? and if revealed, they may be believed, though never fully understood; and if revealed, if forming a part of the divine word, they must be received, they must be credited.

The same thing may be said of the precepts of the word. God has made known and inculcated these that they might be obeyed, in all their extent, and in all their spirituality. They must be regarded as holy, just, and good, and they must be observed without any reservation. Many profess to esteem the commandments of the Lord to be right in some things, and yield obedience to a certain extent, but when they think of the breadth of the commandment, and the spirituality of the law, that it takes cognizance of the heart, that it admits of no sin, whether inward or outward; that it requires full and perfect obedience; that it demands the surrender of the whole man, the sacrifice of every lust, the giving up all, soul, body, and spirit to the Lord—then they conceive that the law is too strict, and God's requirements too rigid and severe, and they wish them set aside, or if not abrogated, at least relaxed. Some duties they will perform, but in the observance of others they must be excused; some sins they will avoid and forsake, but as to the relinquishment of others they must be forgiven. They do not say, What will the Lord have me to do, to sacrifice or to suffer? They do not make unconditional surrender of themselves to the Lord. Now what is this but in actual practice to diminish, to circumscribe the law of God, and to a certain extent nullify its requirements? While we profess then to reprobate Jews and papists in their reverence for traditions and in their superstitious worship, O! let us see that we do not practically identify ourselves with them in our disposition to circum-

scribe the revelation of God as to our faith, and practice; and let it be our habitual prayer to God, that he would lead us 'to esteem his commandments concerning all things to be right; to approve the things that are excellent, that we may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ.'

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'For thou shalt worship no other God: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God,'*  
Exod. xxxiv. 14.

How strong must have been the propensity of the children of Israel to idolatry, when the Almighty introduces the subject so frequently, and threatens it so fearfully. If any people under heaven had revolted at such indignity offered to the Sovereign of the universe, it was the nation of the Jews. They were brought into such close contact with God, he lived in the midst of them, he day by day afforded them such plain demonstrations of his power and favour, they had such clear notions of his true character, and such distinct intimations of his will, that one would have thought it impossible for them to choose any other God but the Lord, and to worship him in any other way than he himself enjoined. And yet there never was a nation, even the most ignorant, uncivilized, and brutish, that manifested a stronger and more unconquerable tendency to turn the truth of God into a lie, than did this chosen people of God. What a melancholy proof do they afford of the deep depravity and desperate wickedness of the human heart. God reminds them of their constant provocations—and now that they were about to enter Canaan, and witness the manners and customs of its inhabitants, he warns them against being corrupted and led astray by their sinful practices, and he commands them to destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves. These were gross affronts to the true God, they were degrading to human nature, and, says Jehovah in the most authoritative manner, 'Thou shalt worship no other God.'

But they did degrade themselves by worshipping other gods; they did act in opposition to his express command, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me;' they did forget God's solemn declaration, 'Confounded be all they that serve graven images;' they did defile themselves, by incorporating with their religious homage all the abominations of the Gentile nations. And it is

most remarkable that any professing to be Christians, with all the Jewish idolatries before them, with all the fearful denunciations of heaven sounding in their ears, with the view of all the dread threatenings of the Almighty carried into effect, and professing a religion that is simple and spiritual in its worship, should have been led into the same, and even grosser delusion; yet this is the case with the church of Rome. The time was when that church was distinguished for its purity and steadfastness; but now it has, through lapse of time, degenerated and sunk so fearfully, that its impurity and corruption is every where spoken of.

God has, however, expressed his abhorrence of all such practices as are inconsistent with spiritual worship. He is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and truth, and has told us that men worship him in vain when they teach for doctrines the commandments of men. He is a jealous God, his name is Jealous. The covenant he made with Israel was a marriage covenant. He regarded idolatry as adultery—his glory he would not give to another. We know what has befallen the Jews on account of their idolatry, and we know from the divine record what judgments are in store for the idolatrous church of Rome. 'Her plagues shall come in one day, death and mourning and famine; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.'

We pretend not to worship any other God, save the Lord Jehovah; we profess not to seek to God through the mediation of any other, save the one Mediator betwixt God and man, the man Jesus Christ; we are not characterised by that idolatry that is chargeable on Jews, and the votaries of a degrading superstition. But is it not matter of deep lamentation, that, in this land of bibles and churches, on which the light of the Reformation has dawned, there are multitudes who pay to God no homage, who neither worship him in private nor in public, neither adore him in one form or other? Though there is a false worship to be avoided, there is a true worship to be given. And oh, let not such neglecters, such despisers, imagine that they shall escape the righteous displeasure of God. But then, while we do profess to honour God, and worship him in the way he hath appointed in his word, it is for us to inquire whether, in the worship of God, the homage of the heart is given—whether we draw near to him with a true heart, and in the full assurance of faith—whether under a deep sense of our own utter unworthiness and sinfulness, we do cherish an undivided, an un-

shaken, reliance on the mediation and intercession of Him whom the Father heareth always. While we are chargeable with no outward idolatry, let us see to it that no heart idolatry can be laid to our charge. Is it not the case with many—is it not the case with us—that the creature does usurp, and has obtained, in our affections, the place to which the Creator and Redeemer has a righteous claim? Pleasure in one form or other is hunted after as the chief good, the world in its different avenues is sought after as the better inheritance; and are not friends and children idolized and worshipped, while God is neglected, and neither loved nor adored supremely?

And oh, let it ever be remembered, that of the idolatry of the heart the Lord is most jealous—that he is grievously displeased with the giving that to another which he is most solicitous to retain! Has not the wrath of God been seen going forth against such idolaters? Neglect, and shame, and contempt, following those in a present life, who were worshippers of earthly honour and fame; poverty and want often assailing those who bowed at the shrine of mammon; disease and wretchedness covering those who made a god of their belly and gloried in their shame? And how often have we heard the mourner bewail that his gourd was smitten—that the idolized object of his affections, which stole away his heart from God, has been taken? Such is the manner in which the jealous God testifies his displeasure here; but, alas! if there is not a return to the living God, this is nothing but the prelude—the warning shower before the coming storm. Idolaters shall not inherit the kingdom of God—nay, they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple,' Ps. v. 7.*

THE house of prayer is the place to which the longing eyes of the godly are directed, and their ardent desires drawn. Whatever others may do, says the pious soul, whatever may be their sources of enjoyment, whatever their places of resort—let them repair to the haunts of pleasure, to the scenes of amusement, to the tents of wickedness, as for me, I will come into thy house, I will worship towards thy holy temple.

A day spent there is better than a thousand any where else. And why is it so? Just because God is made known there; because the exercises that occupy him there, and the enjoyments that are tasted there, are suited to his renewed nature, and grateful to his spiritual taste.

There are different exercises and duties, in which we engage in the house of prayer, all needful, all important and essential, but worship is the chief. Many may imagine that the preaching of the word, and listening to the words of life, are the special duties of sabbath-day and sanctuary service. They are imperative duties, and too highly we cannot prize them. If we would grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we must wait on God for the purpose of hearing what the Lord will say to us; if we would hope to be sanctified and ripened for heaven, it must be by a preached gospel, by the operation of the truth on the heart. These are duties, and eternally important duties, but they are not the chief, the leading, duties of temple service. It is prayer and praise that form the acts of worship; and, therefore, they must be regarded as the chief and the most solemn duties to which we are summoned. In the reading and hearing of the word, God addresses us; we listen to him: but in the acts of prayer and praise, we lift our souls to God, we speak to the divine Majesty, we solicit the ear of the Hearer of prayer. And oh, in what an interesting and exalted position is the creature of a day placed, in these sacred exercises! He is, in this way, brought into close contact with the Almighty; he comes as into the immediate presence of God; if he feels aught, he realizes the divine presence, he places himself before God. He prays, and God hears; he asks, and God bestows; he confesses, and God forgives; he entreats, and God blesses.

But in order that our worship may be profitable and acceptable, we must take good heed to the spirit and frame of mind by which we are animated. 'Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.' The spirit of reverence and godly fear must possess us, if we would serve God with acceptance. 'In thy fear will I worship,' says the Psalmist. If men were fully aware what is meant by worship—if they bore in mind what they themselves are, or if they reflected on the nature of that Being with whom they have to do in worship, it would be impossible for any thing but humility, and reverence, and awe, to possess the heart in the acts of devotion. Prayer, in its varied acts, of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and petition, bespeaks

nothing but reverence and godly fear. What is it but a poor worm of the earth, a fallen, guilty, polluted rebel falling prostrate before the great, the self-existent I AM, recognising its own nothingness, and Jehovali's greatness and glory? what is it but an acknowledging mercies, which are wholly unmerited; confessing sins, which, but for divine mercy, must have sunk it in perdition; entreating for pardon and forgiveness, for which, in itself, it has no plea; and, as a needy beggar, supplicating favours wholly of grace, and for which it has nothing to give in return? Does this view of things bespeak any thing but the most profound humility and godly fear? There can be no worship without this frame of mind. Devotion, without it, is a perfect contradiction. 'God resisteth the proud, he seeth them afar off.' It may be the case, it is the case, that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Thoughtless inconsiderates, proud self-righteous spirits, come into the divine presence, and take upon them to speak unto the Lord in all the pride and vanity of their heart, without any feeling of solemnity. Such individuals are rejected, their sacrifices are an abomination in the sight of God! Oh, may I ever stand in awe, when sisted in God's immediate presence; and when brought into God's house of prayer, may I be enabled to make Jacob's words my own, How dreadful is this place, this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

But who may venture into the divine presence—who has confidence to come before God in the hope of acceptance? No man, relying on what he is, or what he has done, may stand in the holy place, and lift his eyes heavenward. Except we had seen a way to the holiest of all opened up, which was shut, we had no more dared to take one step into the awful presence of God, than to rush into the devouring flame. Our encouragement lies wholly out of ourselves—it is to be found in the mercy of God—'I will come in the multitude of thy mercy.' The mercy that is unbounded, the mercy that passeth all understanding, is the foundation of our hope, and the source of our comfort, in every thing wherein we have to do with God. Still, unlimited, unmeasurable, as that mercy is in the divine mind, it can only be exercised in a righteous way, it can only flow in a righteous channel, and that channel is Christ. Mercy, in all its various manifestations, reaches the sinner only through Christ—Christ has sheathed the sword—Christ guarded the approach to the tree of life—Christ hath opened up the way to the holiest of all—Christ has removed every obstacle, every middle

wall of partition, betwixt God and the believer—he is the way to the Father—through his blood we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all. Let our trust be placed on Christ—of his righteousness let us make mention—and with this way before us, sprinkled with Christ's blood, never let us doubt our being heard. The name of Christ is all-sufficient, all-prevalent. It has a charm that is resistless in heaven and on earth. Let us then come boldly to the throne of grace—let us draw near with true hearts in the full assurance of faith.

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 TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain,'* Exod. xx. 7.

THE first commandment respects the object of worship, and guards the glory of Jehovah's throne; the second respects the mode of worship, and preserves the purity of the temple in which he is adored; and the third respects the spirit of worship, and secures the reverence due to Jehovah's name. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain.' By the name of God is not meant any one special designation, but refers to the various titles, attributes, and perfections that he is pleased to assume. We know nothing of God but as he has been pleased to reveal himself, and the ineffable glories of his name, his nature and character, can only be discovered by the contemplation and study of these in the different ways by which he has made himself known. The divine excellencies are, indeed, far above the full understanding and conception of the finite mind, whether of angels or men; but although this is the case, still God has not left himself without a witness, both in regard to his nature, his will, and his name.

Whatever be the names, the titles, the attributes that God claims to himself, and by which he is made known, he requires the holy and reverend use of them all, and we ought to tremble at the very thought of taking any of them in vain. The Jews seem to have been peculiarly solemnized by this commandment, although their veneration for the name of Jehovah has been marked by glaring superstition. It is said that even to this day they never venture to utter the name Jehovah. Without entering into the views of the Jews, that name, or any other by which this glorious and awful Being is designated, ought

never to be heard or uttered but with feelings of profound reverence and awe. Accordingly it has been recorded to the credit of a very eminent Christian and learned philosopher, the honourable Mr Boyle, that the name of God was never uttered by him in conversation without his making a pause before it, that he might thereby keep alive in his own mind, and awaken in the minds of others, the veneration that was due to the great Majesty of heaven and earth. Would that we were similarly impressed, and that such a spirit was cherished by all. Whether such feelings and sentiments exist or not, Jehovah has a righteous claim to them; and if they do not exist, in as far as we are personally concerned, the Almighty has made himself known in vain. His character and attributes are revealed for the express purpose of interesting our minds and affecting our hearts; and that in a way befitting these perfections. Why is Jehovah revealed to us as the Almighty, the all-glorious, the spotlessly pure God, but that we should be humbled in his presence, and tremble at the very thought of offending him. Why is he revealed as the all-gracious, the all-faithful and true God, but that we might be filled with gratitude and love, with confidence and trust. O may the divine Spirit, who quickens and enlightens whom he will, awaken in us those sentiments that are becoming the creatures of Almighty power, the monuments of divine mercy, and the subjects of unmerited grace and love!

It might naturally be expected that the name of the supreme Being, and in whatever way made known, would be held in the greatest veneration by creatures who are privileged to call him Father, and who are entirely dependent upon him for everything connected with the life which now is, and that which is to come. But alas, alas! this is not the case; the Almighty may well say, in regard to many, 'If I then be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear?' By everything is man attracted, but that in which the divine glory and his own eternal weal are concerned; to every idle tale will he lend a greedy ear, but he will not listen to that in which his everlasting peace is involved; to every object he will turn his eye with eager gaze, but that which raises the soul heavenward. The creature is venerated, but the Creator is disregarded. Innumerable are the ways in which this commandment is violated. Men profane the name of God when, adjured by the living God, they declare that to be truth which they know to be false—they do abuse God's name, who in common conversation

allow their tongues to utter hideous oaths and imprecations—they do abuse God's name who employ any of his attributes, without any awe of him upon their minds—they do abuse God's name who think slightly and irreverently of it without any suitable affection of soul—they do abuse God's name who even in prayer make use of it without reverential and solemn feeling of heart—the name of God is profaned when his ordinances are engaged in without becoming humility, and not improved for the purpose for which they were given—and they do grievously profane God's name who hold up piety to ridicule, and treat all that is sacred with contempt.

Such and many other things are what this commandment prohibits. Fearful is the demerit and criminality of this sin in its every form. No guilt can be conceived greater, or even equal; it is directed immediately against the great I AM; it is an open contempt of his authority, a dishonour done to his name, a disregard of his every perfection, a setting the Almighty at defiance, and a saying openly and fearlessly, Who is the Lord, that we should fear, that we should obey him? O what heart does not bleed for the prevalence of this sin! and what Christian does not pray for the restraining of it? 'Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.' This is a sin little thought of among men, but highly criminal in the sight of God, and he has taken the avenging of it into his own hands: 'The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.'

There are many, alas, who perceive not the malignity and fearful criminality of this sin, and in their estimation little guilt attaches to it. It is not so viewed by a holy, a righteous, and sin-avenging God. Here, and in many parts of Scripture, he has expressed his abhorrence of it, and written over it the most dread denunciations. Human laws cannot reach all the profanations of God's name, and seldom are the laws against it put in execution. It shall not be so, however, with God. Even in a present life, the hand of God has made the blasphemer a signal monument of that power which he has defied, and that wrath he has insulted, and though the Almighty may bear and forbear here, yet the sinner shall not escape that wrath and indignation which he is treasuring up for himself against the day of wrath. Let blasphemers 'kiss the Son, lest he be angry and they perish; when his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him.'

#### TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord,'* Gen. xviii. 19.

Of all duties, that of parents towards their offspring is the most important. It is the groundwork of after life, for good or for evil, for weal or for woe. It tells on the future prospects, the after happiness of the individuals of the rising generation; it tells on the interests of religion in coming time; it tells on the peace, and prosperity, and well-being of society of future days. Let parental tuition, parental instruction and example, be neglected, let the religion of the fire-side be suspended and disregarded; and to the extent that it is set aside will be the evil consequences flowing from it felt and visible in the domestic circle. Yea, as wave propels wave, and generation succeeds generation, the one influencing the other, so will the baneful effects of the neglect be transmitted and carried forward to latest time. By the disuse and deficiency of this first of means for impregnating the young mind, for the implanting, and spreading, and advancing the growth of religion and virtue, families that might have been the seed-plots of all that is holy, and pleasant, and beautiful, and blessed, have become the nurseries of vice, and wickedness, and misery. Whereas when children have been trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; have been taught to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; when the principles of religion have been implanted in the youthful mind; when the dwelling has become a Bethel, whence issue the voice of rejoicing and salvation, and when every thing that meets the eye and the ear is fitted to raise the thoughts heavenward, then the effect is most blessed and permanent. We have recorded instances of the pernicious effects attending paternal neglect, and the want of parental restraint, in the case of Lot and Eli, when divine judgments overtook both parent and child, for the criminal failure in parental duty.

One of the leading sources whence have issued that overwhelming tide of insubordination, profligacy, and crime, against which all the terrors of law are but feeble restraints, is just the disregard of family religion, the neglect and letting down of family instruction and government, the grievous inattention of parents to their children, not caring for them in any other way than mere creatures of sense, entirely overlooking the training them up for the service of God here, and the enjoyment of God hereafter. O! what can be

expected of children in coming years, if there are not efforts made to eradicate those noxious weeds which grow so rank in the natural soil; nay, are not merely not uprooted, but cherished and strengthened by a mother's neglect, and a father's example; what can be expected but that these weeds shall grow up, and gain strength, and blossom, and bear seed, and shed their seed far and wide.

Abraham was what every parent and head of a family ought to be. Feeling the power of religion himself, aware of its necessity and importance, filled with love to precious souls, zealous for the glory of God, and anxious to transmit the knowledge and the fear of God to the world's end, and to latest generations, he was eager to convey to others, especially to those committed to his guardianship, what he knew and felt to be the source of all comfort, the foundation of all hope to himself. What honourable testimony is here borne to Abraham's integrity, and stedfastness, and conscientiousness in the discharge of his paternal duty, by him who knoweth all things, searcheth all hearts, and beholdeth all results. Whatever others may do or not do, this Abraham will do; he will command his family and household to keep the way of the Lord; I know him, his faith, his love to me, his stedfastness to his covenant-engagement. He will enter on the course prescribed, and he will maintain his integrity to the end. Prior to this, the father of believers had submitted to the rite of circumcision, as a token and seal of the covenant, without question or challenge, and every one of his household had in the same way been, at his command, separated to the Lord, whether old or young, free-born or slaves.

And what is involved in this parental duty as here suggested? It includes instruction, the sowing the seed of divine truth in the soul, the imbuing the mind with the knowledge of things sacred and spiritual. Whether it spring up and bear fruit or not, the seed must be sown, and sown by parents, and sown in youth, else children must grow up ignorant as the veriest heathen. It includes example. There is a teaching by the life as well as by the lips. There is a drawing out, and illustrating, and exhibiting the lesson in the temper and conversation, a making it palpable, and showing that it is practicable. If the example is not given, the lesson, however good, will fail in taking effect; if the example is contrary to the lesson, it is worse than fruitless, for it teaches and leads to hypocrisy and falsehood. It includes prayer. The father is the priest of the household; the seed that is sown must be watered, the blessing

that enriches must be sought, the sacrifice must be presented to the Lord, and this we hesitate not to say ought to be a morning and evening sacrifice. It includes discipline. A parent is the prophet and priest—he is also the king over his little community, this little dependency of the Almighty's domains. He will *command*, and he must command. The exercise of authority is essential. This does not bespeak harshness, but it bespeakes rule on the part of the head of the family, while it bespeaks submission, and ready submission on the part of the child and dependents. Instruction was doubtless given in Eli's case, good example was afforded, prayers were offered to the throne of grace, but authority was not exercised. The not restraining of his children was Eli's sin, and for this neglect both he and they were most grievously punished. O let parents lay this seriously to heart!

It is in this way that a parent is to train his children; but the household is to be cared for. All under the roof are subjected to the inspection, the guardianship, the authority of the head of the family. The souls of all are a trust committed to him, and how that trust has been executed, in regard to all, account must be rendered. Servants the lowest have souls to be saved or lost as well as children. They must be instructed, they must be prayed with and for, aye, they must be commanded to keep the way of the Lord. And this is a duty parents owe to God, to their country, and to their children; and in neglecting this duty, they are destitute of true affection, they are guilty of the greatest cruelty, they are doing what in them lies to ruin, to murder that which worlds could not purchase, which nothing but the blood of Christ could redeem.

#### TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord,'* Lev. xix. 12.

THESE words succeed the warning that is given in the preceding verses against falsehood and lying, to show us how easily one sin leads to another, and that when once men can bring their minds to falsify for their own supposed advantage, they will soon go a step farther, and venture to *swear* for their advantage. O! how downward is sin in every form—once enter upon it, and there is no saying where we will stop. The words of our present meditation bring before us two ways in which the third commandment is specially

violated, viz., by perjury, and by profane cursing and swearing. These are crimes of the very blackest and deepest dye, which, while they bring a very foul stain upon the character, are peculiarly obnoxious to God, and injurious to man. The former, that of perjury, needs but to be mentioned to show its abominable nature. Indeed I cannot conceive anything that bespeaks such daring and atrocious impiety as this sin. For what is it? It is a calling on God, the God of veracity, and holiness, and justice, with all the solemnities of a coming judgment placed before the mind, to bear witness to the truth of what we assert, and the sincerity of the promise which we make, although we know at the moment that what we assert is false, and what we promise we neither can nor intend to fulfil. Every one who thus swears invokes the omniscient God to notice and record what takes place, and calls upon the righteous Judge of all the earth to bring him to account. This is the idea that is implied in an oath. Now what a gross insult is thus given to the great God! It is a direct attack upon every divine perfection. To call on the God of truth to witness a lie, implies that he who does so either supposes that God does not know what he does, and therefore it is an attack upon his omniscience; or that God is not displeased with falsehood, and so it is a denial of his holiness; or that he is not able to avenge the indignity, and thus it derogates from his power. I conceive perjury, when deliberately committed, to be near akin to atheism. It is actual practical atheism.

And while this sin is immediately directed against God, the consequences on society are most pernicious. The interests of individuals are not merely involved in it, but the peace and well-being of mankind at large are subverted by it; for what security is there for any man's life, or character, or property, if these may be sworn away by the miscreant who sports with falsehood, and dreads not the fearful solemnity of an oath? Says Solomon, 'a false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow;' is as much to be dreaded as the most fatal weapon, nothing can be mentioned that is more dangerous or destructive. O what a picture does such a sinner give of the deep depravity of the human heart! It is to be feared that the frequency of these solemn appeals to heaven, and allowed on occasions comparatively trivial, have had a powerful tendency to weaken the obligation, and lessen the reverence due to an oath.

But the sin of profane swearing, and that in ordinary conversation, is also denounced in these

words, as it is in the third commandment. Notwithstanding the strong warnings, and dread threatenings of the Almighty against this sin, it is truly awful to think how prevalent it is. Turn to what hand we will, we hear men opening their mouths against the heavens, and our ears are assailed with the most horrid oaths and imprecations. In the perpetration of this crime it may be justly said, that men go astray as soon as they be born, for profane swearing appears as familiar to the young as to the old; the very child is taught to lisp an oath. This desecration manifests itself in various ways. Sometimes the name of God is profaned by the thoughtless sinner as a mere expletive in conversation; sometimes it is used in the company of the ungodly to give zest to their language, and to promote amusement; sometimes it is employed to express more strongly the vehemence of their rage; sometimes it is used to heighten the denunciations of revenge, and very often it is employed by unhallowed lips in imprecations of evil on their fellow-men. Drunkenness, anger, disappointment, mere merriment, give rise to the violation of this divine commandment. I do conceive that of all the innumerable and varied sins by which men are characterized and degraded, this sin is, so to speak, the most gratuitous, and betokens more than any, man's low and sunk condition, and the deep-rooted enmity of the human heart to God. For almost every one sin that can be mentioned you discover some motive; it is indulged in for some fancied advantage, or gratification; but no one can see why a profane person opens his mouth in imprecations, why he blasphemes the name of the great God, but solely from the love of blasphemy, the love of sinning in this particular way. No acquisition in any one way was ever made or expected to be made by profanity, and but for this fearful enmity of the carnal mind to God, one wonders how it is committed at all. O that the profane person would consider that whatever recommendation his blasphemy may be of him to the profane like himself, he exposes himself to the abhorrence of the religious and the virtuous, yea, even the sober-minded. A swearer is generally avoided, you dread to come in contact with him. His language is the language of hell. He is one whom the young are admonished to dread, and to avoid; he is branded as a nuisance to society; he is marked as a blot in the creation of God.

Some do pretend to excuse this vice under the plea and pretence that it is a habit with them, and because they have been so much inured to it, therefore they cannot get quit of it; it has become second-nature to them. Alas, alas! what is this

but an aggravation of their guilt. They have familiarized their minds so much to sin that they cannot live without it; they cannot speak without profaning God's name; the habit is so strong that their consciences have become seared; the turpitude of the crime terrifies them not, and they have brought themselves to that state that they can call 'good evil, and evil good.' And shall the Lord hold such persons guiltless? No, no, He will not hold them guiltless, the curse is written over them. He will bring them to judgment. Jehovah in this interdict thus speaks, 'I am the Lord.' In casting your eye over this chapter, you will observe how frequently this memento is given, to remind men that he is a jealous, a sin-avenging God, 'I am the Lord,' the holy One who changeth not—my views of this sin do not alter—mine ear is not heavy that it cannot hear their impiety—my arm is not shortened that it cannot punish their profanity. O let us plead with the Almighty that he would check this abounding iniquity, that he would pour out a spirit of grace and godliness upon us—that his name may be hallowed in our hearts, and extolled by our lips, and glorified in our lives.

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TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool,' &c., Mat. v. 34—37.*

THESE words of our Lord have been regarded by some as an absolute prohibition of oaths in any circumstances, and on any occasion whatever. This judgment has been formed without duly considering the object Christ had in view, and without taking to account the character of the persons addressed.

It cannot be doubted that oaths have been resorted to in every period of man's history. They were in use among the patriarchs long before the promulgation of the law; thus Abraham swore to Abimelech; and Jacob swore to Laban; and it is more than probable that such solemn appeals to heaven did not originate in human suggestion, but were expressly commanded by God. It is evident that such appeals were not merely admissible, but were enjoined under the Jewish dispensation. The very prohibition of *false* swearing implies the lawfulness of it in certain circumstances, and for certain ends; but Jehovah expressly commands it, 'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt swear by his name;' and the

very form and terms of the oath are prescribed, 'Thou shalt swear the Lord liveth in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.'

Although there is no express injunction respecting oaths under the Christian dispensation, yet, while there is nothing against the practice, there is much to confirm it. This appears both from the language of the prophets in reference to gospel days, and also from different declarations in the New Testament Scriptures. Thus saith the Lord, by the mouth of Isaiah, 'I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.' The apostle Paul solemnly appeals to the Almighty, as to the truth of his affirmation, and the sincerity of his affection: 'God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son,' Rom. i. 9. And in his epistle to the Hebrews, he tells us, that among men, 'an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.' In the book of Revelation, the angel is represented as lifting up his hand to heaven, and swearing by him who liveth for ever and ever.

Still our Lord's words stand on record, 'Swear not at all.' Does he hereby oppose the positive law of God? does he condemn the patriarchs who solemnly invoked Jehovah's name? does he set aside this mean suggested by the apostle for establishing truth, healing divisions, and settling strife? By no means. The prohibition of the Saviour, had it referred to any thing but rash, irreverent, and unnecessary swearing, would be contrary to the light of reason, the appointment of God, and the good of human society. It may be observed, that it is no unusual thing in scripture to express *that* in absolute terms which yet is to be understood in a limited sense, and to be explained in reference to the persons and circumstances to which it referred: and if in one place swearing is forbidden in scripture, and in another place it is allowed, the two cases must be different, and the nature and character of each must be discovered by the special circumstances. What our Lord had in view in the whole of his sermon on the mount, of which this warning forms a part, was to unfold the extent and spirituality of the divine law, and expose the gross corruption of the law by the traditions of the elders; and he sets his own authoritative, *I say*, over against their sinful explanations. He does not set aside a tittle of the divine command; but he expresses himself strongly against what was unlawful in itself, what was not commanded, and the practice of which no consideration, no traditional gloss, could justify. Although the Jews pretended to venerate the very letters of the name Jehovah, yet

they had discovered a way by which they might guiltlessly swear in common conversation, and might swear to a falsehood, and yet not perjure themselves, and that was swearing by the heavens, and the earth, and the temple. And that our Lord referred to that pernicious habit that prevailed, and not to oaths righteously and solemnly administered, and taken with awe and reverence, and on suitable and becoming occasions, and for important purposes, appears from what he says in verse 37, 'Let your communication be yea, yea, nay, nay;' for, adds he, whatever goes farther than this is evil; proceeds from the evil one, from a sinful principle, from an evil habit, and ought by all means to be suppressed.

This prohibition of our Lord is doubtless a loud and solemn warning to swearers of every name, and in whatever way their profanity discovers itself. Many there are who trifle with God's attributes in common conversation. God's mercy, God's truth, God's curse, are utterances which frequently issue from their lips—and like the Jews of old, they swear by the heavens, by their souls, and in other forms. All these are detestable, all obnoxious to God, all subjected to the wrath and curse of God. Yes, such despisers plainly show that they are none of Christ's disciples; their shibboleth is not that of the Redeemer's followers; their spot is not the spot of God's children; they have neither lot nor part in the salvation of Christ: for while they violate the third commandment of the law, they disregard the authority of the Lord who bought them; they clearly manifest that neither the thunders of mount Sinai, nor the moving scenes of mount Calvary, influence and affect them. How then shall they escape!

And while this sin of profaneness, however discovered, is of a most degrading and corrupting character personally, it has a most pernicious tendency to corrupt all that are brought within its influence. Profanity is a social sin. It cannot be committed but in company. No man was profane alone. He must have society, in order to indulge his impious propensity, and thus does this sin become peculiarly injurious. He scatters firebrands, arrows, and death, on all around. Persons of all ages and circumstances are exposed to his influence; and unless fortified by grace, will more or less feel its effects. Woe to the young who are brought into contact with the profane; they will be early inured to the language of hell, and lose their reverence for what is sacred; while the more aged, if they are not shocked, and turn away from the despiser, may suffer severely.

Oh! let the swearer bear in mind that he is eminently a partaker of other men's sins; that while he is a smoke in Jehovah's nostrils, he is the pest of society; let him bear in mind that on the great day of final reckoning, he must not only bear the burden of his own sins, but must appear before God as the guilty instrument of corrupting and leading others away from God, and bringing them to that misery which they, with himself, must endure through eternity. May a reverential awe of that great and glorious name, which makes devils tremble, and fills heaven with joy, ever be cherished by us; and let that name be the strong tower to which we run in our hour of danger!

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful,' Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.*

FROM these words we learn that a conscientious regard to all the commandments of God is equivalent to the fear of this glorious name, *the Lord our God*. These are never disunited. As the stream bears the character of the fountain, so he who fears God hates sin. In giving the law from mount Sinai, God prefaced it by a solemn warning of our obligation to listen and obey, saying, 'I am the Lord thy God.' Most glorious and fearful is that name, gloriously does it testify of his character; and fearfully does it bind us to obedience.

'*The Lord*' who made and preserves all things, whose power, wisdom, and bounty have made us what we are, and given us what we possess. The Lord who ruleth over all, guiding and controlling all, who holds the sceptre of universal sovereignty, and demands the obedience of all creation, giving or taking away, casting down or raising up, to whom none may say, 'What dost thou?' The Lord, omnipotent, eternal, unchangeable, all-wise, all-holy, all-merciful, just, and good. The Lord God, who reigns with no delegated power, but in himself is to be feared and worshipped as the great I AM, who was, and is, and is to come; the Lord God who is to summon us into his presence, and judge us at the last day, and whose face is the only brightness of eternity.

'*The Lord our God*,' who has revealed himself to us, and by invitations, and exceeding

great and precious promises, and by the gift of his own Son, and by the institutions of his word, and the pleading of his Spirit, has chosen us as his people, and expressed his desire to be our covenant-God. The Lord our God, to whom we were dedicated in baptism; whom in after days we have chosen as our God, by fleeing to him for comfort in sorrow, by owning him in his sanctuary, and at his table, by laying hold of him as our hope when death seemed approaching, and by still desiring him as our portion beyond the grave, and through an endless eternity.

How glorious then, yet how unutterably fearful is this name, when used by God himself as the sanction of his law. 'I am the Lord thy God,' offered to you, and accepted by you in this character. Fearful to man, even as it is glorious to God. Fearful to those who in wayward folly have outraged his laws. Fearful, peculiarly fearful to those who irreverently sport with this great and dread name—fearful to those who, conscious of guilt, have found no sacrifice for sin. Fearful, in some degree, even to those who though pardoned and striving to obey his commandments, yet feel the deceitfulness of their heart, and the pollution of the whole man.

There is a fear that hath torment; this, however, is not the fear that God requires, or that we must seek to animate us. The fear which is desirable, and with which God seeks to occupy our hearts, is the fear that love begets, the fear which the glorious name of the Lord our God produces. And such also is the obedience that God claims, and that his children are desirous to give; an obedience that is cheerful, an obedience that is universal, an obedience flowing from love, an obedience that has respect to 'all the words of God's law.' Receiving the law at the hands of the Lord their God, as a revelation of his will, an exhibition of his nature, they say, like David, 'the law of the Lord is perfect.' Requiring all that purity of heart which will fit them for the divine presence, and the abodes of bliss, and refusing to allow of less, they say, 'the statutes of the Lord are right.' Little fear of God can be before his eyes, who leaves the written law for the duties of a voluntary humility of his own devising, and no less his who would relax the severity of the law of the Eternal; for while the purity of the law, and the extent of the law sufficeth, it is essential.

But how shall man know the character of God? Whence can he learn the nature of that purity which shall enable him to breathe at ease, in the presence of Jehovah? Whence but from 'the words of this law that are written in this book.'

To all who would seek to have the polluted temple of their own hearts purified and renewed; to have the image of God which has been effaced restored, God saith, 'see that ye make all things according to the pattern shown thee on the mount, observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book?' Who then that truly fears the Lord will venture to relax one iota, or remit one tittle of its words? Who that has experienced the tearful cry of Paul, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' is not filled with the deepest anxiety, lest he carry into eternity a fragment of the carnal heart, lest any root of bitterness remain to trouble his every joy, lest any lust left unmortified should shut him out from the New Jerusalem, into which entereth no unclean thing?

He that feeleth in this way makes conscience of doing all the words of this law, not merely striving to do that which he knows to be the will of God, but observing, searching with anxious care the words of this book, lest he fail of the grace of God, lest he forget, mistake, or not learn the true mind of God.

It is natural that they who do not fear this glorious name, nor feel their obligations to obey this law, should discredit the divine threatenings, and persuade themselves of the improbability of God's wrath overtaking them. But if there be any thing implied in the glorious and fearful name that gives to the law its sanction—if there be any guilt in denying the sovereignty of the Lord our God—if there be any criminality in disowning his propriety in us, disregarding his unmerited mercies, and braving his threatened wrath, then it is plain that a holy God whose very nature is abhorrent to sin, must frown on the guilty. To manifest such a spirit of ingratitude, waywardness, and rebellion in the wilful violation of any of the known commandments of God, were justly to deserve the threatened penalty; 'thy plagues shall be wonderful.' But why speculate on the justice of the doom? Is it not sufficient that the Lord our God hath said it? Is it not enough that we behold its fulfilment in God's visitations on the Jews? Have we not evidence of it in those deaths and woes innumerable which render this world a Bochim? What a warning do God's chosen people against whom the denunciation was uttered, 'thy plagues shall be wonderful,' afford of the rectitude, the purity, the faithfulness of the sin-avenging, the glorious and fearful God. Consider this, all ye that forget God.

## TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Pet. i. 3.

THIS is the name by which, above all others, the apostles loved to designate and describe the God whom they worshipped. By it they expressed, and in it they recognised, the attributes of God which most filled their souls with wonder, love, and praise. As the God of nature they blessed him all-wise, all-powerful, and kind. As the God of providence they adored him, the incomprehensible Being who preserves, and governs all his creatures and all their actions. As the Lord their God they bowed to him, confessing the authority and purity of him who commands. As the eternal God, they felt the glories of his name, and fell prostrate before him. But most of all did they bless, and adore, and magnify him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And why? Because as such he was, and they knew him to be, the Father of mercies, the God of peace, the Author of *salvation*—a pardoning, an accepting, a reconciled God. Glorious and fearful then is his name as the Creator, the Preserver, the Ruler of the universe. Glorious, when in the brightness of his holiness he stood at the gate of Eden, a consuming fire. Glorious, when in unapproachable majesty he stood on the mount that might not be touched, proclaiming the law. But blessed, unutterably blessed, when by signs and wonders he declared himself the God and Father of him who came to preach the acceptable year of the Lord; and when, by a voice from heaven, he announced, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased; hear ye him.' O how blessed to the sin-distracted soul is the name which confirms the errand, the doctrines, the invitations, the promises of the gracious Saviour, the crucified Redeemer, the name that tells us, that in the peace-securing, the peace-offering Jesus we behold the character, the desires, the attitude of the unseen God, against whom we have so deeply sinned, whom we have so grievously offended.

Infinitely adorable is God as thus made known to us, in the person, the character, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. All his character is there disclosed in a brightness at once effulgent and lovely. His abhorrence of sin, his unbending justice, appear more dreadful far in the groans of Gethsemane, and the agonies of Calvary, than amid the thunders of Sinai and the desolations of the flood. God's love, too, ever witnessed and experienced in all his dealings, here spreads out into an ocean of unmeasurable breadth and unfathomable depth.

'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' The mind is overwhelmed. Reason staggers in the vain attempt to fathom that mystery of love. Intelligence higher than ours desires to look into this adorable mystery; and through eternity it will form the song of angels and cherubim, as well as redeemed and ransomed sinners. O! how adorable is that name in all that it reveals and makes known of the divine character—adorable in all the blessings it bespeaks and offers to us—for while it plucks us from everlasting burnings, it awakens hopes, and creates joys, which will rise in infinite succession, exhaustless through eternity.

Most *encouraging* is it to the weary soul to know this name. Who that knows it need stand afar off, or sit down in despair? Be it the case, that under a sense of sin we feel our own just deservings to be wrath for ever. Let it be that stripped of every plea of self-righteousness, that denuded of every hope of earning and meriting pardon, we feel that we are undone and helpless, this name gives encouragement. This is the very state and character of those for whom he came into the world, and for whom he died. 'He came to seek and to save the lost.' To such his doctrine provides a balm of healing power. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' Christ was 'wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities,' and thus is the righteousness of God declared in the remission of sin—thus are we convinced that God *can* be a just God, and yet the Saviour of sinners. But while many are so far encouraged as to say, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;' how many refuse to believe it possible that God will welcome them, how many, who deem it presumptuous in such as they, to expect such favour! But what dishonour is thus put upon God! When God freely sent his Son to die for us, and testified his approval of all that he taught, and did, and suffered, when as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ he invites all, and rejects none, can we doubt that he is willing to save, to save to the uttermost all that come to him through Christ. O what soul is so tempest-tossed as to find no encouragement in this gracious name!

While this name is thus adorable to all; while it is encouraging to those that seek for life and salvation, it is peculiarly endearing to all who can call Christ theirs—who can say, 'our Lord Jesus Christ,' who can worship God as the Father of 'their Lord.' One with Christ, all

the relationships that he holds with his children are theirs. As on the cross he said to the disciple whom he loved, 'Behold thy mother;' and to his mother, 'behold thy son;' so when risen from the grave he said, 'Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' He is not ashamed to call them brethren, he gives them power to become the sons of God. He sends into their hearts the spirit of adoption, he imparts to them the confidence and the love of children, he enables them to cry, 'Abba, Father.' Endearing then is this blessed name, both in the assurance of God's paternal love, and of our filial confidence and delight in him. 'Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.'

A name thus descriptive of the highest, and holiest, and most gracious attributes of God—a name so solemn, and sacred, and endearing—a name on which are based all our hopes for eternity, should not pass from our lips, even in the hour of prayer, but with reverence and awe. Let us never hear it without deep emotion of soul, let us never utter it without the deepest solemnity of mind—let it never be found among the idle words for which we shall be judged at the last. And while in word we profess to bless him, let us not in heart dishonour him as if he were not such as Christ has revealed him, pure and righteous, merciful and true. And O let us seek to get a personal interest in him as *our* Lord, and *our* God, our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus.

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;'* Psal. cxlv. 10 11.

THE context leads us to understand that by the works of the Lord, David means both the works of creation and providence—the objects of nature, and the events of life. The territory and the dominion of God, are intended in the phrase, 'thy kingdom.' In this sense every thing that exists, and every thing that occurs, is the work of the Lord, with the exception of sin, which is rebellion against his authority. 'All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made,' and 'he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' 'Surely as I have thought so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed so shall it stand.'

Of the objects of creation, and the events of providence, the psalmist says, 'all shall praise thee, O Lord.' All shall give occasion to thy saints to bless thee, by affording manifestations of the glory of thy kingdom, and thy power. As by their works we know the character of the disciples of Christ, so by the works of Jehovah we attain some knowledge of his character. 'Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge. The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.

1. The endless diversity of objects and forms in creation, the skilful mechanism of each, and the harmonious adaptation of the whole—the beneficial purposes which every tribe and every object serves—the varied means by which these purposes are fulfilled, yet the evident unity of design that animates, and actuates, and controls the whole, declare in language most expressive, and that cannot be misunderstood by any thinking intelligent mind, the wisdom, and power, and beneficence of the one great and glorious Being whose works they all are. Without rising from his throne, he said and it was done. His voice was heard in all its power by the remotest star, his hand at once moulded the countless worlds, occupying the immensity of space, fashioned the insect's microscopic form, and decked the lily with its evanescent hues. At its birth creation awakened the praises of seraphim, 'They sang together;' and God himself resting from his work, pronounced it 'all very good,' worthy of the hand that made it. Though in blinded ignorance we pass by the glorious works of God without notice and observe them without admiration, or it may be, impiously rail at them as the causes of woe; yet they who study most profoundly, and know most fully the works of God, are ready to confess that were but the jarring discord of sinful thoughts to cease, while all nature raised its voice to tell of the wondrous perfections of its God, the rational offspring of the great Supreme would commingle their melodious strains in celebrating the praises of him who dwells on high. David was filled with awe at the contemplation of God's mighty works, and so is every rightly constituted mind; therefore it is that the psalmist says, 'thy saints shall bless thee.'

2. As in nature so in providence, God's doings and dealings proclaim the glory of his kingdom, and show forth his power. His wisdom planneth all, his eye seeth all, his hand restraineth all, his power brings all to pass. The resistless energy of providence, and the wonderful results effected

by an unseen agency, proclaim that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The ever-watchful care of providence tells us that every thing is under his eye, and that the Lord knoweth them that are his. The revealed aim of providence displays him in the character of the good Shepherd, seeking the lost, or sitting like the refiner of silver, and purging away the dross. In short, the dealings of providence in the present day, like scripture history, unfold and practically illustrate the character of God as revealed in the life and doctrine of Christ. All, says David, 'all shall praise thee.' In the most trivial event there is a purpose, let us not despise it—in the darkest dispensation there is a purpose, let us not murmur or repine; the purpose is love, the end is gracious. Men by reason of blinded ignorance may not see the design of heaven in different occurrences, and they who 'walk by sight,' may rashly and impiously rail at Jehovah's doings, yet all God's works shall one day praise him. 'Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' But even here below 'thy saints shall bless thee.' Remembering all the way by which the Lord has led them—amidst the darkest dispensations and severest trials, strong in faith, a faith resting on promise and experience, they boldly say, 'the day will declare it.' We will still speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power. 'He that spared not his own Son, will he not with him freely give us all things? Shall he not make all things work together for good? In the light of eternity we yet shall see the power and the loving-kindness of God.

A spirit that breathes not thus—a spirit that grumbles at its lot, or carps at any of the ways or doings of the Eternal, what does it but deny the wisdom, the power, the goodness of him who avows these works to be his? What does it? It profanes, it dishonours, it casts reproach on the government of the all-mighty, all-wise, all-merciful God. As we have therefore the volumes of creation and providence spread out before us, and as we read the lessons they are fitted and intended to convey, let us not merely be satisfied with the absence of discontent, and disapproval, or even with the feeling of resignation; let us go farther; let us strive and pray to be enabled to bless the Lord who made and who rules it so. 'Speaking of the glory of his kingdom, and talking of his power.' O! let us see that it is out of the abundance and fulness of the heart that our lips give utterance

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up,'* Psal. xxviii. 5.

THE objects of creation, and the events of providence, God claims and sets forth as 'the operation of his hands.' Let us inquire what is meant by not regarding them.

In general it is the absence or the opposite of that feeling which blesses God in them—the failing to acknowledge the manifestation of his character in them, as worthy of adoration and praise—the not desecrating his attributes of wisdom, power, and goodness, as made known in the works which he hath made, or the things he bringeth to pass. This spirit of disregard manifests itself in various ways; for instance:

By not regarding the outward blessings of nature or providence, as of his operation and bestowment, and so giving to others the praise which is due to God alone.

By understating and despising his gifts as if they were of trivial value, and so failing to give thanks to him who claims our gratitude.

By repining at outward hardships in our lot, murmuring because God has ruled and directed it so, and thus insinuating or affirming that God willingly afflicts the children of men.

By forgetting that they are the works of God, and so abusing them; using God's creatures for the gratification of sinful desires, or turning providences into opportunities of sin, as if we were the lords of creation, and not the mere stewards of God's manifold mercies.

By disregarding the obvious lessons they are meant to teach, such as the vanity of time, the value of eternity, the existence of sin in the earth, God's abhorrence of it, yet his willingness and desire to deliver from its guilt and pollution; or,

By not remembering that however delightful they may be, after all they are but the works of God's hand, the stream that flows from the fountain-head; and so loving the creature more than the Creator, seeking enjoyment in them apart from him, cleaving to them in preference to him, and mourning over the loss of them, as if God who bestows them could not, from his own fullness, supply infinitely more than all creation can yield.

Those who cherish such a spirit, David says, 'God will not build up, but destroy.'

Little do they know of God's character who see in this revealed purpose of heaven a frivolous decree, or one of needless cruelty. God has laid no more on man than what is right. His love,

his desire to save, is not lessened or set aside by this decree. The great Lord who claims propriety in and authority over all, whom no one can resist, or may gainsay, might make the conditions of life what he chose, might have attached the penalty of death to the most unimportant command. But surely he who sent his own Son to die for us, has not laid any needless barrier in our way to glory; on the contrary, he has removed every obstacle, and has smoothed the path that leads to life. This decree of destruction against those who regard not his works, does not belie his willingness to save. It is based upon unalterable truth, would have been borne out though these words had not been recorded, and betrays no unconcern about the welfare of man. By this declared purpose of heaven, God makes known the character of those, with whom alone he can associate in eternity, who alone can find delight in the exercises and enjoyments of heaven: 'Two cannot walk together except they be agreed.' There can be no 'concord betwixt Christ and Belial'—none betwixt the angels of light, and those who love the unfruitful works of darkness. The throne of iniquity can have no fellowship with God.

If then the character of God is manifest in his works—if in them he declares his will—if that will is unalterably the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—if in eternity the same principles will guide his counsels, and direct all his proceedings; and if by disregarding his workings now, we betray a heart at enmity with God, a heart whose desires are at variance with his desires, how obviously true and consistent is the statement that no pitying tenderness—no relentings of compassion, no extent of love, can prevail on an unchangeable and holy God to build up the way of such. If he is 'the Lord,' if his will is paramount, they must be destroyed. As our Father, our Lord, our God, who will demand beyond the grave (as he does now) our love, our reverence, our service, whose presence will constitute the felicity of eternity, how obvious is it, that for God to delight in us, and we to delight in God, our desires must breathe in unison. One of two changes must take place, ere those, who regard not the works of the Lord, can enter the heavenly Zion, or become citizens of the New Jerusalem. Either God must alter his temple, to suit the tastes of those who are to be admitted, his service and rewards to harmonize with the desires of those who are to participate in them—or their desires must be renewed, their hearts changed. Either God must compromise his will, lower his character, and reduce the principles of his government,

to meet the state and the wishes of men—or they must lay aside the old man, and be renewed in the likeness of God. Unison and harmony in character and desire there must be, ere a cheerful obedience can be yielded to God's will, pleasure taken in his service, or delight in his rewards.

And are we then so utterly degraded—has the God of this world so completely blinded us, that we are at a loss in determining on whom the change must pass, or do we for a moment hesitate which state to choose? The principles of the divine government are well and wisely planned; they are like God himself, unchangeable; and he will not, he cannot alter them to suit the views and please the tastes of corrupt, and depraved, and rebellious men. And let it never be forgotten, that if in eternity our hearts harmonize not with this unalterable decree of Jehovah, if the seeds of discontent and rebellion are not uprooted, what can the issue be, but that we shall be crushed before the sceptre of the Lord God omnipotent, that we shall 'be destroyed, and not built up?' In mercy has our God proclaimed this dread truth in the ears of wayward men, that through the atoning blood of Christ they may seek by the Holy Spirit to be born again, and restored to the likeness and image of God. *This* is the accepted time. Tomorrow who can answer for it? The hour of death, how uncertain! The awful truth, 'as the tree falls, so shall it lie,' how plain! May the truth here declared sink deep into our hearts, 'thou shalt *destroy* them, and not build them up.'

#### TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name,'* Psal. cxxxviii. 2.

THE psalmist was a most devout worshipper. Everywhere, and in all circumstances, he recognized the presence, and celebrated the perfections of Jehovah. He saw God's power in the starry firmament, he beheld his goodness in the beauty of lower creation. He heard God's voice in the rolling thunder, he heard him also in the whispering breeze. Every thing, and every place, was full of God. But in no place did he take such delight, as in the place of God's assemblies. And why? Because there his ordinances were dispensed, his presence and blessing promised—and no where else did he find himself brought into such close contact with God. He went to the temple to worship and praise God's name.

But there were two features of the Deity that he here speaks of as specially rising to his view, viz., the loving-kindness, and the truth of God, the mercy that was hid in God, and the mercy that was revealed by God—goodness in possession, and goodness in reserve. He had present experience of God's loving-kindness, and the faithfulness of God was a sufficient guarantee that what regarded futurity, and was the subject of the divine promise, would all be made good in God's appointed time. This personal experience, and his trust in God's truth, led him thus to express himself in the 23d psalm: 'Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies, thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over;' and then with assured confidence he adds, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' Jehovah had made with David an everlasting covenant, and nothing that had gone out of his lips had altered or failed. Every word had been accomplished, every promise had been made good, in spite of all the difficulties that lay in the way, and which appeared to men insuperable. Meditating, in the sanctuary, on the loving-kindness and the truth of the Almighty, he is filled with holy admiration, and he exclaims, 'thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name,' thou hast magnified thy faithfulness in the fulfilment of thy promises to me, more than any other of the glorious perfections by which thou art known.

But this declaration of the psalmist affords room for meditating on the peculiar excellency of the word, for showing that it gives us discoveries of God's nature, and character, and dealings, which we in vain search for any where else. It is peculiarly glorious in his sight, and we may affirm that it is the chief and the leading witness for God. The Almighty has, indeed, never left himself without a witness in this lower world. He has written his name on every created object, and he speaks to us of himself in every passing event: 'The heavens declare the glory of God, the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. And we are evidences to ourselves of God's wisdom, and power, and goodness. So that even when there is no vision, no written record, men are left without excuse: for with such faculties and endowments as they possess, with the law of God written in their hearts, and with such a volume of evidence spread out before the eye, and with reason's finger pointing heavenward, every rational being is inexcusable in not giving God the glory.

And yet reason's light and nature's discoveries are unable to lead us into the mysteries of the Godhead, and not till God himself speaks, and not till he draws aside the curtain, and discloses himself to view, have we clear, and full, and certain, and just notices of the Deity. That God is, that he is great, and wise, and just, and good, we may perchance know from nature's light, but *how* great, *how* wise, *how* just, and *how* good he is, we cannot know till we consult the oracles of the living God. But there is one feature of the divine character that to all eternity must have remained hidden, but for divine revelation, and that is the mercy of God to perishing sinners, the way of deliverance from death and hell by the mediation of the Son of God. It is only in the word of truth that the intimation of a Saviour is given, or could be given, that the method of salvation is unfolded. You may just as hopefully look for light without the luminaries of heaven, for life without creative energy, as the knowledge of a Redeemer without the immediate inspiration of God. The light of nature may discover the disease, but it cannot disclose the remedy; it may show the danger, but it cannot point out the way of escape. But how clearly, and fully, and satisfactorily is this unfolded in the word! It seems to be the grand object of God, from the beginning to the close of the sacred volume, to show how an offended God could be reconciled, a fallen creature restored, a lost sinner saved, a guilty rebel pardoned, and a polluted outcast sanctified. And surely of all intimations to man, this is the most important, and of all the works of God this is the chief; and this being revealed in the word of life, that word acquires a peculiar excellence and glory, and it may justly be said to be magnified by God above all his name. Yes, the wonders of grace far exceed those of nature, and what is discovered of God by revelation is greater far than what is discovered by reason.

But it is not only in its discoveries that God's word excels in glory; but God has employed it as the chief instrument of his power in bringing salvation near to sinners' hearts. He has magnified it above every other means for the subversion of Satan's authority, and for the extension of Christ's kingdom, for the convincing and converting of sinners, for the edifying and building up of saints.' 'The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.' Divine wisdom has not merely employed the *word*, as the means of promoting the salvation of individual sinners, but of extending the triumphs of the cross everywhere. It has been mainly by the word read and preached, that

souls have been aroused, enlightened, sanctified, confirmed, comforted, and ripened for glory; it is by it that grace has commenced, been advanced, and perfected. And it is just by the same instrument, wielded by the Spirit of God, that the wilderness has been gladdened, and by which we hope for the universal triumphs of Christianity. Yet, awful to think, this pearl of great price is despised, this most precious gift of God to man is neglected, disbelieved, contemned, ridiculed, and held up to sport. Awful profanity! Contemner of God, beware! The time is drawing near when by that word thou shalt be tried, and by that word thou shalt be condemned.'

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 TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word,'* Isa. lxvi. 2.

THE Jews in Isaiah's time boasted of the magnificence of their temple, and their temple service. Jehovah here shows them its perfect nothingness in his sight, levels all their lofty ideas, and humbles their vain imaginations. And this he does by reminding them of the glories of his own nature, the splendour of his own abode, ver. 1. and then he points out the character of that worshipper that should find acceptance with him, thus letting them see that his ideas of things were very different from theirs—that while they aimed at ostentatious show, he demanded inward purity—that while they chose as the objects of their regard, the rich and the gay, and the exalted in rank, he chose the man who was poor, and of a contrite spirit, and who trembled at his word. There are three features in this character which is the object of the divine complacency.

1. He is poor. This does not mean poverty of state or condition. There are of those who are covered with rags, that have a worldly, an unsanctified, a proud, an unsubdued heart, notwithstanding their many earthly privations. And there are of the most elevated in this world who feel their nothingness in the sight of God, and are like weaned children. It was not because Lazarus was covered with sores, and clothed in rags, that he is now in Abraham's bosom—nor because Dives was clothed in purple, and fine linen, and fared luxuriously, that he lifts up his eyes in hell. God forbid! It was because the poverty of the one chastened his heart, and brought him nearer to God, and the prosperity of the other lifted up his soul, and alienated his affections from God, that the one

was comforted, and the other tormented. The poverty, that is here spoken of, is spiritual poverty, which is not in the least degree influenced or regulated by outward condition. It arises from a sense of our own weakness, our own dependence, our own insignificance, our own ignorance, our own guilt, our own sinfulness. It implies a feeling sense of our constant need of God's aid both for soul and body, time and eternity, mercy to pardon, and grace to help and sustain. It is such a spirit as the publican manifested, as the apostle Paul discovered, both feeling their own nothingness and sinfulness in the sight of God.

2. He is contrite in spirit. Contrition flows from humility. The person, that is lowly in his own estimation, will be grieved on account of his transgressions; and no other can be so affected. A proud, a self-righteous man, can have no sorrow for sin, because he does not feel that he is a sinner, and can see nothing in himself that ought to awaken distress of mind. Light and darkness are not further removed in nature from each other, than self-righteousness and humility, than pride and contrition. There must be a complete revolution in the views, and sentiments, and feelings of a self-righteous person, before he can mourn for transgression. But he who has obtained the grace of humility, whose eyes have been opened to see the holiness of God, the purity of God's law, the state of his own heart, and the course of his own life, cannot but lie low before God, confess his guilt, and bewail his many, his aggravated offences.

Godly contrition, let it be remembered, is not excited by the opinion of the world, or by any thing that is created. The truly contrite soul sees God, and God alone, in all its offences and transgressions. Against Thee only have I sinned, does it exclaim. It is not a sense of danger, or a fear of punishment, that awakens it, or keeps it alive, but it arises from the fear of offending a Friend, a Benefactor, a Father, a Saviour. It is not the consequences of sin, but sin itself, that a broken heart bewails, not merely outward transgression, but inward corruption—not mere omission, but short-coming in duty, not positive rebellion, but want of heavenly graces, yea, the weakness of grace in the soul—not mere indifference, but the languor of his love, that awakens the grief of his heart. It is because he has broken God's laws, misspent precious time, abused divine mercies, perverted the grace of the gospel, not been duly affected by a Saviour's love, and not lived as a ransomed sinner, as an heir of glory, that a contrite soul mourns.

3. The acceptable worshipper trembles at

God's word. In everything that bears the stamp of divinity, there is something so exalted and full of majesty, that it cannot be regarded by a mind that is rightly constituted without a degree of reverence and holy awe. The stupendous works and the wonderful doings of Jehovah fill us with veneration, and the same will hold true respecting God's word wherever the heart is properly enlightened and suitably impressed. There is such a sublimity, and grandeur, and importance in the revelation of God, that that man who can read or listen to its declarations, without solemnity of feeling, has no genuine conviction of its truth and importance. Were God to speak to us, face to face, and address us in all the splendours of divine majesty, we must be overwhelmed; and yet in his written word God is speaking to us individually, and the only difference betwixt the one mode of communication and the other, is in the manner, not in the matter. In the one he condescends to the infirmity of our nature, and addresses us in a still small voice; while in the other we must be addressed as with the voice of thunder. Now if we had a believing impression that God, in his written word, is addressing *us*, surely our perusal of the word, our listening to the word, would be with reverence and humility, with anxiety and godly fear. And such will be our feelings of mind if we are suitably impressed. Never will a Christian take the word of life into his hand, without reflecting that it is heaven's legacy to *him*; never will he peruse its sacred page without bearing in mind that Jehovah therein addresses *him*; and he will never attend the ministry of the word and the divine ordinances without saying, Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. He reads the word, and he hears the word, with solemnity of mind, because it is not the word of man, but the word of the living God.

And what a rich reward has every such worshipper. To him God looks. Much is included in this declaration and promise—God approves and accepts his sacrifice, God watches and defends him, God delights in him to do him good, and God will abundantly reward and bless him. O! may we ever seek, in all our approaches to God, to be under the influence of his Spirit, that his favour may come to us, in peace and comfort in life, and in those blessings that are to be found at his right hand through eternity.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart,' Mal. ii. 2.*

THE first verse of this chapter shows that this solemn warning and threatening is specially addressed to the priests, the sons of Levi. They were an order of men set apart, and consecrated to the Lord's service. Holiness to the Lord was engraven on their character, their office, their very garments. They were the interpreters of the law, the ambassadors of the Lord of hosts, the instituted medium, through whom, God and the people were to hold intercourse. The most exalted, even kings and princes, had no right in virtue of their rank or authority to intermeddle with their sacred duties, touch the vessels of the sanctuary, or interfere in the administration of divine ordinances. Much therefore depended on the priesthood, for instructing the people, extending and keeping alive the knowledge of God, and things divine. Their sacred office called on them to maintain the purity of God's worship, to promote vital godliness, and to advance the interests of pure and undefiled religion. If *they* became corrupt, if *they* declined in their duty, the consequences were most ruinous. And thus it has happened in every age, that, whenever those who are vested with the sacred office, have lost sight of the awful responsibility of their situation, have become corrupt in principle and practice, it has told most fearfully and fatally on mankind. Society through all its grades have been affected thereby—the interests of religion have declined, and morality has sunk to the lowest ebb. And how can it be otherwise? When the fountain-head, or even the channel, is poisoned, death must be the consequence to many. Now it would appear that the priests, in Malachi's days, not merely neglected to give right instruction in God's covenant, but, like Eli's sons, despised God and caused others to do so too; spake contemptuously of what was most sacred, disregarded the Most High, and thus degraded themselves, and ruined multitudes. We have this account of them in the foregoing chapter. And because they neglected to glorify God's name, they defeated the great end of their institution, made men abhor the offering of the Lord, brought religion into discredit, and thus subjected themselves to the righteous displeasure of God. If they did not hear, and repent and turn unto the Lord, he would send his curse upon

them, curse their every blessing, and visit them with his most dread judgments; yea, says he, I 'have cursed them already,' the sentence has gone forth, and the indignation of the Almighty is kindled against them.

Now what is written here is written as a solemn warning to the ministers of religion in every age. Though the dispensation of the gospel is different from that of the law, yet the work of the ministry now, is similar to that of the priesthood in former times; their charge is the same, their character is the same, their responsibility is the same; and whatever is recorded, whether in the way of warning or encouragement, ministers now-a-days may take it home to themselves. They are the anointed priests of the Lord, the heralds of salvation—the accredited ambassadors of the King of Zion. 'Tis theirs to speak to men in the name of the Lord, to seek the glory of God, and to advance the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. 'Tis theirs to preach the gospel, to watch for souls as those that must give account, to warn every man, and to teach every man—and by word and doctrine, by life and conversation, to win souls to Christ. The 'priest's lips should keep knowledge, and the people should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.' As it is by a preached gospel, by proclaiming a full and a free salvation to perishing sinners, by being examples to the believers in word and conversation, that the end of a gospel ministry is gained; should the Christian minister prove, in any way, unfaithful to God, or to men's consciences, the injury that is done to the cause of truth, and to precious souls, is incalculable. Should he by any means corrupt the seed of the word, and poison the water of life, should he give false or garbled views of divine truth, should he withhold or keep out of sight any doctrine or precept that is essential to salvation—should he cover the wound, or cure it slightly, should he preach, for the doctrines of God, the commandments of men, or should he entertain perishing sinners with dry philosophical discussions, or glowing descriptions of the beauties of virtue, instead of the spirit-stirring, the heart-affecting lessons drawn, from mount Sinai, or Calvary's hill, he would prove himself to be an unfaithful steward. Or should the trumpet give an uncertain sound, or nothing but a cold, barren, lifeless orthodoxy issue from the pulpit, or should the messenger of the Lord be characterized, by carnality and crime, by carelessness and indifference, his life being inconsistent with his office, and giving the lie to the doctrine which he proclaims,—then the effect on men's souls is

ruinous. What I have just read I believe to be perfectly true, 'that the inconsistencies of the popish priesthood, has made Italy a land of infidels—the myriads of souls which they have murdered cannot be reckoned.' O! let the protestant ministry tremble at falling into similar condemnation. 'Woe to the shepherds that feed themselves, but feed not the flock.' Read the denunciations contained in Ezek. chap. iii. 18; xxxiv. 1, &c. 'What guilt so awful as that of a faithless pastor, what character so despicable, what fate so fearful! His conduct tells upon thousands, and upon generations yet unborn. O! it is not limited to time, it extends to an endless unbounded eternity.

But though priests may suffer, people shall not escape—though carelessness, and faithlessness, and profligacy may be the reproach of shepherds, and the calamity of the flock, yet it will not save or excuse the flock. People need not perish, though their teachers do. In this land particularly, men have the word; it is not buried, it is not locked up; and they have reason, and understanding, and the power of judging; therefore whatever guilt may be contracted by pastors, and whatever delusion may have been practised by them, or whatever bad effects may have been induced by ministerial faithlessness and inconsistency, still this will not excuse the hearers of the word. Pastors may perish, but the flock shall suffer along with them. When the curse has got its commission from God it shall seize upon both, and consume both.

#### TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not,' 1 Sam. iii. 13.*

THE sin of which the sons of Eli, who belonged to the priesthood, were guilty, was one of a peculiarly daring, self-willed, and carnal nature. It was a profanation of those sacrifices of blood that were presented unto the Lord, and was aggravated by the consideration that those sacrifices were emblems and typical representations of a coming Saviour, and of his one sacrifice for sin. It is the same sin as that spoken of in Heb. x. 29. They 'trode under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.' Eli regarded it in this light when he said, 'If a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him;' plainly intimating that he

knew it to be that sin, of which the apostle afterwards wrote, when he said, 'There is a sin unto death, I do not say he shall pray for it.' Theirs was a sin without remedy, as it was a profanation of the only remedy for sin. They must die 'without mercy,' and not even a father's voice could be raised to heaven for them, if they continued to defile and pollute the only channel through which mercy could flow. All sin renders the perpetrator of it vile, but this sin most peculiarly so. All men who make themselves vile by defacing the image of God shall fall beneath the divine curse; but doubly awful shall that curse be, against those who render the priestly office vile in their persons. Their punishment is just, for their iniquity is peculiarly aggravated. 'I have sworn,' says Jehovah, 'that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.' But this verse leads us to consider the judgment brought on Eli, because of his being a partaker in the sin of his sons.

We cannot doubt, from the character of Eli, that in early youth he had instructed his children in their duty to God, and that he set them an example of what was right. It was not therefore through ignorance that they perverted the instituted worship of God. His language in the foregoing chapter intimates, that he prayed for them also, and likely cherished the hope that his prayers would be answered. He did not altogether wink at their sin, he did not think lightly of it, he did not give countenance to it. On the contrary he was greatly grieved by it, tenderly, yet solemnly warned them of its magnitude and inevitable consequence. Would that every professing Christian parent could truly say as much, in regard to those of their children who profane the name of God! But though sorrow of heart, like Eli's, delivered Lot from the charge of partaking in the sin of Sodom, yet it did not deliver Eli from the guilt of his sons. He was responsible for their sin, because, as their father, he had authority and power, and was bound to restrain their profanity. It is the simplest and most obviously just conclusion, that a man is guilty of that crime, which he has been commanded, delegated, and clothed with power to prevent, yet fails to do so. This was Eli's case, this was Eli's sin. He knew his sons' profanity, he knew that they were guilty of most heinous transgression; he knew, that as their father he was required, and had authority 'to restrain them,' yet from a foolish tenderness of heart, he would not 'frown upon them,' (so the word may be rendered). He speaks to them, he reasons with them, but he will not command them, like Abraham; he

will not exercise a father's authority, an authority with which God had invested him, and for the exercise of which he must give an account.

Nature teaches us the parent's duty in controlling his offspring. The frailty of infancy, the ready submissiveness and docility of the youthful mind, declare the responsibility of the parent. Revelation declares that God has clothed parents with this power, and implanted this docility in the young mind, in order to enable godly parents to restrain their children. And because of this the constitution of our nature, he commands children to obey their parents, and parents to rule well their household, for the glory of his name, 'These words which I command thee this day, saith the Lord, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them unto thy children,' &c., Deut. vi. 6, 7. Personal religion pure as Eli's is not enough; ardent prayer and godly example, like that of Eli's, is not enough; the spiritual welfare of our families must be endeavoured after, by all means diligently, constantly, painfully, and with heartfelt anxiety, and the command of authority must follow the request of tenderness. Not guiltless surely would that mother be, who, rather than *restrain* the wayward fancy of her infant, would allow it to sport beside the devouring fire; and not less guiltless, if in the knowledge of determined sin in his child, a father refuses to employ the authority with which God has clothed him; guilty first of disobedience to the command of God, and guilty also of his children's sin, inasmuch as he did not what in him lay to prevent it. I know not how to characterize the *cruel* tenderness, the *hard-hearted* softness, of those parents, who by sinful indulgence will endanger the loss of their children's souls, and submit to see and hear the name of God dishonoured by those, whom they might, and could, and ought to have restrained. If such they be who read these lines, let them pause and solve this question: 'Is it thus with you, because you are indifferent about the salvation of your children's souls, and care not whether in eternity they stand on the right hand of God, or depart to endless woe? Is it thus with you, because you are indifferent about the honour of God, and think their sin but trifling? or is it thus with you, because you have not realized the certainty of judgment, the magnitude of eternity, or the character of God as an all-seeing and sin-detesting Judge?' If not from one or other of these causes, whence does your neglect proceed? If you knew the blackness of sin, and realized the dread eternity, and truly loved your children, you would not, you could not be slow

in exercising your authority to restrain their waywardness, and bring them back from their folly. Without much encouragement, and even against hope, you would leave no means untried. But where is your excuse if it appear from scripture, and be confirmed by all experience, that the promise of success is almost commensurate with the command to obey?

If then as parents you disown the relationship subsisting betwixt you and your children, treating them as you should not treat a stranger, O! take heed that your Father in heaven disown not you; lest it happen to you according to the true saying, 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.' Say not in regard to your children, 'Am I their keeper?' Nature and scripture acquaint you that such is your office. Fear then lest God suddenly coming to judge you, say, 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest no longer be steward.'

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TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually,'* Job i. 5.

THE instinct of nature, the voice of reason, and the revelation of God, all combine in affirming, as a solemn duty, the constant, habitual, and earnest endeavouring after the welfare of those to whom we stand related as parents and guardians. And while to infidels it might be necessary to show the reality of an after existence, and its superior value to the life that now is, it is a plain and self-evident proposition to all, who acknowledge the truths of revelation, that if tender, and watchful, and self-denying endeavours after our children's outward prosperity be laudable, much more when these regard their spiritual, their eternal well-being. Whatever men's actual practice may be, this must be their conviction; for just as much does the one exceed the other, as the soul is preferable to the body, as eternity is longer than time, and the enjoyment of God is a higher portion than all the enjoyments of wealth, or honour, or scientific lore. The tender care of parents, especially as regards the souls of their children, is a duty strongly pointed out in the word of God. In the catalogue of crimes by which those are characterised who have reached the lowest depths of depravity,

the apostle assigns a prominent place to the want of natural affection. Jeremiah, weeping over the defections and the dire calamities of Israel, complains that the mothers of Jerusalem were deprived of natural affection. 'Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones, but the daughter of my people is become cruel like the ostriches in the wilderness.' And, among the keenest reproaches that can sting the heart of a neglectful mother is found in the inquiry: 'Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?' And of all the strong, endearing, and expressive emblems by which the Almighty points out the tenderness, the constancy, the steadfastness of his love to us, the most affecting and interesting is that, which exhibits him as our Father in heaven, and enables us as children with confidence to approach him as a Father, all-wise, all-merciful, all-gracious, all-powerful. Yes, if there be any comfort in the emblem and promise of adoption, the duty of parents is abundantly plain.

As an illustration, and example of parental care, the conduct of Job is highly deserving of attention and imitation. Little need be said to recommend it; it finds an echo and response in every breast. Even those who live most neglectful of the duty, here set forth, cannot withhold the approval of conscience, as they read this verse. The infidel himself, who may smile at all religion as a dream, is constrained to acknowledge, that believing, as Job did, in the existence of a sin-hating God, and in the importance and efficacy of sacrifice as a mean of atonement, he had been a heartless parent indeed, had shown himself a worthless character, had he manifested indifference to his children, or failed to propitiate the Deity in their behalf. In strong and happy contrast, is his conduct, with that of Eli, which last evening engaged our attention. He knew not of any open profanation of God's name with which his sons could be charged (which was not the case with Eli), but yet his affectionate heart yearns for them, and he trembles, lest the pure eye of God should have seen that, within them, which had not discovered its disformity to *his* eye, or to the eye of man. 'It may be,' he did not know that it was so: 'It may be,' he knew the frailty of man, the corruption of the human heart, and he was filled with parental anxiety, lest any of his children should dishonour the God whom he loved, lest any of them should sin, and curse God, and thus perish eternally. 'It may be,' and therefore he will use the appointed means. He did so, 'when the days

of feasting were gone about.' But it was a habitual exercise with him, to sanctify and offer burnt-offerings for all, and each of them, and that 'continually.'

'It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.' What parent may not make this language of Job his own? What parent may not feel similar anxiety and fear, to that which agitated and possessed Job's heart? O! how few are blessed in the remembrance that by early culture, and early promise, it is only a 'may be,' or only a question, if they have done so 'in their heart.' But how few have been under the influence of such fear, have been concerned about the atonement for their children's sin, or sincere repentance being awakened in their hearts. Will it content or justify the mother, that she does not actually *know* that her child has fallen from yonder cliff. If she knew that 'it may be' so—will she sit still with folded arms till she learn that it *is* so? And can a godly parent, who himself has felt the temptations and snares of youth, with indifference allow his child to wander unwarned and unwatched amidst the flowers which the destroyer scatters in the path of ruin. 'It may be that my sons have sinned,' is enough at any time to fill him with anxiety, who knows the nature and the consequences of sin, enough to make him exert all his parental authority to bring his children to the only sacrifice that can cleanse the soul from sin.

Mark then the conduct of Job and follow in his steps. 'Send' to them not only in the day of sickness, but after feasting, and in the midst of gladness. 'Send' to them, making your anxiety for their souls a matter of more than casual or chance conversation—'Send' to them, even when they have passed the days of boyhood, and dwell in homes of their own—'send' to them that they may sanctify themselves, so training them, that your message will not be set aside—'send' to them, not only to inform them that you pray for them, but also that you desire them to pray with you. And while thus you 'send,' let your personal ardour and sincerity manifest itself like Job's. 'He rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all.' Let your dread of sin be seen, but no less plainly your persuasion of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. And let your conduct show that yours is no formal duty, but the deed of one, who runs *so* as to obtain, who worships that he may accepted, who sends on such an errand, in order, that at the bar of God he may be able to say, 'Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given.'

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

'O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens,' Psal. viii. 1.

To little purpose, indeed, have we now been so long contemplating the glorious and fearful name of the great God—his works and his ways, if we have not caught one spark of the holy fire that glows in these words of David, or do not tremble at the thought of dishonouring or casting reproach on such an Almighty and exalted Being. A surer evidence of a carnal mind cannot be found, than, that in the contemplation of his character and perfections, we still see no loveliness in him, no cause of adoring praise, none of lowly reverence and solemn awe; unless indeed it be, that, though convinced and intellectually enlightened, no chord of praise responds in the deadened feelings of our hard and unsanctified hearts. If thus adorable in all his names and attributes, not only is the *profanation* of Jehovah's name forbidden, but the same argument demands as loudly that we yield him praise and glory. Not enough is it, that in word and outward action we refrain from the irreverence of those things whereby he makes himself known to us—not enough that, in heart also we be conscious of no irreverence, or even indifference, but love and admiration should burn in our hearts, and the song of ardent praise should proceed from our lips. No one can really behold the beauty of the Lord without rapture; can have a just apprehension of the divine perfections, without being filled with admiration. As light is suited to the eye—as melody delights the ear, so the contemplation of the great, and glorious, and gracious Jehovah entrances the soul. It glows, it burns with joy unutterable, it seeks relief in praise; but language fails, and thought is feeble, and after summing up all its powers, and making every effort, the enraptured soul can but say, 'How excellent is thy name, O Lord, in all the earth, thou hast set thy glory above the heavens.' This is the language of all who have any just ideas of the divine perfections, on contemplating these, as revealed in God's works, and in his word. But O what new, what enlarged, what interesting and affecting themes of praise crowd in upon the heart of him who, looking upwards, can on good grounds say of this great Almighty Being, *my* Lord and *my* God, *my* Father in heaven—*my* reconciled Father—the God and Father of *my* Lord Jesus Christ. Thus to feel is to have kindled within us the fire of divine love, is to have awakened the first note of the melodies of heaven, is to know somewhat

of that joy which fills the courts of the upper sanctuary with adoring and eternal praise.

When David beheld the excellency of Jehovah's name as that was written in legible characters on every object of nature, and every event in providence, displayed in all the earth, and to the utmost verge of God's dominions—when he beheld its excellency, as discovered in the immensity and magnificence of creation, as manifested in his guiding the sun in the firmament, and sealing up the stars, as ruling over all, and swaying the sceptre of the universe, he might well exclaim in wonder and amazement, 'What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldst visit him?' Contemplating the divine greatness, David and every devout soul is led to think on his own worthlessness and insignificance—and reflecting on his own nothingness, he cannot but be astonished at God's unbounded condescension; and it is in this condescension that to man his excellency appears most conspicuous and wonderful. In this his love is made manifest, and in this, there is a mystery and depth of love that angels do desire, and may through eternity desire to look into and explore.

How excellent is thy name! Could heart now feel or tongue express the *full* measure of that excellence, it could not, in that case, be what God declares it *will* be—the source of endless praise. Much as the ransomed soul now feels; strong, and ardent, and ecstatic, as is its song of praise—the excellency of the divine glory that we have seen is as nothing, when compared with that which still remains unknown. Now we see but darkly, and all that we learn of the excellency of God's name is, that it 'passeth understanding.' But even the full vision of the upper sanctuary will not discover all its beauty, the unclouded vision of souls made perfect, as they gaze through eternity, will not fully descry his glory: nor shall ransomed sinners find one moment, through eternity, without cause to veil their faces before Jehovah's brightness, as it advances in effulgence.

Let us then, while we tarry here below, attune our hearts to those praises which we hope to sing, in higher strains, in the heavenly world. Here, in the lisping accents of the infancy of grace, let us begin the hymn of glory. Moreover let us strive and pray, that, as there is no corner of the earth, where men may not read the excellency of Jehovah's name, so in every kindred, and in every tongue this song may echo through 'all the earth;' that as God's glory covers all the earth, and reacheth even above the heavens, so it may be recognized and confessed by men, when, to confess his name, is the salvation of the soul. But

while nature's light everywhere discloses a present Deity, and bespeaks the excellency of God's great name—let our leading prayer ever be that the name of our Emmanuel, which above all is excellent, and, to know which in truth, is life eternal, be made known, wide as earth's surface, that men may everywhere worship the Son, and give him glory as they honour the Father—that his name may be glorious from the rising to the setting sun.

O! that grace from above were so largely and continuously imparted to our souls, that, in our spirit and lives, nought were found to contradict this the song of our lips; but that rather, by our trust, and hope, and cheerful acquiescence in the Lord's dealings, our light might so shine forth, that others might catch our spirit, and learn from our lips this song, and unite with us, in glorifying our most exalted and all-glorious Father, our most gracious and adorable Redeemer!

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#### THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether,'* Psal. cxxxix. 4.

FOR us to realize the truth contained in these words, is to possess a powerfully constraining motive against all profanity in word or action. We say action, because our life and manner speak as plainly and distinctly as our tongue; and it may be said as truly, that 'out of the abundance of the heart' the hand moveth, as 'the mouth speaketh.' But let us view these words specially in reference to the tongue.

Of all sins men think most lightly of the sins of the tongue. It is the common excuse of the profane swearer, that his oaths and profanity are mere words, an empty breath, a meaningless sound, to which his heart responds not; and hence he infers that God takes no cognizance of them, neither are they offensive to him. To such it might be sufficient to reply that the very letter of the law describes their very case; and while it doubtless extends to the feeling of the heart, it expressly, and in so many words declares, 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;' shalt not use it but for a good and holy purpose; nothing whereby Jehovah has made himself known, shall by thee be treated with irreverence; 'not a word in thy tongue' expressive of God's names, titles, or attributes, shall by thee be regarded as idle and meaningless. This plainly implies that the glorious and fearful name of God

is profaned when not used with that reverence and solemn awe which so well becometh him.

But while this may be enough in reply to those who make such vain excuses, it may be well to deepen our convictions as a preventative from a sin into which many are so prone to fall, and as an incentive to a duty which we are too ready to forget,—the sin of speaking lightly of Jehovah and his ways, the duty of speaking reverently of him, and all that he does. For this purpose observe:—

1. That the tongue when it speaks thoughtlessly, and gives utterance to idle words, is the great mean by which profanity is disseminated.

The outward senses are the appointed means of communication betwixt man and man, and they are adapted to convey to the mind those influential impressions of good or evil which form the character and dispositions of the heart. We all know the power of language in awakening the dormant feelings of the heart. Insulting language, or jeering words, even when known to be spoken in jest, raise a storm of passion in the most placid breast, which the strongest efforts of self-control can scarcely restrain. The remembrance of our youthful days may teach us that the deepest principle will not altogether guard the young—that by hearing the idle or ribbald oath of the profane, their purity of language will be endangered. The experience of every age testifies aloud, that the children, the associates, or the servants of the profane talker are in peculiar danger of corruption. His words cannot be listened to with impunity—they are like sparks of fire falling on the withered herbage; like the miasmata of an infectious pestilence, the most healthful cannot resist the subtle poison. But this is not all; not only the words of profanity on the lips of others, but especially in our own, fan the flame within us. He whose feelings have scarce been moved by the tale of wrongs which another told, no sooner begins to set it forth himself than his bosom swells with deep emotion; and he, whose sense of duty is scarcely lessened by the levity with which another speaks of it, no sooner himself begins to speak of it in a slighting tone, than his heart assumes the character of his voice. So it is emphatically with all profanity. To the very last it is repulsive in the mouth of another, but in our own we lose sight of its blackness. Like deformity, we only see its hideous aspect in another's face or form, but forget or excuse it in our own. That profanity of language is thus the fruitful seed of profanity of heart, is obvious from the diligence and manner of Satan's tempting us to its commission. He tempts us not when alone merely, but

chiefly, and more powerfully, when in company with others; he tempts us to sow the seed when we stand upon ground where it can take root; his object being to dishonour God, and, through us, to lead others on to sin, and thus to dis sever us from God. 'Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth. The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell.' This being the case, who will say that God does not take cognizance of our idle words, or will not hold those guilty who under any pretence take his name in vain.

2. This verse leads us also to note the great means or motive that will restrain impiety and profanity of language. When we bow the knee in prayer, or realize the presence of God, we feel no inclination to give utterance to irreverent words. A believing and quick sense of the divine presence controls our lips by solemnizing our hearts. Levity of thought being checked, levity of speech is restrained—the one gone, the other is absent—the fountain-head being dried up, the stream ceases to flow. Let us then realize the solemn truth, that 'there is not a word in our tongue, but, lo, he knoweth it altogether;' not only knoweth it, but taketh notice of it, recordeth it in the book of his remembrance, and is much and grievously offended with it. Let us realize the presence of God in every company, and in every place, and in every possible situation—realize it as fully as we do in the hour of prayer, or in the house of God, or at the communion table—realize it as fully as when standing by the death-bed of a Christian friend, or ourselves placed on that couch whence we shall never rise—let eternity rise to view, and we will feel no more inclined to the utterance of profane words in the ordinary scenes of life than we do on occasions such as these.

Let our deep and ever-present conviction be, 'Thou, Lord, seest me.' 'The Lord hears, and hearkens;' hears as truly and fully my idle words as my praying voice. And let us live under the deep and abiding conviction, and dread remembrance, that since the most idle and vain word may be to ourselves, or others, the seed of profanity, there is not an idle word for which we shall not have to give an account at the last day. Fearful will be their doom, and bitter their agony of soul, whose idle words have unintentionally spread around them the contagious pestilence of profanity, infecting as with leprosy all brought into contact with them, their children, domestics, associates, and friends. O! that our conversation were

always 'seasoned with salt,' and savoured of grace! then the effect would be blessed. Instead of corrupting it would spread around us the benign influences of piety, peace, good-will, and comfort—and thus our tongue would become the instrument of good, and by our 'words we should be justified.'

### THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips,' Psal. cxli. 3.

UNDER a deep conviction of the dangers which we ourselves have encountered from the profane language and vain words of others—under a lively impression of the power of mere words to awaken emotions in the heart, and sensible at once of our own corruption, and the corruptibility of others, how fearful is the responsibility under which we lie to regulate our words aright; how truly righteous is our God in declaring that for every idle word we must render an account; and how fervently will every one, who desires the glory of God, and the good of souls, and his own peace and purity, entreat, with the psalmist, that the Lord would 'set a watch before his mouth, and keep the door of his lips.'

Out of the heart proceed blasphemies, and every evil and base thing that degrades humanity. This is the well-spring of all that is outwardly sinful, the fountain whence issue irreverence, and corrupt, and corrupting, and impious words. What watchfulness, then, should characterise us, in regard both to the inward and the outward man; and if we would have the life holy, and the tongue kept under restraint, let us 'keep the heart with all diligence.' In us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing; the carnal mind is enmity against God. He is not in all the thoughts of the natural man. And while we live on earth, we, alas! are more or less burdened with this fleshly tabernacle; even God's people are sensible that much of the old man remaineth in them. What a warfare do we maintain against the flesh! what efforts do we ceaselessly require to put forth, in order to restrain our murmuring, or discontented, or repining thoughts! what painful endeavours to banish levity, and awaken reverential feelings, even at the hour of prayer! and oh, how much more amid the business or pleasures of ordinary and every day life! Ever and anon we feel sinful thoughts of God rising to our lips, light thoughts of him imparting a levity to our words; as the God of creation, how often do

we dishonour him in his works; as the God of Providence, by impatient, discontented, and fretful feelings and thoughts of his dealings; as the God of ordinances, by the irreverent or careless use of them, or by the neglect of them; as the God of the Bible, by our slighting it, carping at its truths, or despising its teaching. In one or other, or all of these ways, do we profane the glorious attributes which he hath revealed and made known; questioning his wisdom, doubting his love, braving his omnipotence, not duly impressed with the conviction of his omnipresence, his holiness, his wisdom, his tender mercy. This very day, how often have not merely vain and sinful thoughts intruded, and been cherished in our minds; but how often have we spoken unadvisedly with our lips, uttering that which was not right of God, that which was dishonouring and displeasing to him; and, dread thought! who can tell what fruits may be found at the harvest of eternity, as the growth of those seeds of profanity which we have thus recklessly scattered abroad. And now that we are convinced of our sin, who can answer for another day? who can say that he will at all times feel, as perchance he may do at this moment; feel so reverently, that his thoughts will impart a reverential character to all his words? 'The tongue can *no man* tame, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.' But let us not make our frailty an excuse for sin, for divine grace can effect what man cannot do. 'My grace is sufficient for you,' is the promise of God. He never said to any, Seek my face in vain. If not straitened in ourselves, we are not straitened in God. If we will but truly pray, 'Set thou, O Lord, a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips;' and combining watchfulness with prayer, and firm purpose of soul with steadfast reliance on God's promised grace, we shall soon learn, and be able to make the apostle's song our own: 'Most gladly, then, will I glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; I take pleasure in infirmities, for when I am weak, then am I strong.'

'Set a watch, O Lord,' lest, through our often infirmities, our unworthy, or fretful, or irreverent thoughts of thee should become the means of awakening or confirming sinful thoughts in the corruptible hearts of others. 'Set a watch, O Lord,' lest, through our hasty and inadvertent words, these thine enemies, who watch for our halting, should find occasion to mock the name of thy professing people. 'Set a watch, O Lord,' lest, by our use of irreverent words, we come to indulge in irreverent thoughts, and imperceptibly slide into greater and increasing profanity. 'Set

a watch, O Lord,' lest thine own holy name be dishonoured, and lightly esteemed on earth. 'So keep the door of our lips,' that no profanity may ever at any time, or in any place, or in any company, proceed from them. 'So keep the door' from which our words flow out, that nothing but praise may ever issue thence. 'So keep the door,' that profanity and vanity shall never reach even the lip. So watch, and keep us by thine omnipotent and ever present grace, that we shall fulfil the great object of our being, by glorifying thee, and this not of constraint, but willingly and cheerfully; that while we thus glorify and praise thee,

we may also enjoy thee for ever! So fill our hearts with a sense of the glories of thy name, that there shall be no room for one indifferent, far less irreverent, thought of thee. So unvail thyself to us, that from the overflowings of love, as well as the tremblings of holy fear, the thought of thee shall never leave us, and in our gayest moments, we still may live as in the solemnities of thy presence, and amid the untold riches of thy grace! Lord, atune our hearts and lips, for those triumphant songs on which seraphs and saints have entered, and in which we hope ere long to engage!

## J U L Y.

### FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God,' &c., Exod. xx. 8—10.*

THE divine institution of the sabbath throws around the subject a sacredness which is fitted deeply to awe the minds of all those who have any respect for God's authority. Who can think lightly or speak irreverently of that day, which is called by Jehovah himself 'the sabbath of the Lord thy God.' While we may canvass with perfect freedom, the institutions of men, however hallowed by ancient usage in the church, or approved by the experience of God's people, it is very different when we venture to sit in judgment on the ways and purposes and institutions of the Almighty, the Eternal, the all-wise God. Here a holy reverence and awe becomes us; here we must be still and know that Jehovah is God; when he speaks we must be silent. The very words with which the decalogue is introduced, and prefaced, are fitted to awe and solemnize the mind, in regard to every injunction: 'The Lord spake all these words.' The Lord whom we profess to honour and adore, the Lord in whom we live and move, the Lord who is to judge us at the last day—He spake them. Applying this consideration to this fourth commandment, who will venture to question God's right, to appoint such set times as he sees fit for his own service; and who will deny his wisdom, in appointing a weekly sabbath, a seventh day of hallowed rest?

The sabbath being signalized by the express appointment of the divine Lawgiver, we next inquire into the perpetual obligation of this sacred day. And this appears from the manner in which the Lord gave the commandment to the Jews. While the ceremonial law, which was typical of the coming Saviour, and the civil or national code, which was to be the guide of the Jews in secular matters, were conveyed to them by the lips of Moses; the ten commandments were given in a separate and more solemn form. These Jehovah wrote on two tables of stone, to point out their perpetuity—they were written with the finger of God, to signify their vast comparative importance—they were written on both sides, on the one side and on the other, to signify that none should add to, or take away from them.

Of these ten commandments, this which we are now considering is one. It holds no subordinate place in the decalogue. It is not distinguished from the rest of the commandments, unless it be by the emphatic warning, 'Remember'—by the more full and minute detail of its requirements, and the reiteration of its injunctions. And the solemnity of its closing appeal to obedience, is not surpassed by that which is annexed to any of the rest. Though there were then no other mention of the sabbath in scripture, though this had been its first and its only institution, he would be a bold man indeed, who in virtue of his own inclination, or pretended wisdom, would dare to erase that which the finger of God has engraven on a table of stone, or should alter the injunction, and make it run thus: 'Forget the sabbath-day, and do

not keep it holy, *seven* days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; for there is no day a holy sabbath unto the Lord thy God! Why was it that God wrote this commandment on the table of stone, and placed it among these other precepts, which are universally allowed to be purely moral, and of perpetual obligation, and laid it up in the ark of the testimony, if it was not a part of the moral law? Why had it not its place amid the ceremonial and national institutes which God gave the Jews, if it was merely ceremonial? The inference is plain, it was not a mere Jewish enactment, but a command obligatory on all mankind, in all ages, and under every dispensation, because a command moral like the others.

There are various other considerations which set forth the perpetuity of the sabbath, viz., 1. Its institution from the foundation of the world, Gen. ii. 1—3. 2. Its aptitude to the physical condition of man and beast. 3. God's requiring the Gentile and the stranger to yield obedience, as well as the Jew. 4. The universal practice of all Christendom, from the days of Christ to the present time; and, 5. The reasons by which God enforces it, all of perpetual and universal obligation, if they have or ever had any bearing on the subject at all. And in addition to these, the very words of the commandment impress most powerfully its obligation on our minds. 'Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.' There is something peculiarly emphatic in the admonition, Remember. It is the only commandment that has this memento attached to it; as if Jehovah provided against that proneness in man to forget its obligation, divert it from the purpose for which it was designed, and appropriate it to his own secularities. Remember the sabbath, for you are apt to forget it—Remember it, for it is due to me, the Lord your God—Remember it, for I have blessed it, and it will prove a day of spiritual growth and gladness—Remember it, so that all your secular work may be ended, before its arrival—Remember it, throughout all its hours, so that it may be kept holy—Remember its author, its requirements, its advantages, its propriety—Remember it when it is past, to recall its lessons, to fulfil its vows, to avoid the sins then confessed and wept over, and to exercise the grace then received—Remember it; it is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, the memento of creation, the memorial of redemption, the type of that rest on which Jesus entered when his work here below was finished—Remember I have appointed, and you have need of its holy rest, need of it for your bodies, especial need of it for your ever-during spirits.

The duty here set forth admits of a brief but comprehensive definition. It demands that one whole day in seven be withdrawn from the ordinary avocations of life, and devoted to the Lord, to his worship and service. The law of morality binds us to holiness of life every day, and forbids the immoderate pursuit of worldly business and carnal pleasure at all times. If therefore this commandment does not free us from such obligation on the six days of the week, it requires a special and peculiar sanctity on the sabbath.

The practice of ancient times explains what is meant by sanctifying any thing, or keeping it holy to God. Persons, and places, and vessels were so sanctified under the law, *i. e.*, they were set apart from ordinary purposes, and were exclusively devoted to the service of God. These were profaned, not only by being used for sinful purposes, but also by being used as common—not only by being used for ordinary purposes, but by not being used in the service of God. So it is with the sabbath: we profane it, when we make its rest an opportunity for sin, when we do not rest from ordinary duties or pleasures, however lawful on other days; we profane it also when by lengthened slumbers or lazy apathy, we loiter out the day in idleness, and we profane it when God is not sought and worshipped, and our souls are not cared for in the ordinary institutions of his grace, in the sanctuary, the family, and the closet.

There is an exception to the rest and pious-occupation to which we are summoned on the sabbath, viz., the portion of time required for the works of necessity and mercy. Though these works may interrupt our rest, yet they are to be performed as duties. Christ has taught us this; but let us not forget that he has taught it not as an improvement upon the fourth commandment, but as implied and required by God, under the Jewish dispensation.

Alas! alas! for fallen man, that he has so lost all relish for the presence and the service of his God—that he calls the Sabbath a weariness, and speaks of its rest as burdensome. Tremble, ye who feel in your hearts this enmity against God. Tremble for eternity, for how shall two walk together, except they be agreed. Nor think that because the dispensation of grace has superseded that of the law, the privilege of believers consists in devoting fewer of its precious hours to God, and giving more of them to the world. God forbid that Christ, who came to bring us back to God, should have abridged, by one hour, that day of hallowed rest, that sabbath which God has

blessed, and continues to bless. It is but a short season that we sit by the pools of Elim, undisturbed by the cares and vexations of time. God forbid that it should be abridged. We need it all and would sue for more—were it not that He who knows our frame had said, 'Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work.' The sabbath is our jubilee, our blessed privilege, a happy foretaste of our joy, when the last remnant of the curse shall have passed away; for it is a respite from the curse, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread!' Oh that *on it* and *by it* we may be ripened and prepared for the eternal sabbath!

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#### FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God,'* Heb. iv. 9.

THE whole of the dispensation prior to and under the law, was prefigurative of the Christian. By the sensible emblems of the one, the spiritual nature of the other was pointed out; and all the institutions and typical observances of the Jewish economy were designed to shadow forth and prepare men's minds for the purer and brighter state of things under the gospel. The words offered for our meditation, are a conclusion drawn from some preceding arguments, to prove that the sabbatical rest appointed on the seventh day, when God ceased from his work of creation—as also the rest of the promised land of Canaan, were both the one and the other types and figures of another and a better rest, into which all real Christians should be admitted. The seventh day of rest was emblematical of the eternal sabbath—and the land of Canaan was prefigurative of the heavenly Canaan. The Israelites had enjoyed their sabbaths, their privileges, their rest in Canaan, still led to anticipate something far more glorious and exalted. If Joshua had given Israel all the rest that God intended, when he brought them into Canaan, would he have spoken of another day and another country—would the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, many ages after their settlement in the land of promise, and when they were in the height of their prosperity, have spoken of another sabbatism, of another country, had there not been another and better rest; had there not been another and a better country awaiting true believers, a sabbath that was everlasting; a country that was eternally blessed?

In the morning we were led to reflect on the fourth commandment, and the holy observance

that it claims; let us this evening follow up our reflections. What soul that is capable of thinking and judging correctly, can fail to be thankful that God has so imperatively instituted a day of hallowed rest? It has been appointed in wisdom and mercy by the great Author of our being, who knows what man is, and what man stands in need of. Oh! how blessed is it, that on the recurrence of every seventh day the whole rational offspring of God, some of them worn out by distracting, soul-oppressing, soul-ruining cares, others borne down and worn out by severe and hard toil during the six days of the week, should on this holy day suspend all their labours, and leave all their cares and toils for a time behind them. How blessed, that in their private retirements, and in the bosom of their families, and in the sanctuary of God, they are privileged, in peace and solemn stillness, to meditate on things divine; to hold converse with God; and thus to prepare for another and an eternal world. Sweet, indeed, is this day of holy rest, it is the best and most blessed of all the seven; and that man who would denude himself of the spiritual enjoyments of this day, knows not what his privilege is; knows not what true delight means. And oh! who can calculate the guilt and criminality of those who would divert this sacred day from the grand purposes for which it was designed and instituted—who would do anything themselves to desecrate it—who would prevent any, whether rich or poor, from keeping it holy unto the Lord? Oh! it is lamentable to think, that in this Christian land there should be found one daring enough to rob God of his own day, and thus of his glory—bold and cruel enough to rob man of his dearest birth-right privilege—mad enough to afford the means, and hold out the temptation, to inconsiderate souls to prostitute and profane this holy day.

But as every Sabbath-day is an emblem of the eternal sabbath, it should be employed in such a way as to render it a preparation for the eternal rest. It was instituted for this purpose, and men are frustrating the design of Heaven, when their exercises and employments on that day do not lead the soul directly to God and to heaven. How then should the day of the Lord be spent? Not merely in resting from bodily toil and earthly cares, but in engaging the mind in those spiritual and sublime exercises in which believers hope to be eternally employed in the upper sanctuary. It should be spent in praising and holding communion with God—in uniting with the redeemed above, in worshipping Him who sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb that was slain—in gratefully rejoicing in that event, to perpetuate

which this first day was instituted, viz., Christ's resurrection from the dead—and in meditating upon, and looking forward to, that sabbath which they hope to enjoy, when the shadows of time shall flee away, and the realities of eternity shall commence. Believers enjoy their sabbaths here, and praise God for them; still they look above and beyond them, they long for something better.

I cannot conceive any thing more comforting and heart-cheering than this gracious declaration, "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." Believed in and taken home, it is fitted to ease every load under which burdened souls labour. Let us then meditate upon it for a little. The rest of the soul, whether in heaven or earth, in eternity or time, can only be found in God himself, in his love and favour through Christ. Till such time as a sinner has learnt to place the burden of his guilt upon Christ, to look to God as a reconciled Father, and to choose Him as his alone portion, he cannot know what rest means. But induced and enabled to come to Christ, labouring and heavy laden, to look to him with steady eye, to repose in Him as the only Saviour, he experiences a peace and a tranquillity of mind that passeth understanding. It is of this rest, of which the apostle speaks; and this is tasted by believers here, this proves to them an earnest and foretaste of heaven; and this raises them above all the toils of their pilgrimage-journey, so that they can even glory in the tribulations of life. Still, whatever may be the experience of God's children here, and whatever peace God may impart to them in their passage through the wilderness, like the Israelites, they look forward to Canaan, and their gracious leader still reminds them that there is a rest that remaineth. They may have a cup that is sweet put into their hands, but it is not unmingled; a day that is bright, but not cloudless; a peace that is comforting, but not perfect; an enjoyment of God that is enviable, but not full. There is always something in themselves, something in the land where they sojourn, something in the inhabitants of the country where they have pitched their tent, and something in the very atmosphere that they breathe, to remind them that this is not the place of their rest. Now the rest that is here spoken of, is the rest of heaven, for never can it be tasted in perfection till the Christian gets there; and though we cannot conceive of it aright now notwithstanding all that God has revealed of its nature, yet enough has been made known to quicken our desires, and to stimulate our exertions for the attainment of it. It is rest from all the

labours and toils of our mortal condition—rest from all the cares and perplexities that enter into our state here below—rest from all the infirmities, diseases, and pains that cleave to us as the children of the dust—rest from all the fears, and bereavements, and sorrows, that are mingled in our cup—rest from all the temptations of the world, the fiery darts of the wicked one, to which we are exposed here—rest from all the stings of conscience, and the apprehensions of guilt that are inseparable from our present state—rest from all the rebellious thoughts, sinful desires, and corrupt passions, that flesh is heir to—rest from all those lamentable differences that separate man from man, Christian from Christian in this world—rest from the fear and the stroke of death to which every child of Adam is subject. In short, there shall be deliverance from all that can be denominated evil or calamitous, whether it arises from natural or moral causes; and this, just because there shall be deliverance from the very existence of sin. And who does not sigh for this state of things? Tossed by the tempests of life, who does not respond to the declaration, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours.' But this is not all. The rest of heaven is not mere negative, but positive enjoyment. It is, as we said, rest in God—in the enjoyment of God's presence—the seeing him face to face—the being gladdened with the smiles of his countenance and the sensible tokens of his love—the being filled with all the fullness of God—the uniting with the spirits of the just made perfect—the doing God's will, celebrating his praises, and dwelling for ever with the Lord.

Now, this rest *remaineth* for the people of God. Great as it is, it is not too exalted for every child of the dust to aspire after. It has been purchased, it is prepared, and it is promised to every child of God. It is secure as the promise and oath of the unchangeable God—secure as the covenant of peace ratified by the blood of Christ can make it, and after it shall have been enjoyed through ages unnumbered, there still shall remain a rest, a growing felicity for the people of God. Let us then cast in our lot with the people of God, let us pray and strive to obtain their character, and let us fear lest 'a promise being left us of entering into this rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.'

## SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

• *And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made,* Gen. ii. 2, 3.

It will greatly simplify and clear up our views of the ordinance of the sabbath, and at the same time furnish us with a most comprehensive principle for determining how the day should be observed, to be thoroughly convinced of *its perpetual and universal obligation*. Most erroneous opinions have been expressed on this point, by some men of considerable learning and influence; and the effect has been the disseminating of very hurtful doubts in the minds of many, both in the higher and in the lower walks of life.

In the fourth commandment, the reason of the institution is stated to be God's resting from the work of creation. Now, as this reason for its observance existed so early, it must be a strange partiality for a theory, which can lead any one to suppose that it was not observed till upwards of two thousand years after. As to the argument founded on Dent. v. 15,—had no other reason been mentioned for the observance of the sabbath, this passage would be much in favour of the idea that it was not observed till that time. But as the reason of God's resting from the work of creation is referred to expressly and repeatedly, the fair conclusion is, that the sabbath, which from the first was a commemoration of the creation of the world, was then to answer to the Jews the additional purpose of being a memorial of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

But to come directly to the point, the perpetual and universal obligation of the sabbath is clear from its *original institution*, in the second chapter of Genesis. The reason given, existed with as great force immediately after the creation, as at any subsequent period. This reason, drawn from the creation of the world, equally concerned the whole human race; and, therefore, it is unreasonable to suppose that God would have enjoined the observance on so small a proportion of them as the Jewish people.

Another argument in support of the universality and perpetuity of the sabbath, and especially of its early origin, arises from the fact that *almost all the nations of antiquity had a weekly division of time, and regarded the seventh day as holy*. Hesiod and Homer, who are probably the

most ancient uninspired authors, both say, 'The seventh day is holy.' Other ancient writers have such expressions as these:—'The Phœnicians consecrated one day in seven as holy: 'The seventh day is the day which all mankind celebrate: 'A seventh day is observed among holy people: 'The seventh day is given to school-boys as a holiday: 'The Greeks, as well as the Hebrews, observe the seventh day as holy: 'Almost all the philosophers and poets acknowledge the seventh day as holy.' Josephus says, 'No city of Greeks or barbarians can be found which does not acknowledge a seventh day's rest from labour: 'and Philo, the Jew, says, 'The seventh day is a festival to all nations.' Now, though in some cases this custom may have been derived from intercourse with the Jews, yet, when we consider its very early and very extensive prevalence, and the general aversion of the nations from what was peculiarly Jewish, we must conclude that, in most cases, it had a different origin. That origin evidently was not any foundation in nature, like what exists for the yearly and monthly division of time. The custom must be traced up through Noah to Adam, and can only be accounted for on the scriptural principle of the express command of the Creator.

The universal and perpetual obligation of the sabbath, also appears from its *occupying a place in the moral law*—the ten commandments. It is moral as to its essence, which is, that some portion of our time should be dedicated to God. Its circumstantials are the exact proportion, and the particular day; either, or both of which might be altered, and one of which has been altered, by the authority of the Lawgiver himself.

From this doctrine of the perpetual and universal obligation of the sabbath, as well as from the most prominent idea in the passage now meditated on, we may clearly infer, that one great reason why we should still observe the sabbath under the Christian dispensation, is devoutly to commemorate God's work of creation. The first day of the week, being substituted for the seventh, must, of course, be considered as answering the purpose of the seventh in this respect. It is not for Christians, even under the pretence of exalting the glory of God in the work of redemption, to undervalue, or overlook his glory in the work of creation. The glorified in heaven praise him for the things which he has made. They fall down before him that sitteth upon the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure

they are, and were created.' So let us, on our sabbaths on earth, praise him who 'in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day,' and on that account, 'blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.' While some have imagined that the world existed by a necessity of nature, and others, that it owed its being to chance, and while many have persuaded themselves that the sun, moon, and stars governed the world; we see that the stated weekly return of prayer and praise has tended, and is still designed to perpetuate the knowledge, and to promote the glory of the one living and true God; and that it is a declaration on our part, that we are neither atheists, nor idolaters, but believe in him, and worship him who at first said, and it was done, and commanded, and all things stood fast, and who still upholds and regulates the universe. This, we also see, is worthy of the special consideration of those who addict themselves to the study of the history or the philosophy of nature. They are here taught, not only that they ought to look through the works of nature to the God of nature, but that a view of the wisdom, power, and goodness manifested in creation, should lead them to the conscientious observance of the sabbath. If this be neglected by them, they may muse, or talk, of devout feelings as they please, but they have no such devotion as the bible acknowledges, or as God will accept.

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SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou,' Deut. v. 14.*

AGAIN are we called on to meditate this evening on the pleasing theme of the sabbath of the Lord our God. May the Holy Spirit cause us to delight to dwell on it; and may our contemplations be blessed to lead us more and more to understand its duties, and more and more to value its advantages.

From the doctrine of the perpetual and universal obligation of the sabbath we may infer the way in which it ought still to be observed by us. Our rules on this subject ought to be drawn from

all that is written in any part of the sacred scriptures with regard to it.

What, then, is the leading idea which the scriptures convey as to the manner in which this sacred day should be observed? It is that it ought to be kept as a day of rest. There should be a cheerful and total cessation from all worldly business. The only exception to this rule, let us ever remember, is the lawfulness, or rather, the incumbrance, of works of necessity and mercy; with this exception, the rule ought to be strictly, unequivocally, and conscientiously adopted and observed.

In connection with this, let us also remember, that the negative observance is but one part of the commandment, and that it has also its positive duties to be discharged. Under the Old Testament, the sabbath was 'a day of holy convocation,' on which sacrifices and other services additional to the daily were offered at the temple, and on which Moses and the prophets were read in the synagogues. In the New Testament, Christians are exhorted 'not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.' But as the whole day is sacred to the Lord, the remainder of it should be dedicated to the more private duties of religion.

Now, not to dwell longer on the sabbath as an authoritative commandment of God, what a striking illustration is it of his goodness! It is merciful to the lower animals. These animals need this rest to recruit their strength; God has ordered that they shall enjoy it.

What a merciful institution is the sabbath to human beings of every class! How merciful to servants, and to all who are employed by others in any capacity! None can deny that such rest is good when men are labouring entirely, or partly, by compulsion, and for the benefit or pleasure of others; it is also good, when they are labouring voluntarily for themselves. The law of the Lord does not leave it to the discretion of any party whether men shall work on the sabbath or not; it does not leave them at the mercy of the tyranny, and covetousness, and ungodliness of others, or of their own selfishness, and want of principle; but it wisely and graciously restrains them. Human law is also merciful, when, in conformity with the divine law, it interferes to prevent the desecration of the sabbath by unnecessary work, or by amusement. There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that such laws bear hardest on the lower classes; for the lower classes most directly reap the benefit of them. This is true, even in a merely temporal sense. No more wages would be drawn, on the whole, by working people, from the labour of seven days, than from

the labour of six. The price of labour is, in a great measure, determined by the demand and the number of labourers. A few might gain something more, for a short time, in some departments, by working on the sabbath; but that could not be generally or permanently profitable to labourers, because if they were to work as hard on seven days as they do on six, *that*, besides wasting away the body, and destroying the character, would have just the same effect as if one-sixth more labourers were to come forward, which would infallibly help down the rate of remuneration.

As the sabbath is equally incumbent on all classes, so it is equally a gracious institution to them all. The rich need it, even for its tranquilizing effects on their minds, and the poor evidently need it on every account. How clearly does it tend to promote health of body and calmness of mind! It is useful to reform savage and slovenly habits, and to promote habits of cleanliness, decency, civility, and social order.

But O what a proof have we of the goodness of our God in the appointment of the sabbath, when it is viewed in its bearing on our spiritual and eternal interests! What a merciful institution is it to our precious and immortal souls! It is our own highest interest that is to be promoted by the observance of this holy day. It is the chief outward means of preserving the knowledge and worship of the true God, of making known the way of salvation through the Redeemer, of bringing men within the reach of the converting and edifying ordinances which the Holy Ghost usually renders effectual, of training them to all the graces and duties of the divine life, and of preparing them for glory, and honour, and immortality. True, indeed, it is that 'the sabbath was made for man,' for man's temporal and eternal benefit.

What a merciful institution for the unconverted and unbelieving! How thankful should they be for the precious opportunity of escaping for their life, and how careful to improve it! The Lord, in his infinite mercy, then calls to them, saying, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' Let them not refuse; let them not delay; but let them close with the kind invitation, and flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.

What a gracious institution, also, for believers! If we have good hope through grace; if we have in any good degree attained to the character and feelings of children of God; if, notwithstanding much imperfection, we delight in the law after the inward man; how profitable, how precious, how dear will God's own day be to us! We would

ever hail its return with joy, and consider it as a call to withdraw our thoughts from this world's bustle, and cares, and sorrows, and to fix them on the concerns of our never-dying souls, on God, and Christ, and eternity. We would ever seek on it more light, more love, more joy; and ever study so to spend it that it may be the means of building us up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

### THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto the Lord: to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none,'* Exod. xvi. 25, 26.

I. WE have here an additional proof of the universal and perpetual obligation of the sabbath, in its being mentioned at this time, not as something new, but as an institution with which the Israelites were already familiar. This easy and incidental way of speaking implies, that they were aware of the institution, though they needed to be reminded of the duty of its strict observance; and it was very natural thus to state a reason for the particular directions given about the manna. It is worthy of notice, too, that there is a plain indication of the weekly division of time, and, of course, of a turning point in a sabbath, in the direction for the observance of the passover, and before the Israelites left Egypt; 'Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread,' Exod. xii. 15. Let no lax and mistaken theories, then, shake our orthodoxy on this point, or have any discouraging effect on our sanctification of the holy sabbath.

II. Let us mark with reverence, the example which the Lord God himself sets of the sanctification of the sabbath in this part of the sacred history. He gave us an example at the original institution of the ordinance, by resting from his works of creation. And here he gives us an example again in the way in which he proceeds in his extraordinary providences, and also miraculously. He rains manna from heaven on six days of the week; but on the seventh day he ceases from that work, and no manna is given. He orders it so that though, on the first five days of the week, the people, however they gathered, had all just a certain quantity; yet on the sixth day they gathered it in greater abundance, so that when it was measured and prepared they

had twice as much. His general order was, 'Let no man leave of it till the morning;' and if any transgressed, and kept part of it, it became quite putrid. On the sixth day, however, God's order was, 'That which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning;' and when they did so, they found it next morning quite fresh and good. How can we but see very strikingly in all this the example of Jehovah himself, and the peculiar interest he displays in the sanctification of the sabbath by working at least three miracles in honour of it? Let us devoutly observe this; and let us in this respect, in so far as his ways are imitable by us, be 'followers of God as dear children.'

III. In this part of the sacred history we have several points of instruction with regard to our own duty of sanctifying the sabbath.

1. This passage teaches us a lesson of diligence on the other days of the week, in order that we may have it in our power to rest on the sacred day. Even when it was miraculously given, God would not dispense with their gathering of it diligently. In like manner are we all called on to use diligence during the working days, that we may be able to afford, or may be able to command leisure if we are in easy circumstances, to rest on the sabbath.

2. We are taught, in one part of this history, to make special preparation for the sabbath on the day immediately preceding it. 'To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that which ye will seethe.' We read also, in the New Testament, of the 'day of preparation when the sabbath drew on.' While, therefore, it is well to have the privileges of the sabbath in view throughout the week, we are particularly called on to think of them, and to make preparatory arrangements for them, on the day before. It is clear that as little work as possible should be left to be done on the sabbath, even though it may relate to food, or the most necessary affairs of life. Thus, though the table may not be furnished with such variety, the fare will be sweet and good; for it will be partaken of with a good conscience; and 'sanctified by the word of God and prayer.'

3. We are here taught the sin and folly of prosecuting worldly business with the view of getting worldly gain on the day of sacred rest. In defiance of the divine command, 'Some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather manna, and they found none. And the Lord said, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?' It is right to be diligent

in business, but to carry business into the sabbath is positively forbidden, and certainly incurs the divine displeasure. This is probably one reason why some do not thrive. And this is plainly the reason why some have no solid pleasure, and are strangers to the peace of God. He grants them, it may be, their worldly desire, but sends leanness into their souls. Let us also mark and act up to the spirit of the injunction, ver. 29, 'Abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.' This teaches us not to leave our home on the sabbath for secular business, or pleasure, or travelling. A sabbath day's journey to Christians is just the distance they have to go from their own houses to the house of God.

Finally, while the directions about the manna furnish us with much instruction relating to the sabbath, let us also notice and improve the typical meaning of that miraculous food. We need support for our bodies, but we also need spiritual nourishment for our souls. God fed the Israelites with manna, that he might make them and us know that 'man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.' Jesus said, 'Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' Let us seek this nourishment every day, and especially on the sabbath day. Let us earnestly seek an interest in all the benefits of the Saviour's purchase, and an abundant supply of the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may be nourished up into eternal life. 'Lord, evermore give us this bread!' So shall we have strength to pass on through this earthly wilderness, and arrive at last in safety and comfort at the Canaan which is above.

#### THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them,' Acts xx. 7.*

THE scriptural authority for Christians observing the first, and not the seventh day of the week, as a sabbath, or day of holy rest and religious exercises, though not in the form of express precept, is yet direct, plain, and satisfactory, and consists chiefly in the example of the apostles, and other inspired teachers, and of the private members of the church, as described in the sacred

books which refer to the period subsequent to our Lord's resurrection. Let us remember, first of all, that Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Next, let us reflect on the great importance of that event in itself, and in its bearing on the gospel in general, as the leading proof of its divinity and of all its doctrines, particularly that of the acceptance of the atonement, as the ground of the justification of sinners. Let us remember, too, that on the same day, even the first day of the week, he met his assembled disciples; and that eight days after that, which was also the first day of the week, he again appeared in the midst of them. The feast of Pentecost, described in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, took place on the first day of the week, and on that day the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured out on the preachers of the gospel, especially on Peter, and the converting influences of divine grace were given in such abundance, that on the same day there were added unto the church about three thousand souls. On the first day of the week, too, as appears from the passage at the head of this exercise, the disciples usually assembled for the preaching and hearing of the word, and for holding communion in the Lord's Supper; see also 1 Cor. xvi. 1. This clear example of the early churches, guided by inspired men, has all the force of precept. The words of John, in the Revelation, i. 10, are also very decisive, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'

We see, then, that there is clear scriptural authority for our now observing the first day of the week. And though we do not rest the proof of any doctrine on any uninspired authority, it is satisfactory to find distinct proof from the early Christian writers, that there is no mistake, in point of fact, as to the meaning all attach to the term 'the Lord's day,' or as to their actually observing it. Ignatius, who was a cotemporary of the apostles, and who was torn to pieces by lions at Rome by command of the emperor Trajan, in the year of our Lord 107, says, 'Let us no more sabbatize,' that is, keep the Jewish sabbath, 'but let us keep the Lord's day, on which our life arose.' Justin Martyr, who was beheaded for the Christian religion in the year 167, says, 'On the day called Sunday, there is an assembly of all who live in the city, or country; and the memoirs of the apostles, and the writings of the prophets, are read.' Irenæus, who suffered martyrdom in the year 203, says, 'On the Lord's day, every one of us Christians keeps the sabbath, meditating in the law, and rejoicing in the works of God.' It is unnecessary to trace the custom lower down.

The leading reason for the change plainly was, that while the first day was to be, in room of the seventh, a memorial of the work of creation, it should also serve as a memorial of the Redeemer's resurrection, and the finished work of redemption. This work is sometimes represented in scripture as a new creation; and it is of still more importance to us than the first creation. That it should be so celebrated is foretold in Isaiah lxxv. 17. Now, it was by the resurrection of our blessed Saviour, that this new and most glorious work was completed; and what day of the week could answer for its commemoration so well as that on which he arose? Who is not sensible, that while on this day the work of the first creation is not overlooked, that of redemption occupies a larger and more interesting place in the contemplation of Christians?

From this it follows that there can be no proper and acceptable observance of the sabbath, except on Christian principles. It will not do for any to pretend that they desire to honour the Deity on that day, irrespectively of his manifestation through his Son; for, thus to dishonour the Son, is to dishonour the Father also. Whoever would observe the day aright must connect with it the believing and grateful commemoration of the great deliverance, wrought out for transgressors, by him who died for their sins, and rose again for their justification.

There is another passage in the Old Testament confirming this view of the subject, as well as being very interesting in a general way, namely, that in the cxviii. Psalm from the 19th verse. 'Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go in to them, and I will praise the Lord. The stone which the builders refused, is become the headstone of the corner. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.' It must be recollected that the apostle Peter applies that passage to Jesus Christ, the true head-stone of the corner, though disallowed by the Jewish builders; and therefore, that the whole passage refers to gospel times. But it speaks, in reference to these times, of a day which the Lord 'made,' that is, which, as distinguished from other days, he had appointed and set apart for himself,—a day on which the gates of righteousness were to be opened, the gates of the sanctuary for the people to enter, and on which the people were to be blessed from the house of the Lord. Does not all this obviously imply that, after the coming of the Messiah, those who believed in him were to continue to observe a

day, as a sabbath for praise, and prayer, and public assemblies? and does it not also imply that the observance of the sacred day under the gospel was to be peculiarly in commemoration of Messiah and his saving work?

Let us, then, welcome and improve the first day of the week in this particular view. Let us see to it that we embrace the great salvation from the guilt and power of sin, which the Lord's day commemorates. Let us also spend it in a way calculated to enlarge our knowledge, and raise our admiration of that most glorious deliverance. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!'

#### FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,' Isa. lviii. 13, 14.*

Let us consider, first of all, what we are taught, in this beautiful passage, to call, and, of course, to esteem the sabbath. We should call it, and account it, 'a delight.' God forbid that the day itself should seem gloomy to us, or its services irksome. May every one of us be able to say with sincerity and deep feeling, I esteem this day the best of all the seven, and I will delight myself in this commandment which I have loved.

We should also call and account the sabbath 'the holy of the Lord.' It does indeed belong to the Lord; it is his own property. It is the time sanctified, and set apart by the Lord, and to the Lord. Let us regard it, acknowledge it, and keep it as such.

We are also taught to call the sabbath 'Honourable.' Let us esteem it highly; let us speak of it with admiration; let us honour it in our way of spending it; let us openly profess and practically show the respect we bear to it.

Secondly. We are here instructed, in various distinct particulars, how we ought to observe the sabbath. We should 'turn away our foot,'

from it. The word 'foot,' or 'feet,' is sometimes used to signify inclinations and actions. 'Keep thy foot,' be very careful of thy behaviour, and abstain from every thing improper, 'when thou goest to the house of God; and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.' Perhaps the allusion in the expression, 'Turn away thy foot,' is to the care with which a man turns aside his steps, when he wishes to avoid treading on any thing; as if it were said, Do not trample on the sabbath, refrain from profaning it. Or, the expression may imply a caution against needless travelling on the sabbath. Or, this clause may be intended to be taken in immediate connection with the next, and so we are cautioned to refrain from doing what is mentioned there.

We are next prohibited from 'doing our pleasure on God's holy day.' We must not suppose that we are then at liberty to do as we list, to do whatever may happen to please ourselves, and suit our own inclinations, whether it fall in with the design of the sabbath, or not; but we must cheerfully conform to the rules God has prescribed, and do the things that please him.

Again, we are called on to 'honour God' on the sabbath.' Let us honour God himself by honouring his sabbath. Or, this clause may be viewed as leading on to what follows, and then it calls on us to honour God in the ways there specified.

'Not doing thine own ways.' Sinners 'turn every one to his own way.' Let us beware of this perverseness, and study to follow God's directions. And then, as in close relation to the sabbath, are we not here positively forbidden to follow, on that day, any ordinary calling, or worldly business?

'Nor finding thine own pleasure.' Ungodly men are described as being 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;' and when this spirit is indulged on the sabbath, it becomes peculiarly sinful. We are interdicted, too, even from such recreations, or amusements, as may be lawful on other days. Amusements are even more inconsistent with the proper observance of the sabbath than ordinary labour, seeing they more certainly and more entirely dissipate the mind, fill it with frivolity, and disincubate and incapacitate it for serious exercises. How shamefully is this prohibition disregarded by some who seem to consider the Lord's day as appointed only for their recreation! Away with the expression, 'Innocent amusements on the sabbath!' No amusements are then innocent; they are all forbidden.

'Nor speaking thine own words,'—or, more literally, nor speaking a word. It is necessary to

add something to complete the sense; for, it is not to be supposed that absolute silence is enjoined. We are called on, however, to abstain from such conversation as is not suitable to the sabbath, to abstain from speaking unnecessarily on temporal and worldly topics, from vain and trifling discourse. What ground for self-abasement have we here! and what a call to keep the door of our lips!

Thirdly. Let us consider the encouraging promise here held forth to our conscientious observance of the sabbath; we are assured that we shall find it delightful, honourable, and profitable.

'Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.' In the way of keeping the sabbath, we shall find much spiritual joy and comfort in our redeeming God.

'And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.' This denotes great security, dignity, and triumph; see Isa. xxxiii. 16; Deut. xxxii. 13; xxxiii. 29. The Lord will bestow honour on public bodies, and on individuals, who thus glorify him; while he will, sooner or later, bring disgrace on those who in this respect contemn his authority.

'And I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father.' As applied to the Jews, this may refer to peace and plenty in the land of Canaan, the temporal inheritance promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It may also refer to the double blessing and the birthright which came to Jacob, Psal. cv. 9, 10; cxxxvi. 21, 22. And so, to the pious observers of the Lord's day, temporal prosperity is promised, in so far as it shall be for God's glory and their own good. But as the covenant made with the patriarchs included a promise of spiritual blessings to the faithful and obedient, so this promise also includes all needful nourishment for the soul, a rich feast of evangelical blessings, as a pledge of an eternal inheritance.

How complete, finally, the security given for the fulfilment of this rich and encouraging promise, 'For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it!' Let us take God's word for it. What his mouth hath spoken, his hand will perform. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Lord's words shall not pass away.' May this sure and precious promise encourage us to be more and more careful in sanctifying the sabbath; and, in our endeavours to do so, may the Lord shed down upon us, in abundant measure, the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit, for his Son's sake. Amen.

## FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

'From even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath,' Lev. xxiii. 32.

THE law of the sabbath is, that one whole day must be given to religious rest. As less will not be accepted, more is not required: the necessary proportion of time, therefore, is allowed for sleep and refreshment on that day, as on every other. But, as the very essence of the commandment is, that a day, a whole day, shall be set apart, a very fruitful source of corruption has arisen in departing from that principle, by making a distinction between the hours of public worship, and the other hours of the day, and supposing that if part of it be spent in religious exercises, men are at liberty to employ the remainder of it as they please. 'What need is there,' say some, 'for a whole day? Is not that too much? Is it not enough if we attend church, and, perhaps, read the Bible, or some religious book, part of the day at home? May we not then give the rest of the day to recreation? Or, if we are not at liberty to do so, must not the day become extremely irksome?'—In answer to this, it should be enough for us, that the divine command is explicit. Besides, unless the whole day be sanctified, what passes during the space of time occupied in public worship will make very little impression on us. If the judicious employment of the whole of the sabbath in the varied public and private exercises of religion, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy, be indeed irksome to any; then they would do well seriously to consider whether that be not a proof of their being in a state of general estrangement from God, in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Amos represents irreligious persons as saying, 'When will the new-moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?' and in Malachi, we find this representation of their feelings towards the service of God, 'Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts!' 'should I accept this of your hand?' saith the Lord.

How is it possible to spend time so wisely, profitably, and pleasantly, as in the proper duties of the Lord's day? The season is indeed very precious. Let us improve it to the utmost. Besides, unless we feel and act thus in reference to the sabbath, what meetness have we for heaven, or how could we be happy if we were there? If we cannot spend a day comfortably in the service of God on earth, how could we spend an eternity in his service on high, where they are

before his throne, and serve him day and night in his temple?

From all this, we may clearly perceive the futility of the defence of the lax observance of the Lord's day (if observance it can be called,) drawn from the example of foreigners. It is too true that in some lands which bear the Christian name, the sabbath is wretchedly desecrated by the great majority of the population. Many pay no attention to it whatever; and many exhibit only a very partial respect. After some pompous, it may be, but superstitious and unedifying public services, on which few attend, except on days distinguished by something more than the ordinary authority of the Sabbath, the theatres, and other places of amusement, are thrown open, dancing and diversions of every kind are commenced, and the latter part of the day is devoted to gaiety and dissipation. Many in the higher walks of life in this island resort to these countries. They are generally hurt in their feelings at first, by these ungodly customs, so contrary to the principles which were inculcated in their native land. Gradually, however, the offence ceases; they become familiarized to what they behold sabbath after sabbath; and, alas! too many of them fall into these customs themselves; and when they return home, they return habitual and systematic sabbath-breakers. Many of their inferiors are corrupted by their example. Nor is it uncommon to hear them endeavouring to subvert the pious principles of their countrymen, and to defend the customs of the foreigners. 'You are mistaken,' they will say, 'in the rigid notions which you have adopted. You are imposed on by narrow-minded men, who know nothing of life. Go and see the world. Or, believe what those who have seen it will tell you. Consider the opinions and customs of other nations, even Christian nations, and you will be undeceived; you will put away your illiberal and sour notions: and Sunday, instead of being to you a day of loathing, of moping, and of melancholy, will be, as it ought to be, a day of enjoyment, and of cheerfulness.'

On this style of talk, it may be remarked, first of all, that the profanation, so much lauded, may be easily accounted for, without it at all weakening the grounds on which the proper observance of the sabbath rests. The gross public, national, and allowed profanation of the Lord's day has originated and prevailed chiefly in those countries where the holy scriptures, which are the only rule of judgment, are least known and studied, that is, in popish countries. The unjustifiable encroachments, too, which popery has made on

the ordinary business of life, by a great number of saints' days, have thrown a great bar in the way of the due sanctification of the sabbath. To this must be added the worldly, loose, and accommodating spirit of the whole system, and its general substitution of pompous observance and imposing spectacle in the room of what is rational, and spiritual, and instructive.

Were the question to rest on human authority, we should not want either number or weight. We should appeal from the superstitious and the lax, to the enlightened and the sound. But it is not on such ground that the question should rest. We appeal to a far higher than any human authority, even to a divine,—an authority which should settle the judgment, and bind the conscience of all who make any profession of the Christian religion, the authority of the holy scriptures: and, holding the perpetual and universal obligation of the Sabbath, and, of course, the applicability, at the present moment, of the scriptural views of all that is essential to the sabbath, we must conclude, that, in comparison of this authority, the opinions of different men, and the customs of different countries, must go for nothing; and that, whatever may be our deficiency in fact, the standard of duty must be held to be the honest, conscientious, and unreserved sanctification of the whole of the Lord's day, in thought, in word, and in action.

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#### FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Six days shalt thou work; but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in eaving-time and in harvest thou shalt rest,'* Exod. xxxiv. 21.

How great a proportion of our time does the Lord appoint for the business of life, and how moderate a requisition does he make expressly for himself and the business of eternity, when he appoints six days for the former purpose, and requires only one for the latter! Should we not be ashamed, were the fixing of the proportion referred to ourselves, to propose, for the latter purpose, so little as he has required? Instead of one-seventh, we should probably think of one-half at least. Or, suppose we were lying on what, without an extraordinary interposition of providence, would prove our death-bed; how much of our time would we be willing to consecrate to God for the future, if he were to restore us to health? Would we not decline to make any conditions, and cheerfully leave the matter to his determination? Nay, were God, when we

were in the prospect of death, to offer to lengthen out our life, if we would agree to live in acute pain every seventh day, and to be comfortable the other six; would not the most of us gladly close with the offer? But, shall we compare a sabbath spent in communion with God, and in preparing for everlasting happiness, to a day spent in agonizing endurance? Where is he who shall have the audacity to do so, and still speak of his religion? Are not the duties and privileges of the sabbath very pleasing to the pious mind? and shall we not gladly devote it to the Lord?

We are not to forget that on the sabbath there are considerable exceptions to the rule of resting from work. Works of necessity and mercy are not only lawful, but binding on the Lord's day. These works are such as feeding and watering cattle, lifting an animal out of a pit into which it may have fallen, quenching conflagrations, stopping inundations of water, defending a town that is besieged, resisting assaults, taking care of children, waiting on the sick, relieving the distressed, and the like. Our Lord healed the sick, defended his disciples for taking and rubbing out in their hands some ears of corn when they were hungry, on the sabbath day, and taught that God preferred mercy to sacrifice, Matt. xii. 1—13. It is not enough, then, to say that such things are lawful, for, it is our positive duty to attend to them.

Let us beware, however, of carrying this principle too far, or rather, of applying it to things to which it was never intended to be applied. There is a danger of multiplying exceptions to the rule of rest, till no sabbath is left at all, or till it is so encroached on as hardly to be distinguishable from the other days of the week. This tendency was foreseen by the divine Lawgiver, and is provided against in the words at the head of this meditation. 'On the seventh day thou shalt rest: in eaving-time and in harvest thou shalt rest.' Even in the most busy seasons of the year, when it is necessary to make great exertions, and when labour is very valuable, as in the time of ploughing and sowing in spring, and in the time of cutting down and carrying home the corn in harvest, men are expressly commanded to rest, not to labour, on the sabbath. Valuable as is corn whence is made bread the staff of man's life, even such labour is prohibited. Men are not entitled to regard it as a work of necessity. How know they but that the weather may continue good, and so the state of the corn be further improved? Is not such labour the result of a distrust of providence? Cases have occurred of corn being carried on the sabbath, and afterwards rotting. But however this may turn out, the commandment

is clear. Except in such a case as the removing of corn which would be carried away by a flood, all work, under whatever pretence, even in the critical season of harvest, must be discontinued, as inconsistent with the general doctrine of the sabbath, and as directly opposed to this injunction. Christians must learn to prefer communion with God, even to the business and the joy of harvest. And then, we have here, not only a particular precept, but a principle of very general application. If it is unlawful to work on the sabbath in the time of harvest, it is much more evident that it is unlawful in other seasons of the year, and it is very plain that many other pleas for such work are altogether vain.

Such, undeniably, was the nature of the prohibitions under the Old Testament dispensation; and let us not imagine that Christianity has lessened the strictness of the commandment. Nothing of this kind is once hinted in the New Testament. We know that the sabbath was in full force before the giving of the law by Moses, and it is in full force still. With the single alteration as to the particular day of the week, the New Testament leaves this point as it found it. It is altogether away from this point to speak of the liberty of the gospel; for, that is a liberty from condemnation, terror, and legality of spirit, not a licentious dissolution of the duties of piety and morality. Nay, so far are the obligations to the strict observance of the sabbath, or of any other duty, from being weakened, that they are greatly increased by the superior light and privileges of the gospel. As their deliverance from Egyptian bondage was an additional reason for the Israelites to remember to keep holy the sabbath day, so also, though still more powerfully, is our deliverance from the bondage of sin and Satan through the blood and spirit of the Saviour.

It becomes us, also, seriously and practically to remember, that though the Lord's day is to be a day of rest from the business and amusements of the world, it is not to be a day of idleness. There are some who would not be guilty of the indecency of prosecuting their worldly calling, or of engaging in scenes of amusement, or of openly outraging in any way the feelings of their pious neighbours, or even of casting off all form of religion, who yet spend the greater part of the day in sloth, lounging in their houses, or wandering idly about the doors, or streets, or highways; and who thus make void the great end for which it was set apart. It is a rest, indeed, but it should be a holy rest. We do not sanctify it, we do not keep it holy, by inactivity. Spent in sloth,

it would be a day lost. We must consecrate it to sacred uses. We must rest in one way, but be busy in another. Let the sabbath be with us a day of the industrious application of our minds to spiritual and eternal things, to all the exercises of religion which tend to glorify God and benefit our souls. Let it be to us a cessation from the harassing employments of the world, that we may give ourselves without distraction, and with undivided intensity, to the service of Christ, and to the things which belong to our everlasting peace. Let us thus carefully avail ourselves of that solemn pause in earthly pursuits, that favoured season of holy leisure; and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we shall find the serious thoughts, the heavenward aspirations, and the sacred observances of the sabbath, eminently impressive, interesting, edifying, and delightful.

#### FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'It is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings,'* Lev. xxiii. 3.

We are now to meditate on the way in which the sabbath should be kept by us in our own houses; or, in other words, on our home duties on the Lord's day, both as individuals, and as members of families.

First, Let us, as individuals, be careful to consecrate to the Lord that portion of the sabbath which we spend at home. Unless we are personally conscientious in this respect, there cannot be any satisfactory or acceptable observance of the day in our families as such. Among the sabbath duties incumbent on individuals, let us attend to the following. The duty of *rising betimes*: slothful indulgence in this way, is taking away a considerable and very valuable part of the day, from the edifying exercises in which it should be spent. *Secret prayer* is one of the obvious duties of the Lord's day; and then, at least, we cannot plead any excuse, but should engage in this duty in a very calm, solemn, leisurely, sincere, and earnest manner. To this, let us add *reading*: the reading especially of the Holy Scriptures, in an attentive, pious, regular, and persevering way; and also, according to the time which attention to other duties permits, the reading of religious books of human composition, which are calculated to be very useful in so far as they are founded on the word of God. To all this, let us add *meditation*, that we may seriously reflect on what we read, so as to digest it, and make it our own; and that we may examine ourselves as to our state and progress, and indulge

in all those inward exercises which tend to humble, improve, encourage, and delight the soul. Indeed, we should guard our *thoughts* throughout the day, as well as our words and actions. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.'

Secondly, Let us meditate on, and, in our several spheres, carefully observe the duties incumbent on us on the Lord's day in our *families* as such.

1. *Family worship*. Reason and scripture unite in inculcating the observance of this duty on every day of the week, and therefore on the Lord's day. When we look to scripture, we find the example of Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19; of Jacob, Gen. xxxv. 2; of Job, i. 5; of David, 2 Sam. vi. 20; of Joshua, xxiv. 15. The high priest was directed to make an atonement, not only for himself, but for 'his household,' Lev. xvi. 17. Jeremiah (x. 25) utters these awakening words, 'Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name.'

But, do all professing Christians faithfully discharge this duty? Is it not undeniable that many live on from sabbath to sabbath in utter neglect of it? Conscience tells that this ought not so to be. Let it now say impressively to the person who ought to take a lead in this duty, but neglects it, 'Thou art the guilty man. It is nothing to thee whether the blessing or the curse rest on thy dwelling, whether those who are dear to thee be saved, or perish. It is high time to reform.'

2. *Catechising*. Religious instruction, in the form of question and answer, should be fully, perseveringly, and affectionately given on the sabbath, to children and servants.

3. *Religious conversation*. We should not only refrain from 'speaking our own words,' but also speak God's words, speak on religious subjects, on the Lord's day. The conversation should not be about the weather, or the crops, or the affairs of our neighbours, or our own business, or dress, or the news, or even about deaths, or accidents as they are called, without giving our observations a pious and edifying turn. There is, perhaps, no way in which the sabbath is more profaned, even by persons of some religion than this. Let serious topics be chosen. When a favourable opening is made, let it be well followed up. The subjects of discourse in church should be spoken of in the house at home; not for the sake of commending or censuring the preacher, or of speculating on what may be curious and disputable, but in a way calculated to fix the remembrance and the impression of the most important topics on the memory and conscience.

For all this, there is a superintending and controlling power, lodged by the Lord of all in parents and heads of families, which it is their duty to exercise. Children should not be permitted, and should not seek, to engage in what is contrary to the duties of the sabbath at home, or to play, or wander about the streets, or fields, or roads. And, while servants are entitled to enjoy the Lord's day rest, and share in its means of religious instruction and impression, they should not (if they are unhappily so inclined) be allowed to go whithersoever they please on the sabbath. It seems a good rule which some masters and mistresses adopt, and inform their domestic servants of when they engage them, that they will not be permitted to leave the house on the Lord's day, except to go to church; but that if they wish to go out for some time on any business, or to visit their friends, they have only to apply for leave on any other day of the week.

How happy the effects which might be expected to flow from such a way of spending the hours of the Lord's day which fall to be spent at home! How would it keep at a distance from families many causes of discord and misery, and unite the members together in sanctified relative affection! How greatly would it contribute to secure attendance on the public services of the day, and add to their effect! Let it be seriously considered whether the little success of the preaching of the gospel be not very much owing to neglect in this way at home. If public ordinances were prepared for, and followed up by the various religious exercises of the closet, and of the family circle, what might not be expected! Better days would arise on the church. A congregation composed of such families, just come from such exercises, and soon to return to them—how would they listen to the word of life! how would they pray! and what songs of heartfelt praise would they sing! May such sabbaths be extensively realized among us. So shall our families be abodes of happiness and peace; and so shall our country be a delightful land, whose name shall be, 'The Lord is there.'

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#### SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching,'* Heb. x. 25.

I WOULD now meditate,

1. On the proof that it is a positive duty to

*assemble* for religious purposes. I find, then, an argument for this, arising from reason and the almost universal practice of nations. Notwithstanding our fall and natural want of spirituality, reason teaches, and conscience requires, that there shall be some acknowledgment of God, not only by individuals and families, but also by communities. As for scripture, I cannot but perceive that it inculcates this duty in a continued thread of example and precept interwoven. It was practised before express precept was given. The Lord separated the family of Abraham from idolaters, to be a peculiar people to himself; and to them particular directions were given as to the mode of worship. They had first the tabernacle, and then the temple, where they assembled. Though sacrifices were confined to these, the people assembled in every place of any note, in synagogues, every sabbath; sabbath was to them 'a day of holy convocation.' When I come to New Testament authority, I find both example and precept to be express. I find the Saviour often in the temple and synagogues, and often assembling great multitudes to preach to them. In the Acts of the Apostles, the following passages occur,—'These all' (the apostles) 'continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.' 'Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.' In writing to the Corinthians, Paul uses these expressions, 'In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together:' 'If therefore the whole church be gathered together into one place.' I ought not, then, to entertain any doubt as to my duty in this case. I would remember it; I would charge my conscience with it, I would studiously comply with it. But I would meditate,

2. On the way in which I should wait on God in the assemblies of his people. I would consider how I should do this, both as to my inward disposition, and as to my external manner.

My conscience tells me, then, that I ought to attend *regularly*. I should never be absent from any of the ordinary diets of public worship, except for such a reason as will be satisfactory at the bar of an enlightened conscience, and before the judgment-seat of Christ. Those who are needlessly absent always lose valuable opportunities, sin against God, and set a bad example to others. If my health and other circumstances permit, let me be always in my place, lest my minister and the exemplary part of the congregation be grieved when they see my seat empty, and lest I be away at the very time

when the subject is discussed which would be most suitable and useful to me. As for the systematic plan of attending church only once a day, and keeping away from the other diet,—it is characteristic of men of the world, who wish to pay as much respect to religion as they think necessary to tolerable decency, but who have not given their hearts to the Lord. How many opportunities may remain to me God only knows: they may be very few; therefore, let me not, if I can avoid it, lose one of them.

Again, I feel that I should attend *early*, taking care to be present before the service begins. The evils of late attendance are numerous and great. It is a breach of common propriety; for, those who are too late in coming to any company feel that an apology is called for. It disturbs those who are already in the service. It is also disrespectful to God, who has invited us to a feast and expects us to be present at the beginning of it. When Peter came into the house of Cornelius, he found him 'waiting for him,' with many that were gathered together; and Cornelius said, 'Now, therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.'

I should also wait on the assemblies of the church with *decency and solemnity*. 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.' 'Let all things be done decently and in order. The following things are contrary to this rule, and should be avoided:—a light and trifling carriage, betraying an ill regulated mind;—the look of displeasure, or of dulness, saying, as it were, I dislike, or care not for what is going on;—the continual wandering of the eye to surrounding objects;—an ambitious display of appearance, as if to dispute with Jehovah the homage of the worshippers;—sleeping, or even seeming to sleep, for we should 'abstain from all appearance of evil.'

*Sincerity*, too, a real, *heartfelt interest* in all the exercises, is required of us in the assemblies of the church. Let us ever remember that presence and a reverential appearance are not enough if the heart be not properly engaged. Let us beware of formality and hypocrisy. What avail prayer and praise that go out of feigned lips?

How edifying and refreshing to his people the privileges of God's house! How do they extend their knowledge, strengthen their faith, call forth their love, enliven their devotion, improve their character, and comfort them in trouble! There the consoling truths of the gospel are proclaimed, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is ready to apply them to the hearts of his people.

There they often experience a softening, soothing and reviving influence, which enables them to triumph over melancholy, and turns grief into joy, tears into songs, and sighs into praises. By the help of God, then, I will not forsake, I will always, when it is in my power, frequent the assemblies of his people, relying on his gracious promise that in all places where he records his name, he will come unto them and bless them.

The last part of the verse at the head of this meditation, reminds us of the duty of *caring for each others' souls*,—the duty of mutual edification. While we thus study the good of others, we shall take a most effectual way to promote our own. To all this, in relation both to ourselves and to others, let us be powerfully prompted by the consideration of the near approach of death and judgment. The day of decision is at hand. We have no time to lose.

#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me,' Mat. xv. 8.*

It is unquestionably my duty to draw nigh to God with my mouth, and to honour him with my lips; it is incumbent on me to make an open profession of religion, to confess Christ before men, and to observe the divinely-appointed ordinances, both public and private. Not to make such a profession of religion would prove that I am opposed to it, or indifferent to it, or ashamed of it. Hypocrites there certainly are; there are who assume the appearance of piety, while they have nothing of its reality. It must not be supposed, however, that this will be any excuse for the want of a religious profession. Suppose two contagious fruit trees, the one covered with luxuriant foliage and blossom, the other dry and leafless. Would not men say of them, 'The one may produce fruit this season; the other cannot?' Grant that the former, though it blossoms in promise of a plentiful crop, produces no fruit; does that in any way show the superiority of the total barrenness of the latter? Let the foliage and blossom of the former be an emblem of the empty profession of the hypocrite, and the deadness and leaflessness of the latter an emblem of the want of all appearance of religion in its avowed neglecter, and the application is obvious. The hypocrisy of some can never be any excuse for a real defect in others. The promising appearance of some will only render the deadness

of others more obvious and more dismal. A man may sometimes be heard to speak in this way, 'It is true that I pay little attention to the outward ordinances of religion, and that I do not rank among the godly; but then, I never pretended to any thing remarkable in that way. Thank God, I am no hypocrite.' Such a person is indeed no hypocrite, for, his character is manifest. He is no Christian. If he really had any proper religious principle, it would show itself, and he would not expressly disavow it. In a word, there may be a profession without true religion, but there can be no true religion without a profession. It is my duty to attend also to external bodily worship, to be present in the place, and go through the form of worship, to glorify God in my body as well as in my spirit, both of which are his. If I neglect this, I am manifestly irreligious.

I must remember, however, that my profession and attendance on ordinances will be worthless, if they be not the genuine index of my heart. It will avail me nothing to give out that I am a believer in Christ, if I do not indeed believe in him and *that* in his true character, and so as to be interested in him for justification. It will avail me nothing to call him Lord, Lord, if I do not the things which he says. I shall not be accepted in joining outwardly in public worship, unless I be sincere in the service. 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth; such the Father seeketh to worship him.'

The great defect of those who are reprov'd in the passage on which I am now meditating is, that in the midst of all their religious observances, their heart is far from God. What the Lord chiefly requires, then, is my heart. 'My son,' says he, 'give me thine heart.' May I be enabled to withdraw my heart from every other object, from all that would keep it from him in point of subjection, love, and dependence. May I make a cordial and entire surrender of myself to him as my redeeming God, according to the gospel scheme and warrant. I would give my heart, my soul, to him, as dark, to be enlightened; as guilty, to be pardoned; as polluted, hard and rebellious, to be renewed, softened, and ruled; as weak and wavering, to be strengthened, kept, and finally and completely saved. This I would do, because my own happiness requires it; because in claiming my heart, he claims only what is his due; and because if I withhold my heart, nothing else will be rightly given by me, or accepted of him. Without this, everything else will be a specious insult. It is not the shadow, but the substance of my homage which he requires, 'The Lord requireth truth in the inward parts.'

I would especially think of this in reference to drawing near to God in his house, and in religious exercises. Then I voluntarily place myself in his more immediate presence, and subject my inmost soul to the scrutiny of his all-seeing eye. When I enter his house, I will endeavour to remember that the great Master of assemblies is present and observing all; and under the impression of that awakening truth, I will study to receive the gospel with all readiness of mind, and to render to him the prayers and praises of an unfeigned heart.

How greatly does it concern all the professing worshippers of the Lord, and followers of Christ, to examine themselves with the view of ascertaining whether they have the power as well as the form of godliness! Are we Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile? Let us consider well, and allow our consciences to speak the truth, whether it be favourable, or the reverse. Those who have reason to fear that they have only the appearance and not the reality of religion, should be deeply humbled before God, and make determined struggles to escape from the snare of the devil, and of their own delusive hearts, which are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. If we are, on the whole, sincere and upright, let us be encouraged to hold fast our integrity of purpose, and consistency of conduct. Let us be careful of outward appearances; but let us be still more careful of the state of our hearts. Let us keep our heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Let us grieve over the partial insincerity that still cleaves to us, and aim at greater purity of motive and simplicity of intention.

And while we lend our best endeavours to attain this character, let us be mindful of our own insufficiency. Let us often and earnestly pray that our prayer may be the prayer of the upright, which is God's delight, that our love may be without dissimulation, and that in all things we may speak and act with simplicity and godly sincerity. 'Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee.' 'Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.'

#### SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals,'* Neh. xiii. 15.

WHAT a graphic account have we here of scenes which would naturally occur in Palestine in such

a season of backsliding and anarchy! Against all the profaners of the sabbath, and particularly against those who sold victuals, Nehemiah 'testified.' He came forward boldly, declaring his displeasure, remonstrating with the offenders, proving their conduct to be contrary to the law of God, and solemnly protesting against all such abominations. He explained the evil of such conduct, and gave good warning, before he interposed his authority as governor. Finding it necessary, however, he had recourse to very decided measures. He began with rebuking, 'the nobles,' who were much in fault, and whose example was so hurtful. He ordered the gates of Jerusalem to be shut during the sabbath, and if opened at all, to be opened very cautiously, and so that no burdens might be brought through them. He placed some of his own servants as guards at the gates. These measures had great effect. But as the evil was not entirely cured, some of the dealers still hanging on about the walls without the city, he told them peremptorily, that if they did not desist, he would 'lay hands' on them, cause them to be seized, and imprisoned, or otherwise punished. 'From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath.' He then committed the duty of keeping the gates to some of the Levites, ver. 16—22. Thus the open profanation of the sabbath was put down.

This history is full of instruction to us. The sin of sabbath profanation is a growing sin in our country; it calls for deep humiliation; and if its progress be not met with very resolute, persevering, and prayerful opposition, it seems as if it would entirely overrun our land. *Christian magistrates* are here taught that it is their duty to take proper measures to guard the Lord's day from being openly profaned by labour, merchandise, or amusement. Sufficient warning should be given; and if that is not attended to, they should carry the law into execution against the offenders. Nor ought they to be partial in its application; they should bring it to bear on the rich and the poor, the nobles and the commons. Not that the circumstance of one set of offences being overlooked can justify the perpetration of another; but impartiality shows conscience in the administrators of the law, and tends to shut the mouths of gain-sayers. As the Levites did of old, so the *ministers* of the gospel now, should lend their aid in every way suitable to their office, and the circumstances of the times, to secure the sanctity of the sabbath. The office-bearers of the church should exercise church discipline on sabbath-breakers. It is the duty of *all classes* of persons to testify against this sin, some more privately, and others

more publicly. We should do all we can to expose its enormity, and to check its prevalence. We should complain of it, that if there be a suitable law, that law may be enforced. And if the law of the land be not sufficient, such an enactment should be petitioned for and passed. Nor should we forget to wield the powerful influence of good example and earnest prayer.

It is a serious thought that the prevalent national desecration of the sabbath will expose us to divine wrath, and to national judgments. 'Ye bring more wrath upon Israel,' said Nehemiah, ver. 18, 'by profaning the sabbath.' The following passage in Jeremiah brings before us, in very striking terms, both the promise and the threatening, as a people should observe, or disregard, God's holy day: 'It shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots, and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and this city shall remain for ever.' 'But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.'

Would to God that those who are decided sabbath-breakers would take warning. Reflect, and blush, and be afraid, and tremble, ye who set this day at nought. No reproof would be too sharp for you, no upbraidings too keen.

Let those of us who are on the whole conscientious in this respect, feel admonished and encouraged to improve, when we think of the advantages of the due observances of the day, both to individuals and communities. Scotland is spoken of by other nations as peculiarly distinguished for regard to the sabbath; and it were well that the encomium were more deserved than it is. The Lord grant that a stop may be put to the progress of sabbath desecration in the midst of us, and that the dutiful observance of the sacred day may be universally acknowledged again to characterize the cities and the hamlets of our dear native land! May our Scottish sabbaths be Scottish sabbaths indeed. Never may the day come when foreign opinions and foreign manners shall supplant the truly scriptural sentiments, and the truly scriptural customs, which, along with the most precious civil and religious privileges, come

down to us recommended by the example, and sealed by the martyrdom of our forefathers. At all events, let us resolve, in God's strength, to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. And may our remaining sabbaths on earth prove to us days of profit and pleasure, and foretastes of the joys of that blessed state whose duration shall not be measured by days and weeks, but in which we shall enter on an eternal sabbath where such things shall be seen, and heard, and enjoyed, as will soothe all our old cares into oblivion, and awaken into transport our songs of endless praise.

SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it,'* Psalm cxviii. 24.

WE have often heard it said that dedicating the whole of the sabbath to the public and private exercises of religion must render it a day of *gloom*, and excite a dislike to all its duties; and it is too true that there are many who feel a strong aversion from such a way of spending the day. But then, it becomes us wisely to consider what this proves, and how it can be remedied. It surely does not prove that such strictness is not binding; for, the commandment remains in full force, whether men approve of it, or not. Nor can this dislike ever be remedied by departing from the doctrine of the full sanctification of the sabbath; for, that would be not to reconcile careless men to the sabbath; but to give up the sabbath to careless men. It is true that the employments ought to be judiciously managed and varied, and that direct exercises of worship ought not to be unreasonably protracted: but to yield up any thing of the *principle* of the sabbath, to allow that any part of it should be diverted from sacred to common purposes, that be far from us; for, that would be a carnal and unjustifiable policy, which could never do any good. The plain truth is, that the dislike in question is only one of many symptoms of a state of alienation from God; and, in order to such persons being brought to relish the duties of the Lord's day, something more than an argument on this one point is necessary, namely, a radical change of state and of heart. Where that change has taken place, and vital religion exists in any considerable degree, God's holy day is a day of much enjoyment.

This verse is found in a passage part of which is applied to Christ and gospel times by the apostle Peter, first Epistle ii. 7; and therefore, we have

here the frame of mind described which becomes us on the Lord's day. We are here taught that the law of the sabbath should be not only observed but loved by us, and that we should keep it joyfully and gratefully.

Are we, on this day, to commemorate the great work of the creation of the world? that calls for adoring gratitude and praise. When God 'laid the foundations of the earth,' 'the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy:' and it well becomes us whom he has called into being, when we think of the displays of his wisdom, power, and goodness in his works, to praise him also, and with a solemn yet happy mind, to 'sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.' Above all, what reason of joy do we find in the glorious work of redemption, of the finishing of which our Saviour's resurrection, as on this day of the week, was the chief proof! 'The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.' 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

To the spiritually-minded, the exercises of the Lord's day are truly refreshing and delightful; may they prove so to us! We would take pleasure in acts of prayer and praise. We would regard God's testimonies as the joy and rejoicing of our souls. We would be glad when it is said unto us, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.' We would listen with delight to the preaching of the gospel, the glad tidings of great joy; and seek the blessedness of the people that experimentally know the joyful sound. How happy when we personally realize the blessings of a present salvation, when the light of divine truth shines into our understanding, when the spirit of grace sanctifies and comforts our hearts, when we rejoice in the sense of our heavenly Father's love, when our affections go forth in tenderness and power on every right object, when our faith is strong and our hope lively, when the peace of God that passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, and when we honour, in all his offices, our divine Redeemer, whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

There is another view of the sabbath which should make it a day of rejoicing and gladness to us, and that is as it is a *type of heaven*. This

idea is unfolded in a very full, instructive, and comforting way, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The apostle there treats of the weekly sabbath, the day of rest to be observed by every human being, and of Canaan, the earthly rest provided for the Israelites as a nation, and of both these as a figure of the eternal rest of heaven. 'If Jesus,' that is, Joshua, 'had given them rest,' perfect and perpetual rest, 'then would God not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest,' a sabbatism, or a keeping of a sabbath, 'to the people of God.' 'They who have believed do enter into rest;—believers have rest and peace in Christ; they have rest even in this life, in comparison of the wicked to whom there is no peace, and who are like the troubled sea that cannot rest. But still, their rest 'remaineth,' perfect rest is in store for them in glory; and of this the sabbath of earth in every sense, is a type. Heaven is perfect and eternal rest from labour, sorrow, and sin. Let, then, every day of sacred rest here lead forward our thoughts, our faith, and our hope, to the eternity of rest hereafter. Let us tremble at the idea of coming short of that rest. 'Let us fear, lest a promise being left of us entering in, any of us should seem to come short of it.' 'Let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.' Let us comply with the invitation to come to Christ, and he will give us rest even now. Let us give all diligence to acquire a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. In particular, let us hail the weekly sabbath with gladness; let us improve it to the utmost, as a preparation for the rest that still remains for us; and let it continually keep us in mind of that blissful and glorious state of which it is so instructive and so pleasing an emblem. Dear to us be its opening, its closing, and its every hour: and may the Lord bless to us abundantly the meditation of this present evening.

#### EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,' Exod. xx. 12.*

THE important place assigned to the commandment relating to the duties which children owe to their parents, (for it is placed the first in the second table of the moral law, and next to the commandments which enjoin piety to God himself) is, no doubt, intended to show us the great im-

portance of these duties. While young children, and persons in early life, may be considered as most generally and fully concerned with this commandment, because, in most instances, their parents are alive, and they are usually most dependent on them; it becomes us all to remember that its duties do not cease at any age. Though we may be considerably advanced in life ourselves, yet, if we are so happy as to have both, or either, of our parents spared with us, we are still bound, and should still delight, to cultivate every filial affection, and to discharge every filial duty, as scripture may direct, and circumstances require and permit. The word 'honour' is very fitly and happily chosen, as it is so definite and so strong as to be quite intelligible, and to command attention, and yet so comprehensive as to include all the duties. This commandment is justly viewed as intended to regulate the reciprocal duties of all different classes, in their several relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals. We shall, however, confine our thoughts, at present, to the duties of children to their parents. Of these duties the following are some of the chief.

I. *Reverence*, or respect. 'We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence,' Heb. ix. 9. 'A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master,' Mal. i. 6. Suppose parents have weaknesses and faults, their children should not notice these with pleasure, or with bitterness. They should never think or speak of, or treat their parents with contempt. If parents have estimable qualities, filial affection will recognise these with delight.

II. *Obedience*. 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right,' Eph. vi. 1. 'Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord,' Col. iii. 20. Let us observe the extent of this duty; it should be 'in all things,' 'in the Lord,' that is, in every thing lawful.

III. *Attention to their instruction*. Parents are enjoined to 'teach the things of God diligently to their children,' and 'to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' But, on the supposition that parents are qualified and disposed to do this, in order to success there must be a corresponding readiness to receive instruction. 'My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.'

IV. *Love*. This is due to all, even to our enemies. But the precept of love applies here with singular force. Our hearts must be steeled against every thing that is good, if they are not deeply

impressed with this feeling. There is, indeed, a natural attachment without religion, which is little more than an instinct, but let our filial love be something more and better than this. Let it consist in rational good-will, an enlightened and earnest desire for the welfare of our parents, both in time and in eternity. Let it express itself in affectionate words; and let it appear in the kindness of our actions, in the readiness and satisfaction with which we do all we can to contribute to their external comfort, and their spiritual good. Let it also vent itself in earnest and persevering prayers that the Lord would shower down his richest blessings on their heads.

These are the strongest *reasons* why we should attend to all these duties to our parents. We should honour our parents,

1. Because it is the *express command of God*. Not to advert to other precepts, the fifth commandment is peculiarly positive and solemn. Had we no reason but this, it ought to be enough.

2. We should honour our parents, because it is a debt of *gratitude* due to them. If we have any ingenuous feeling at all, this motive will be irresistible. What have they felt, and suffered, and done for us! What care and kindness did they exercise over us in infancy and childhood! How many restless nights have we cost them! As they sat by our bed-side, or hung over us in our sickness, how did their eyes fill with tears, and their hearts with unutterable tenderness! How have they denied themselves in many respects, that we might want for nothing! And how did they labour and pray for our everlasting welfare! Shall we, then, act an ungrateful, cruel, and undutiful part to such friends as these! Shall we behave so as to grieve those who have so loved us, and to bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? God forbid! We can never altogether repay them; but let us study to do so in as far as we can.

3. We should honour our father and mother, because of the *promise annexed*: 'that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.' 'Honour thy father and thy mother, (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth,' Eph. vi. 2. Dutiful children, by their very dutifulness, are kept out of the way of many evils, have a special promise of God's blessing, and, in so far, are in the likely way to prosperity and long life. All temporal promises, indeed, are conditional, and the particular promise specially annexed to the fifth commandment is to be viewed as made only in so far as it shall be for God's glory and

their own good to those who keep the commandment; but, with that explanation, the promise is not only sure, but precious; indeed, any thing more than this would not deserve to be called a promise.

Let disobedient children repent, ask forgiveness of God for the Saviour's sake, and grieve their parents no more. Let those who are on the whole dutiful to their parents feel admonished to consider wherein they are deficient, that they may supply it; and let them habitually, cheerfully, and affectionately study to promote, in every way, the happiness of those from whom, under God, they derive their existence, and to whom they are bound by the strongest ties of nature and of religion.

#### EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father, or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition,'* Matt. xv. 5, 6.

In the extensive range of meaning to be assigned to the word 'honour' in the fifth commandment, we must remember that it includes the duty of contributing to maintain. So the word signifies in other cases; as in the passage, 'Honour widows that are widows indeed,' 1 Tim. v. 3, 16. Children may generally be said to have nothing but what belongs to their parents, having either received everything from them, or been greatly indebted to them for the means of procuring it. Reason and the common feelings of nature combine in teaching, that to neglect one's parents when they are in distress and poverty, is most inhuman. As for scripture, it enjoins the duty of relieving them in the strongest terms. What is included in this respect, in the word 'honour,' is plainly and fully expressed in 1 Tim. v. 4, 16, 'if any widow have children, or nephews, (grandchildren,) let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God.' 'If any man or woman that believeth have widows (really destitute,) let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.' If their parents stand in need of it, it is the duty of children to minister to their wants, and afford them pecuniary assistance, according to their ability.

The incumbency of this duty is also insisted on by our Lord, in the passage before us this

evening. He had brought forward against the Scribes and Pharisees the general charge of transgressing the commandments of God by their traditions; and here he substantiates a particular example. The law of God enjoining filial duty was express, and it was enforced on the Jews by the most awful sanctions; but their blind guides found an expedient by which it might be quite evaded. The Scribes and Pharisees taught, 'Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, 'It is a gift,' (Mark vii. 11, 'Corban') 'by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free;' (in Mark) 'And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother.' Some are of opinion, that this means, that it was taught that a man by simply having made a vow that he would not give anything to his parents, was thereby religiously released, nay, bound up from doing so. And, no doubt, this idea is involved. But on the whole, and especially when it is considered that the Hebrew word Corban signified any offering, any thing given, devoted, or consecrated to God by a worshipper in approaching him; the meaning of this seems to be, that these teachers inculcated, that if any man chose to devote any part of his substance, or what he could spare, to the sacred treasury, he was free from the duty of assisting his parents, nay, it then became sin in him to assist them. That was entirely reversing the maxim, 'God will have mercy, and not (or rather than) sacrifice.' It was like what became so common under the great apostacy from pure Christianity, namely, giving or bequeathing property to the church, or to religious houses; and charitable endowments, under the influence of superstition, or terror of conscience, or in the expectation of thereby purchasing salvation, while the calls of ordinary benevolence, and the just claims of near relations were neglected. In some countries, a great part of the land had in this way fallen into the hands of the Romish priests. In the charters making over these gifts, this was a common form,—'For my own salvation, for the salvation of my predecessors, for the salvation of my successors, and for the salvation of my wife, &c., I give and bequeath to God and the church,' &c. This was always a complete supplanting of the scriptural doctrines of the atonement, faith, and justification, and often a sinful neglect of the claims of relations and friends. Monastic vows fall justly under the same condemnation, as amounting, in all cases, to a dereliction of the duties owing to the public, and, in many cases, to a cruel disregard and desertion of parents and other relations. Of all such

excuses for neglecting one's parents, it may be truly said, that they are not piety, but superstition and injustice, and displeasing to God. 'I hate robbery for burnt-offering,' saith the Lord. What hypocrisy or delusion must influence those who can hold that it is in their power so to bind themselves by a vow, as that they shall not be able, without great sin, to do what the law of God requires, and that their vow must stand, though his law should be thereby made void!

Let such notions be far from children professing godliness. Let them beware, too, of what are much more frequent causes of such cruel neglect in our day, thoughtless extravagance, and base selfishness: for there are too many who will not live frugally, or deny themselves in any respect, but who will have their own desires gratified, though their parents should be pining in neglected age and want. Instead of this, let us, if our parents are in need of pecuniary aid, cheerfully render it, in so far as we have it in our power, other claims of equal urgency being attended to. Let us also remember that there are other ways of promoting their comfort which we should carefully adopt. One of these is, a discreet, wise, pious, and virtuous conduct. 'A wise son maketh a glad father,' says Solomon, 'but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.' 'My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.' There are various kinds of attention too, which the truly filial disposition will suggest, and the truly parental heart will appreciate. If they do not live in the same family with us, we should, if possible, see them frequently. We should study to promote their bodily comfort. We should, with that respect which is due to the relation they bear to us, affectionately encourage them to attend to the things which belong to their everlasting peace. We should cheer them with our company and conversation. We should patiently and kindly bear with their infirmities. We should nurse and comfort them in pain and sickness; and do all we can to enliven and brighten the cloudy evening of their days.

'Me, let the tender office long engage  
To rock the cradle of reposing age;  
With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,  
Make languor smile, and smooth the bed of death.'

#### NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it,'  
Prov. xxx. 17.

WE are here called on to meditate on the character and the doom of the undutiful child.

1. On his *character*. In what black colours is it here drawn! and how should it be abhorred! There are such monsters. 'There is,' says Solomon in the 11th verse, 'a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.' There is, in every age, a race who form a party, associate together, and encourage, and irritate each other to disobey and insult their parents. They even curse them; or at least, they do not bless them, or pray for them, which is a kindred wickedness. The disobedient son is represented as 'mocking at his father.' Sometimes this mockery is in words, and sometimes in actions: but here it is described as in the looks, 'the eye mocketh.' The eye is an index to the feelings of the heart. We can distinguish a look of distress, a look of joy, a look of fear, a look of expectation, a look of love, a look of hatred, a look of respect, a look of contempt. Alas for the child whose eye mocketh at his father, who regards his father with looks of sourness, doggedness, impatience, anger, defiance, and disdain! If such be the expressions of his eye, what wickedness must there be in his heart! God will certainly reckon with him, as for his words and actions, so for his very looks, which indicate such inward depravity. The eye of such an undutiful child also 'despiseth to obey his mother.' He not only does not obey her, but he looks at her in a way that shows that he would think it below him to obey her, and spurns at the thought. She is the weaker of the parents, and his base and cruel spirit takes advantage of that. He presumes on her sex, and on her age and infirmities, if she be old and infirm; and though he should not say it in so many words, he declares it in as cutting a way, he declares by rebellious and contemptuous looks, that he will not be controlled by her, and that he despises her. Of what wickedness is not fallen humanity capable!

2. *The doom* of the undutiful child. How awful the threatening here denounced against him! The words seem to point to the case of a criminal that has been condemned and hanged, and left to hang; or to that of a man slain in battle, or in some more private way, whose body is left unburied, till, as soon happened in countries where birds of prey abounded, ravens, or eagles, lighting on their carcases to devour them, picked out their eyes, and gave them to their young ones to eat.

According to the law of Moses, the obstinately undutiful son was to be punished with death. 'If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chas-

tened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of the city, and unto the gates of his place: and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die: so shalt thou put away evil from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear.' Though the law of our nation does not attach capital punishment to this crime, we have a striking proof of its exceeding heinousness in the circumstance that such was the punishment under the Old Testament dispensation.

We have an example of death and ruin coming on undutiful children, in the sons of Eli, as related in the second book of Samuel. Though Eli did not exercise proper authority to restrain them when they made themselves vile, he did say to them, 'Why do ye such things? Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear.' 'Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father.' The Lord therefore foretold, by Samuel, the destruction of Eli's house; and his sons were slain by the Philistines.—Absalom furnishes another example. He was guilty of the shocking wickedness of rebelling against his wise and affectionate father, and seeking his life. But let us think of him suspended from the tree as accursed, pierced through the heart with three darts, and buried with ignominy; and we shall see the Lord's abhorrence of the rebellion of children against their parents, and what should make us tremble at the thought of the crime.

It is not, indeed, to be inferred from such threatenings and examples that all rebellious children will be brought to a violent death, and their carcases devoured by birds and beasts of prey, and their bones left to bleach in the winds: but many instances occur of a premature and ignominious end, as the result of a career began in disobedience to parents; and it may here be justly apprehended that heavy providential judgments will overtake such transgressors in the majority of cases. At all events, those who despise their parents are a disgrace to humanity, and an abomination to the Lord. If they continue unpardoned and impenitent in that state of sin, they must perish for ever; and they must expect to die in misery. 'Whoso curseth his father, or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.'

Let every undutiful child, of every age, take warning. Let none of them say, 'I allow that this description of rebellious children is awful, and

that they deserve to suffer; but I am not so bad as this, and therefore, I need not fear.' If they are bad at all, knowingly and wilfully bad, they are in the direct way to become as bad as this. If they do not stop short resolutely, and alter their course, they will be like other 'evil men and seducers, who wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,' till they become a terror to themselves, and intolerable to God. Let them not stifle the remonstrances of conscience. Let them not despise the warnings of God's word. Let them humble themselves before the Lord, cast themselves on his mercy through the Redeemer, and ask the assistance of his Holy Spirit to enable them to act a different part for the future. Let them seek not only to escape the curse on filial disobedience, but to obtain the blessing on filial piety. So shall they yet obtain peace of mind themselves, and rejoice the hearts of their parents which they have pierced through with many sorrows.

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NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it,'*  
Prov. xxiii. 6.

WHATEVER assistance parents may employ, they are not at liberty entirely to transfer to others the work of training their children; and they are especially bound personally to instruct them, as well as to see that they are instructed, in religion. These words, then, must be considered as most immediately addressed to parents; and yet they are not to be confined to parents, for they plainly apply to teachers, and to all who are in any way concerned in the education of the young.

Training is absolutely necessary for the safety, prosperity, and happiness, of the young, as they are incapable of guiding themselves. Accordingly, the divine command to train them is express; and the same word that contains the command, also contains both general and particular directions as to the way in which it should be followed out. Children are to be 'trained in the way they should go.' Doubtless, they should be instructed in such secular knowledge as is calculated to enable them to gain a livelihood, and to pass creditably and comfortably through the present state of existence: but their education should not be confined to this; nay, this cannot be considered as wisely aimed at, if spiritual instruction be not imparted, and if the chief and ultimate end be not the salvation of their souls. Their whole being should

be taken into account, from the first, and throughout the whole process. They should be trained for time and for eternity. Of how little avail to them would be earthly prosperity and fame, if they were to live estranged from God, die in sin, and perish for ever! There is much implied in the word *training*. It implies communicating knowledge, giving instruction, informing the understanding. It implies that useful and saving truth be conveyed to the intellect, and impressed on the memory. But proper training implies much more. It is the training of the conscience to correct the tender feelings, and of the will to choose the good and refuse the evil, and of the affections to delight in the divine law, and to love God and man.

The way in which children should go, and of course, the way in which they should be trained, is the way of faith and holiness. It is the way of *faith*, the gospel way. It is not enough to give them some vague ideas of what unenlightened men call religion; they should be trained in the religion of the Bible. Some only tell children to be good, without telling them how they may become good. They should be instructed, as soon as possible, in the knowledge of their own sinfulness, and of the necessity and method of pardon through Christ, and regeneration by the Spirit. Children can understand the leading truths of the gospel as soon as most other things that require thought; nay, the display of the love of God in Christ is peculiarly calculated to arrest their attention, and to gain their hearts. Let there be no delay in leading the young to the Saviour. This is his own language, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.' They should be trained also in the way of *holiness*. They should be fully and carefully taught their duty to God, to love him, to reverence him, to pray to him, to obey him, to keep his sabbath, and to attend his courts. They should be trained to the knowledge and practice of their duties to their parents, teachers, and friends, and to all men. They should be trained to honesty, truth, charity, purity, self-denial, diligence, and humility.

How great the encouragement held forth to such a training of children in the promise that if they are trained up in the right way, *they will not depart from it!* Such a result may be calculated on generally, though in some instances the best human means may fail. Of course, in order to secure the permanence of the effects of a good Christian education, a decided impression must be made on the mind. Early instruction is most likely to be successful and lasting, because, though children are sinners by nature, they are

not hardened by habits of actual sin, and because they most readily submit to be taught, and are most capable of receiving new ideas and impressions. Unquestionably, those who are early trained in the right way do not easily, or ordinarily, forsake it. Results have shown that the far greater number of those who have proved eminently pious in advanced life, were well trained in childhood and youth. Samuel, Solomon, and Timothy are eminent examples of this. Failure in many cases might, doubtless, be traced to faults in the training, either amounting to a radical and sinful want of piety, or care, or prayerfulness, or consisting in a great want of judgment and good management. There are cases, too, which, though they may at first sight appear exceptions to the rule, are, in fact, proofs and illustrations of it. The apostle Paul, for example, was an enemy and persecutor of the Christians when first mentioned in scripture. He had received much religious instruction, however, in youth, for he was 'brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,' and 'profited in the Jewish religion above many of his equals in his own nation:' and though no good effect of this appeared for a considerable time, the knowledge he had acquired in early life of the Old Testament, was evidently of much service to him personally and officially, after his conversion.

Well would it be if all parents were conscientious in doing their utmost to instruct their children in the knowledge, and to bring them under the influence of the truth. Would to God that they always acted, in this respect, as those who are to give an account. In most cases, they would soon see the fruit of their labour. Nor, though they may have to wait long, let them be so discouraged as to desist. Let them persevere in labours, and prayers, and affectionate intreaties, and they have every encouragement to hope that their endeavours will not ultimately prove in vain. Augustine, who at last proved such an ornament and blessing to the church of Christ, was very obstinate and ungodly in his youthful years. His pious mother persevered in labours and prayers for him for nine years, apparently without any good effect. When she went, in agony, to a certain bishop, to beseech him to try what his interference could do, he could say nothing that would satisfy her, till at last, when she was pressing him with much weeping, he said, 'Go away, good woman: it is impossible that the child of such tears should perish.'

## TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes,'* Prov. xiii. 24.

THERE are some theorists on education who argue strenuously for banishing punishment of every kind, especially corporeal punishment. Unquestionably, it is not to any thing of that nature that those who are engaged in endeavouring to train up children in the paths of religion, should look chiefly for success. On the contrary, punishment, in whatever form, ought always to be had recourse to with reluctance, and ought to be entirely avoided where it can safely be dispensed with. Whatever effect compulsion may have in forwarding the mere mechanical part of instruction, it can never succeed in producing true piety. It is impossible to compel children to open their hearts; their will may be gained, but it cannot be forced. Gentleness and affection are the chief means, under the divine blessing, of winning them to the love of Christ, and to the practice of Christian duty. And yet, gentleness and affection must be accompanied with firmness and faithfulness; for, if the latter qualities be wanting, the former will degenerate into weakness, and produce contempt.

It is too much for self-conceited men to rise up against the wisdom and express commandment of the Lord, and utterly to condemn what he clearly teaches to be sometimes necessary. It is certainly much better if children can be well managed without the rod, or corporeal chastisement: but there are cases in which this cannot be, and there is no need for running from the one extreme of harshness into the other of the relaxation of all discipline. Natural depravity exists in all children; and where it produces a spirit of disobedience and obstinacy which cannot be otherwise overcome, measures ought to be adopted of greater or less severity, according to the strength of the evil to be met.

The scriptural authority for such discipline is express. 'He that spareth his rod,' forbears altogether to punish, or ceases till he carry the point, 'hateth his son,' that is, acts as if he hated him: if he hated him, and intended to injure him, he could not do him a greater injury than not to correct him, when his disobedience, and wickedness, and obstinacy required it. 'But he that loveth' his son 'chasteneth him betimes,' begins the discipline very early. The salutary restraint should be commenced in infancy, and continued and thoroughly established in childhood. If the principle and habit of submission to authority, and

of the restraining of evil passions, be established very early, parents will find it easy afterwards to rule by argument and affection, and safe to treat their children with the utmost confidence and tenderness. Too great indulgence is a great evil: it leads to still more unreasonable and improper expectations, and entirely defeats the ends for which it is usually resorted to, namely, the ease of the parent; and the pleasing and the securing of the affections of the child. If faults be not inquired into, or if they be passed over and allowed to be persevered in, lest a child should cry, or look sad; the bad consequences will soon appear. Better that a child should cry while it is salutary, than that his parents should weep in vain, in seeing his wickedness confirmed for life, and ruining his soul for eternity. 'Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying,' Prov. xix. 18. If he see that he can gain his object by a few tears, he will not be slack in availing himself of that means of extorting compliance. And then, if by such mistaken lenity, which is real cruelty, he get the mastery in childhood, it will seldom be practicable to reduce him to obedience afterwards, except by far greater severity than would have been necessary at first; a severity which may prove hurtful, and which at all events must be dangerous and painful.

It should always be remembered that correction constitutes but a small part of parental government. That government includes the whole plan pursued to secure obedience, attention, and improvement, and to check all evil. It includes advice, praise, blame, reproof, expostulation, influence, rewards judiciously chosen, putting to shame, depriving of enjoyments and many other things. It should never be lost sight of that the good of the child is the great end to be aimed at. In order to be effectual, too, correction should always be accompanied with instruction, or tuition: indeed, the same word which in some texts is rendered 'correction,' is in others rendered 'instruction.' Nor is it enough to form children to obedience and habits of application, and to impart to them varied knowledge; they should be disciplined to self-denial and the government of their passions. It is of much importance, also, that the system pursued be well balanced, of the same tenour, consistent with itself, unremitted, and steadily followed out. No pains should be spared, no labours should be grudged, where failure would be so grievous, and where success would be so important.

Eli was unquestionably a pious man; yet here was one great defect in his character, 1 Sam. ii. iii. iv. While his history is a warning to all, it

is especially so to pious, but to easy and indulgent parents. The indulgence of the wayward inclinations of children, and neglecting to do all they can authoritatively to check them, are offences which the Lord will severely chastise in his own people. It is true that the most judicious discipline may fail: but when scriptural means have been faithfully employed and a failure ensues, the blame is all on one side.

As it is the duty of parents to govern, and, if necessary, to correct, their children, so it is the duty of children to submit readily to such government and correction, and not by obstinacy to render very severe measures indispensable. Both parents and children may derive much instruction from the way in which our Heavenly Father corrects the members of his family. As the word of God illustrates the afflictive dispensations of providence by comparisons drawn from parental discipline and corresponding filial duty among men, these comparisons plainly teach what the reciprocal conduct of parents and children ought to be in this respect. The Lord unites discipline with instruction. He has various means of carrying his point with the objects of his love; and one of these is the rod of his displeasure. 'Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.' 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.'

#### TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' Eph. vi. 4.*

OF the proneness of men to run into extremes, the parental management of children furnishes a frequent example. The wise man reminds parents of the necessity of maintaining discipline with a steady hand, and even declares that 'he that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.' As, however, there is, on the one hand, an extreme of laxity, so there is, on the other, an extreme of severity, which should be guarded against with equal care. 'Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.' Take care lest by an unkind, repulsive, overbearing, and tyrannical behaviour in general, and by rigorous, excessive, cruel, and unrelenting severity on some particular occasions, you entirely alienate their affections, and irritate them into feelings of dislike and indignation which may lurk

secretly and sullenly in their hearts, and prejudice them against yourselves and your instructions, or even so exasperate them as to lead them to break out in the language and actions of violent rage. It is true that such mismanagement does not excuse the wickedness of children, but it often awfully occasions it. When parents are constantly finding fault, and never commend what is right, or speak in accents of encouragement; when they are in the habit of confounding the distinction between obstinately wilful faults, and mere thoughtless inadvertencies; their children are ready to think it is impossible to please them, and therefore needless to try, and are in danger of hating their company, and becoming altogether reckless of character and consequences. See examples, Gen. xxxi. 14; 1 Sam. xx. 30.

When children are of a bold temper, such harsh treatment irritates and hardens them. When, on the contrary, they are of a soft, timid, and very tender disposition, severity has the effect of breaking their spirits, crushing their energies, and filling them with terror and misery. 'Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged,' Col. iii. 21. How cruel to oppress a not very clever it may be, but gentle child, so as, at all events, to keep him in a state of constant alarm and misery in the meantime, and probably, to render him unfit to pass through the world with advantage, after his spirits have been so unreasonably and so unmercifully broken by a heavy yoke in the early years of life!

Temper, disposition, opportunities, and the various kinds and degrees of misconduct in children, should be carefully studied, and judiciously met with corresponding treatment. Correction administered without discrimination, or distinction, is foolish, and must be injurious. What may be hardly enough to subdue one, may be absolute cruelty to another.

Having cautioned parents against excessive severity to their children, the apostle proceeds to exhort them positively to 'bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;' that is, carefully to train them in such a course of discipline and instruction united, as forms a religious education, and as is calculated to lead them to know, believe in, love, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ. There seems also to be here an allusion to that particular mode of instruction which is commonly called catechising, which is peculiarly adapted to children, and which is practically found to be of most excellent use.

If parents wish to succeed in interesting their children on the side of religion, and cordially attaching them to themselves and what is good,

they should proceed, not only with firmness and faithfulness, but also with real and obvious affection. Whoever would be instrumental in winning the hearts of the young to the Saviour, cannot adopt a better model than that of the apostle Paul: 'We were gentle among you,' said he, 'even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.'

Moreover, if parents wish to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord, they must set them a *good example*. The force of example, either for good or for evil, is very great, even on grown-up persons; but it is especially great on young children. They are constantly seen imitating others, (and especially those whom they love and admire), in the actions and customs of common life. The same principle prevails in the formation of their religious and moral character; it operates with fatal influence in leading them into sin; and it would be equally powerful in leading them to holiness, were it not for their natural depravity, which renders a higher than any human influence necessary for bringing them into a state of salvation, and forming them to the divine image. Of how little avail, in most instances, is even good advice, when the example of those who give it leads in the opposite direction! How happy, however, the influence of a prudent, pious, consistent life! Children are much more observant of the conduct of their parents than many think, and often their good example is remembered, after all their advices are forgotten, and they are silent in the grave.

In addition to all this, parents should ever accompany the means they employ for the religious education of the children with earnest prayer to God. No discipline, or instruction, no means however wise, or persevering, can be sufficient of themselves, savingly to illuminate the mind, or to renew the heart. For this, which always ought to be the chief object at which they aim, they must look to the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. Parents, therefore, should teach their children how to pray, and accustom them to the exercise of prayer. They should pray for them fully and earnestly, in secret. They should pray with them, one by one. They should pray with them all together, in family worship. So David 'returned to bless his household;' and Jacob blessed his sons, and thus prayed for his two grandsons, 'The angel who redeemed me from all evil bless the lads.' May the Lord guide Christian parents to the prudent, affection-

ate, faithful, prayerful, and persevering discharge of the duties of parental government and instruction; and may he open the understandings and hearts of their offspring, giving them an humble and teachable disposition, and creating a clean heart, and renewing a right spirit within them.

ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it,'*  
Eph. v. 25.

How intimate and endearing the conjugal relation! If things are as they ought to be, and as they often are, husband and wife are one in residence, in property, in feeling, in desire, in affection. They are to each other the most valued society; and absence only makes them more sensible of the strength of the chain that binds them together. They contrive and act together, for each other's advantage and happiness. They do all they can to ward off evil, and to secure good for each other. They mutually make known their secrets, and unbosom their cares. What is lost to the one, is lost to the other; and what is gained to the one, is gained to the other. Their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, their comforts and bereavements, are mutual. Each would willingly undergo pain to relieve the other. Their distresses are alleviated by each other's sympathy; and their enjoyments are doubled by the circumstance of their being shared with the object whose happiness is dearer to each party than its own. They commune together, and read together, and pray together, for their soul's eternal welfare; they take sweet counsel together, and go into the house of God in company. Nor is the attachment lessened by time, or change of circumstances; it rather grows according to the time it has existed; and the very inroads of age and of increasing infirmities only render it more certain and more tender. And then, with what affecting interest is this relation invested by the consideration that it is for life! 'What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' A tie is formed by marriage which is only dissolved by the dissolution of one of the parties. When two thus join hands and hearts, on together they go, till death come in between them, and bid them part.

As, however, this connection is productive of so much happiness, where things are as they ought to be, so, on the other hand, how great the misery which it occasions when the proper char-

acter, temper, and conduct, are wanting! Where there is neither sincere attachment, nor good principle, where there is nothing but alienation, distrust, suspicion, strife, hatred, confusion, and every evil work, what a complication of miseries is there! What wretchedness for life! and what danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience for ever!

And how may these dreadful evils be evaded, and the opposite advantages secured in the married state? Plainly, by the conscientious discharge of its duties on both sides. Most of these duties are mutual, though we are, at present, concerned chiefly with conjugal duties as they relate to the husband. These duties are summed up in the one word '*love*.' '*Husbands, love your wives.*' This should include what is commonly called love. Such love, in the rational sense of decided preference and cordial attachment, (though not in any foolish and romantic sense), is necessary to the true happiness of the married state. But in addition to this, there should be Christian love, enlightened benevolence, a wishing well in every way. Now, one peculiar feature of Christian love is that it takes the soul into account, and desires to promote the spiritual and eternal welfare of its object. This love in the most extensive sense, once kindled, should be carefully cherished. Married persons should guard against whatever would destroy, or damp it. They should '*leave off strife before it be meddled with;*' and, if any slight misunderstanding unhappily arise, they should not follow out keenly the cause of dispute, but should drop it, and be thoroughly reconciled, as soon as possible.

The duty of love especially requires on the part of the husband, as well as of the wife, *faithfulness to the marriage vow*. Let no man '*deal treacherously against the wife of his youth;*' she is his companion, and the wife of his covenant.'

Supposing husbands to be faithful and inwardly affectionate, their *love should be manifested in their words and actions*, in the whole way in which they treat their wives. Let not the head become a tyrant, and quarrel with his partner for every trifle, and deny her reasonable comforts, and abuse, or grieve her, by opprobrious or unkind language, and act so overbearing a part to her, as shall at all events, render her life unhappy, and as may even break her heart, and shorten her days. Where is he that is guilty of conduct so inhuman? Let him stand forward, if not to the hiss and execration of the community, at least as a beacon to others; and let the husband that cannot now bear even to think of such conduct beware of all approaches to it.

This love requires that instead of acting with bitterness and severity, the husband should treat his wife with the greatest positive kindness, and show her the most substantial, practical proofs of his high regard. He should attend to whatever is agreeable and serviceable to her, and calculated to promote her external comfort; and he should above all, (as has been already noticed), be studious to advance her spiritual good. His love should also appear in doing well-meant actions in a kind manner. And if he desire to make his wife happy, he must be very circumspect in his conduct. He must be industrious, prudent, economical, temperate, pious.

So intimate, so delightful, and so endearing is this relation, that it has no parallel in ordinary life. Its like is only to be found in the connection which subsists between Christ and his church. The love of the husband to the wife cannot, indeed, equal that of Christ to the church, nor can it in any degree be of the same kind in respect of meritorious and mediatorial nature; but there are some features in which it should be like it. It should resemble his in sincerity and tenderness, and in being ready to do and suffer any thing for the welfare of its object; and it should resemble his in its faithfulness and duration, for 'having loved his own, he loved them unto the end!' Happy pair, where such the enlightened and Christian love on the one side, and such the dutiful attachment on the other! Mutual blessings in this life, they are connected together by a tie stronger and more lasting than that of marriage, a tie which death itself cannot dissever, even the tie of grace which will be acknowledged in the world of spirits, where 'they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.'

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body,'* Eph. v. 22, 23.

IMPORTANT to the prosperity and happiness of domestic life as is dutiful conduct on the part of the husband, dutiful conduct on the part of the wife is no less so. Unless the example and exertions of the former be met by those of the latter, the good effect will be entirely destroyed, or much weakened. Of the duties of the married state, as was noticed under the preceding article, many are quite mutual; and, indeed, some are so much

the same as not to require any separate consideration. This is the case, for example, with the duty of faithfulness to the marriage vow. The duty of love, too, is equally incumbent on the wife, and it should be carefully cherished by her, and should manifest itself in those peculiar forms which are called for by the place she occupies in the household. It is her duty, also, as well as his, to avoid all bitterness, and to be placid, gentle, contented, forbearing, and kind, in temper, language, and conduct. As it is his to show her every practical proof of regard, so it is hers to do all she can to make him comfortable and happy in his house at home. As it is his diligently to provide the means of support for his wife and family, so it is hers frequently to do more or less for the same objects, and always to economize these means in the domestic arrangements. In the great majority of cases, it is the duty of the wife, as mistress of the family, diligently, wisely, frugally, and charitably, to contrive, direct, superintend, and manage, the expenditure, the food, the clothing, and the general affairs of the household. She who does all this well is indeed a great treasure to her husband. Of such a 'virtuous woman,' Solomon gives the following beautiful and instructive description: 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hand to the needy. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.'

Peculiar, however, to one party in this relation, there is one duty, the idea of which, it is to be feared, is not always agreeable to the natural pride and self-will of that party, but which cannot be denied by any conscientious and Christian woman, and that is the duty, on the part of the wife, of *obedience*, or submission to the will of her husband. Not to insist on the natural foundation laid for this in the superior strength and enterprise of the men—the word of God is quite explicit on the subject. 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands

in every thing.' See 1 Cor. xi. 3, 9; Eph. v. 22, &c.; Col. iii. 18; 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2, 5, 6.

Unquestionably, this duty of obedience is not without limitation. It is binding only 'in the Lord,'—in conformity with Christian principles, and in so far as what is required is not inconsistent with the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of both parties. Neither of the parties is to yield to the other in any thing sinful. The husband should stand firm against the solicitations of the wife, when they would draw him away from the Lord. See Deut. xiii. 6; Judg. xiv. 16; 1 Kings xxi. 25; Acts v. 1—11. With the exception of things sinful, however, the wife should conscientiously and cheerfully comply with the known and declared will of the husband. Nor need she fear that this will lower her true dignity, or happiness; for, it will exalt, not degrade her, and will go far to secure for her contentment and peace. The duty she owes him is represented as bearing some resemblance in reverence, strength, and faithfulness, to the duty the church owes to Christ, who is not only the head of the church, but the head of all relations, in whom they have all their sweetness and gracious efficacy.

Husbands and wives are *mutually and equally bound to study to promote, in every scriptural way, each other's spiritual welfare and salvation.* With this leading end, they should come together, and continue to live together. They should read together, and converse together, on the things of God: they should encourage each other in all piety and goodness: and they should pray together for those influences of the Holy Spirit without which no union and no care can secure piety, virtue, and peace. As the apostle Peter expresses it, they should live 'as being heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered.' The great influence which this most intimate connection is calculated to exert for good, or for evil, should weigh powerfully, with single persons who fear the Lord, against marrying those who are void of religion. If such an ill-sorted alliance has been contracted, he, or she, that believeth should both guard against being drawn away from God, and also use all prudent methods to win over the other party.

Finally, let husbands and wives be stirred up to the careful performance of all their relative duties by the thought of their coming separation and final account. Let them be duly impressed with the transitory nature of all earthly relations, and look forward to the hour of death and the day of judgment. 'The time is short: it re-

maineth that both they that have wives,' (and by parity of reason, they that have husbands, or other connections), 'be as though they had none; for the fashion of this world passeth away.' Let them seriously consider and suitably improve this affecting and awakening thought, and they will be blessings to each other. Indeed as long as they sojourn together here below, they will be lovely and pleasant in their lives; and if death should divide them for a time, they will soon meet again to part no more for ever.

#### TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven,' Col. iv. 1.

LET masters, all who have any persons in the capacity of servants in their house, or in any employment under them, take heed to this solemn admonition to conduct themselves towards them as the dictates of common justice and the sacred obligations of the Christian religion require. Be it remembered, too, that, making allowance for obvious differences in some circumstances, under the duties of masters those of mistresses are to be ranked.

One duty which masters owe to their servants, and that which seems to be here most directly intended, is the duty of giving them reasonable *wages*. According to the nature and value of the services, the wants of those who serve, and also, in some respects, the ability of the employer, the remuneration should be, not in a cruel and nigardly way, screwed down to the lowest farthing, but bestowed liberally and cheerfully to the extent, and at the time promised. 'Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy;' 'at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be a sin unto thee.'

The duty of masters, however, is not completed by the payment of reasonable wages as stipulated; there is committed to them a very comprehensive and important trust somewhat like the parental. It is their duty to consult the general *temporal comfort* of their servants. They should treat them with *humanity*. They should only require of them what is *lawful* in nature, and *reasonable* in degree. They should not proudly refuse to listen to what they have to say in their own defence, or for their own benefit. 'If I did

despise the cause of my man-servant,' said Job, 'or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then should I do, when God riseth up? and, when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us?' They should not rule over them with *rigour*, but fear the Lord, Eph. vi. 9: 'And, ye masters, do the same things unto them; act on similar good principles towards your servants, *'forbearing threatening,'* abstaining from violent and menacing language. Let the account of Nabal (1 Sam. xxv.) serve as a beacon to warn masters against such rudeness and violence. 'The man was churlish, and evil in his doings.' 'He is such a son of Belial,' said one of his servants, 'that a man cannot speak to him.' Masters should consider what the strength of their servants is able to endure, what rest and accommodation they require, and what are their infirmities. They should be *kind* to them when they are *sick*, after the beautiful example of the centurion mentioned in the seventh chapter of Luke. They should *not be too difficult to please*; nor should they be constantly finding fault. Their servants must have uncommonly good tempers indeed, if such treatment do not sour them. While masters should be at liberty to point out what they wish altered, they should, at the same time, notice with approbation what is right, and make reasonable allowance for infirmities and occasional mistakes. Masters and mistresses should not take up vulgar and idle prejudices against servants, as if they were almost all, or even generally, unreasonable and unprincipled. 'If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked,' Prov. xxix. 12. It would be well, if instead of employers dwelling on the faults of their servants, or servants dwelling on the faults of their employers, each party would endeavour to discover and reform their own; for then would the interest and comfort of both be indirectly indeed, but surely and greatly promoted.

Masters should be *sensible of the value* of good and faithful servants; they should reward such, proportionally to the length and value of their services; and especially if they remain with them, they should not cast them off, but *provide for them, if possible, in old age*. In some cases, servants have deserved to be treated, and have actually been treated, almost like children of the family. 'A wise servant shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren,' Prov. xvii. 2. And good and faithful servants should be mourned for when they are removed by death. 'Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried beneath

Bethel, under an oak; and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth,' that is, the oak of weeping.

But if masters are to acquit their consciences, and do justice to their servants, they must also *seek their spiritual good*. Let them watch over their morals. Let them do what they can to regulate their conversation and actions. Let them aim at their conversion to God; or at their edification, if they are already under the influence of the truth. Let them instruct and admonish them, in a way suited to their age, character, and progress. Let them read to them, and hear them read, the word of God, and furnish them with other useful books. 'I know him,' said the Lord, of Abraham, 'that he will command his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' They should assemble them to family worship, like David, 'who returned to bless his household.' They should, according to the fourth commandment, enjoin on them, and give them every facility to the observance of the sabbath, and attendance on the sanctuary. And authoritative injunction and affectionate entreaty should always be accompanied with a consistent example. Every head of a family should adopt and act on the principles of the Psalmist, 'I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O! when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.'

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#### TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,'* Eph. vi. 5, 6.

HOWEVER some may ignorantly and discontentedly complain of the inequalities of human condition, it is a wise and benevolent arrangement of divine providence that such inequalities should be found. They tend, in many ways, to promote the comfort of our kind; and it is difficult to conceive how any desirable state of society could exist without them. The condition of servitude has arisen, in some cases from inequality of abilities, but in many more, from inequality of property. When a state of servitude is for life, and altogether independent on the will of those who are under it, it is called slavery, than which state nothing can be more subversive of the rights, and happiness, and improvement of our species.

Voluntary service, for a stipulated recompense, and for a stipulated time, is highly conducive to the interest of both master and servant. In this kind of service, however, as if anxious to depart as far as possible from the justly-aborred condition of slavery, or perpetual servitude, many are too ready to run into the extreme of frequent changes. When, indeed, parties are so ill-assorted that they cannot be comfortable, the best thing they can do is to part in peace: but to change needlessly, from caprice, or merely for the sake of change, is unfeeling and injudicious. A considerable time is, in general, necessary for the formation, on either side, of that attachment which may afterwards prove very useful. If servants would consult their own advantage and happiness let them seek, at all events, a safe employment, and, if possible, a situation favourable to their religious character; let them be contented with their lot and provision suited to it; and let them set themselves to the zealous discharge of its duties.

One of their leading duties is *obedience*. 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters.' That is, they should obey, to the utmost of their ability, all their lawful commands; for, if any thing sinful be required, it should by no means be yielded to. Servants, like all others, should act on the principle of obeying God rather than man. They should obey 'with fear and trembling,'—not with slavish terror, but with a fear of doing wrong,—with the utmost care to avoid displeasing them, and as feeling the inferiority of their own station. Another duty they owe to their masters is a *respectful carriage*. 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour,' 1 Tim. vi. 1. An assuming and haughty behaviour would be very unbecoming in them, as would disrespectful language. Though they may calmly state whatever can be truly advanced in vindication of themselves; they should never give rude and surly replies: this is the meaning of the prohibition in Tit. ii. 9, 'Not answering again.' A third duty of servants is *diligence*. The slothful servant is a wicked servant; Matt. xxv. 26. The master requires a property in the time of the servant; and if the servant do not employ it and improve it for his master's benefit, he is guilty of injustice. Again, *faithfulness* is one of the leading duties of servants, and includes several things. It includes perfect freedom from positive dishonesty. Servants have often much of their masters' property in their power, and they cannot be too careful in preserving integrity. This principle should be carried out by them in mat-

ters of small value, as well as of great:—'Not purloining,' or secretly keeping back, or abstracting, any thing, 'but shewing all good fidelity,' Tit. ii. 10. Faithfulness also requires that they do not waste, abuse, or neglect the property committed to their care, but manage and husband it well. Servants should exert themselves to conduct their employers' affairs to the best advantage; and they should not knowingly suffer them to be wronged by others. Faithfulness requires servants to take a general interest in the welfare and comfort of the family in which they serve. The passage at the head of this exercise enjoins '*singleness*,' or sincerity, '*of heart*;' and cautions against '*eye-service*.' Servants must not be satisfied with exerting themselves and doing well when the eye of their earthly masters or mistresses is upon them: but they must sincerely study to fulfil their duties at all times, and whether any human eye see them or not. They should also go about all this service with *cheerfulness*:—not as a painful drudgery, or as forced, but with readiness and alacrity, 'with good will doing service,' Eph. vi. 7. Such servants greatly promote the temporal prosperity and comfort of families.

It is of importance to notice that servants are bound to be obedient, respectful, and faithful, whatever be the character of their masters, or their behaviour towards them. 'Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully,' 1 Pet. ii. 18. Doubtless, meek submission in such cases, is very difficult; but it is very commendable, and instead of justifying such bad treatment, renders it more inexcusable. It should, however, and will, by every ingenuous mind, be felt to be peculiarly pleasant to comply with the desires and study to promote the happiness of pious and kind masters.

In reference more directly to spiritual things, it is the duty, as it is the interest, of servants, to *value and improve the means of religious benefit with which they may be favoured* in the house in which they reside. The obligation on their masters to use endeavours to promote their souls' good, implies an obligation on their part to meet these endeavours with corresponding desires.

## THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God,'* Rom. xiii. 1.

WE meditate, this morning, on the duties of subjects to their civil rulers.

1. *Obedience.* On this point scripture is full and express. 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,' or superior authorities. We should hold a very high standard of submission to civil governors. The only limitation is when they require what is contrary to the will of God; then it becomes not only lawful, but a positive duty, to refuse to comply; and in such instances of disobedience, instead of being guilty of any thing that deserved to be stigmatized as rebellion, men of God have exhibited some of the noblest examples of human virtue and religious courage. Such noble examples were furnished by those who would not destroy the male infants of the Israelites at the command of Pharaoh king of Egypt; by the three Hebrew youths, who said to Nebuchadnezzar, 'Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up;' by Daniel, who, when Darius had made a decree that whoever should ask any petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of Darius himself, should be cast into the den of lions, paid no attention to the decree, but went on to worship the Lord as before; and by the apostles, who, when they were strictly commanded, by the supreme council of the nation, not to teach in the name of Jesus, proceeded to preach notwithstanding, and when called to account for doing so, answered, 'We ought to obey God rather than man.' Nothing, however, but such strong and conscientious grounds as these can be fairly pleaded in defence of not submitting to the decrees of supreme rulers, judges, and magistrates. We are sacredly bound to obey them, in a free country, as long as they act agreeably to the laws, within the limits of their own jurisdiction, and in a way not requiring of us what is sinful.

2. *Honour*, or civil respect. Though rulers may not be personally characterized by special excellence, their station and rank are entitled to honour. 'Render to all their dues;' 'fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.' This precept seems to discourage that stiffness, which, under the pretence of Christian simplicity, by disputing such forms, may rather indulge pride, and occasion reproach.

3. *Payment of taxes.* Christians should act uprightly in this respect, and by no means be

guilty of smuggling, or conveying away clandestinely goods for which the legal tribute has not been paid. 'For this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom.' We are not at liberty to refuse to pay, on the general plea of being displeased with the application of taxes; they are due on our part, if they be actually demanded according to law and the existing constitution. When Christ was asked if it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, the heathen emperor, he answer in the affirmative, and enjoined it, in the words, 'Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's.'

4. *Prayer.* God alone can qualify rulers for their office, and direct and prosper them in it. 'I exhort therefore,' says the apostle Paul, 'that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life all in godliness and honesty.'

These are the chief duties of subjects to rulers; and it is to be observed that they are not limited to any one form, *but applicable to every form of government*; they are due to 'the powers that be,' to the existing authorities. There are, in free, or comparatively free countries, constitutional means of improvement. What degree of tyranny can justify open resistance is a very delicate question. Surely there is nothing in the word of God which can be fairly interpreted as intended to check the progress of national improvement, to rivet the chains of despotism, and to keep the sword in the hand of merciless tyrants that would oppress, and even slay, the servants of the Lord.

While such are the duties that subjects owe to the authorities that already exist, they have also, in free countries, like ours, a very important duty to perform with regard to *the election of rulers and legislators*, whose appointment depends on their voice. They ought to choose men of good principles and good character, men of piety and morality, who are disposed to respect all the laws, civil and ecclesiastical, already made, and, (if they are to have legislative power), disposed to support measures for the glory of God, and the real good of the people. Electors may err; but surely they should aim right, and have a fixed determination to choose virtuous men. In cases where they cannot find men in every respect to their mind, they should take those who come nearest to the proper standard.

Strong *reasons* exist for subjects carefully ful-

filling the duties they owe to their rulers. *Civil government, in the general sense, is founded in the will of God, not in an imaginary social compact; and therefore, to disobey, without just cause, is an offence against God.* 'The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation,' or condemnation. *The danger of resistance is great, in all cases, in this world, and in unjustifiable cases, in the next world.* Civil government is instituted for *good ends.* 'He,' the ruler, 'is the minister of God for good,' to be a terror to evil-doers, and an encouragement to those who do well. Disobedience on the part of some tends to a state of *anarchy*, which is the worst possible state of society, even a bad government being better than none. *The happy consequences to the peace and prosperity of a nation, resulting from the discharge of these duties, should weigh powerfully with every good man.* Upon the whole, let Christians feel the sacred obligations under which they lie to demean themselves as good subjects; and let them attend to the words of the apostle, ver. 5. 'Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath,' or out of a regard to the displeasure of the ruler, and fear of punishment, 'but also for conscience' sake.'

THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.*

WITH what plainness and beauty does king David, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and therefore, in unerring terms, describe some of the chief duties of civil rulers! First, 'He that ruleth over men must be just.' *Justice* is an essential ingredient in the character of good rulers. *Justice* requires them, in the capacity of legislators, to enact equitable laws;—in the capacity of judges, to decide impartially according to these laws; in the executive capacity, to put these laws in force. Rulers must not use their power to injure, or oppress: they must employ it to defend the good, and to restrain the evil; and they must be very conscientious in carrying out the principles on which they are called to act, without any partiality.

In connection with justice, certain other virtues are also requisite to form the character of good rulers. They should be *temperate*,—characterized, not by excess of luxurious indulgence, but by

moderation and self-command. 'It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink; lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.' Diligence is also needful to the good management of public affairs,—the intense and persevering application of the mind and powers to the various important subjects which fall to be settled. 'The honour of kings is to search out a matter.'

Rulers, to be good rulers, should be *pious*, 'ruling in the fear of God.' There is no security for the discharge of any duty whatever without the prevalence of religious principle. Those who fear not God, are very ready to disregard man. The need of religion, however, is peculiarly great in rulers. Their duties are arduous, and their temptations are many: hence the necessity for their being decidedly under the influence of inward and sincere piety. It is their duty to show a *good example*. Their station is conspicuous; they are like a city set on a hill which cannot be hid. The influence of power, rank, wealth, splendour, and fashion is very great, either for good, or for evil. In whatever way the great lead, multitudes usually follow. It is their duty, without interfering with the spiritual independence of the church, to encourage religion in their official, as well as private capacity. Jehovah says to the church, 'Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers.' 'And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee.' Another important duty of civil rulers is *clemency*. Justice should be tempered with mercy. 'Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto him, What doest thou?' But princes must take care not to become oppressors. A discretionary power is lodged with them to remit, or mitigate punishments, which should be cheerfully, though judiciously used. They should seek to govern rather by persuasion and love, than by fear and force: and they should be much employed in preventing evil, that there may be but little necessity for punishing it. They should seek to *promote, by all proper means, the prosperity and happiness of those who are under them.* They should avoid selfishness, and cherish a benevolent spirit, remembering that they are raised up, not that they may receive the incense of flattery, and shine in splendour and gratify their pride and luxury, but that they may be blessings to the community.

The sweet Psalmist of Israel, guided by the Spirit of the Lord, employs, in the fourth verse, the following beautiful comparisons to describe the

cheering and happy effects of the government of such a just, pious, and kind ruler: 'He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds: as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.' It is certain that God, in his providence often blesses nations for the virtues, and punishes them for the crimes, of their princes. What evil may come on nations in consequence of the wickedness of their kings, is exemplified in Jeroboam and Ahab;—what good, in David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

It would tend powerfully to prompt rulers to the faithful discharge of their various duties, were they properly to consider, and habitually remember, that their authority is delegated,—that they themselves are the subjects of the King of kings, and responsible to him. They are expressly called God's 'ministers,' or servants. 'He is the minister of God to thee for good;' 'he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.' 'They are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.' Rom. xiii. 4, 6. While this relation to God is very honourable to them, the thought of it should keep them humble and dutiful, and remind them that it is his honour and not their own they should seek to promote; his holy will and not their own caprice they should exert themselves to work out. The hour is coming, too, when rulers will have to stand before the bar of Him 'that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor.' Surely such considerations should lead rulers to study and pray that they may act for the glory of God and the good of man, according to the rules of the unerring word. They should learn a lesson from the command given to the king of Israel, Deut. xvii. 18, 'It shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of his law, and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand, or to the left; to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.' Happy the king that so acts! for, great as is his honour on earth, it shall be far greater in heaven. Happy, too, the people who are so governed, and who manifest corresponding dutifulness on Christian principle! 'Happy is that people that is in such a

case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.'

FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?' Ezek. xxxiv. 2.

WHOEVER enters on the great work of the Christian ministry ought himself to be an enlightened, believing, converted, and truly religious man. 'Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?' Nay, religion must not only exist, but be in a thriving state, in a minister's own soul, in order to his going on vigorously, and in order to his having a reasonable expectation of much success in his ministry. 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.' Supposing that ministers personally know, believe, and obey the truth, the following are some of the chief duties they owe to their people.

It is their duty to *feed* the flock; that is, to instruct them. Knowledge is the food of the mind. Jehovah makes this gracious promise to his people, Jer. iii. 15, 'I will give you pastors according to mine heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.' Now, the chief way in which they feed, that is, instruct, or teach, the people, is by the *public preaching of the word*. Whatever other means may be useful, this is the most useful of all. In order to preaching being effectual, it must be sound, sensible, plain, varied, solemn, earnest, doctrinal, experimental, practical, discriminating, decided, faithful, and affectionate. But it is also the duty of ministers to feed, or instruct, their flock, *in private*. 'I have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,' Acts xx. 20. The visitation of families and of the sick, and the religious instruction of the young, are laborious and important parts of ministerial duty. So, also, is personal dealing with individuals, especially such as are under concern about their souls. 'Remember,' said Paul, 'that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.'

Another duty of ministers is to *rule* their flocks. They have to 'take the oversight' of them. They who speak to the people the word

of God are said to 'have the rule over them,' Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24. They should exercise the government and discipline of the church, impartially, firmly, and tenderly.

Ministers should also *watch over and defend* their flocks. The church, the fold of Christ, is still exposed to be infested by raging lions, and ravenous wolves; still exposed to persecution, and temptation, and to seducing teachers, John x. 12, 13.

Again, ministers owe their people a *good example*. They should be 'ensamples to the flock.' 'Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity,' 1 Tim. iv. 12. Every false step a minister takes will bring dishonour on religion, cast a stumbling-block in the way of inquirers, grieve the people of God, and give occasion to his enemies to blaspheme. Whereas, the minister who is very exemplary in his life is likely to be thought in earnest, and to be useful in his preaching.

The minister, too, who would be useful, must abound in *prayer*. 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. God only can give the increase. 'I once said to myself, in the foolishness of my heart,' writes a devoted minister, 'what sort of a sermon must that have been which was preached by Peter when three thousand souls were converted at once? What sort of sermon! Such as other sermons. There is nothing to be found in it extraordinary. The effect was not produced by his eloquence, but by the mighty power of God present with his word.' This can only be expected in answer to earnest prayer. The word of God cautions ministers very strongly against selfishness, and enjoins on them great *disinterestedness*. They must not 'feed themselves,' or make it their object to secure their own profit, their own aggrandizement, and their own indulgence. On the contrary, they should aim supremely at the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and be willing to deny themselves, and to labour, and endure hardship, and suffer, in the cause.

How solemn the thought of the infinitely important results of the ministry! They are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one they are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.' Well may they exclaim, 'And who is sufficient for these things!' The difficulties and trials of the Christian ministry are indeed very great; but so are its comforts and encouragements. In the very midst of its labours and anxieties, it brings along with it, to

the properly exercised mind, the most refined and exquisite pleasure. 'Now after forty years preaching of Christ, I think I would rather beg my bread all the labouring days of the week, for an opportunity of publishing the gospel on the sabbath, than without such a privilege, to enjoy the richest possessions on earth,' said Mr Brown. 'I do not wish for any heaven upon earth, besides that of preaching the precious gospel of Jesus Christ to immortal souls,' said Henry Martyn. 'My witness is above,' said Rutherford to his flock, 'that your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all as two salvations to me.' Let every pastor whose heart is in his work, think of these examples, and be encouraged to proceed. Let him think, too, of the example of the holy prophets and apostles, particularly of the apostle Paul. Above all, let him think of the perfect pattern, 'the chief Shepherd,' the 'good Shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep,' of whom it is said, '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.'

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FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake,'*  
1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

SUPPOSING ministers to be, with reasonable allowance for human infirmity, enlightened, pious, and faithful, what are the chief duties which their people owe to them?

1. They should *esteem them very highly*:—so the apostle expressly teaches, in writing to the Thessalonians; 'We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you,' that is, to acknowledge them in their true character, 'and to esteem them very highly,' 'for their work's sake.' The ridicule, obloquy, hatred, and contempt, with which the ministerial office, and the most faithful men who hold it, are frequently loaded, are pre-eminently sinful, and ought to fill those who are thus guilty with shame and remorse. Let none think lightly of the ministerial office. It is a very dignified office, as its origin is divine, and as its object transcends in importance that of every other.

2. People should *love* their ministers. Their reverence should be not of the nature which alarms and repels, but of the nature which

endears and attracts. As ministers should be 'affectionately desirous' of their people's welfare, so this feeling should be met with corresponding affection on the part of the people. The relation is indeed very intimate and very endearing. If ministers be themselves very affectionate, and possessed of very amiable qualities, they deserve to be loved for their own sake; and if they are in earnest in their work, they should be loved 'for their work's sake,' and according to the excellence and greatness of their labours. If their hearers would benefit by their ministry, they must cherish this affection to them. Benevolence, too, should lead people to do all they can to comfort and encourage their ministers; and it is of great use, in this way, for them to know that their hearers love them.

3. They should *attend to their instructions*. The minister's, like the priest's lips of old, should 'keep knowledge, and the people should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.' They should wait regularly on his *public ministrations*, hailing the return of such seasons, and saying, or feeling as if they would say, 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' They should listen to them seriously, believingly, obediently. They should attend to their admonitions and reproofs. They should 'suffer the word of exhortation,' and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save their souls.' They should also meet their minister and encourage him in his *private labours* for their instruction. They should all welcome his domestic and personal endeavours for their good. The young, in particular, should make it a point to attend the meetings he holds for their benefit.

4. They should *submit to the government and discipline* exercised by the ministers and other office-bearers of the church. Church rulers are not, indeed, entitled to lord it over God's heritage, or to assume 'dominion over their faith:' but they are entitled to obedience in judging and acting according to the word of God. 'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.' 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.'

5. They should see that their ministers receive proper *temporal support*. Whether it be by the contributions of those only to whom they minister, or by a legal and national provision, with

the view of bringing the outward means of *grace* within the reach of the poorest, or by both these methods conjoined, it is the imperative duty of a Christian people to provide for the maintenance of the Christian ministry. Justice demands this. The welfare of the people also requires that their teachers should be exempted from the necessity of seeking a livelihood by other means, be at leisure to give themselves wholly to the pastoral duties, and be enabled to live in a state of decent respectability. 'Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.'

6. People should *pray* for their ministers. Whatever exertions may be made, and whatever outward privileges may be enjoyed, all will prove in vain, unless the influences of God's Holy Spirit be bestowed; and these influences are only promised, but positively promised, in answer to prayer. Let all, then, who have any desire that those who labour among them should be of use to them, or to their fellow-worshippers, apply to God, in earnest and persevering prayer, that he would accompany the ministry of the word with that divine power which alone can make it effectual for convincing and converting sinners, and for building up saints in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation. Let there be deeply impressed on their consciences the duty of habitually attending to this exercise, the exercise of express, particular, and full prayer, for a blessing on their ministers, and their labours. Let them attend to this in secret, and in their families; and let them join heartily in those parts of the public prayers that refer to the subject. 'Brethren,' said Paul, 'pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.' If there were far more true prayer, there would be far more success in particular districts, and throughout the world. Let every Christian say, and act on the saying, 'For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.' 'Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.'

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;—  
Rom. xii. 10.

TRUE benevolence, or love to man, is an essential feature of the Christian character, and a leading

evidence of the reality of religious principle; while its absence demonstrates a state of total irreligion, and the want of love to God. 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,' said our Lord, 'if ye have love one to another.'

Christian love implies *inward good will* to men, or wishing them well. It is, as Paul expresses it, the 'being kindly affectioned.' It is, however, more than mere natural affection and natural benevolence, which are found in those who are estranged from God, and which are necessary to the very existence of society. It is similar to these, but it is a great improvement on them. It is all that is amiable in human nature sanctified by divine grace, and regulated and directed according to the word of God.

Existing in the heart, love should be *expressed in words*. The way in which Christians speak to men, and speak of them, should be kind. It should, indeed, be free from base flattery and vain compliment; but it should also be free from uncharitableness, passion, and backbiting. They should not speak harshly and offensively to men in their presence; nor should they delight in taking up and spreading false or unfavourable reports of them. 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people.' Christians should not be severe to mark; nor should they be needlessly given to censure. Men may be greatly distressed, or greatly cheered, by the way in which they are spoken to.

True benevolence, however, goes forth also in *actions*. Verbal professions are false and vain, if they are not justified by corresponding conduct, where it is in our power. 'My little children,' says the apostle John, 'let us not love in word, neither in tongue,' that is, not in word and tongue only, 'but in deed, and in truth.' We should observe the rule laid down in the words, 'in honour preferring one another.' Grasping at the chief place, or the best of every thing for one's self, introduces much heart-burning and misery into society; whereas, readiness to give the preference to others preserves peace, and diffuses happiness. Benevolence requires that, according to our ability, we contribute pecuniary or other actual assistance to those who are in need of it. This is the very plain criterion of the sincerity and value of professions of benevolence.

It is important to remember that true benevolence, enlightened Christian charity, seeks to promote the *spiritual*, as well as the temporal welfare of men. It remembers that it will profit a man nothing to gain any temporal object, however great, if he lose his soul. The man of Christian charity, therefore, grieves when he

beholds transgressors, 'rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth,' and does all he can to reclaim sinners, to encourage believers, and to promote the cause of true religion in the world.

There is one way in which Christian charity finds a most pleasing and effectual expression, and in which the poorest may exert themselves as well as the richest, and that is the way of *prayer*. Without the blessing of God, we cannot be of any real, permanent service to our fellow-creatures; but prayer is the great means of engaging that blessing, whether we regard the operations of his providence, or the influences of his grace.

If we would attain to true charity, we must seek it as *the fruit of the Spirit, and in connection with the faith of the gospel*. 'The works of the flesh are hatred, variance, &c., but the fruit of the Spirit is love.' 'Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.'

The *motives* to the cultivation of Christian love are various and powerful. Its happy effect on ourselves; for, while to hate is to be miserable, to love is to be happy. Its influence in promoting the happiness of others; for, were it universally cherished, more than half of the evils which afflict society would be relieved, and men's comfort and prosperity mightily increased. The consideration of our brotherhood; for, even as fellow-creatures, we should feel bound to each other by common ties, and 'think nothing human foreign to us;' and especially, the relation which the disciples of Christ bear to each other as such, and as forming the same family by adoption and regeneration, should be felt as constraining to mutual love and good offices. 'Let brotherly love continue.' 'Love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous.' 'As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' Another motive is found in the love of God to us. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' And then, what a motive, as well as model, have we in the example of the Redeemer's love to us! Though we cannot do any thing meritorious, or miraculous, there is still much in his love that should be imitated by us. 'A new commandment I give unto you,' said he, 'That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' 'Walk in love,' says the apostle Paul, 'as Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.'

Finally, what an encouragement have we to cultivate this grace of love in the consideration that it will last for ever, and constitute a great part of the happiness of heaven! In the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, in which the apostle so beautifully expatiates on the grace of charity, or love, we read, 'charity never faileth.' 'And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.' Faith is the root, hope the blossom, and charity the fruit. Faith is the cheering spring, hope the warm summer, and charity the productive harvest. Faith and hope are two wings that will raise us to heaven, but there we are to drop them. Faith, hope, and charity are three friends that will accompany us all the way to the gate of paradise; but there we must bid adieu to faith and hope; charity alone will enter in with us through the gate into the city, and take her seat by our side when we sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

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FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,'* Rom. xii. 20, 21.

How superior to all human teaching is the divine morality of the gospel! Nor is it in any thing more admirable, or more exalted, than in regard to the way in which it requires that we should feel and act towards those who have injured us. Revenge was not only permitted, but applauded, by most of the heathen writers, and generally perpetrated when it was practicable. Witness the rule laid down by Cicero that a virtuous man should hurt no one, except he be provoked by an injury: and witness the savage conduct of many of Homer's heroes, and the destruction of Carthage and Corinth by the Romans. There are rare exceptions to be found in heathen authors, but such is the general rule. Many of the Jews, too, who should have known better, held that the obligation to forgive and love applied only to those of the same nation with themselves. Not so the law of God, and the code of Christian morals.

The precept of forgiveness does not, indeed, require us absolutely, and in all cases, to lay ourselves open to injury, or to take no means whatever to vindicate our rights. But it reminds us

to expect to find opponents, and even enemies. It cautions us against being 'easily provoked.' It calls on us to bear much, and to bear long. It tells us that we must not take the law into our own hands. It positively prohibits revenge. 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord:' v. 19. This precept requires us cordially, entirely, and in every sense, to forgive those who have injured us, if they repent and acknowledge their fault, Luke xvii. 3, 4. But what if they do not repent? Then there is a still finer field for the exercise of this Christian grace. If they obstinately cherish a bad spirit, that is no reason why we should do so likewise. They then furnish us with what we should regard, not as a model but as a beacon. If we cannot then cherish the love of approbation, or complacency, we should still cherish the love of benevolence towards them. Nor is this all: we should be ready to do them good, if it be in our power. 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink.' That is, if our enemy, or the person with whom we are at variance, be in any distress, let us come forward to relieve and comfort him. Let us watch the opportunity and seize the moment of his standing in need of help, and render him all the offices of kindness we possibly can. Instead of recompensing him with evil for evil, let us return him good for evil. And if there be nothing else we can do, let us at least pray for him. Let us also persevere in this way, notwithstanding numerous and long continued injuries; let not our patience be worn out; let us not 'be overcome of evil,' but let us endeavour to 'overcome evil with good.'

Such is an outline of the duties Christians owe to their enemies: and to the discharge of these duties the *motives* are various and of great force. Our *own happiness* will be thereby immediately and greatly promoted. Malice and the desire of revenge necessarily disturb and harrass the mind, and are accompanied with sullenness and discontent. On the other hand, forgiveness and kindness to those who have acted a hostile part towards us, are accompanied with placidity and enjoyment. The most malevolent being in the world is the most miserable: whereas, He who is the greatest example of forbearance and forgiveness is infinitely blessed for ever.

The *public happiness* will also be greatly promoted by such forgiveness and kindness. Much farther threatening evil will be thereby prevented.

The consideration that this forgiving disposition is *essential to our own forgiveness by God*, and to the Christian character, should also influ-

ence us powerfully. 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,' said our Lord in the sermon on the mount. 'But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'

Again, *This is the way to obtain the noblest triumph over our enemies.* 'In so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.' These words, and the preceding part of the passage, are quoted from Prov. xxv. 21, 22. The connection of the words here and the general bearing of the passage, clearly prove that they are not intended to lead us to forgive and serve our enemies from the malevolent desire of involving them in greater guilt and punishment. No doubt, if men persevere in unreasonable enmity, that will be the result. But we are not to act, or pray, for that end. On the contrary, this is a most benevolent sentiment, and the figure is drawn from smelting metals. When the ore is put into the furnace, coals are put, not only below but also above it, to increase the heat, and to insure the melting. So, we should forgive and do good to our enemies, with the kind intention of melting their hard hearts to sentiments of mutual love. Surely the hope of accomplishing this should be a powerful inducement to such forgiveness and kindness; for what triumph can be so gratifying and so complete? It is indeed an effectual and delightful way of destroying our enemies to turn them into friends.

Let us cherish this temper and pursue this conduct, also, *in imitation of God the Father, and of our divine Redeemer,* and in consideration of their unspeakable mercy to us. It was when we were enemies to God in our hearts, and by wicked works, that the Lord had pity on us, and redeemed us, and actually pardoned us, and greatly blessed us, if we are Christians indeed. What a pattern, and what a motive are thus presented to us! 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' How affecting and instructive the dying prayer of Jesus for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'

It is not to be denied that this is one of the most difficult graces of the Christian character; but it is essential to it, and one of its greatest attainments, and therefore it requires and deserves to be cultivated with the utmost care. Let us study to keep before our minds all those weighty considerations which are calculated to cherish it; let us bring it to bear on the particular cases which arise in our own experience; and let us, by prayer, call in the aid of divine grace, to enable

us to repress every vindictive feeling, and to forgive as we hope to be forgiven.

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SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Thou shalt not kill,' Exod. xx. 13.

THIS, as is well known, is one of the merciful commandments which Jehovah proclaimed with his own voice from mount Sinai. It is one of the parts and expressions of that law which is holy, and just, and good, of which not a jot or tittle shall pass away though the heavens and the earth should perish. It is most worthy, then, of our devout meditation. Though the life which it is intended to guard be only the life of the body, and thus be immeasurably inferior to the life of the soul, yet it is most important in itself and in its consequences. At first sight one would think that there was no need for such a commandment. Life is sweet—at least death is dreadful. Nature shrinks instinctively from the sight of human blood, and in the same proportion to which men love and protect their own lives, might it have been imagined would they have been careful of the lives of others. But widely different is the actual result; the history of the world is little else than the history of human bloodshed. How prodigious are the multitudes who have lost their lives by the hand of man at the instigation of avarice, or revenge, or momentary passion. What multitudes have, in all ages and states of society, perished in unnecessary wars! What multitudes, scarcely inferior in number, have been cut off by religious intolerance and persecution! How utterly careless are entire and immense nations of human life, sacrificing it in bloody superstition, or for the merest trifles! It is not, then, without reason that God hath said, 'Thou shalt not kill,' that he has placed this among the ten solemn commandments of the moral law.

In meditating on the words we naturally think on the Lawgiver. It is not man. It is no mere philosopher or philanthropist. It is Jehovah who speaks. His authority is absolute. He is the Lord of life—its Author, Sustainer, Proprietor, Disposer. There is nothing more entirely God's than life. We cannot communicate or preserve. We can only destroy it, and then the deed is ir retrievable. We cannot by any skill recover it, however anxious to do so. After all the discoveries of medical science, it is still a profound mystery in what life consists. No one can tell what it is. All that we can say is, that it is the

gift of God. And hence our blessed Lord represents his power over his own life, to lay it down, and take it up at pleasure, as a proof of his Divinity. Next think of the universality of the command. It is not like the artificial laws of men. It applies to *all* without exception, high and low, rich and poor, young and old; to all states of society, savage, barbarous, or civilized; to all ages and generations, early and late, in the world's history. Indeed being part of the moral law, comprehended in the commandment of loving our neighbour as ourselves, it is universal and unchangeable in its application. It is impossible to conceive the time when God shall repeal this law, and when it shall become right and proper, or have the force of a law, to kill our fellow-men. Of course there are rare and terrible exceptions to this strong and universal prohibition against shedding human blood, exceptions recognized in the word of God; but these, instead of weakening, only serve to strengthen the law. Where God gave commandment, as in the case of the Canaanites, for the punishment of protracted and incorrigible sin by the death of the sinners, the commandment was repealed, and righteously; the Giver and Proprietor of life was fully entitled to recall it, where it was so long and grossly abused to his dishonour, and the injury of man; but nothing short of a repeal in other cases as clear and supernatural, would warrant any now to take the life of their fellow-men. The case of murder is expressly provided for by the word of God.

From the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill,' addressed to all universally, we may draw the inference that all men are by nature depraved. Where the necessity for such a law, were all benignant and holy—devoted to the love of each other? The very prohibition indicates depravity, and that there are strong temptations to yield to it in the most revolting forms. How urgent then the need of mercy to pardon, and the grace of God to restrain and prevent. We may also gather from the sixth commandment the importance of human life. Why is it so sacredly guarded, unless its value be great? Life is important on many accounts, chiefly as it affords opportunity through the faith and obedience of the gospel of preparing for a higher state of being. It is eternity which confers upon life its high value. Hence it is just in proportion as individuals and nations know the true God, and have adequate impressions of futurity, that they value human life, and cherish a humane and benignant spirit, and abandon that reckless disregard of life, and those shocking customs which are destructive of it. It is thus that even the Jewish laws and

institutions breathe a tenderness about life quite unknown among heathen nations, and that the higher the Christianity, the interest and regard for human life are always the higher. This is not merely because God is recognized as the Author of life, and all his gifts are to be honoured, but because all that is important for eternity is suspended upon life. If life be destroyed there is no opportunity for faith, and repentance, and love, and a new obedience. If the sixth commandment be set at naught, all other commandments become vain. How important then is life!

Unlike the ancient and modern heathen, and the ungodly of Christian lands, let us set a high value upon it. Let us turn it to its great ends and uses—the glory of God and preparation for eternity. Let us not only abstain from all that is violent and vindictive—from all that would lead to the destruction of the life of others, yea, from all that would expose it to danger, or impair its happiness, but let us seek to promote the health, and welfare, and outward prosperity of our neighbour, and that from Christian principle. Let us cherish in spirit whatever is kind, and tender, and humane, because it is Christian; and thus we shall prove that the best way to secure the most obvious and almost instinctive duties of time is to bind them on the higher interest of eternity, that the surest protection for that life of ours which perishes, is to care deeply and anxiously for that soul of theirs which cannot die.

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#### SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and, whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire,'* Matt. v. 21, 22.

THERE is no propensity of our fallen nature more striking than the proneness of man to substitute an external for a spiritual religion; this applies to all without exception. A mere outward observance is one of the grand characteristics of all false systems of religion, and of all corruptions of the true. Even genuine Christians, the professors of the only spiritual religion, need to be on their guard against the temptations of the outward and the visible. What can be seen with the eye or heard with the ear, is much more impressive,

than what can be apprehended only by faith. An external religion, too, is much easier than a spiritual one; an hour of holy communion with God is much more difficult than a year of religious forms; and besides, it is more closely allied to that self-righteousness which is so dear to our corrupted nature. Hence a part of the Christian warfare consists in seeking that the means be not converted into the end, and that the spiritual and heavenly be not contracted into the mere external, and substituted in their room. The Jews, when corrupting the true religion with which they were favoured, were notoriously addicted to the outward and self-righteous, and gave a narrow external interpretation to the most spiritual and comprehensive commandments. Our blessed Lord, when seeking to convince them of sin, pointedly refers to this, 'Ye have heard,' says he, 'that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.' The law of Moses, recognizing the moral law, and the sixth commandment as part of it—in all its latitude—required the love of our neighbour to the same extent in which we love ourselves; and of course, condemned whatever was inconsistent with this love, or fitted to provoke a breach of it. It was thus that the sixth commandment was understood by Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Samuel, and David, and the prophets, and all the other pious and faithful men of Old Testament times; but the Jews of a later day, strangers to the influence of true religion, proud and self-righteous in spirit, greatly narrowed the interpretation, and accommodated the commandment to their own degenerate likings and inferior attainments; they held that the sixth commandment could be broken only by the actual commission of murder, that so long as a man was free of the blood of his brother, he had perfectly kept that law, and was without blame before God. This was fitted to degrade the law, to nourish self-righteous pride, and harden the soul against conviction of sin, and a sense of the need of a Redeemer. Therefore does our blessed Lord expose and correct the erroneous interpretation by the solemn statement, 'But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.' Here our Lord plainly teaches that causeless anger, and much more contemptuous and provoking language, are breaches of the sixth commandment, and unless repented of, and washed away in the blood of atonement, shall issue in the

destruction of the soul. Though a man were chargeable with nothing else, though he had perfectly kept the whole law with the exception of being but once angry without a cause, this would be enough to bring him in as guilty before God, and to seal his condemnation. And if mere anger without a cause be so grave an offence, how much more serious must many sins which are allied to or associated with it?—such as severity, malignity, contempt, provocation, oppression, violence. The moral law not only condemns murder, but all the tempers, and dispositions, and conduct, which impair the comfort, embitter the life, or lead directly or indirectly to the death of others.

Let us rejoice in the Redeemer's vindication of the purity and extent of the law. It is false and narrow views of the law which lie at the root of imperfect and erroneous conceptions of the gospel. And seeing that so small a thing as many are ready to account, causeless anger—is yet a breach of the sixth commandment, let us be on our guard against it, and all kindred sins and temptations. There is an anger which is lawful. The very words before us imply that anger with a cause is allowable. The capacity for anger has been wisely implanted in our nature for its defence. It is like a sheathed sword, warning others against oppression. Our Lord, holy as he was, was capable of anger, and was repeatedly conscious of it, when called to contemplate the incorrigible perversity of many of his countrymen; and believers are exhorted, if they be angry, not to sin, and not let the sun go down upon their wrath; which supposes that they may be angry without sin. But the weapon, though in some cases lawful, is of dangerous application in the hands of a fallen and corrupted creature. There is no small hazard of its lawful passing into its unlawful exercise. Let us then be watchful against its first rising, and use all proper and scriptural means to subdue it. Let us remember, that nothing is more fitted to weaken our moral and religious influence with others than the indulgence of angry passions, and that few things are more apt to lead to habits of equivocation and falsehood in children and servants, than a hasty and passionate temper on the part of parents and masters. The better to arm ourselves against such temptations, let us think of the forbearance, and long-suffering, and meekness, and patience of Christ; the love and gentleness of the Holy Spirit. Let us think also that true religion is essentially spiritual, high and comprehensive in its character. Let us remember that the external and the visible form but a small part of it; that it resides in the heart, and moulds the tem-

per and spirit; that the law of man, from its imperfection, may be able to reach only gross violations of duty, but that there is no offence, however refined, which the law of God does not challenge and condemn. Let us show that we are not limited to the letter; that we entertain enlarged views of the moral law, and of true religion, by cultivating all those dispositions and affections which knit man to man; which discountenance selfishness and passion, and assimilate the society of earth to that of heaven.

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SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man,'* Gen. ix. 6.

THE circumstances in which the doom of murderers was announced were interesting and important. The inhabitants of the world have for their wickedness been destroyed in the waters of the deluge. Noah and his family are starting anew as the progenitors of mankind. In this situation it was proper to give forth various regulations for their guidance. In kindness the grant of animal food is made to them for the first time, and lest the memory of the recent fearful destruction of life, by the flood, should lead them to think lightly of life, and to treat it carelessly, God specially apprizes them of its importance. Though they are to have full use of the lower animals, and are commanded to be fruitful and multiply, yet they are not to abuse God's gifts. They are to treat the blood with reverence, because the life is in it, and it is by the sacrifice or blood of God's own Son, typified by that of the lower animals, that redemption is to be accomplished. While due respect is to be shown to the blood or life of the inferior creatures, the life of man is not to be lightly regarded, or cruelly treated. It is expressly provided, that the man who wilfully takes the life of a brother shall thereby forfeit his own life; in other words, shall be put to death. Though this appointment commends itself to reason and instinct, in short, to our sense of natural justice, yet as its authority, and also its wisdom and goodness, have particularly, of late, been called in question by a party who claim for themselves the character of philanthropists, it may not be amiss shortly to advert to these points.

The divine authority is express. Nothing can be clearer. 'Whoso,' says God, 'sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' This is no mere

prophecy of the future. Though it were, the divine mind would be equally expressed as to the principle, but it is given forth for the guidance of Noah and his posterity. It is conveyed in the same sort of terms as the grant of animal food, and it may as well be contended that the one is future as the other. Then it is obligatory upon all, upon Jew and Gentile alike. The law was enacted before the Jews existed as a nation. The reason which is assigned for the enactment, is not peculiar to them, but applicable equally to all mankind. Man's blood is not to be shed lightly, and without a suitable vindication, 'for in the image of God made he man.' His origin and destiny are alike great, and therefore his life is to be sacredly protected and honoured. At the same time, the law of the Jewish nation, in regard to murder—a law which they received from the hand of God—is in perfect harmony with the older and more comprehensive law which we are considering, and thus strengthens the case and the argument. The criminal law of the Jews is particularly full and explicit on the shedding of the blood of man. Its general doctrine is, that he who smites a man, so that he die, shall be put to death. No satisfaction, it is said, shall be provided for a murderer; the cities of refuge are not like churches, in many popish countries, to be a sanctuary for criminals. No! 'If a man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities; then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him unto the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die,' Deut. xix. 11, 12. The case of Joab, the celebrated general of David, is an illustration of the strength of the law. Though the royal house had been so much indebted to him, and though he was a soldier, accustomed to the rough procedure of these days; yet because he had taken the lives of one or two men—lives which might have been spared—directions are given that he shall in the height of his honour be put to death. There can be no question, then, as to the divine law, in regard to murder and its punishment. It is clear, express, universally binding. Not a word can be pleaded from scripture in behalf of relaxation.

But not a few think it harsh and severe, and propose a repeal. It is contended that man should never inflict upon man the punishment of death—that in doing so he takes away what he cannot give, and cuts off the hope of repentance and the opportunity of salvation. But were these things not all well known to God in making the law? And to what, then, do such pleadings amount, if not to an insinuation that man is

kinder and more charitable than God. Follow out the same false charity, and it will do away with future and eternal punishment altogether. Surely it will not be alleged that those who hold the views to which we refer, are more concerned for the salvation of souls than those who hold that it is right in itself, and the command of God, that murder be punished with death. It should be remembered, that while the claims of mercy are high, those of justice are not less imperative—that the honour of God is involved in the strict vindication of human life, inasmuch as man was created in the image of God—and that the welfare of society demands the same. If even with the penalty of death attached to the wilful shedding of man's blood there be so much violence, and so many murders, how much more frequent would such cases be if the punishment were relaxed? Death may have been attached, in the criminal codes of man, to lesser offences, with which it ought never to have been connected; and public sympathy may thus have been outraged, but that is no reason for abolishing it in the case where the law of God and human sympathy most distinctly require it. The divine forbearance in the case of Cain proves nothing but God's mercy; the case was peculiar; there was no society, comparatively speaking, to be affected; a father or a brother must have been the executioner. In pity to them the criminal may have been spared. From the punishment which has been ordained, we may learn anew the high importance of human life. The prodigious waste of it in all ages, may seem to intimate, that as a whole it is of little value; but its strict vindication—a requiring life for life—is an impressive proclamation of the reverse. It teaches how much must be suspended on life. Let us improve every hour in its fleeting course, and, in the meantime, let us rejoice that we live under a divine as well as civil government where life is so sacredly guarded.

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SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.'* 1 John iii. 12.

The true origin of persecution for righteousness' sake is to be found in the nature and claims of revealed truth—in the law and the gospel of God. It is natural for men to wish others to think with them on all subjects, and to be angry where they

differ, and the matter of difference is deemed important. Hence there have been keen dissensions among philosophers, ancient and modern. And angry sects have also sprung up occasionally among the vast false religions of the earth, and have proceeded to violence. Envy, too, at what is good in each other, may have been a prompting impulse in such cases. But, comparatively speaking, these instances have been rare. They cannot with any propriety be called religious persecution—at least persecution for righteousness' sake. The only parties who, on a great and permanent scale, can be persecuted on principle, are the faithful maintainers of divine truth. Hence persecution rose with God's revelation of truth to man. It has in one form or another continued with its progress, and will only terminate with the history of that truth which is to endure to the end of the world.

All philosophical systems and false religions can either agree among themselves in spite of their apparent diversities and contradictions, or they do not contain any thing so important that their adherents think it worth while to suffer unto death, where it is called in question. Hence there is little or no scope for persecution among their respective followers. It is otherwise in regard to the revealed truth of God. It is not only different from others: it is opposite to all. At the same time it is exclusive. It claims to be alone able to save. It condemns all other systems. Hence in its own nature it is essentially intolerant. It cannot, however meek and mild in its treatment of men, amalgamate with their errors. Then its revelations are peculiarly repugnant to human taste and likings. It proclaims a holy and spiritual law, reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and condemning to the death of hell-fire, all who are guilty of a single violation. The only way of relief which it opens up, is indeed beyond expression glorious and divine, but to man it is humbling and abasing as the dust. It strikes at his pride, and vain-glory, and love of sin, more than he can endure. It is easy to see then how intolerably hateful this revealed truth of God,—which is just another name for evangelical religion,—must be to the natural mind, and how the individuals, and families, and churches, which have embraced and practised it, directly and indirectly as they do with their very goodness, reproach and condemn the sinner, must be objects of decided hatred and aversion, and wherever there is scope for it, must provoke the persecution of the world. This accordingly is the explanation of all the persecution for righteous-

ness' sake, deserving the name which ever appeared in the history of man.

The word of God itself prepares us for such prosecution. The Saviour declared that he came not to send peace but a sword, and that his faithful followers should be hated of all men for his name's sake. Such has been the event. From earliest time, the truth and people of God have been persecuted, and that though so precious and peaceful in themselves. Cain, who was a proud self-righteous disbeliever of God's word, slew his brother; and why? Not for any crime: he would have borne that, but because Abel's works were righteous, recognised the righteousness of Christ, and were in themselves holy and spiritual, while his own were evil, at once defective and unbelieving. How was the church of God under the Jewish form, persecuted in Old Testament times, so long as she was faithful, and just in proportion to her faithfulness, by the heathens of Egypt, and the Wilderness, and of Canaan, and the country around! How was David persecuted for his godliness! The psalms are full of complaints of his spiritual enemies. How were the prophets the victims of persecution, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Daniel, and many others! When the Jewish church and people, cured for the time of idolatry and superstition, returned from captivity to their own land, how bitter and combined was the hostility with which they were assailed! In New Testament times, how was John the Baptist slain for righteousness' sake. How was the Saviour himself, though all that was divine and lovely in character, persecuted to death for the same reason, and his apostles, so that only one of them died a natural death! How was the Christian church called to endure centuries of persecution under Pagan Rome, at the hands of emperors, some of them eminent for literary attainments and moral qualities! How much was the same true church, reduced in number, doomed to endure the far fiercer and more protracted persecution of Papal Rome, in the course of which many millions of lives were sacrificed. Who can be ignorant what multitudes have been persecuted in all Protestant lands, through the efforts of the church of Rome to retain or regain her ascendancy? Even men professing Protestant principles, it is well known, have been tempted to persecute their brethren to the death, from their own hatred to the truth of God, combined with the unhappy teaching which they had received in the Papal school. Nor has the spirit of persecution disappeared from the earth. In Popish countries it is still strong; and though the very light and freedom which Protestantism

brings along with it, prevent the more shocking forms of persecution in the lands under its influence, still is real persecution—in the form of hatred to the truth and people of God—keen opposition—in venerate prejudice—gross misrepresentation—bitter reviling and ridicule to many of their principles and objects—but too apparent, furnishing ample indications that there is enough of the hostile spirit to give rise to still more flagrant acts of enmity. Nor will persecution cease in the future. Whatever men may dream about the progress of liberality and toleration, with the progress of knowledge and civilization, these are powerless to prevent it; the natural mind in no condition can tolerate active evangelical religion, except from dire necessity, and hence the book of prophecy gives us reason to expect that there will be violent persecution in the future—towards the close of the reign of antichrist.

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EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Do thyself no harm,' Acts xvi. 28.

WHEN, for the deliverance of Paul and Silas, an earthquake shook the prison of Philippi, and all bonds were loosed, the jailor, fearful lest the prisoners should escape, and certain that if they did so he must die a dishonoured death, drew his sword and prepared to take his life. The disciples did not, in revenge for the uncalled for cruelty with which they had been thrust into the inner prison, and made fast in the stocks, permit him to execute the deed. In the mild and merciful spirit in which true religion speaks to the sinner, Paul exclaimed to the jailor, 'Do thyself no harm.' To all tempted to suicide, the word of God addresses the same call.

It is a melancholy truth, that in all ages multitudes are exposed to the temptation, and fall before it. Some heathen moralists may have condemned the practice, and the laws of some heathen nations, in their more pure and primitive eras, may have forbidden it under severe penalties; but in the ancient Gentile world, as countries advanced into refined and artificial conditions of life, they became addicted to suicide: their highest philosophers and moralists, such as Demosthenes and Plato, Cato, Cicero, and Seneca, having recommended it. At the present day it is common in the vast heathen empires of China and Hindostan, and even in nations professedly Christian, the practice is, alas! by no means unfrequent. Nay, it is to be feared that it is growing more frequent with the progress of civilization.

Modern infidels may have recommended it, such as Hume; or practised it, as Condorcet; but what can be more at variance with reason—with natural conscience—with humanity to others, with the revealed law of God? It proceeds upon the assumption that man is the proprietor of his own life, and may dispose of it at pleasure, though plainly he is but the steward of another's gift, and knows not how soon that gift may be re-demanded at his hands. The commandment impressively declares, 'Thou shalt not kill;' and no exception is made in favour of suicide in any circumstances. How base the cowardice to flee from the evils of life, instead of encountering and enduring them! How monstrous the cruelty to parents, and wife, and children; to agonize their hearts with a stained relationship, and the certainty of the eternal woe of one who was once dear to them! How daring to rush unbidden into the presence of the Judge with crimson sins upon the head, of which it is impossible to repent! How fearful to be met by the questions, 'How camest thou hither? who called for thee?' To take away the life of another is a shocking crime, but to take away one's own life is still more shocking. The one admits of after faith, and pardon, and restoration. The other is the last act, excludes all these, and seals over to remediless doom.

And what is it which leads to such a crime? It is not true religion, though it has sometimes, in ignorance and prejudice, been charged with the guilt. It is often from the impulse of false religion, or what is the same thing, false impressions of the true. It is almost always owing to intense attachment to the world, and consequent insupportable distress when thwarted of its goods, or threatened with its evils. It is often, too, the fruit of intemperance, and other vices. And is this a state of mind worthy of a rational or immortal creature? To be ever boasting of his powers, and the first moment that trials come to take shelter in the selfishness and cowardice of self-murder. O! how unlike is this to the spirit and practice of the ancient prophets, and of our blessed Lord and his apostles! If ever trials, (misfortunes, as infidels would call them,) warranted suicide, theirs were of the number—but they never dreamed of such a mode of relief. They nobly bore them, knowing that they were all ordered by the providence of God—would work out ultimate good—and at the worst, could never justify the taking away of life. It is not with their names that the crime is associated in the book of God, but with the names of Saul, a rebel against Jehovah, and, in intention, the

murderer of those to whom he was most deeply indebted—and of Judas, the betrayer of innocent blood, the remorseful traitor of his Lord.

Let all guard against that passionate devotedness to the world—that supremacy of things seen and temporal which lie at the root of such sad temptations. If the world were not man's idol, he would not be maddened by its crosses and disappointments. If he knew the gospel remedy under trial, he would not surrender himself to despair. Let us remember that our lives are entirely God's property, and in his hands—that the Christian is never useless to the world, or a burden to society, while he can exemplify the graces of meekness and resignation to those around, or pray for the advancement of God's glory and cause. Let us ever regard human life in the light of God's law, and attain to those principles and convictions respecting it which, with God's blessing, will prove a protection against temptations to its destruction, even in the most distempered hour. Above all, let us remember that the best defence against the absorbing love of the world, and all the perilous evils to which it conducts, is the love of Christ, and of heaven, established in the heart; that it is when true religion has said to us effectually, as regards the soul, 'Do thyself no harm,' that the voice of God, and of man, will urge most effectually the same sentiment in regard to the body.

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#### EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit,'* Eph. v. 18.

VERY various are the ways, in which even those who make a profession of Christianity, destroy themselves; they may not take their lives; they may shudder at the thought of suicide; but by excess in drinking intoxicating liquors, they frequently suspend the exercise of reason and conscience, and thus gradually weaken their intellectual and moral powers when sober, and besides hasten death. Thus in effect they are guilty of self-murder. What an affecting spectacle! The time which is allotted in this world, for securing the great ends of life, is already sufficiently short and uncertain. We need the full and unimpaired exercise of all our faculties to the last; and yet there are multitudes who abridge the term, as if it were too long, and at the same time weaken the mind, and harden the soul, by which alone, with the divine blessing, the great work of life can be accomplished.

While God has made corn to grow for the use of man, he has also added the wine and the oil to refresh his heart and make his face to shine. Such generosity should have called forth at once a frugal and a grateful use of God's creatures. But it is well known, that in every age, and in almost all countries, there has been a sad profanation of the divine gifts. Multitudes have prostituted the wine, which was meant as a medicine and a luxury, into an instrument of the basest intemperance. What an ungrateful return for all God's goodness!

Who can describe the innumerable and appalling evils of intemperance! There is no vice, perhaps, which, especially in our country and generation, is more fruitful in the worst consequences. How does it brutalize man, the child of reason and immortality, below the beasts which perish! How does it waste a man's resources, and reduce his family to beggary! How does it prevent the education of children, or frustrate its great ends!—destroy domestic peace, and entail a forfeiture of public respect! How does it blunt conscience—incapacitate for devotion, and unfit for the kingdom of heaven! To how many other crimes and woes does it conduct—such as licentiousness and violence, and not unfrequently insanity and suicide! Above all, how does it provoke God to high displeasure, and open the gates of hell, and ripen for eternal death. No wonder, then, that the word of truth exhorts and expostulates so earnestly against intemperance, even in its first and faintest manifestations; and that the office-bearers of the church, the pastor, and elder, and deacon, are solemnly cautioned against the intemperate use of wine; sobriety, being included in the number of their essential qualifications. Who has not known within his own observation, of some who were once intelligent and amiable—domestic in their tastes and habits—useful to their families, and to society—apparently pious, who have been literally destroyed by intemperance—destroyed in body and mind—in character, reputation, and usefulness, so that they have become a reproach to society, and to the church of Christ.

It is matter of joy, that the subject has of late awakened so much discussion, both in this and other countries, and that the reformation which has been attained is so decided. At the same time, there is no security for the permanence of the change, or even that the depravity of man will not have recourse to other forms of sin as hateful, save in the wide diffusion of Christian principle. Individuals, families, and nations, may become sober, but remain as hostile as ever

to the true God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, and go down to hell after many reformations. As there is nothing which can save the soul, so there is nothing which can secure personal or social morality, but the gospel of Jesus; and any thing which draws away the public mind from this conviction, inflicts a deeper injury than it can confer good. Hence the wisdom of the apostolic counsel, to be filled with the Spirit; 'Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.' The religion of Christ does not, like the religion of falsehood, and the world, content itself with negatives—with men being free from crimes. It calls for positive moral and spiritual excellence, and will be satisfied with nothing less. Christians are not only not to be intemperate in the use of God's temporal gifts, but they are to seek a large measure of spiritual grace. They are to be filled with the Holy Ghost; and how? By seriously reading the word which he has inspired—by carefully attending on the public ordinances where he is worshipped, and by cherishing sympathy and communion with their fellow-christians whom he teaches, and by earnest, unwearied, and believing supplication for the presence and grace which he has promised. There is no danger of any excess in regard to the Spirit of God—of receiving too largely of his power. The more that we receive him, we shall become the more temperate in the lawful use of God's creatures—the more sober-minded, the more self-denied and laborious in doing good to others.

Let all then, and especially the young who make a profession of Christianity, be on their guard against the temptations of intemperance. It is a sin of great ingratitude and manifold aggravations—of unspeakable evil and certain destruction. It is utterly inconsistent with true religion—fatal to the very being of spiritual life. It has slain, and is slaying, its tens of thousands. Let them not be of the number; and as the best defence against its wiles, while they do not disregard subordinate means and appliances, let them embrace and make full use of the gospel of Christ. Let them be filled with the Spirit, and depend upon His protection and teaching, satisfied that every thing else is vain, and must sooner or later terminate in disappointment.

## NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord,'*  
Rom. xii. 19.

REVENGE upon others for injuries received, however selfish and shocking, is yet natural to all. All savage tribes delight in it, and even in heathen nations boasting of a measure of civilization, it is a matter of course. What is the origin of a great number of wars which have desolated the earth, but revenge between individuals and nations? What is the principle upon which the finest epic poem of antiquity is constructed and still admired, but revenge? Even in countries professing Christianity, what is a more frequent cause of murder by duelling, than revenge for affronts real or imaginary? And how are such tempers spoken of? Are they lamented or condemned by worldly society? No; they are baptized with fine names. They are called gallantry and spirit, and a proper sense of one's own dignity. Indeed nothing can better proclaim the generally vindictive disposition of man, than the wonder with which Christian forbearance and meekness in the midst of provocations are regarded; it seems as if on no account were these to be looked for.

Now in utter opposition to the revengeful spirit of man and of the world, the scriptures imperatively require long-suffering and kindness to the injurious. This is not, as many imagine, peculiar to the New Testament. Though harsh and vindictive deeds are recorded in the Old, yet they are not approved. The earlier as well as the latter dispensation requires us to love our neighbours as ourselves; and even in regard to the matter of revenge, it is expressly said in Lev., 'Thou shalt not avenge nor have any grudge against the children of thy people, but love thy neighbour as thyself.' Indeed this is the demand both of the law of God and the gospel of Christ. It is one of their peculiarities. Very various are the reasons why Christians should comply with the call. They are not required to do so from the impulse of mere good nature and instinctive sweetness of temper. These properties do not belong to all, and many cases of provocation will occur which are too strong for them. We must have something universally binding, and always adequate to the end in view. This is supplied in the words before us. A reason is assigned why Christians should not give way to revenge, but rather yield to the injurious wrath of others, because God is the avenger of all such. It is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.'

The injured may fear that the offender will escape, and as he deserves punishment they may judge that therefore it becomes *them* to interfere. But no; God will take care that he shall not escape, but shall meet with a suitable retribution. It is solemnly declared by God, and with all certainty, 'I will repay:' and He is the best judge of the punishment which is due. Men are very imperfect judges of the character and circumstances of others offending against them; they cannot estimate well their temperament and provocation—their education and temptations: the tendency almost always is, under felt injury, to exaggerated views and undue severity. Now God is free from all this. He is a stranger to passion, while he is intimately acquainted with the character of the oppressor, and can make suitable allowance. In these circumstances, for men, and, above all, Christians, to take up the sword of revenge is equivalent to saying that they do not believe God is able or willing to act the part of a righteous avenger, and therefore it is necessary for them to supplement the deficiency. What sentiment can be more unworthy and daring! Were not retribution in a special manner, and justly, the prerogative of God, there might be room for man taking vengeance; but seeing that such is His declared character and office, nothing can be more inappropriate and incongruous than man's intermeddling.

There are, however, many other scriptural reasons for meek forbearance. We do not speak of the pain of a vindictive state of mind—how it is in its own nature often more bitter and agonizing than the most severe injury which man can inflict upon his neighbour; that it is the spirit of fiends and devils; we allude to the motive for forgiving others their offences against us, founded upon God's previous forgiveness of us, the sins which we have committed against him. This is by far the most powerful, because tender and affecting argument, against revenge. The idea is brought out both in the Lord's prayer which Christians are taught daily to use, and in the parable of the creditors. Nor is it omitted among the apostolic exhortations. 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' In asking this, we ask and expect forgiveness for ourselves, no farther than we forgive our fellow-men. If we are vindictive the prayer becomes reversed in our mouths, and we pray. 'Forgive us *not* our debts, as we forgive *not* our debtors.' What a fearful supplication! yet in such circumstances it is just and real. Who does not condemn the man who owed five hundred pence, and who, when freely discharged, proceeded to harrass his neighbour for a debt of

fifty; and yet is not this the position of the vindictive Christian in reference to God? He believes that his debt of five hundred pence is freely forgiven, and yet he will not forgive his fellow-sinner offending against him the minor fifty. Surely of all motives the most persuasive to induce us to be long-suffering and forgiving, is to remember (when we are believers) that though deserving of nothing but destruction, we have been gratuitously pardoned our many highly aggravated and most provoking offences; and shall we not with equal freedom forgive the injuries and offences of our fellow-men? Shall we not rather be subdued by the grace of God and be forgiving to others, because we believe, on good grounds, that God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us? Nothing can be more incongruous than for Christians to be revengeful. It not only assimilates them to Indian savages; it is a practical absurdity. A vindictive believer is a contradiction in terms. He is like a Christian thief.

Let all Christians then put revenge far from them. Let them rather bear evil than inflict it, and let them do good to those who injure them. The duty may be difficult, impossible to nature, but it is not impracticable to grace; the Lord Jesus and his apostles exemplified it, the Saviour on the cross prayed for his murderers, and the apostles spake not one word of evil of Judas the traitor, the disgrace of their company. A suitable vindication of injured character and rights, by constitutional means, is not indeed unlawful. There is scriptural authority for it. But even to this, Christians will have sparing recourse, and only where imperatively required. In this world the Christian is to triumph chiefly by the meek endurance of wrong. He shall have his reward in another form, and amply, in the world to come.

#### NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,' Rom. xii. 18.*

1. THESE words imply that there would be frequent occasions of discord in the Christian world. Why, otherwise, are believers exhorted to live peaceably? The Christian, however much at peace with God, and in his own mind, must lay his account with discord and war among his fellow-men—it may be his fellow-Christians. There is no uninterrupted peace for him in this world. He may long for it, but at present it is unattainable. His language may be at one with the wish of the psalmist, 'O that I had the wings of a

dove, that I might flee away and be at rest.' But it is his lot, at present, to struggle with the elements of irritation and war. This is partly the result of his own imperfect attainments, and his slender sanctification. It is also partly the discipline of God's providence towards his church and people, for the trial and improvement of their graces.

2. The language of the exhortation implies that it is a great duty to cultivate a peaceable temper. Christians are counselled to live peaceably, and that with all men without exception, notwithstanding the provocation with which they may be assailed. This is represented, not merely as desirable, a pleasant thing for ourselves, and beneficial to others, conducive to good neighbourhood and the credit of religion, but as an imperative duty; 'As much as in you lieth,' says an inspired apostle, 'live peaceably with all men.' This is one of a multitude of practical exhortations, of the highest moment, professedly founded on the great doctrines of peculiar Christianity unfolded in the eleven preceding chapters of the epistle. It clearly teaches what the Christian should be, not merely now and then, but throughout the whole course of his life. Live peaceably. We may as legitimately set at nought any of the other counsels contained in the chapter, such as, 'provide things honestly in the sight of all men,' as disregard the call to live peaceably with all men. The authority and obligation are the same.

3. The exhortation implies that it would be very difficult, in many cases impossible, to live peaceably with all men. 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably,' says the apostle; plainly intimating, that however desirous of peace, and peaceably disposed, it would not be possible, in every case, to maintain this spirit and conduct. And why? Because some men are so unreasonable in their demands and expectations, and so fretful and irritable in their tempers that they will not allow others to live peaceably with them. This applies to not a few who make a profession of religion. And it is well known, that even among true Christians, temper naturally bad is the last part of the man which is subdued by divine grace. Let us rejoice to think that it is at length subdued, and that grace can often dwell in a house where the best tempered Christian could not dwell. But there is another reason why uniform peace is unattainable in this world, and that is, that a regard to moral and religious principle often forbids it. The men of the world are great advocates of peace, especially in religion. They seem to think that the sum and substance

of it consists in peace—that it must come before every thing else. And, according to their notions of religion, this is not wonderful. There is nothing religious, which in point of truth, or observance, they would think so important as to be superior to peace. Hence they could easily sacrifice all to peace and expect others to do the same. But this is not the spirit of true religion. On the contrary, the word of God represents many things as superior to peace, and requires us to seek them first. Principle must come before peace. Hence the exhortation, to live peaceably with all men is not absolute. It has its limits; and these are, that the peace must ever be consistent with principle and a good conscience. This accords with the apostle's own example. Nothing was more desirable, or imperative, than that there should be perfect unity and peace between the followers of Christ, more especially his leading apostles in primitive times, and yet Paul withstood Peter to the face, and so created a serious variance. It was, however, because Peter was to be blamed.

How changed would be the aspect of the world if the apostolic counsel were universally regarded, and all professed Christians made it their study, as much as possible, to live peaceably with all men! Though no more positive blessings were secured; though the simple absence of disturbance and strife was obtained, yet what a vast accession would thus be made to the general happiness; and what a foundation would be laid for farther progress! Might we not hope that those happy days would return of which it is said, 'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.' How many evils and bitter vexatious feelings would be escaped! and what recommendations would be afforded in behalf of our holy faith! There are many motives to this course. Peace is lovely in itself; God is eminently the God of peace; and blessed are the peace-makers, and peace-maintainers. But a chief reason is the strong, the erroneous views of peace entertained by the men of the world. They make a man's peaceableness the test of the reality of his religion. They expect an amount of peace from a Christian which they do not demand from others. In this they may be going too far. They may be putting peace out of its proper place, and allowing it to usurp the throne of principle, but such is their judgment. They may be insensible to other things about Christianity, but they are fully alive to its peaceful character. How doubly important,

then, is it that the friends of Christ should be eminent for the peacefulness of their tempers and conduct. How can they otherwise expect that the gospel, which is so dear to them, is to meet with common fairness or acceptance at the hands of the world. The demand on the part of the world may be extravagant, but there is no help for it; it should be an irresistible argument on the part of the Christian as much as lieth in him to live peaceably with all men.

#### TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you,'* Matt. v. 44.

ONE would have thought that as the true Christian is amiable in himself, a most peaceful member of society, a true friend of civil and religious liberty, an unwearied benefactor of mankind, so that of all men he would have been most beloved, and that no one would ever have dreamed of inflicting upon him an injury; but the fact is widely different, there is no class of men who in every age have been more hated and opposed, ridiculed and oppressed. Criminals have been treated more kindly than Christians.

It is interesting to inquire, since the way in which Christians are treated by the men of world in every age is so provoking, what is the manner in which they are to treat the world in return? Are they to be irritated, and retaliate with hatred and bitterness? Are they to cherish revenge, and, where they have the power, lift the hand of violence? This is no more than what the world deserves, and what, in similar circumstances, it would receive from its own party. But the followers of Christ are to be as opposite to the world in their conduct toward others, as they are opposite in general religious principle. They are to love their enemies, bless those who curse them, do good to those who hate them, and pray for those who despitefully use and persecute them. As the leading forms in which men injure Christians are here specified, so the leading forms in which they are to bless them in return are also described, that there may be no evasion, no shrinking from the duty on the score of ignorance. And how amazing are the spirit and conduct which Christ at once recommends and enjoins! We may safely say they are original. They never entered into the mind of man. They form decisive proof of the

divinity of the religion of Jesus. Even infidels, who have been indifferent to a thousand other proofs, have been struck with this, and have admired the Christian doctrine of the love of enemies, while they have admired nothing else in Christianity. It is indeed wonderful. If even among the Jews, those of old time said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy,' much more did the ancient heathen philosophers and moralists maintain the same doctrine. Governed by the selfishness of revenge, they never dreamed that it was possible to love enemies, or that those who hated them should be regarded with any other feeling than hatred in return. It was reserved for the gospel to teach the love of enemies, and it is the more remarkable that a morality so pure, benevolent, and lofty, should have appeared among a people so narrow-minded and addicted to dissension as the Jews. Plainly the discovery was not their own. What our blessed Lord enjoined on others, he practised himself. Had he not loved his enemies he would not have died for them, and offered salvation first of all to his Jerusalem murderers. We know that from the cross he prayed for those who despitefully used and persecuted him, by saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And Stephen and the primitive confessors, and the Christian martyrs in every land since their day, have all breathed their Master's spirit and followed his example. They have in the most impressive form proved that they loved their enemies, and have thereby sometimes melted the enemies themselves with tenderness.

As only a divine Being could give such exhortations as those before us, so, on the part of men, they can be fulfilled only by divine grace and power. They are obviously beyond the reach of nature, of philosophy, or philanthropy. They take for granted a previous change of heart; in other words, regeneration, and the action of some such powerful motive as a previous personal and gratuitous forgiveness from God—the motive that we should love and pardon our enemies, because God has pardoned and loved us who were His enemies. A distinct motive is expressly specified by the Saviour. Christians are enjoined to love their enemies, so that they may be the children of their Father who is in heaven, 'for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.' Here the example of God the Father is adduced. Little as men may be aware of it, He is daily and hourly as the God of nature and the God of providence, practically illustrat-

ing the principle of loving enemies. Every sun which shines, and every shower which descends, shows forth the divine long-suffering and forgiveness. Were it not that God loves his enemies, would he feed and clothe and sustain them with a thousand bounties from generation to generation? No. And what should be the great object of Christians? should it not be to resemble their heavenly Father? Can they have a higher aim? Besides, is it not their privilege as well as duty to be fellow-workers with God and with his Son? And can they be so, if they cherish cold neutrality, and, much more, enmity and revenge toward those who may have maltreated and injured them?

What would be the effect were all Christians to act on their professed principles? The world would not lose its enmity. Perhaps as it was in the days of the Saviour's personal manifestation, that enmity would be more fiercely drawn out. But multitudes would be convinced that there is a reality in religion, who now doubt, and would feel that they were inexcusable in continuing in sin. The martyr's prayers for the forgiveness of his persecutors, breathed forth from the stake, have often been the first means of awakening that conviction of soul which issues in salvation.

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#### TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,'* Matt. v. 10.

ON first reading the words, 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake,' we are ready to exclaim rather, 'How unhappy the case of those who are persecuted at all, and much more for their very goodness! How sad their condition! Blessed be God! we are not among the number.' After, indeed, the days of suffering are over, and the halo of martyrdom irradiates their names, we can understand how they may be accounted happy, and almost wish we were enrolled in their company, but scripture says, 'Blessed *are* those which are persecuted.' They shall not merely be happy in the future, they are happy *now* in the very hour of their suffering. How strange. But so it is—only the persecution must be for righteousness' sake. It must not be for bad temper's sake, or pride, or ambition, or politics' sake. There is no blessedness promised in these cases; but where Christians are persecuted for righteousness' sake, they are blessed.

1. They are blessed in this world. Suffering on the grounds on which they suffer, their persecution is a plain proof that they belong to the family of Christ. This is a source of great satisfaction. Whatever doubts they may once have entertained about their state, they can question no longer that they belong to the faithful, and shall share in their honour. The best of all tests that an evangelical cause is the cause of Christ, is the hatred and persecution of the world. Next, sufferers for righteousness' sake are blessed inasmuch as they are specially sustained throughout their sufferings, are made happy under them, are enabled to exemplify the highest virtues, and can not unfrequently rejoice and triumph in the hour of violent death. The experience of suffering saints, as recorded in scripture, attests this. How glad was the Psalmist in the presence of his enemies. An apostle could say, that Christians take joyfully the spoiling of their goods. We rejoice in tribulation. Though accounted as sheep for the slaughter, we are in all these things made more than conquerors, through him who hath loved us.' How happy was Stephen when his face was irradiated with angelic brightness, and he saw into heaven, and beheld his Master standing at the right hand of God; and yet at this moment his enemies were stoning him to death! How happy were Paul and Silas, when they sung psalms of praise so fervently in the prison, that the other prisoners heard them! How often have the martyrs, in subsequent times, declared, in the midst of the flames which were consuming them, that they felt no pain, so joyful were their souls in communion with their King! How did Guthrie, the Scottish martyr, declare, that he never enjoyed sweeter fellowship with God than immediately after his sentence, thrust aside amid a profane soldiery, he overheard his judges determining where the different parts of his body were to be stuck up in his native land. Ah! how often would their persecutors, in the hour of *their* death, have been glad to have exchanged places and feelings with those whom they slew for the testimony of Jesus. Nor are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake only blessed in life, and at the hour of death, their memory is blessed, they are held in everlasting remembrance; their persecutors are forgotten. Who now knows any thing of them, except their cruelties—perhaps their miserable deaths. But it is otherwise with the faithful—the scenes of their sufferings are marked, and all the details, after the lapse of centuries, are carefully remembered and transmitted from father to son, and often spoken of with fond veneration. This, how-

ever, is not all. It is but a small part of their happiness.

2. Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake are blessed hereafter. It is added, 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' The Saviour also says to his disciples: 'Great is your reward in heaven.' We can, at present, form no idea of the purity and extent of their bliss. Of this only we may be sure, that the first moment of heaven will make them completely and for ever forget all their past pain, except by contrast to add to their joy. A very striking picture of their happiness, in heaven, was presented to the eye of the prophet John. He was introduced to heaven, and saw a prodigious multitude of the redeemed, from all countries, clothed in white, and holding palms of victory in their hands, standing before the throne of the Lamb and crying, 'Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.' He was asked by an Elder, who acted as interpreter, who those were who were arrayed in white, and from whence they came, and on being unable himself to tell, he was informed, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Amid all the sights of splendour of heaven this was the most splendid. John did not know any of the glorious throng, so surpassing was their glory; and yet Stephen was there, and Peter, and Paul, and his own brother James. This was the company of the martyrs, and what was their happiness? It is described in the words which follow, 'Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' No happiness can be conceived more glorious. And it is unending. Most true, then, is the Redeemer's declaration and promise to the sufferers for righteousness' sake.

Let us rejoice, that in every age, even the darkest and most corrupt, Christ has raised up many willing, yea, glad to suffer for his sake. Let us rejoice in their testimony, and warmly prize it. Though slandered as rebels and seditious; let us cherish their memory. At the same time, let us, be jealous of ourselves, and remember that, like the unbelieving Jews, it is a possible thing to admire the martyrs at a distance, and to garnish their tombs, while we have no real sympathy with the principles for which they con-

tended. Let us see, then, that we are intelligent admirers of the suffering saints, because like them we have been renewed in the spirit of our minds, and are vitally united to the same glorious Head.

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TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

'*Thou shalt not commit adultery,*' Exod. xx. 14.

To understand aright the enormity of the offence against which the seventh commandment is directed, it is necessary to bear in mind that that commandment lies at the foundation of the family constitution, and so of the welfare of the commonwealth. God might have maintained and enlarged the population of the world as he commenced it, namely, by creation. There might have been successive creations of races. But instead of this, in great wisdom and goodness he has seen meet to carry forward the peopling of the world by a succession of families. In other words, he has created man male and female, and provided in this way for the increase of mankind, and their multiplication and replenishing of the earth.

The family constitution is one of the highest moment. Little as many may think of it—much as many may despise and injure it, it provides largely for the happiness of the parties, so that their union becomes the image of all that is most endearing and permanent. It secures in the best manner for the care and comfort of children; it lays the foundation for other most important relations, such as those of brothers and sisters; indeed, for some of the most useful and gentle affections of which our nature is susceptible; it is the source, to an incalculable extent, of industry and economy, education, subordination to government, and religious knowledge and practice. Conceive, if possible, that there were no such thing as human families, or that there was no such thing as marriage as the foundation of society, and all these blessings would, to a vast extent, be frustrated and destroyed. The sad evil which results to children where the parents are not married, amply show how fearful would be the result were this universal. So important and honourable does God account the conjugal relation, that he himself condescends to employ its imagery in regard to still higher things. He is pleased to style himself the Husband of his people. 'Thy Maker is thy husband.' And the Redeemer is denominated the Bridegroom, and his church the Bride and the Lamb's wife.

Now, the crime of unchastity, in any of its aspects, is a blow levelled at this blessed family constitution, of which God is the author; and no wonder, then, that it is so vigorously repelled, and the crime so strictly and severely forbidden. The seventh commandment implies that men would be apt to fall into the sin of unchastity. And is not this amply realized by facts? There are some offences so manifestly destructive of society, that all concur in condemning them, such as forgery and murder. But it is not so in regard to breaches of the seventh commandment. Though really subversive of the family constitution—not to speak of the honour of God—and though almost all nations, even the darkest and most corrupt, have passed laws at least against adultery, and so far testified that the conscience of man is here at one with the revealed will of God, yet it does not appear so immediately fatal to the welfare of man, and hence, in all ages and countries, the sins of licentiousness have been amazingly common. Few are the nations, perhaps, where poetic genius has not exerted its powers against the seventh commandment, and more or less directly reviled the family constitution. Over immense countries, fornication, polygamy, and frivolous divorce, are treated with perfect indifference; yea, unlawful connections often form a part of false religion. Idolatry and licentiousness are generally associated. The deities, male and female, which millions of ancient and modern nations have worshipped and continue to worship, are of the worst character. Nay, part of the actual worship of some idols consists in a sacrifice of chastity.

And as this commandment is needed, so does it express the strongest divine disapprobation of the sin. God, the great lawgiver, declares, 'thou shalt not,' on any pretext whatever, violate the law of chastity. The language is comprehensive, and as binding as 'thou shalt not kill.' In itself the crime is fraught with the greatest and most wide spread evil. It has been justly remarked, that there is no sin which more speedily and irretrievably destroys character, both in high and low, and which introduces more misery in less time. It implies and leads to other crimes, such as fraud in cases of seduction, perjury in cases of marriage, not unfrequently to murder and suicide. It involves also the greatest misery. Who can conceive the degradation and woe of an abandoned one—the wretchedness of an injured father or mother, and scarcely less injured children—the sweetest relations of life turned into gall and wormwood?

The word of God has declared His mind in no doubtful terms. 'No whoremonger or adulterer hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God;' also, 'whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.' Whoremongers, (who are classed with murderers) it is said, shall have 'their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.' What were the crimes which brought down a deluge on the earth, and destroyed at once the population of a world? Were not those of licentiousness in the number? What were the sins which called down fire and brimstone from heaven on the cities of the plain, consuming them to ashes? Were they not breaches of the seventh commandment, heightened in aggravation? And what were these punishments meant to typify, if not the still more fearful inflictions of the future and eternal place of torment?

Let us then abide firm by the law, as unfolded in the scriptures, and contend for its integrity and permanence. And let us be persuaded that nothing can warrant the dissolution of the conjugal relation once formed, but the crime which destroys the very end of marriage, and see at once the guilt and folly of the modern infidelity which, under the pretence of adding to social happiness, would, by destroying the permanence of the conjugal tie, overspread society with a deluge of crime and wretchedness. Let us adore the wisdom, and bless the goodness of God, for the sweet ties of the family circle, and for the powerful defence which he has drawn around them; and show our sense of obligation by strictly maintaining the law of chastity ourselves, and guarding, so far as in us lies, against its violation in others.

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TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'Whosoever locketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,'* Matt. v. 28.

THE great desire of fallen man is to repeal the moral law of God. He imagines it is at war with his happiness, instead of being what it truly is, where obeyed, the grand source of abiding bliss. Hence the misinterpretation to which Christ's mission was exposed in early times, and to which it is exposed still. As many now think that the design of Christianity is to introduce what is called a remedial law, softening the rigour of the decalogue, so we find there were some in the days of Christ who imagined that he had come to abrogate the law, or at least greatly to

mitigate its severity; they rejoiced in this as good news, as gospel. Had such been the real design of the Redeemer's advent, we may safely say he would have been cordially and universally welcomed, but instead of adding to the happiness of man, he would have been one of its cruellest destroyers. So far from abrogating the law He vindicates it, explains its extent and spirituality, and closely applies it to the heart and the conscience. Indeed, next to the noble purpose of propitiation by suffering and death, this was a leading object of His coming, and the one was intended to be subservient to the other. The Saviour was anxious to convince his hearers of sin. Until this was gained, all tidings of redemption were vain.

There are many strong things which have been spoken by pagan philosophers, legislators, and moralists, against breaches of the seventh commandment, and not a few severe punishments, in almost all countries, have been enacted against their commission, but none can compare in purity and comprehensiveness with the views of the Son of God. It is obvious that he entertains a far loftier standard of morality than any others. Who, it may be asked, can abide his law? Who has never been conscious of one evil and irregular desire? If this be a breach of the moral law, then are all transgressors. Yes! and that is the very conviction which Christ is anxious to fasten upon every conscience. He wishes to convince of sin, that all may be led to exclaim, What must they do to be saved? and may be persuaded to receive his free redemption.

It is not necessary to show that the seventh commandment is, like all the others, spiritual; the words of Christ testify to this in the most impressive manner. He who gave the law is a Spirit, and can be served only spiritually. It is well known how possible a thing it is to observe a law with the utmost external correctness, while the heart is revelling in its daily and hourly transgression. Can such a state of mind be acceptable in God's sight? Would it be pleasing in the eye of an earthly parent, or teacher, or master? No. But how solemn the saying,—that he who so much as looks upon a woman to lust after her—though this be a single and most transient act, is an adulterer—one of the most hateful of characters. How holy must God be—how terrible the slightest violation of his law and what a multitude of transgressors of it! Though conscious guilt may rebel, yet reason and conscience must pronounce the declaration to be equitable and right.

Instead of quarrelling with the law, let us rather, fully approving its spirituality, consider by what means irregular passions and propen-

sities may be best overcome. If the eye be the inlet to so serious sin—a sin which shall destroy the soul—let us be on our guard against all those outward excitements which may lead to its commission. Peter speaks of some whose eyes are full of adultery, and Job speaks of having made a covenant with his eyes. Let us be watchful against all that would suggest evil thoughts, or words, or lead to licentious deeds, whether in ourselves or in others. Let us be watchful against all in dress, or attitude, or gesture—all in books, or prints, or sculpture—all in poetry, and music, and song—all in the dance, or the stage, that even in a remote degree conduces to light views of unchastity. Let us also beware of any excess in food, or in drink, which would blunt the conscience and relax the spiritual vigilance of the soul. The men of the world may laugh at these precautions, but such will not be the judgment of high moral, and much more Christian principle.

And the better to enable us to pursue this course, let us in all circumstances remember the omnipresence of God, and that his eye sees and marks the most secret sins, and that ere long He will bring all into judgment. Let us remember the case of Joseph, who though a young man in a dependent situation, and surrounded with the strongest temptations, yet preserved his integrity, asking with true principle, 'How shall I do this wickedness and sin against God?' Let us remember the awful judgments of God against the licentious and unclean—and that Christ, with all his purity and delicacy of mind, did not shrink from addressing to them the most distinct and solemn warnings. Nor let the young especially forget the apostolic counsel 'to abstain from youthful lusts, which war against the soul.' It cannot be doubted that multitudes who promised well, have fallen a prey to the temptations of licentiousness—have thus broken the hearts of their parents—blasted all the hopes of honour and usefulness which they had awakened, and made shipwreck of the eternal welfare of the soul. How needful then that the Holy Spirit, as the spirit of sanctification, should be sought by prayer.

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 TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks,' Eph. v. 3, 4.*

PAUL writing to his Ephesian converts, to be 'followers' or imitators 'of God as dear children,

and to walk together in love, as Christ had loved them,' exhorts, as an indispensable step to this course, and indeed a part of it, to shun whatever savoured of unchastity. Nothing could be more fatal to an imitation of God, or to walking in brotherly love. The language is remarkably comprehensive and strong. 'But fornication,' says he: not merely higher crimes, but the simplest form of the sin, 'and all uncleanness,' whatever its nature or degree, 'or covetousness,' selfish—inordinate desire, whatever its kind; 'let it not be named among you, as becometh saints.' So far from being practised and spoken of with pleasure—treated as a matter of indifference—let it not so much as 'once be even named among you,' and that because it is not merely criminal in itself, but is utterly unbecoming, and inconsistent with, the character of saints—the holy family of God. And not satisfied even with this most comprehensive counsel, he adds, 'neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient (or becoming), but rather giving of thanks.' It is unchaste thoughts which lead to unchaste words; while again, unchaste words, by a sad re-action, deepen and perpetuate the thoughts, and lead to corruption in practice. The apostle does not, of course, condemn harmless pleasantry and wit, which may be subservient to the cause of truth, and the vindication of character, as well as innocent recreation, but to talking and jesting which have an unchaste tendency.

It may seem singular, but there was urgent need for exhortations on these points, even to Christian churches, especially in primitive times. The great mass of the members had come fresh from the moral abominations of heathenism—from a heathenism, in regard to which, the apostle says of its miserable victims that 'they were past feeling, and wrought all uncleanness with greediness.' The Christians of Ephesus had been the worshippers of Diana, whose temple was one of the wonders of the world—but whose character was notoriously immoral—and as is the object worshipped, so ever must be the character of the worshipper. The apostle Paul found it necessary to administer the most solemn reproofs to the Christians at Corinth—a city proverbial for its profligacy. He informs them, that the case of incest, tolerated in their communion, surpassed the proceedings of heathenism, and yet he said that on visiting them anew, he expected to be humbled and cast down, on account of many of them who had sinned, and who had not repented 'of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they had committed.

This shows how strong were the temptations to such crimes in apostolic times; they were similar to temptations to the same sins in the newly formed Christian churches of the South seas, or the West India islands, at the present day. Nor have such exhortations been uncalled for in the Christian church generally, in all subsequent times. Not to refer to the breaches of the seventh commandment, which the apostle, doubtless, foresaw, in connection with the celibacy and confessional, the convents and the nunneries of the apostate church of Rome, such offences have always constituted too large a part of the discipline of the Christian church.

It is surely not necessary to say any thing of the gross inconsistency between the offences of which the apostle speaks, and a profession of Christianity. What can be more at variance with the spirit, conversation, and conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ? Such sins may suit well enough with the character of the men of the world. They may not exclude from the favour even of what is called good society, but they are at war with every pretension to true piety, and ought not only to exclude from the communion of the church, but the recognition and friendship of Christian men, in the more private relations of life. Paul writing to Christians solemnly says, 'If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.' The temple of God is the Christian church; and whosoever pollutes it with sins of licentiousness, shall suffer under the wrath of God. 'The body,' says he, of Christians is 'not for fornication, but for the Lord.' It is not for the service of sin. It is fitted and designed for the service of God and of holiness. 'Know ye not,' he adds, 'that your bodies are the members of Christ.' It is the high privilege of Christians, that they are made one with Christ their Surety, so as to become members of his body, he being the Head. Now it is asked, 'Shall I make them the members of a harlot?' One cannot conceive any thing more unutterably shocking, than turning the body of our blessed Lord to the wretched purposes of sin. But every Christian who yields up his body to such sins, does in effect convert the body of Christ into the members of sin; 'for he that is joined to a harlot, is one body with her.' What Christian does not shudder at the thought? How inconsistent with devotion—with seeking to promote the honour of Christ, and the salvation of souls, are unchaste character and conversation! We cannot conceive any thing more abhorrent to the morality of the gospel. It not only brings intense, but degrading selfish-

ness into union with the holiest benevolence and brotherly love: and besides it exposes the Christian church to the scorn and contempt of those men of the world who are pure in their morals. Let Christians then, as individuals, families, and churches, flee all that savours of uncleanness, whether in word or deed—let it not be so much as once named among them. Let them remember their professed character—their connection with Christ and the Holy Spirit. So far from using the tongue to purposes of obscenity, let them rather devote it to thanksgiving and praise to the restraining grace of God, which preserves them from the sin and woe of licentiousness.

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers,'* Eph. iv. 29.

It is apprehended that few, even of the intelligent and Christian members of society, consider, as they ought, the vast importance and responsibility attached to the use of articulate speech. So long as a man is silent, the good or the evil is confined to his own breast—others cannot be affected by it; but the moment he speaks, it ceases to be his own; the words, with the sentiment which they convey, pass from under his control. He knows not into what other minds and hearts they may be transmitted. This only he knows, that they may pass from individual to individual, from family to family; nay, from one generation to another, and in their influence only cease to act with the day of final judgment. What a solemn thought, that a man may be doing irreparable mischief, long after his spirit has passed to its award, and his body has mouldered into dust! It is pleasant to think, on the other hand, that good, whether by poetry, or prose, or tradition, is as capable of transmission and perpetuity. Under the head of 'corrupt communication,' rather classes of sins, than particular offences, seem to be comprehended. We may interpret it as cautioning Christians against all blasphemy and profaneness as regards God, or any thing which is His—all falsehood and perjury—in short, breaches of the ninth commandment, in their endless variety; all flattery, tale-bearing, whispering, reproach, railing, reviling, backbiting, slandering, as regards our fellow-men, and fellow-Christians: and all obscene and unchaste words and jests, and vain and idle

talking, and rash judgment, and unprofitable speech, as regards ourselves. No sins are more frequently or solemnly condemned both throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Surely it is not necessary to say any thing of the danger of evil communications. Proverbially they corrupt good manners. What multitudes of the young, made miserable for life, can bear witness to the injury which they have received from false teachers, ungodly masters, sinful companions! Armed, too, with sympathy and apparent earnestness, how powerful is speech, whether in the hands of the orator, or the demagogue, for evil. Did man simply cease to deal in corrupt conversation, how much time would be redeemed; what incentives to sin would be escaped; how much evil would be prevented; what occasions and opportunities would be afforded for lessons in good!

It is worthy of notice, however, that the apostle, in addressing Christians, does not content himself with forbidding evil. He exhorts to good. It is added, 'but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.' Of course he does not, by this, mean to forbid cheerfulness and innocent mirth, nor to interfere with the freedom and consequent enjoyment of conversation. This were at war with the happiness of society, which speech is so well-fitted and designed to promote. But he condemns all vain, frivolous, trifling conversation which is not fitted to do us or others good; all idle talkativeness which leaves the mind empty and destitute of just thoughts, and all excess in pleasantry otherwise lawful, which is irrational and unfits for serious duty. In opposition to this he calls Christians to turn the gift of articulate speech to useful account, even to speak in a wise, rational, entertaining it may be, but still profitable manner. He teaches them that a savour of godliness and of heavenly wisdom, a desire for the glory of God, and the interests of piety, should appear in their conversation, and, so to speak, tincture their words. Not that it is necessary or desirable to be always speaking in a manner *directly* religious, any more than to be always engaged in the actual worship of God. This would be inconsistent with the other duties of life, and mar our usefulness. What Christianity requires, is, that its disciples, in speech and conversation, never indulge in any thing which is at variance with Christian principle—that they take care that all be pure, rational, calculated more or less to be useful, and if possible, that all shall remotely at least have a moral and religious tendency; so that on the retrospect they may not have any thing with which to reproach themselves, and may

be able honestly to ask God's blessing. A pious man who is watching for opportunities of good, may by well-timed and well-turned conversation not only prevent mischief, but by first recommending his own intelligence and good sense may afterwards communicate salutary moral impressions of lasting value to his hearers, especially the young. In order to this he will always speak of God with reverence and awe, where it is necessary to mention His name; with prudence, candour, and tenderness, where it is proper to speak of others; and with uniform modesty, and sobriety, when he feels called on to speak of himself.

Let Christians now, when the means and opportunities of social intercourse are daily multiplying, and so much time is necessarily taken up in conversation, be exhorted carefully to comply with the excellent counsel before us. Putting what is directly corrupt out of sight, is it not matter of deep regret, when looking back at the close of day, that professed disciples of Jesus find whole successive hours in conversation directed to no good purpose, but idle, light, frivolous, it may be, ill-natured or satirical talk, injurious to the spiritual health of their own minds, and to the influence which it should exert over others. Do such neglected opportunities, and misapplied talents, and ungrateful treatment of God, involve no criminality? Let Christians faithfully employ their gifts and advantages. Let them be intelligent, candid, amiable, sober-minded, communicative, that they may be able to make a right and effective use of their articulate speech; and while they do not, by any means, confine themselves to religion, let them not fall into the opposite error of preserving a strict silence on all that borders on religion, as if it were intended only for the secrecy of the heart, or as if men could not speak upon it without disputing, or as if in the danger of professing too much, it were better to make no profession at all. Above all, let them remember the example of the Lord Jesus. What a pattern was he of pure and profitable, yet withal pleasant speech! What wisdom directed his words! What love to God, what compassion for men, breathed through them all! Let such be the model of the disciples.

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity,'* Hab. i. 13.

It is scarcely necessary to refer to the proofs of the divine holiness; they are to be met with on every hand. How impressive is the holiness of

God proclaimed in the creation of man in innocence—in the conscience which is planted in every breast—in the moral government which is established in the world, in virtue of which God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked! Above all, how impressive is the proof which is to be found in his word: in the moral law—which is holy, and just, and good, and still more in the scheme of redemption, so nobly devised to recover sinners from the consequences of its violation. How holy must God be, that sooner than spare sin he would not spare an only-begotten and well-beloved Son, nor withhold the Holy Spirit, to renew and sanctify those who were redeemed, and that though often grieved and provoked by their perversity. No testimonies to the divine holiness can be so striking as these. But it may not be unsuitable to think of the testimonies to the holiness of God contained in the words and images of scripture.

The prophet addressing Jehovah says, 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity.' So far from being indifferent to moral evil, or favouring, or loving it, God cannot so much as look upon it, so abhorrent is it to His pure and holy nature. The heavens, with all their brilliancy and splendour, are said not to be clean in his sight, and the stars not to be pure before him. It is said, 'Behold he putteth no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly.' How inconceivably holy then is God! Of him it is declared, 'thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee.' Nay, in regard to evil, it is said that God not only is not or shall not, but 'cannot be tempted, neither tempteth he any man.' The thing is impossible. His holy nature forbids the most distant approaches to it. He is represented as 'very light, in whom is no darkness at all.' The angels and archangels of heaven are introduced as celebrating the praise of God's holiness above every other perfection, as exclaiming, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory,'—of the glory of his holiness, and he himself is represented as swearing by his holiness: so high and essential a part does he account it of himself. Nay, not only is God holy in himself, the Holy One of Israel, but he is so holy that every thing connected with him partakes of the same quality. Whatever he touches becomes marked with purity—his name is holy, and so is his throne, and place, and heaven,—they are all holy,—so is his hill, and habitation, and mountain, and house upon the earth. His works

covenant, his promise, his law; his people also, and their calling, are holy; in like manner is his sabbath holy; his prophets, priests, and angels. His Son and his Spirit also are eminently holy.

How desirable is it to feel that there is a great unseen Being who sees and knows all, to whom the most secret desire of evil is as open as the most proclaimed action of the life! How important to feel that the holy One of Israel, whose eyes are pure and piercing as a flame of fire, is ever with us! What a check is the faith of this fitted to exert upon thoughts of causeless anger, unchaste desires, covetous affections, purposes of revenge! Who can be wilfully impure under the very eye of Purity? Who can be careless about progress in holiness, when the God of holiness is present, and invites and encourages to be holy as he is holy? Let Christians be well persuaded of the indispensable necessity of personal holiness. It assimilates to the most glorious, excellent, and lovely of beings, and what else ought they supremely to desire? What happiness can be so great as being like God. If we admire and follow what is perfect among men, shall we not much rather imitate the perfections of the ever-blessed Jehovah, from whom indeed all that is beautiful in human taste and morals has been derived, as a small and mudded stream from a fountain of exhaustless purity? We cannot pleasantly spend a day in the society of one whose likings and dislikings do not accord with our own, and how then, if unsanctified, can we expect to spend a happy eternity with God? Remembering the words, 'Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy,' let Christians be exhorted to press forward after holiness in all its extent, in thought, speech, and deportment. The simple character of God as holy, his moral loveliness, should animate to much watchfulness and many a holy exertion; but happily there is more than this. There is an ample provision of means for the express purpose of sanctifying. The work of the Son removes every obstacle to the holiness of the believing soul, and supplies the best motives to its attainment, at once showing the evil of sin, and proclaiming the holy love of God. And it is the express office and the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third person of the adorable Trinity, to renew and sanctify the soul from day to day, yea, it is His joy and delight to do so. Oh let Christians avail themselves of these means, and employ them to the uttermost; and consider, for their encouragement, that the higher their sanctification here, the greater their glory hereafter. And let the sinner be satisfied, that he cannot be made holy

till he is at peace with God; that the first step to his being sanctified, is as a perishing sinner to submit to the righteousness of Emmanuel. Let him, as he would receive the Holy Spirit, first receive Christ the Redeemer. And the better to encourage him to this, let him remember that that great and awful Jehovah, of thrice sacred sanctity, before whom the angels of heaven veil their faces with their wings, invites and beseeches him to lay down the weapons of his warfare. Let him think that a tear of compassionate love stands in that pure and piercing eye, which cannot look upon sin, and before which the heavens are not clean, and is ready to fall for the guiltiest of men. Let him think of the blended purity and mercy of God, and at once be melted into contrition for sin, and be aroused to a new and holy obedience.

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 TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things,'*  
 Phil. iv. 8.

LET us attend to the exhortation to mental and moral discipline to which the apostle calls. It forms the conclusion of a practical address to a much-loved church. Paul's counsels, in regard to God and themselves and their fellow-men, were too numerous to be detailed; therefore he embraces them all in a comprehensive statement. 'Finally'—to conclude the whole—'whatsoever things are true'—not one or a few or many, but all things, of whatever class, which are true—'whatsoever things are honest,' &c.—meditate on them, judge, reason, draw inferences, make practical applications of them. And in case any should be bewildered by calls so general, the apostle adds his own example: 'Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen *in me*, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.' This is a noble farewell; to exhort men to think upon good, and nothing but good, and that not as a matter of mere speculation or vague desire, but for the purpose of imitation. It is like a celebrated painter calling upon his more youthful pupils to study all the finest models of ancient and modern times.

Meditate for a little upon the different parts

of which the exhortation is composed. Though to a superficial eye the parts may seem to run into each other, they convey separate ideas. The word of God does not deal in idle repetitions. Christians are required to think on 'whatsoever things are true'—not merely to acquire the knowledge of divine things on suitable evidence, but solemnly to realize all the great truths which regard God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—ourselves as sinners—the way of salvation—our duty and privileges—the day of future account and retribution; we are to picture these and many others vividly forth to our minds, as if they were actually present, and as if we could converse with them. Farther, Christians are exhorted to think on 'whatsoever things are honest;' in other words, uprightly to follow out the convictions which meditation on divine truths has awakened. It is well known how prone the mind is, where it has become enlightened, to shrink from its own convictions, how it attempts to smother and evade them, in order to shun the pain of a new and more exact course of obedience. How important, then, the call, in cases of mental and moral discipline, to personal honesty! Where is the use of meditating upon the great truths of natural or revealed religion, if the moment they become practical, the mind dishonestly turns aside from the conviction?

Having exhorted to a suitable consideration of truth, and an honest application of it, the apostle next calls us to practise, in all our dealings with our fellow-men, 'whatsoever things are just.' This embraces a very comprehensive class of duties. The Christian is not only to be scrupulously just in all his transactions with his fellow-men, even the smallest—'owe no man anything'—he is to be just to the character and reputation of his neighbours, and he is to call himself strictly to account, as in the sight of God, for the manner in which he discharges his duties in the various relations of life, as a superior, a parent, or a master; an inferior, a child, or a servant; an equal, a friend, or neighbour. He is to meditate on the responsibilities of justice, as applicable in his case, and consider whether he is employing all his talents and means of usefulness as he may and ought to God's glory and the good of his fellow-men. Passing from such contemplations, he is to think on 'whatsoever things are pure.' He is to take full and persevering account of all the personal virtues, particularly of the state of his heart before God, the motives of his actions, the prevailing current of his desires and affections. He is to see that these be pure, such as a holy God and his own conscience ap-

prove. This may be a severe, but it is a most necessary portion of moral discipline.

The last part of the exhortation regards what is 'lovely' and of 'good report.' However correct and excellent the character, which, with the divine blessing, will grow up under the discipline already described, it is essential to the perfection and beauty of the whole, that the lovely and the praiseworthy be added. It is well known that there are a class of virtues, which even the world, with all its blindness, is compelled to admire; these are the higher graces, such as meekness under provocation, forgiveness of injuries, patience under protracted suffering, self-denying charity to the worthless. These and similar virtues are lovely in themselves, and they are universally well reported of. They recommend the gospel to general honour and acceptance, the more especially, if not satisfied with an accidental manifestation, the Christian seeks for and seizes opportunities of exercising them, and so glorifying his Father who is in heaven. The Christian character is truly lovely. It is intended, as it is fitted, to awe and attract and lead to universal imitation. Let the believer keep this in mind, and think practically and to purpose on whatsoever is 'lovely and of good report.'

There are some fine sayings, and self-denied and generous doings, to be met with even in the writings of Heathenism—such sayings and doings as may make many professed Christians ashamed; but it is not to the contemplation of these that the believer is called. In the words before us, he is exhorted to meditate on the works and ways of God, as manifested in nature and providence, and especially the whole revelations of the scriptures in their practical applications. He is called to think on all that is great and good, as exemplified in the history of scripture saints. And how lofty is the devotion of the psalmist, how profound the piety of the prophets, how heroic the spirit and conduct of the apostles! What a record of moral wonders is the eleventh of the Hebrews! What a halo of glory encompasses the martyrs of Jesus in every age! How undying and diffusive is their fame!

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TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

'*Thou shalt not steal,*' Exod. xx. 15.

THAT God is the God of society as well as of individuals and families, is proclaimed in the

words before us. Property lies at the foundation of society, and the eighth commandment recognises and protects it. Our bountiful Creator has given dominion over the world to man, and implanted in his nature the capacity and the principle impelling him to appropriate a share of it for present, and to lay up another share for future use. In proportion to the importance of property as an institution of God, conducive to the welfare of society and the progress of true religion, is the guilt of its violation, and yet how extensively is it violated, and how varied the forms! There may be little scope for robbery or theft in a savage state of society, where there are few articles to steal, and the offending parties can readily be detected and punished; but the principle of unrighteous appropriation as part of our corrupted nature always exists, and with the artificial wants and temptations of society is brought into enlarged activity. Innumerable are the ways in which men violate the eighth commandment. To what is the immense civil and criminal codes of a commercial nation directed, if not the protection of property and the punishment of those who violate its laws? The Christian happily cannot tell of the endless forms of fraud and forgery, theft and stealing and robbery, idleness and profusion, covetousness, avarice, gambling, and a thousand others; but our laws, and criminal courts, and prisons, and penal settlements, and wretched families, can bear melancholy testimony to the existence and prevalence of the breaches of God's law, in these great leading outlines, not to allude to less direct or minor cases. And is it necessary to say any thing of the punishment? The decalogue uttered from Sinai, by the mouth of Jehovah himself, proclaimed, 'Thou shalt not steal,' and both God and man have in every age concurred in expressing their strong displeasure against the sin. The law of Moses enjoins, 'Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant, that is poor and needy; at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.' Here the simple withholding of the wages of a servant for a season, is accounted oppression, and a crying sin against Jehovah.

Parallel to this, is the address of the apostle James to the rich men of his day: 'Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth;' and what is the denunciation which he utters regarding them? It is in these words, 'Weep and

howl for your miseries that shall come upon you; your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as if it were fire.' And what was the declaration of God by Ezekiel? He says, that the man who hath oppressed the poor and the needy, or who has not restored the pledge, shall surely die, and that his blood shall be upon him, (xviii. 13). Still more impressive is the language of the apostle Paul. Addressing Christians he says, 'Be not deceived;' implying that even they were apt on such subjects to deceive themselves or to be deceived by others; 'neither thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God;' in other words, they shall be doomed to the kingdom of Satan. Our blessed Lord though when upon earth a poor man, exposed to the privations and temptations of poverty, yet did not, like many in similar circumstances, indicate any prejudice against property, or encourage others to entertain it. On the contrary, he sacredly guarded its rights, saying, 'Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's,' and denounced eternal death against those who should steal, and die with their sin unrepented of and unatoned.

From the commandment before us, let Christians be on their guard against dishonesty in any of its forms. All circles and professions in life have their peculiar temptations. Let Christians be scrupulous in giving to all what belongs to them, and in maintaining the trusts reposed unbroken. Let them be rigidly honest and upright even in small matters. The eighth commandment is a law which is absolute, not admitting of degrees. The least theft is a great sin, and if successfully practised will lead to others. And as the root of much of the breaches of this law is either inordinate love of the world, or a supposed necessity, occasioned by men's own idleness or prodigality, so let Christians keep the world in its own place, and be at once busy in their proper callings, and frugal in the use of God's gifts. Thus will they be kept from all temptation to violate the law, 'Thou shalt not steal.' Let them remember that to steal in any form or degree is mean as well as sinful, and cannot plead even the apologies of passion which may be urged in behalf of other crimes. Let them consider that it is a most ungrateful return for God's goodness, as the patron and protector of society; that it aims a blow at the civilization and regeneration of the world, through the lawful use of property; that it is an indulgence of that love of the world which is one of the leading enemies of the spiritual life; above all, let them remember that it

will certainly entail eternal death, and that the dread doom of Achan and his house is its type.

Let no one plead the community of property practised in the earliest days of Christianity, as inconsistent with the views of which have been stated. Even were a community of goods in some aspects sanctioned by the word of God, this would never countenance fraud or theft. In all states of society the eighth commandment remains the same. The institution referred to was evidently peculiar, intended to meet a particular exigency—the persecution of the first Christians,—and disappeared with the circumstances which created it. Moreover, it was quite voluntary, and we have no reason to believe was universally adopted, even by the primitive believers. It can be pleaded with justice only to the effect of strongly recommending disinterestedness, and self-denial, and liberality among Christians in days of special trial.

#### TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found,'*  
Lev. vi. 4.

THE law of restitution may be contemplated under two lights: 1. As proving the justice of God; 2. And as furnishing a test of the sincerity of man. Both aspects are most important. It is of high moment to know the character of God; and that character is marked by unswerving justice. It is also of great value to have good tests at hand by which we may readily ascertain the reality of men's repentance, where they profess to be sorry for sin, and to turn anew to God. The principle of restitution secures both.

Where a man has taken away what belongs to another, or has found it, he is required to restore it to the owner. What applies to property also applies to character. If one has, in any form or degree, injured the good name of another, he is bound to make reparation, by clearing the reputation which he has assailed, and taking such other steps as may be necessary to place the character in the same estimation in which it was before. Restitution is demanded by God. Conscience and common sense bear witness to it, even in heathen lands; and the requirement of the divine word, both under the Jewish and Christian dispensations, is most explicit. It is involved in the great law proclaimed from Sinai by the

lips of Jehovah himself, 'Thou shalt not steal.' Permission to steal, or to retain what is stolen, is plainly inconsistent with the decalogue. The law of Moses, too, is clear. A man is to restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he has gotten deceitfully, or what was delivered him to keep or the lost thing which was found. The cases in which restitution is to be made are minutely detailed, that there may be no excuse for withholding on the plea of ignorance. Nay, not satisfied with a bare restitution, the Mosaic law required compensation in addition, two-fold, four-fold, and even five-fold. The case of Jacob, after receiving corn without payment, returning the money in the mouth of the sacks to Egypt, shows what was the idea of restitution which then prevailed. And Samuel, at a later day, gave evidence of the influence of the same sentiment, 1 Sam. xii. 3. Not to multiply illustrations, what were the spirit and conduct of Zaccheus when he became a new man through the faith of the gospel? He said, 'Behold, Lord,...if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold.' And what was the Master's approbation? 'This day is salvation come to this house.' It is plain, then, that the law of God imperatively requires restitution. And that not as an artificial or arbitrary appointment, but as a moral commandment, seated in the very nature of God. There may be some things which do not admit of restitution, or in a very imperfect form. Who can restore the life or the chastity of others, where they have been taken away? Who can undo the injury to character which a wide-spread lie may inflict? But wherever the case admits of restitution, justice demands that it be rendered. Yea, the very fact that restitution is in some cases impossible, is just a reason why in all cases where it can be made, it should be the more cheerfully yielded. There may be many cases where the laws of society do not demand restitution, as where parties become subsequently able to discharge debts from which they had been previously released; but the law of God, and the spirit of true religion, I humbly apprehend, call upon such persons to restore what they owed. Many casuistical questions may be started in connection with restitution, as to whether children should enjoy property doubtfully or unlawfully acquired by parents, and many others; but it is believed that in the great majority of cases, a sound judgment and enlightened conscience, under the regulation of the word of God, will find no serious difficulty. We see, then, the justice of God. His law is another name for

himself. It is, so to speak, a picture of Deity, and it expressly requires restitution and reparation wherever there has been an offence which admits of either.

The second point is as a test of sincerity. Men are prone to deceive themselves, and in nothing more than their repentance. There are two kinds of it, the genuine and the spurious. Now restitution supplies an admirable standard for ascertaining what is genuine. Not but that a man may restore property, and make reparation to character, and still be impenitent in heart. But, at least, no man can be said truly to repent, who refuses, though he has it in his power, to make restitution. If he truly repents, he will restore; nay, he will be forward to do so, and while he confesses his sin he will deeply regret should he, in the providence of God, be unable to make reparation for the injury which he has inflicted. This at once tries sincerity. Many have no objections to confess their sins to God, but are utterly averse, even though they have the means, to make any restitution to man. This plainly shows that there is no cordial approbation of the law of God, which is essential to true repentance. It proves, whatever may be their confessions, and tears, and convictions of sin, that they hate the law as hard, and wish it altered, and that after all their grief does not proceed from the sin which they have committed against God, but because He will not change his law to suit them. Let them consider that dishonesty, in small things, is a proof of radical dishonesty in heart, and proves that it is owing to circumstances alone, and not to principle, that they are not the most abandoned thieves. As the principle of restitution requires them to pay debts which have been contracted, let them feel that it also forbids them to incur debts which they have no reasonable prospect of paying. Let them search not only their hearts, but their substance. And if they find any thing which has been unlawfully come by, let them not attempt to enjoy it: let them cast it out. Where they cannot find the owner, let them give it to the poor, or to the service of God, but let them not retain it; they cannot do so, and truly repent of their sins, nor can they receive any blessing on their basket, or their store, from the hands of God.

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 TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough,'* Prov. xxviii. 19.

THE 'natural man,' in the language of scripture, is emphatically an idle man. Hence we see men

in the most simple states of society—savage life, overrun with indolence, and utterly averse to any exertion, unless some strong appetite calls for its exercise. So it is of men in more civilized society; as soon as they are released from the conflict with the world, which business or condition may demand, they sink into indolence and self-indulgence. Indeed the hope of realizing these for the evening of life, is often one of the prompting motives of their temporary activity. Even religious men are far from being free from such temptations—they frequently yield to them. Not to refer to the sloth of the convent or the monastery in popish countries, how often are Christians disposed to retire from the warfare of the great world into a little circle of their own, where they meet with no contradiction—are respected, and indulged, and indolently pursue their own tastes and likings. This may apply to Christians, in the middle and higher ranks of life; and even among those who are compelled to labour for their daily bread, how much sloth is seen even in religious duties—in reading the word—and in prayer: how little pains are employed to shut out the world, and to fix the attention on the exercise in which they are engaged. What carelessness in reading the word! How little self-denying study and effort to understand it as compared with many other books! What roving of the mind in prayer! how easily is it disturbed with any new circumstance, or supposed engagement, so that the words are little better than a form!

It is well for all, and especially Christians, to bear in mind, that all our powers of body, soul, and mind, are capable of activity, and were evidently designed for unwearied exercise. Even in the state of innocence our first father Adam was to dress the garden and keep it; and if this was desirable and obligatory, then, how much more important is labour now in a state of temptation and sin. The fourth commandment says, 'six days shalt thou labour.' The government of God is evidently founded upon the principle of labour. Men do not succeed in this world by sloth—by indolently doing nothing, but by industry, and not fits and starts of industry, which would be injurious both to mind and morals—by intoxicating with success—but by slow and steady application, often without much intellectual energy. All nature testifies to the same great law. God speaks to the sluggard through the ant, whose ways he exhorts him to consider, and be wise—without guide, overseer, or ruler, providing her meat in summer, and gathering her food in harvest. The fields, too, like the garden

of the sluggard left to themselves, yield nothing save weeds, thorns, and thistles; but apply industry, and forthwith they wave with golden corn, and 'he that tilleth his land has plenty of bread.' In harmony with this, the earth itself, and sun, moon, and stars, are not stationary—they are the subjects of unwearied motion—of ceaseless beneficial revolutions. Rising to their great Author and Sustainer, how active is the providence of God! 'He worketh hitherto,' and his working forms no breach of the sabbath rest. When upon earth, and now that He is in heaven, how energetic and unwearied the labours of the Son—and how powerful and ceaseless the operations of the Spirit! How untiring also the service of the angels and archangels around the throne! And when all above, beneath, around, in heaven, and in earth, are full of motion, shall redeemed man alone be idle?

In accordance with the sentiments before us, we are informed, that the hand of the diligent not only maketh rich, but shall bear rule; that the man who is diligent in business shall stand before kings. The patriarchs were active in business, and though holy men, with what wealth and honour did God enrich them! And in how many other cases has He, in all ages, fulfilled his promise? Let Christians then be exhorted to industry in all their callings, whether secular or religious. Industry in the things of the world may indeed be carried too far. It may pass into hasting to be rich, which is destructive. It must therefore ever be kept in subordination to God, and the soul, and salvation; but within these limits it is most important, favourable alike to outward, mental, and spiritual health; while in all circumstances and situations, its opposite is an unmitigated evil, the parent of various temptations and crimes—fatal both to pure morals and spiritual religion. Let us view sloth not only as an evil—the friend of savage life, with its ignorance, degradation, helplessness, and woe, but as sin against God—a violation of the great law of nature—ingratitude for the active powers and capacities with which we have been favoured—one of the iniquities which brought down upon Sodom the wrath of Heaven. Let us shun its earliest snares—let us resist its first temptations. And among these let us specially number bad company. The same wisdom of God which assured the industrious man of plenty, declares, 'but he that followeth vain persons, shall have poverty enough.' Vain persons are evidently irreligious men, indolent schemers, seditious censurers of government—those who will not work themselves, and who lay all the blame of their misery

upon the rulers of the nation. Such persons, it is said, shall have poverty enough. There are always not a few of this description of character. While they live they are the victims of discontent and the demagogue, and are ready for deeds of spoliation and murder; but they soon become exposed to disease, and seldom live long. Now it is said that he who followeth after such persons, shall have poverty enough. Nothing else could be expected. A man shares in the fate of the companions he chooses. If the companions of the wise are safe and honoured, they who follow the irreligious and slothful shall have their award. How certainly are evil companionships the sources of ruin. The bitter shipwreck of early hopes—the broken hearts of parents—the prison, the scaffold, are witnesses to the solemn truth, and the present is no exception to the rule, 'the companion of fools shall be destroyed.' Let us ever remember that the society of God, the friendship of Christ, the companionship of the faithful, form the noblest security of industry, and the best protection against the idle and injurious, and all who would deteriorate its blessings.

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 TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man ;  
 he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich,'*  
 Prov. xxi. 17.

Most persons readily understand what is meant by the love of pleasure. It consists in the indulgence of the senses, the appetites and passions of the body, and those tastes of the mind which border upon and minister to them. It is opposed to restraint, self-denial, and to what savours of the spiritual and divine. In short, it consists in the indulgence of that part of our nature which is common to us with the lower creatures, or which is allied to it. Philosophers and moralists, even in pagan countries, have counselled against this self-indulgence. They see that, besides involving in many outward evils—poverty and crime—it relaxes the tone of the mind, weakens the moral sense, and obliterates the grand distinctions between man and the brutes. Hence many of them, under such impressions, have denied themselves to the pleasures of sense, and exercised a mental self-control, such as is fitted to make not a few Christians ashamed of themselves.

As might have been expected, true religion forbids the love of pleasure. The false religious

systems of the world may, with some exceptions, encourage it. Indeed, this is one of their grand charms, to the natural man, but it is otherwise with the religion of God. Under all dispensations, it is the religion of restraint upon the lower appetites and propensities of our nature. It aims at bringing man up to a holy, spiritual, and heavenly character, and in order to this, it is essential that he deny and mortify the merely sensual. There is indeed a degree of pleasure connected with the senses, which the law of God approves: and this is a testimony to His condescending kindness. For instance, He has made the use of food pleasant. He might have provided that it should answer its end without any accompanying enjoyment. True religion gives no countenance to the self-imposed sufferings of self-righteousness. It sanctions a lawful and thankful use of God's gifts; but it encourages self-denial as an important virtue and mean of spiritual good, and calls upon Christians to be moderate in their use even of things in themselves lawful.

It is scarcely necessary to refer to passages of scripture condemnatory of the love of animal pleasure. It is said, 'He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man; he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.' The heaviest penalty here is simply poverty, and though brought on in the most painful way—excess and dissipation—many may still think it by no means intolerable. But much more than outward poverty is included in the punishment. There is poverty of soul—poverty as to God and eternity. The apostle Paul says of the persons who make their belly their god, that 'their end is destruction.' And yet, is it not to be feared, that not merely the worldly who mind earthly things, but that many Christians, professed and real, scarcely know what self-denial means? They seem to think that if they have the pecuniary resources, and abstain from what is directly sinful, they may indulge their fleshly tastes as they please—spend their time in unnecessary sleep, or frivolous reading, or the pursuit of the fine arts—without any one having a right to find fault. Is not this much to be deplored? Is it not at variance with the mind and will of God? Is it not injurious to spiritual character and usefulness? Does it not rob us of many precious hours and opportunities, and unfit the mind for turning to advantage those which remain? Does it not in effect convert the free grace of the gospel into licentiousness?—spending an easy self-indulgent life, because Christ has died for the guilty, and we are not called upon to seek for heaven

by any laborious works or costly sacrifices of our own.

Let all men be exhorted against the love of pleasure. This is peculiarly necessary in the luxurious and artificial age in which we live—an age which has forgotten the hardships and the sufferings which the men of an earlier era endured for Christ and his cause. Let those who listen to the temptations of self-indulgence remember the great law, that to live for pleasure is to destroy it—that to pursue pleasure as an object, is to make it flee from us. The same principle holds in the spiritual life. True happiness consists not in the indulgence of self in the lower pleasures of our nature, but in peace with God, a frugal and thankful use of His gifts, the restraint of the appetites and passions of the body, the enjoyment of lawful pleasures, incidentally and by the way; zealous efforts to do good to our fellow-men, and to extend the kingdom of the Redeemer. How striking the contrast between the apostle Paul and the rich Fool mentioned in the gospel. The apostle says, 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.' The sensualist says, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be merry.' While the apostle denies his body, the sensualist gives license to his soul, and degrades it with surfeiting and drunkenness. And what is God's voice to him in return? 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.'

Let Christians then be given to self-denial, shun all unnecessary indulgence and prodigality, arm themselves against the snares of the flesh, and turn all God's gifts to a pure and faithful use. To adopt the language of another: 'Self-denial does not consist in monkish austerity or ascetic rigour. It is neither a long pilgrimage with its hardships, a useless seclusion with its deceptions, a sour look with its disgusts, or a bare head and empty stomach, with their inconveniences. It is a holy, persevering, prayerful opposition to the desires, appetites, wishes, and tempers of corrupt human nature. It is submission to providence; it is resignation to affliction; it is preference of others. And in all this it is reasonable, manly, necessary;—reasonable to deny and oppose what is corrupt in its origin, baneful in its growth, destructive in its end—and such are nature and sin. It is manly; for thus is shown that the mind, the soul, the reason, holds the seat and sceptre of government, while the inferior passions obey. It is necessary for the discovery of our graces, the good of society, our own peace and salvation. It has been made by Jesus Christ a condition of discipleship.'

#### TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat,' 2 Thess. iii. 10.*

In apostolic times some Christians imagined that the gospel released from the obligation of labour, and introduced universal ease and relaxation. This idea seems to have prevailed very extensively at Thessalonica, and was strengthened by the impression that our Lord was about immediately to appear. In these circumstances it was imagined to be unnecessary to attend to secular business, and many abandoned themselves to inactivity. Hence the apostle, after showing that the Saviour was not to appear again until the anti-christian apostacy had come, and long reigned, proceeds to rebuke the idle and slothful Christians who dishonoured the name they bore, and to exhort to the most earnest activity in well-doing. He calls upon the Christian brethren in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—so solemn does he account the case—to withdraw themselves from every brother who walked disorderly: and the disorderly walking consisted in Christians 'working not at all, but being busy bodies.' He speaks strongly on the subject. He 'commands' them, in virtue of his apostolic authority, to disown all connection with such persons, and reminds them of a rule which he had previously established, that if any would not work, neither should they be allowed to eat. So far from regarding them as proper objects of almsgiving, he looked upon them rather as persons who should be starved into labour—compelled to exert themselves, in short, as befitting subjects of discipline. In the course of his earnest appeal he refers to his own example, and from it calls to diligence. He reminds the Thessalonians, that while he lived among them he gave no countenance to the 'disorderly;' that, on the contrary, he did not eat any man's bread for nought, but wrought with labour and travail, night and day, that he might not be chargeable to any; and that though he had a perfect right to a maintenance from the gospel, he preferred to earn a livelihood by menial toil, to prevent men saying that he was mercenary. The disorderly, then, are exhorted and commanded in the name of Christ to cease to be busy bodies—going about from house to house, living upon others, and to work with quietness, and to eat their own bread, implying that the bread upon which they had hitherto been subsisting could not rightly be called their own, but another's.

Let Christians now listen to the full and earn-

est counsels addressed to the Thessalonians, as not less applicable to many now, and in every age of the Christian church. There may, at present, be no temptation to imagine that Christianity releases from the obligations of labour; still not a few require to be reminded that it calls to the utmost diligence in our proper callings, and in works more directly religious. True Christianity, by exercising the intellect, and making man thoughtful; by stirring conscience, and expanding the heart and affections on new and great objects, naturally quickens the whole man into activity—body, soul, and spirit. It not only gives new views of the importance of time, and a deeper sense of responsibility and greater zeal in one's proper calling—that families may be suitably supported and educated; but it makes a man diligent, that he may have wherewith to give to others, and to contribute to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom on the earth. Accordingly, how unweariedly active were Christ and his apostles. Nothing could equal, far less surpass, their self-denying and incessant labours. None ever toiled to amass wealth, and attain to fame, as they toiled for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. On the other hand, who needs to be told of the evils of indolence and idleness, especially in a Christian? To the man spiritually they are most injurious. It is when idle we are most exposed to a thousand temptations of Satan, and are least prepared to resist them. What Christian does not know that it is when inactive, doing nothing, his mind is most distracted—his happiness most disquieted. And how mischievous does he become to others. With no occupation on his hands, he does not know how to employ his time pleasantly, and so he passes into 'a busy body,' interferes with the time and pursuits of others—carries idle gossip from one house to another, till he has stirred up quarrels among Christian friends, and perhaps sown schism in the church of which he is a member. Thus does he spend his own weariness upon others. Is it necessary to remind you how idleness disparages Christianity in the eye and estimation of the world, and even of heathenism?

Let all then, and especially Christians, shun the spirit and the practice of indolence, whether as to secular or religious things. Let them beware of being mere busy bodies in the church of Christ, meanly living like mendicants upon the benevolence of others, and repaying their kindness by stirring up strife among brethren. Let them seriously consider the apostolic maxim, that if a man needs to work for his bread, and do not work, neither should he eat. Let them regard themselves what

they truly are in pursuing such a course, as thieves and robbers, at least as gross violators of the eighth commandment. Does their conduct further the wealth and outward estate of their neighbour? Does it not rather seriously hinder them, and the well-being of the church of Christ besides? Let Christians, then, like their Master, be active and persevering in labour. This is conducive to health of body and of mind. It is not less subservient to happiness, outward and spiritual. It is essential to honesty. It leads to honour and to usefulness—contributes to satisfaction in the hour of death, and in the prospect of eternity. The opposite spirit and conduct are condemned by the solemnly expressed command and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ; constitute rebellions against God, and the great law of nature. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.' They also justly expose to the discipline of the Christian church, to the charge of being disorderly, and to being treated as one with whom no company is to be kept, that he may be ashamed; moreover, they expose to the wrath of God in the world to come.

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth,'* Eph. iv. 28.

THE apostle does not content himself with calling upon Christians to shun fraud. As the true way of mastering its temptations, he exhorts to a line of conduct which destroys the incentives to dishonesty; he calls to active labour, and that for the most benevolent ends. How noble is the spirit of true religion! It will not be satisfied with mere negatives. It aims at positive attainments, and these of the highest character. 'Rather let him labour, working with his hands that which is good.' The apostle requires the Christian who had once stolen, henceforward to labour, and that hardly and severely, with his hands, in an honest employment. True religion is no encourager of idleness or laziness, but eminently the reverse. It is the friend of active labour, physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. These are all conducive to its sound and healthful exercise. Many false religions, and corruptions of the true, directly or indirectly encourage indolence. The dreamy speculations of the Hindoo, and the innumerable saints' days and mendicant orders of the

church of Rome, are of this character. But it is not so with living Christianity. Its author was devotedly active and unwearied; so were his apostles. Paul, with all the care of the churches on him, and well entitled to a separate provision, worked with his own hands as a tent-maker for his daily bread, often, it is believed, during the night. The regular employments of industry have a closer connection with the progress of piety than many imagine. How soon does a man, who is otherwise good, become the source of unhappiness to himself and mischief to others, if he be of an active temperament, and have no fixed occupation! How speedily is his religious character deteriorated, and his best energies wasted!

The apostle, however, is not contented merely with exhorting to abstinence from theft and actual labour. These are great points gained. But the labour needs to be well directed. Apart from this, it may become an intense pursuit of the world, and estrange that soul from God which once knew him, and encourage avarice besides. Multitudes of the world are, unhappily, too active and laborious. Not that it is desirable they were idle: that would make them more dangerous; but that their energy were well regulated. Accordingly, Paul calls upon those of the Ephesians who had at one time been dishonest, to labour—working with their own hands—in the first instance, of course, to provide for their families; but with the ultimate object of having something ‘to give to him that needeth,’ to make restitution of what they had stolen, and to minister to the necessities of the saints and of the church of Christ.

The claims of Christianity upon those who receive it are high and universal. In the present case there is no relaxation of the demand because the man had once been a thief. It is not said, ‘Less is expected or required of those who have formerly been very degraded; they are released from the obligations of higher duty.’ No. The thief is required to work for the express purpose that he may have wherewith to give. And why? For this, among other reasons, that giving is not what too many represent, a mere duty, far less a burden, but a privilege and a happiness, and Christianity would not deprive any of its disciples of the joy which belongs to them. It would have them all to be happy, and, if possible, those the more—who were once peculiarly the slaves of sin and misery.

In the counsel here given to a particular class in the Ephesian church, we recognise a great Christian principle of the highest value, little, alas! as

yet, understood by professed believers; and that is, the duty of all labouring and denying themselves, in order that they may be liberal to others, and especially to the cause of God. It is generally, if not universally, allowed that Christians should not be selfish, but should be public spirited and generous givers. This is well. But with the great mass of professors, here the duty ceases, and they give only out of their superfluity, or according to their greatest convenience. Hence their charity contains no sacrifice, and affords but a slender proof of religious character. What is it to give away what costs little? How different is the principle, that even the man who had once been a thief is to labour with his hands, for the express purpose that he may be in circumstances to be liberal? What a noble activity is this! How high and worthy its motive, and how blessed the fruit!

Were the members of the Christian church generally to labour, and deny themselves that they might have wherewith to give, what immense resources would be immediately obtained for the objects of humanity and religion! Though the Christian church were to receive no accession to her present numbers, yet were all to do their duty by the principle which has been stated, what an immediate provision would there be of men and money for the propagation of Christianity. Instead as at present of being every now and then hampered and restrained, how would she be able to avail herself of her advantages to the uttermost, and pursue the work of faith and labour of love till it covered the earth! Never will Christians acquit themselves fully of their obligations, till they act upon the principle before us. Under God, the general adoption and faithful practice of it will be one of the means of ushering in the glory of the latter days. It will show that the church is in earnest for Christ and for souls, while it will provide means for conveying the gospel to the perishing.

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TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*‘And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner: that he may live with thee,’ Lev. xxv. 35.*

AMONG the laws of the Jewish code, there are few more interesting than those which regard the poor. Selfish and narrow-minded as the people were, their laws indicate and enforce

the greatest tenderness to human suffering—such tenderness as we look for in vain among the heathen who surrounded them, or the most distinguished nations, whether of ancient or modern times, unless where they have been blessed with the faith of the gospel in some measure of purity. Nor is this tenderness limited to human suffering. It extends to animal suffering—the suffering of the inferior creation. The Jewish law expressly forbids every thing like cruelty; even a kid is not to be seethed in its mother's milk; no wonder then that the poor are specially care for. But how interesting a peculiarity is this of the law of God, and how worthy of his character, as the God of goodness and love! The injunctions to kindness to the poor are the more remarkable among the Jews, when it is remembered that every Jewish family (with the exception of the tribe of Levi, otherwise provided for) had a share in the land, which though capable of being lost or forfeited for a season, was always restored on the year of jubilee; a singular institution, which only the belief of supernatural authority could have maintained. Such an institution rendered poverty the more inexcusable, and might have tended to harden the Jews against the poor. Hence the wisdom, as well as the kindness of the injunction: 'And if thy brother be waxen poor,' &c. The injunction has the force of law. It is not a mere recommendation. It is a commandment, as binding as any in the decalogue, and is most comprehensive—no exception is specified—at the same time the terms in which it is conveyed are very affecting, 'If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee.'

Men are unwilling to acknowledge any relationship to the poor—they would account it degradation to have beggars styled their brothers and sisters; but such is the tie which the Jewish law recognises, and it is the recognition of it which softens the heart, and draws forth the exercise of true charity. If men could see in the destitute the relationship of brother and sister, they would be far more tender and liberal than they usually are. The word of God describes the poor as our *brethren*. We are partakers of the same nature, are susceptible of the same feelings where there is privation, and know not how soon the circumstances of the destitute may be ours, how quickly the most opulent may be involved in all the horrors of want! In such circumstances, surely we must be forward to relieve. The poor are not an inferior and degraded class to be despised. They are brethren, objects of sympathy, to be com-

forted and assisted. But in case any through hard-heartedness should plead, that many who solicit charity are not of the same nation with themselves, and so have no claims on their kindness, the Jewish law adds, that 'though he be a stranger, or a sojourner'—a Gentile—and that merely passing through the country, and therefore having of all men the least claims, still he is to be relieved. No charity, surely, can be more comprehensive, and yet it is the charity of the despised Jewish law. It would be well if all other, and especially all Christian nations, could point to the same benevolence themselves.

Many passages could be quoted from the Old Testament scriptures which breathe the same spirit with the great law before us; for instance, oppression is strongly and severely forbidden: 'He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, shall surely come to want. Rob not the poor, neither oppress the afflicted, for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.' Here God is represented as the Advocate of the oppressed, and as inflicting certain retribution on their oppressors. In like manner, He is exhibited as the friend of the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless, all of whom are frequently exposed to poverty. 'The Lord doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment. A father of the fatherless, and judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation; the Lord preserveth the stranger, and relieveth the fatherless and widow.' What a beautiful, tender, and affecting character is that of Jehovah, the God of the Jews! How unlike to the idols of heathenism! yea, how unlike to the hard-heartedness and cruelty of many professed Christians! In gleanings the vintage, and reaping the corn harvest, they were expressly commanded not to make a clean riddance of the corners of the field, but to leave a portion for the poor and the stranger. And in regard to the widow and the fatherless, it was solemnly declared, 'Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your children shall be fatherless.' The very poverty, and absence of human protectors, which should call forth the deeper sympathy in behalf of the widow and her children, are frequently the very things which provoke the aggression of the cowardly and heartless. To meet this, God represents himself as specially the judge of the widow, and the father of the fatherless, and

denounces against their oppressors the heaviest woe.

From the views to which our attention has been called, let us feel fresh inducements to be kind and tender to the poor. If the law of Moses, under a comparatively dark dispensation, was so clear and strong in its requirements, let not Christians, under their noble dispensation, be cold-hearted and illiberal. There are many other ways of aiding the poor besides the mere gift of alms, which in too many instances is open to abuse. We may do much by advice, by instruction, by finding employment for the poor—by caring for their children, by withdrawing them from evil example, and putting them in a way of being useful. In short, even in the worst cases we may do good. Let us in all act the part of genuine friends.

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 TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth,' 1 John iii. 17, 18.*

In the former exposition we contemplated the kind consideration of God for the poor under the Old Testament dispensation. Comparatively narrow and obscure as that dispensation was, He under it gave to charity the force of a law, and that in terms the most tender. We have now to contemplate the same duty under the more perfected dispensation of the New Testament, and as might have been expected, there is no diminution in the obligation; on the contrary, it is confirmed and enforced by new arguments. True Christianity conduces to the increase of wealth. It stimulates the mind, and makes industry and frugality sacred duties, and saves from many costly vanities and sins. Hence the countries where its influence is most powerful, are most noted for their enterprise, industry, and resources. On the other hand, corrupted Christianity, such as Popery, tends to poverty. It lowers the mind as a whole. Its superstitious observances, such as saints' days, impoverish; and the priesthood have an interest in keeping the people poor in their means, that they may be dependent and enslaved in their judgments. But Christianity is not, on this account, a worshipper of wealth, or a despiser of poverty. It crucifies the inordinate love of wealth, directs money into useful channels, and breathes a spirit

of peculiar tenderness to the poor. Our blessed Lord may, indeed, be said to have sanctified poverty by his own example, choosing its state of privation rather than a state of secure, competent wealth. Poor as he was, he manifested the utmost kindness and liberality to the indigent, incessantly labouring for the good of the suffering, however unable to repay him. He commended the poor widow who cast in her mite into the treasury, and called upon the young man, the sincerity of whose professed attachment he wished to ascertain, to sell all, and give to the poor. He enjoins his followers, also, when they would make a feast, to call not those who are able to return the compliment, but the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, assuring them that if they did so they should be blessed, and receive an ample recompense at the resurrection of the just.

The spirit of kindness thus shown by the Master in behalf of the poor, he imperatively requires on the part of all his faithful servants. As Christianity naturally leads to the acquisition of wealth; apart from this outlet there would be no small danger of Christians becoming covetous and worldly-minded. Hence while it enjoins men to be self-denied, as regards themselves, it requires them to be liberal as regards others, especially to the pious poor. It is evidently the pious poor of whom the apostle speaks. He had been setting forth the duty of Christians loving one another, and had declared that this was the test of Christian discipleship: an infallible proof that we had passed from spiritual death to spiritual life. He had also referred, as an illustration of and inducement to Christian love, to the case of Christ, who laid down his life for his people, which he converts into an argument why Christian brethren should be prepared to hazard life itself for each other; and then having pointed to so high a standard of love, he proceeds to rebuke those who would not make even a small sacrifice of money for the relief and comfort of their Christian brethren. Appealing to their consciences, as in the sight of God, the apostle asks, 'But whoso,' whatever professed Christian, 'hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him;' has ample and satisfactory evidence of his Christian brother's necessity, and yet refuses to relieve him, 'how dwelleth the love of God in him?' Is it possible that he can know any thing of the love of God in his own soul? No! If he *truly* loved God, which he *professedly* does, he would love the Christian who is formed not only after God's natural, but after his moral image. If he loved

God he would love all who were connected with, and like to God. This is an invariable rule in nature, and also an infallible test of personal safety, so that it is added, 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth,' as if by no other means, 'and shall assure our hearts before him.' Perhaps there is no class more interesting than that of the pious poor. They naturally remind us of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are his representatives upon earth. What, more fitted to cut a Christian to the heart, than to think that he has been unkind to one who has been loved by Christ from eternity, who, it may be, will be in heaven before him, and who will be with him for ever engaged in worshipping the same compassionate Redeemer? What is more opposed to the spirit of heaven, than a cold, selfish disregard of the necessities of others—a shutting up of the bowels of compassion? Could we conceive heaven to be a place of true happiness, or really desirable, if filled with hard-hearted, cruel men? Surely not.

Let Christians, then, listen to the apostolic counsel, 'My little children, let us not love,' however others may do, let us professed Christians not love 'in word or in tongue,'—let us not content ourselves with the name and profession of sympathy for others, but let us 'love in deed and in truth.' Let us show the reality of our professed kindness by suitable action, by corresponding deeds. Good words are easy, they cost us nothing; besides, the feeling and expression of sympathy, without active benevolence, are dangerous. They deceive and harden the soul. And if men are in hazard, in many cases, of being deceived, let them rejoice the more in opportunities of giving to the pious poor; glad to think that these are cases in which they cannot err. It is much for Christ to say, 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward'—that the humblest service to believers, done in faith, and from a Christian motive, shall be acknowledged; but it is a still loftier testimony to the importance of charity, when it is remembered that on the great day of judgment the everlasting awards shall be dispensed according as men have been liberal or penurious in their donations to the Christian poor. 'Come, ye blessed of my Father,' &c., Matt. xxv. 40.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble,' Ps. xli. 1.*

'BLESSED,' says inspiration, 'is he that considereth the poor.' By the poor, we are probably to understand those who have become poor in the ordinary course of God's providence; not that we are to despise and disregard even those who have become poor through their vices and a criminal abuse of the divine gifts; for we are informed, as characteristic of the conduct of God, to which our conduct should be conformed, that he makes his sun to shine on the evil as well as the good, and his rain to descend on the just and the unjust. At the same time an important distinction must be drawn between different classes of poor. To bestow in the form of money upon many poor, would be but to encourage them in sin, and therefore to arm them in more daring rebellion against God, while it would render to the parties themselves no real benefit. This is at war with the spirit of true religion, which condemns idleness, improvidence, and vice, and calls to industry, prudence, and good conduct. The poor for whom God specially cares, and for whom he would have all professing to be his servants, and who are blessed with the means, to care, are those who have been impoverished without any fault of their own, in consequence of His all-wise and righteous visitation. And what does he declare of those who consider the case of such persons; who, not contented with a single act of instinctive charity, called forth by the sight of suffering, deliberately lay themselves out to relieve and permanently benefit them? He says of such persons that they are blessed; 'Blessed is he that considereth.' Many regard the poor as a burden and injury to society; they are irritated; they would much rather there were no poor to annoy them with calls of charity—but 'blessed,' says God, happy 'is he that considereth the poor,' who studies their case, who enters into their wants, in order to relieve them. He shall not merely be happy hereafter, receive an ample recompense in the future world for his present pains and liberality. But he is happy now. He is blessed in the very act of giving, especially where the case is a good one, and he has reason to believe the charity will not be abused to evil. The highest authority—one who knew the truth from ample personal experience—has said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' There is a wise and beautiful connection between doing good to others and receiving personal happiness and enjoyment. All who have ever made trial must know from experience the relation between doing

good and getting good. The selfish and the covetous, in withholding, rob themselves of much greater happiness than all their hoarding can confer. The enjoyment connected with selfish indulgence is not once to be compared with the happiness which results from the exercise of the sympathetic and benevolent affections. The world is of course incredulous on this point, but the testimonies of the word of God and of Christian experience are clear and assured. And besides the happiness inseparable from the exercise of enlightened liberality, which is indeed 'twice blessed,' there is in addition many direct and precious promises from God of blessing to those who befriend the poor, even in this world.

It is declared in the passage before us, that the Lord Jehovah will deliver him in the time of trouble—that he will preserve and keep him alive—that he shall be blessed upon the earth—that he shall not be delivered into the hands of his enemies—that Jehovah will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing, and will make all his bed in his sickness. These comprehend all temporal good; preservation, deliverance, restoration, and prosperity, and they seem to correspond with the circumstances and wants of the poor. They are often in trouble—stretched on a bed of languishing—involved in sickness—oppressed by enemies. Now, says Jehovah, those who 'consider' in these respects the necessities of the poor and relieve them, shall in the same respects themselves be blessed of God, according to their wants, in return. It is easy for God in the course of his providence, and in a thousand unknown ways, to preserve and rescue and restore those whom he designs to favour. Scripture speaks of the blessing of such as are ready to perish, coming upon those who do them good, and no one can tell how much the liberal and beneficent are indebted for protection against evil and the possession of good to the prayers of the poor in their behalf. Certainly few evils can be conceived more dreadful than to be exposed to the curses and maledictions of the poor. Nor is it wonderful that God thus promises the best temporal blessings to those who care for the poor. Entertaining a special regard for them himself, he befriends those who cherish and manifest the same sentiment. The man who despiseth the poor in effect despises God, under whose providence they have become poor. He quarrels with God's dispensations, or as much as says that he was not able to make them otherwise, whereas he who gives to the poor from right motives, lends to the Lord; he recognizes God's hand in their lot, acknowledges it to be wise and righteous and good, and expresses his

perfect assurance that God will repay him for his services. This honours God, and those who honour Him He will honour. There are various ways of honouring Him spoken of in scripture; he is honoured by acts of worship, by prayer and thanksgiving—he is honoured by due observance of the sabbath, and by holiness of life and conversation. He is also not less truly honoured by kindness to his creatures, and especially by deeds of charity and mercy to the poor.

Let all those who make a profession of true religion, repress the risings of selfishness, and cultivate a spirit of enlarged benevolence; especially let them tenderly and unweariedly consider the case of the poor. Let them remember that this is required by the spirit of the eighth commandment, and that if they fail in it, they are guilty of a violation of the decalogue. Let them think of the present and certain happiness of giving to those who need, that God shows a peculiar kindness for the poor as his representatives upon earth, sent to test the benevolence of others, and that those who manifest his amiable spirit shall share in his favour. Let them consider that a spirit of care for the poor is essential to true religion, and is one of its most prominent characteristics, Isa. lviii. 6—11.

#### TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven,'* Matt. vi. 1.

THE influential Jews of our Lord's day were governed in their charity by the external and the visible. Nor was this a solitary instance. Their prayers and fastings were vitiated by the same false principle. When they went to prayer, instead of betaking themselves to retirement, they betook themselves to the synagogue and the corners of the streets and the market places; and when they observed a fast, they put on a sad countenance and disfigured their faces, 'that they might appear to men to fast.' So of the payment of tithes—they paid the tithes of insignificant garden herbs, such as mint, anise, and cummin, which were of no consequence to the tribe of Levi, while they omitted the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy and faith—and probably withheld the larger tithes. In short, their religion was ostentatious, fitted and intended to attract the attention of men, and was, moreover, stained with hypocrisy. What our Lord condemned in the Pharisees is, un-

happily, not peculiar to them. The tendency to the external and hypocritical, and that in connection with almsgiving, has been manifested in every age of the church, and especially in degenerating periods of her history. The caution contained in the words before us, was addressed not only to the multitudes who heard, but also to Christ's own disciples. They needed to be guarded against such temptations. The praise which men bestow upon the liberal, and the flattery which they often receive from those who wish to turn their benevolence to personal advantage, are exceedingly apt to ensnare and mislead even the well-principled and the good, much more the self-righteous. We need scarcely remind you how deeply the corrupt Christian church, in the days of Popery, dealt, and still deals, in the hypocrisies of ostentatious charity. Who can question that the large donations regularly dispensed at the gates of Romish convents and monasteries—donations so abundant, that they have diffused a spirit of mendicancy over continents—if not designed as the purchase money of eternal life, are intended to earn the applause of men, so as to add to the power of the giver? And in countries of purer Christianity, how much ostentation often is there in the donations of charity! what founding of charitable institutions for the sake of a name! what trumpeting of subscriptions! what extravagant laudation of individuals who, it may be, have done no more than their duty!

In opposition to all that savours of ostentation and hypocrisy, our Lord enters a solemn warning. He cautions his followers against doing almsdeeds to be seen of men, forbids them to sound a trumpet in the streets and synagogues to attract public attention to their charity; and, on the contrary, exhorts them to dispense their alms in secret, in a manner so quiet and unostentatious, that the right hand shall not know what the left is doing. And what are the reasons for pursuing such a course? They are many. He tells them that if they do their alms to be seen of men, they shall only have the reward of human praise. And how poor and worthless a recompense! It perishes with the breath of man, and while it lasts, is often associated with suspicions and distrusts. The hypocrite is conscious of his own baseness, and lives in the perpetual dread of exposure. On the other hand, they who give alms from correct motives, without regard to what men think or say—because charity is right in itself, and God has enjoined it—shall receive an ample recompense. God, our heavenly Father, Jehovah, under

the most endearing relationship, who sees in secret, shall reward openly, it may be here, certainly it shall be hereafter on the great day, when men would most wish approbation. In addition to these considerations, we have to remember that ostentation is at utter variance with the spirit of true religion. That spirit is generous and benevolent—it looks out of ourselves to others; whereas ostentation is essentially selfish, and looks to the estimation in which self is held as supreme. This, too, is the spirit of hypocrisy. The language of hypocrites is, 'Come and see our zeal for the Lord!' They proclaim their own goodness—they trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others—they justify themselves before men—they receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only. And what shall be the end of persons breathing such a spirit? Their hope shall perish—the hypocrite shall not come before God—the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate—the Lord of the evil servant shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites—there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Let Christians then be on their guard against the temptations to ostentatious charity. These may not be so strong among us as they were among the Jews of our Lord's day, who had not only a much more external and ritual religion than Christianity, but the influence of strong prepossessions in behalf of Pharisaian virtues with which to contend; still the bias is powerful now. Let them consider that though men can only see the outside, God sees the heart—that the secret is as open to him as the public—and that one of the remarkable names of Jehovah is, 'Thou, God, seest me.' Let them think, too, how idle and foolish it is to attempt to have a reputation for piety and liberality, when the hypocrisy will so soon be broken up and exposed to their everlasting shame and contempt. It may not be possible literally to forbid the right hand to know, in the dispensations of charity, what the left is doing. There are some sorts of charity which, for the satisfaction of the public, must be more or less proclaimed; but certainly the counsel of the Saviour calls upon Christians to look narrowly to the motives of all their actions, and particularly of their charity; to be jealous of themselves; to be on their guard against all that savours of egotism and display and vanity and ostentation in almsgiving; in short, to be like the Master whom they profess to serve, who loved not the fame of men, but the approbation of the unseen Jehovah.

## TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation,' Mal. iii. 8, 9.*

WELL may we, like Israel of old, when such a question is put, 'Will a man rob God?' ask, 'Who would have the daring to do so, or who, though sufficiently audacious, would have the power? How is it possible to rob the Universal Proprietor and Lord—the All-seeing and Omnipotent One? It may be easy to deceive and defraud the most penetrating of men, but to rob God, how vain the effort! how monstrous the idea!' We are assured, however, that ancient Israel, in a corrupt and degenerate period of her history, did rob Jehovah; and though not precisely in the same way, yet substantially is he robbed by all men, and even his professed church, now and in every age. In one sense indeed, God cannot be robbed—he cannot be deceived, nor can any thing which he would retain be taken from him. Still by their sins do men deprive him of his rights, and thus constitute themselves the greatest and most serious of robbers. They are guilty of sacrilege.

When God gave to man the earth for his use, he seems to have reserved a tenth part of the produce for himself; at once as a test of man's obedience, an acknowledgment of God's universal proprietorship, and also as a mean of providing religious instruction for all classes, particularly the poor and destitute. This institution of tithe was recognized under the patriarchal dispensation, and was expressly embodied among the laws of the Jews. Whether or not it was intended to apply in every country and generation may admit of question; though more can be urged on the affirmative side, than men in general who have not studied the subject can well imagine. But however that may be, there can be no doubt that it is an eminently wise institution, and that it possesses this singular advantage of rising with the progress of improvement, and so with the moral and religious necessities of the nation. It supplies also the people with the means of grace and salvation, without provoking, as public grants of money are apt to do, the hostility of some part of the community, and so in a considerable degree of defeating the very end of a public provision for the maintenance of religion. But whatever divine wisdom there may be in the tithe arrangement, it requires more faith in the word of God, than the covetousness of man generally allows, to permit of its smooth opera-

tion. And hence Jehovah, under the Jewish dispensation, had frequent occasion to complain of being robbed of tithes and offerings. His altars did not receive the allotted and appropriate oblations, and his priests and ministers,—the temple and the synagogues—did not obtain from the produce of the soil the support to which they were entitled. The unbelief and covetousness of men robbed God of his rightful property.

The form under which men rob Him in Christian countries now, may not be precisely the same, though in many cases He is robbed in regard to tithes, where publicly sanctioned as a means of supporting Christianity; but there are still a multitude of ways in which professed Christians apply to their own use what is due to God. Is there not a too general withholding from His cause both at home and abroad; a meagre and niggardly way of giving to religious objects, which strangely contrasts with the profusion which men expend upon themselves, and families, and houses? When it is thought necessary to retrench, are not religious objects the first to suffer, as those which are so unimportant that they may well be spared on? Are not contributions to the church of God often postponed to subscriptions for other interests? Do not religious men frequently die more wealthy than is creditable to their Christianity? Is it not to be feared that in these, and many other ways, God may say, 'ye have robbed me, even this whole nation?'

And what are the consequences? Is it a small matter to rob God, either of his day or his property? No. He pronounces upon all such the most direful doom, 'Ye are cursed with a curse.' This sin is a national sin, as well as an individual one, and though it may be little thought of, the result is appalling. The candlestick is taken away from the church—the candlestick of sound doctrine and pure ordinances, and in regard to the country it is said, the 'nation and kingdom that will not serve God shall perish.' Men deceive themselves in imagining that in withholding or alienating from Him what is due, they shall still prosper. It was remarked at the period of the Reformation, that the families which robbed the Church—fallen and corrupt as she was—so as to alienate the tithes and lands from supporting the preaching of the gospel to which the Reformers were anxious to apply them, did not prosper even for this world, but speedily come to poverty. It is a true, yea, an inspired saying, of the wise man, 'there is that scattereth, and yet encreaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.' It was not without reason, then, that good John Brown,

in his Catechism for children, places almsgiving among the direct means of getting on in the world. The countries which rob God most seriously of his day, are not the most prosperous. Britain and the United States of America, which keep the sabbath, are far ahead of any nation which profane it. Let no professing Christians then presume to rob God. None would dare to do so directly were He visibly present; let none do so in spirit and reality. Let them consider that it is not for his own sake, for his own happiness or glory, that He requires offerings on his altar and a day for his worship; that these are demanded solely for their good. Let them consider how much they are indebted to Christianity, how much it has done for them, from how many expensive vices it has kept them, and how much worldly wealth it has been the means of pouring into their lap, and let them be liberal in their donations to the cause of God in return. Let them beware of covetousness and unbelief, and remember that the circumstance, that the laws of society care little for the robbery of God, if the temporal interests of men be assailed, is just a reason why God guards the sanctity of his own institutions the more carefully, and why his people should fall in with his views the more unreservedly.

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 TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour,'*  
 Rom. xiii. 7.

THE apostle Paul had been describing a very important class of duties, those which Christians owe to men placed over them in civil authority. This is at all times a matter of delicacy, and was peculiarly so in the day in which he lived, when the world was groaning under despotism, and men in power were watchful and jealous of Christianity as a new religion, interfering with their supposed rights. But he faithfully taught the Christian's duty for all times, it may be to the displeasure of not a few professed Christians, who would have wished for greater latitude in their submission. Passing from duty to the civil magistrates, he proceeds to duty to men in general where invested with authority. Under the general language of the passage we may comprehend the duties which children owe to parents, servants to masters, pupils to teachers, people to ministers; in short, duties to superiors: but as the duty which Christians owe to civil authority is very

important, and is most apt to be misunderstood, and in some aspects is frequently and seriously infringed, we shall confine our attention to it. The general rule is submission, even to the most tyrannical governments, and that not merely for wrath's sake—the fear of punishment in the event of disobedience, but for conscience' sake, because commanded of God who has appointed civil government as one of his ordinances for His own glory, and the good of the world, as truly as he has appointed the Christian church for the same ends.

Christians are required to render 'tribute to whom tribute is due, and custom to whom custom;' in other words, they are to pay their public taxes, however many and oppressive they may be. They may use all constitutional means to have them mitigated or abolished, but so long as they have the force of law, they are bound, as Christian men, to render a cheerful payment. They are not entitled to start objections, and say that the proceeds of the tax are applied in ways of which they conscientiously disapprove, and that therefore they are released from the obligation of paying. This is a false principle, which would speedily prevent the payment of any tax whatever. A Christian's conscience has no responsibility in connection with the *application of a tax*. The moment the money is paid it ceases to be his. The responsibility belongs to the government or nation. It would be hard, indeed, if Christians were made responsible for the application of public taxes. They could never enjoy rest of mind. Their divine Master, in great condescension and kindness, has released them from all such perplexities, by requiring them to pay the tax where the civil authority is competent, and where they at the same time may use all legitimate means for its abrogation. No man should feel his conscience invaded, unless the ruling power requires him to do what it is impossible for him to do without sin. This never can be the case in paying a public tax, with the application of which those who pay have nothing to do. Our blessed Lord, though legally exempted, yet cheerfully paid a public tax, lest any should be 'offended' or stumbled by his refusal, nay, wrought a miracle to obtain the means, though of some parts of its application he doubtless could not approve.

There is another and a far more frequent error, or rather sin, connected with the public taxes, and that is, the notion that men may lawfully, or at least with little guilt, defraud the revenue. Many it is well-known, of ordinary integrity in their transactions with private individuals, think themselves entitled, if able, to appropriate what belongs

to the nation. In short, they make a distinction between public and private property, and think there is no harm in cheating revenue officers. But scripture recognises no such distinction. On the contrary, it condemns it. We are required without reserve to pay 'tribute to whom tribute is due, and custom to whom custom.' And Christ's example, and that of his primitive disciples, are in full harmony. It is a violation of justice, a sinful indulgence of covetousness, and a solemn breach of the eighth commandment.

And is submission then to civil authority unlimited? Are there no exceptions? Is resistance in every case sinful? No! There are important exceptions. In some cases resistance is one of the highest Christian duties. Happily there are examples in scripture to guide us in such delicate questions. It is a duty to disobey magistrates where they prostitute their power by commanding what is contrary to God's law. The midwives of Egypt, the faithful Israelites who refused to worship Jeroboam's calves, Mordecai, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, the prophet Daniel, the apostles Peter and John, and many others, are all examples of divinely approved resistance. The nature and constitution of the Christian church where living and pure, also leads to resistance. The men of the world cannot endure its doctrine, and still less its discipline and government. Hence under various pretexts they stir up the civil power to interfere with these. This interference directly invading conscience of course, creates a lawful resistance to civil authority. In such cases the authority is a usurpation, and resistance a duty.

From the views which have been presented, let Christians be led to admire the wisdom of Christianity, which though a religion of high principle is so constructed as not to alarm the rulers of this world. Let them admire the wisdom with which it strongly enjoins submission to civil authority, and not less the courage with which it exhorts to the maintenance of its principles, even to the disregard of that authority where it interferes with the claims of conscience and the will of God. Let Christians be eminent for their exact obedience to civil rulers; their meek submission to civil authority though oppressive, provided it be competent. Yea, let them be all the more anxiously obedient, that, in some cases, they must refuse subjection, and are the only persons who have principle enough to do so. Let them shun a spirit of turbulence and vain-glorious patriotism. In short, let them show the men of the world, that while living members of a true church, they are also the most useful members of

society, and the most devoted patriots of their country; that to render to God the heart as his due, and in the first place, is the best way, and the strongest motive to render to all men their dues; 'tribute to whom tribute.'

### THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such,' 1 Thess. iv. 6.*

THE sum of the second table of the law is, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. It obviously results from this, that the rule of obedience laid down in the eighth commandment is, that we should have the same regard for our neighbour's property as we have for our own. It seems especially necessary to bear this in mind, when we come to consider such an injunction as that which has been quoted above. How very different is it in its very aspect, from the ordinary maxims of worldly morality! How very different from the ordinary conduct of men in their dealings one with another! The contrast is especially discernible in the busy traffic of a mercantile community. To a keen observer, the aspect which there presents itself is not of men who studiously guard against going beyond their brethren in any matter, but of men whose great study it seems to be to perpetrate this very iniquity. If, for example, a merchant has become possessed of some exclusive information regarding the state of markets, and while every body else is counting upon a continuance of the same prices, he, from his earlier and better information, can calculate most surely upon a sudden rise or fall; he avails himself immediately of the opportunity to become an extensive buyer or seller, according to the circumstances, and thus effects a large transfer of capital from the coffers of his neighbour into his own. For a man to do this is literally to go beyond his brother. Such conduct may be consistent with worldly honour, and worldly morality; it is expressly denounced in the Bible, and is inconsistent with the Christian character. It is a manifest violation of the eighth commandment, which requires us to treat our neighbour's property as we would our own. For no man who expected a rise in prices would sell largely, till he was able to obtain the higher price for his goods.

The extent to which this sin of going beyond our brethren prevails, is abundantly indicated by the eagerness universally displayed in the mer-

cantile world, to get the earliest possible information regarding the state of markets. Such eagerness can only arise from one or two things. Either the merchant is obliged to seek and obtain the earliest information, in order to defend his property from the encroachments of his covetous neighbours, or he is himself anxious to go beyond and defraud his brother; and in whatever way we regard it, we are constrained to believe that the morality of the world lags far behind the morality of the Bible. Human laws may not be able to reach, and they may disregard such transgressions, 'but the Lord is the avenger of all such.' Were there but an abiding faith in such a solemn truth, there would be less over-reaching, less fraud in the world.

It is even possible that a right view of the detestable character of the crime itself, might prevent many from indulging in it. It is frequently because men dress out their sins in a comely vesture, that they are able to reconcile their consciences to the commission of them. But let us see wherein he who goes beyond, or defrauds his neighbour, differs from the robber or the thief. Awed by the fear of the law, the thief and robber seek the covert of darkness to perpetrate their crimes, and bring to their aid all the watchful cunning which may secure them against detection. But they profess no friendship for the victims of their crime, and society is on its guard against them. 'He who goes beyond and defrauds his brother,' is not recognized as an enemy. He goes forth in the broad light of day—he wears the aspect of kindness—he deceives his brother, while he wears a brother's face. All the ordinary defences whereby property is guarded, are overleaped by him. He occupies his place within them all, and deprives you of your property, under the guise of friendship and favour. Such a man possesses a character more detestable than that of the common thief. He wears the mask of honesty, and believes—and often believes truly—that men will not be able to look beneath it.

And thus it is too, that such a man reconciles himself to his low cunning and fraud. He soon learns to look upon himself with the same eye as society does. He forgets all the while that there is One who seeth not as man seeth—who discerns the fraudulent purpose in the heart, and observes all its out-goings in action—One whose justice and truth is unswerving, and who will one day call him to an awful reckoning.

It might not be surprising that men who do not own God, and who profess not the knowledge of his ways, should go beyond and defraud their brethren. But it is lamentable to think that

many who bear the Christian name, are as guilty as the children of this world. They seem to act as if the commandment were that they should not defraud their brethren in *all* things, and are contented as long as the world looks upon them as honest men. The law of God is against the slightest fraud. Thou shalt not go beyond thy brother in *any* matter. It may in the eyes of men be trivial. No transgression is so in the eye of God. How watchful then should all Christians be over their every thought and deed, that none of them may suffer as a thief.

The commonness of fraud shows the multitude of temptations to the commission of it, and the facility with which the heart yields to them. Let us all then be watchful with prayer, that grace may be given us from on high. Let the fear of the Lord be continually before our eyes, that the terrors of his wrath may persuade us. 'He is the avenger of every fraud,' and what will our ill got gains avail us in the day of vengeance? His righteous judgments are especially threatened against such offences as human laws cannot reach. The commands to avoid such offences are the tests of obedience to God, and it would be better that we renounce the Christian name, than under it to make the world's laws the rule of our obedience. The temptation to get gain may be great. This one sentence is enough to subdue it: 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'

#### THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God,' Deut. xxv. 13—16.*

THE law of the Lord is perfect, and it is the only perfect law. It takes cognisance of every thought, it prescribes a perfect rule of action. There are none of the dealings of men, amid all the varied relations in which they stand to one another, in which the law of God does not lay down, with all clearness and simplicity, the manner in which they are to be conducted. The laws of men vary according to the circumstances in which they are

placed. And even in their best forms they are felt, by the framers of them, and known by those subject to them, to be inadequate. But even though they were competent to meet, to check, to punish every crime as it arises, all codes of human law partake of the errors to which human nature is subject. At the best they are a transcript of a depraved nature. The law of the Lord stands out in admirable contrast to all of them. It is perfect in the cognizance it takes of every crime. It is perfect as a directory to the discharge of every duty. It leaves no case unprovided for, and its purity is perfect. It is a transcript of the mind of Him who is righteousness and truth. It manifests its own divine origin. It bears this attestation to all, that its framer was not blinded, depraved man, but the righteous and unerring Jehovah. Conscience within us bears witness to this fact. Look to the testimony it bore to the divine morality of the bible, in the breast of a young Hindoo, as briefly recorded by Dr Duff. The testimony was elicited by the view of morality presented in the sermon on the mount. After hearing its precepts read, the young Hindoo perceived that 'there was something in them of such an overwhelmingly attractive moral loveliness; something which contrasted so luminously with all that he had been previously taught to regard as revealed by God that he could not help crying out in ecstasy: "O how beautiful, how divine! Surely this is the truth, this is the truth, this is the truth!"' Such is the reluctant testimony of depraved nature to the divine, and perfect, because divine, morality of the bible. It is a testimony as striking and as valuable as that which the centurion was constrained at the foot of the cross to give when he exclaimed, 'Surely this man was the Son of God.'

It is more easy, however, to admire and to commend the far-reaching and pure morality of the bible, than to bear in mind that it is a reflection of the perfect righteousness of God, who is our witness, and who will be our judge. It is by this holy law we must be tried, and if God has displayed his righteousness in giving forth such a law, he will also display his truth and faithfulness in adhering to its declarations. It were well that we could bear in mind this solemn and momentous truth, in all our conversation, and that we should daily live in the consciousness that the righteous God is our witness. He searches and knows us. He knoweth our down-sitting and our uprising. He is familiarly acquainted with all our ways. All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. His memory is un-failing. We may forget our own

evil deeds. They are held in everlasting remembrance by him who is to judge us. And O what a dark record that will be, on which is inscribed every short-coming, and every transgression of that law which is holy, and just, and good, and which characterizes even our righteousness as filthy rags.

Let us look at our conduct in the mirror of this particular law which we have quoted. It expressly prohibits the keeping of unjust weights or measures, and enjoins a perfect and just weight, and a perfect and just measure, but in its spirit it obviously reaches all our dealings, and tests their integrity. It is quite possible, for example, that in any article we sell by measure, we may give the full and just measure. Were we not to do so our crime would soon be detected; we would be exposed to disgrace and punishment, and the article we sold would be returned. Therefore we do not frequently find a literal violation of this injunction. But does it not amount to the same thing; does it not show the purpose of the crime existing in the heart, and is it not in reality a transgression of the law, if we ask a higher price for the article we sell than it is really worth, and obtain our price by representing it as more valuable than it really is? How many are there who durst not keep a small measure, who are ready to take advantage, in this way, of the ignorance of the buyer. A person enters the shop of such a dealer, and the first experiment that is made is upon his knowledge. If he be a judge of the article he buys, and knows the price of it, he is able to make a just bargain; if not, he is dealt with in the same way as if he received small measure, or a small weight. And yet the greater number of dealers seem to look upon such a practice as if it were no sin. Else why should it be necessary, when we want any article, that we should be obliged to ask the assistance of those who have knowledge and experience to enable us to make a just bargain? Why do we find shopkeepers asking a high, and taking a lower price? All such practices are forbidden by God. They are equivalent to the keeping of unjust measures and unjust weights.

It is worthy of observation and reproof, that the selfishness of human nature which leads to the transgression of this law is very early manifested. It is common enough to see children in their little dealings, acting the part of more mature wickedness. If they have to exchange, or wish to sell any article they possess, how apt are they to represent it as better and more valuable than they know it to be, that they may impose on the ignorance of their companions, and effect a good

bargain. Let them remember that the eye of God, of the God of justice, is upon them. If they wish to part with any article, the likelihood is, that it has some fault, which in the bargaining they are anxious to conceal. Let them act justly. Let them tell the real value of the article. If it have any defect, let them openly show it, and then let them make their bargain.

### THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,*  
Titus ii. 9, 10.

This text is very comprehensive in its directions to the class of persons to whom it is addressed, and like all the other divine commandments, it will be found that in the keeping of it there is a great reward. Servants cannot do any thing more adverse to their own happiness and comfort, than acting contrary to the spirit and letter of the law which is here laid down, and the grievances of the hardest bondage would be softened and alleviated by the faithful obedience of it. Every service, however easy and light it may be in its own nature, will be galling to those who render it, if it be done grudgingly. The hardest service, on the other hand, becomes not only easy but pleasant, when it is rendered from the heart. The truth of this is abundantly manifested in the self-denying sacrifices which affection frequently demands from those who are nearly related to each other, and which are made not only with unyielding constancy, but with heartfelt delight. If servants truly loved and respected their masters, they would experience the same kind of satisfaction in the discharge of their duties. Such services as they had to perform would become pleasant to them, and masters would generally be more gentle, and kind, and forbearing, when they saw that their servants were anxious to please them in all things. In order to secure this mutual forbearance and kindness, it is of prime importance that servants should refrain from answering again. It will probably happen in the experience of even the most faithful servants, that they will need admonition and reproof for the neglect of duty, and it will certainly happen that those who are less faithful, and less skilful, will need to be instructed in better methods of performing their services, and to be

reproved for negligence. If instead of receiving such instructions with meekness, they answer again in anger, the likelihood is that they will excite the same passion in the heart of their masters. From the want of temper and meekness, servants bring upon themselves a double evil. They first of all make it certain that every duty they discharge will be a burden to them. For if they are angry with their masters when they receive a command, they will execute it grudgingly, and if they have, by answering again, excited angry feelings in the breasts of their masters, any order which is given will be uttered in such a tone and spirit as to destroy all comfort in the execution of it. Thus peace is driven beyond the threshold, and with it all happiness, and that place which ought to be the very refuge and fortress of comfort, is converted into a scene for the display of hateful passions.

Still further, the text warns servants against purloining, and enjoins them to show all good fidelity. This warning and injunction points to two kinds of crime which there is reason to believe are very prevalent. Servants are hereby exhorted to abstain from purloining—from appropriating the property of their masters to their own uses, or disposing of it to their friends and acquaintances. They are not merely warned against the more extensive and glaring robberies which are sometimes perpetrated by their hands or with their connivance, but also against the very least intermeddling with their master's property. In the law of God, criminality is not measured by the amount, but by the fact of transgression. He who purloins a farthing is just as guilty as he who commits the most extensive robbery.

But there is deep criminality also incurred by servants in a way in which there is reason to believe they scarcely suspect it. Every servant is necessarily invested with considerable power over his master's property. To some extent at least, the use of a master's property is committed as it were in trust to the servants he employs. Now servants are enjoined to be faithful to this trust; they are to be as careful of their master's property as if it were their own—to put it to the best uses which their skill and prudence can suggest—and to guard in every way against the waste and abuse of it. There are many servants who would abhor the crime of purloining, who seem to be insensible to the equally heinous crime of wasting and destroying their master's goods. Yet on reflection, it will appear to be an offence of the same kind needlessly to waste, as it is without authority to dispose of their master's

goods. In either case the property is lost to the master, and a transgression is committed against the spirit of the eighth commandment. Such offences become all the more heinous in servants from the trust necessarily reposed in them. Against the thief and robber we can lock our doors, and guard against their encroachments. Our houses are constructed as well to keep out thieves, as to obtain the comfort of shelter and warmth. But when servants purloin their master's property, and are faithless to their trust, the ordinary defences are of no avail. They occupy their place within the house, and from their very position acquire facility for the perpetration of crime. This enhances their guilt, and renders every act of theft or faithlessness doubly criminal.

It were well that in the discharge of all their offices, servants would remember not only that the eye of the righteous Lord is upon them to note and to avenge their evil deeds, but that it is incumbent on them, in the station they occupy, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. In a Christian household, masters and servants are fellow-heirs of the same glorious inheritance—knit together by bonds, the sacredness and strength of which should be ever felt. And if in such circumstances it be the master's part to love the servant as a brother, it is the part of the servant to strengthen such a bond by showing all good fidelity. The spirit of him who is the Lord of all should animate them in all their labour, and while in meekness and fidelity they discharge their offices, however humble, they will adorn the doctrine they profess to believe, and enoble and dignify their calling, by manifesting the power of faith to overcome the world, and to produce those graces which adorn and exalt our nature.

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THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'Behold, the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields: which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth,'* Jam. v. 4.

If it be a deep crime in servants to betray their trust, and abuse or purloin the property of their masters, it is a more aggravated sin, still, in masters to defraud their servants of that which rightfully belongs to them. The aggravations of this sin are two-fold: the one arising from the comparative weakness and helplessness of servants to defend themselves against the unjust tyranny of

their masters; and the other arising from their poverty, which renders the due and full payment of their hire almost essential to their existence. It is recognized as a maxim, even in the common morality of the world, that the strong should not trample upon and oppress the weak; and how much more in the purer morality of the gospel which, in various ways, enjoins that power and strength should be exercised in defence of the helpless and defenceless. What a reproof, for instance, to unjust and tyrannical masters, does the whole conduct of Christ administer! He was possessed of infinite power; and how was it exercised? It was in aid of those who had no other help or stay. And surely whenever we find power exercised by men for the oppression of the weak and helpless, we are entitled to conclude that they are animated by another spirit than that which dwelt in Christ, and that they have no right to call themselves by his name. It may be that by the forms of human law, servants are unable to secure themselves against oppression. But let masters remember that they also have a Master in heaven, whose eye is in every place beholding the evil and the good, and let them beware lest the cry of the oppressed should enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

In the passage before us the inexpressible meanness and injustice of the second aggravation, we have noticed, is very strongly set forth. The case exhibited by the apostle is that of a man who keeps back the hire of those labourers he has employed to reap his harvest. In such a case the master is represented as keeping back the hire of his servants in circumstances which admit of no palliation or excuse. He is in the enjoyment of all the fullness which a plentiful harvest brings. His crops have been cut down, and the riches of his fields gathered into his garner. Yet he grudges the hire of those servants whose labours have enriched him. He refuses to fulfil his engagement with them. He defrauds them of their hire. They, on the other hand, are dependent on what they have earned for their subsistence. With the hire, for which they had laboured, they could have procured from his abundant stores sufficient to supply their wants. Without it, they must starve. The injustice and cruelty of such conduct is made to appear in a yet stronger light when we consider, more particularly, that those who are thus represented as defrauded of their just earnings are the reapers. Had they employed themselves in some other way, and refused to enter the harvest field, the rich treasures of the earth would have rotted on the ground. The master owes his present abun-

dance to the labours of those very men whose hire he keeps back, and every enjoyment he may be able to command should be poisoned with the consciousness of ingratitude.

The instance here adduced furnishes a wholesome admonition to all who employ labourers. Even when the hire of labourers is justly paid, there is between them and their employers a mutual obligation of gratitude. While the servant could not subsist without the hire received for his labours, his employer would be put to almost equal inconvenience without the aid of his services. There should, therefore, be between them an exercise of mutual kindness and forbearance. Let masters remember the comforts and conveniences they can command and enjoy, from the willing and faithful services of those whom they employ. Let them remember, also, that as the weaker and more defenceless members of society, their higher influence and authority should be exerted to protect and defend them. Above all, let them remember that by keeping back the just hire of their labourers, they deprive them of that which is their life, and expose themselves to the just indignation of God.

There are various ways in which a master may defraud his servant. Let him watch against, and spurn them all. He may delay unduly the payment of his servant's hire. Let him be punctual in his terms of payment. The necessities of a servant's condition require this. It is seldom that the term for payment of his hire comes round, but he stands in immediate need of some essential article of comfort, and his hire should not be withheld from him for a day. Let mas-

ters, also, beware of imposing upon their servants more labour than they bargained for. This is virtually to deprive them of their hire, because for more onerous duties higher wages are received, and to pay small wages, and exact heavy burdens, is the most grievous of all ways of defrauding a servant. The same thing is true of masters requiring labourers to work longer hours than their agreement warrants. This is equivalent to a master paying the hire of one year for the services of two.

It must be obvious from these remarks that in many respects, as regards the just payment of hire, servants are very much in the power of their masters; that in this as well as in all the relations of human life, many acts of injustice and fraud may be perpetrated for which there is no remedy in human law, and on which no human judge could give an award. But there is a Judge before whom masters and labourers must at last appear, by whom every act of oppression, injustice, and deceit will be weighed in an even balance. He heareth the cry of the oppressed one, and if we, by our conduct, cause that cry to be uttered, we may justly fear an awful retribution. Let us, then, set the Lord always before us. Let us live in remembrance of his righteous judgment. He will redress all wrongs, and servants who are wronged and oppressed, who may have appealed to our sense of justice in vain, and who may vainly have sought redress from men, have a solemn appeal to the Judge of all the earth, and an assurance that their appeal shall not be disregarded, but that their cry shall enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

## AUGUST.

### FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,'* Exod. xx. 16.

THE former commandment had for its object to secure justice between man and man; the object of this commandment is to maintain and establish truth. In the relations of human life, it is obvious that the importance of a strict observance of this commandment can scarcely be over estimated. Truth is the basis of all fellowship, because the basis of all confidence. Without it man must stand isolated and alone—without

confidence or stay upon the earth—his natural affections sealed up in their fountains.

Truth is made the basis of our confidence in God. Unless we trusted in his truth, we could have no faith in him, and in his word he has often condescended to assure us of his truthfulness. That we may be led to repose confidence in him, how often does he remind us of his past faithfulness in the fulfilment of his promises. He assures us that he is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of a man that he should repent. He is known as the God who keepeth covenant, whose faithfulness endureth throughout all generations.

He is not slack concerning his promise, but will accomplish all his purposes which he hath declared.

The prominence with which this attribute of God is set before us in the Bible, is enough to arrest our attention, and to convince us of the infinite excellence and value of truth. And as it is the very object of the revelation of his grace through Christ, to renew men after his own likeness, we may learn how utterly vain are all our professions of religion, if we have not been taught by it to speak and to maintain the truth. So long as we deceive and lie one to another we are not only unlike God, but manifest a spirit which is the very reverse of his, and possess a character uninfluenced by his law. The faithfulness of God teaches us the criminality of falsehood, as well as the preciousness of truth. To be guilty of falsehood is the highest dishonour we can cast upon the God of truth. It is to exhibit the character of him who has been a liar and a deceiver from the beginning, and there is no kind of criminality by which we can more decidedly manifest that we are the children of the devil and his willing servants, than by following in his footsteps as a liar and deceiver. Our destiny also shall be the same as his, for all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

Even in this world men's interests have taught them to hate and to shun the liar, and by the pernicious consequences which result from falsehood, God is teaching us, in his providence, with what abhorrence he looks upon the crime. Detected falsehood suffers immediate retribution. The liar is shunned by his fellow-men—excluded from their confidence—an object of just contempt—the friend of none. He is deprived of all the enjoyments which men most highly prize. He cannot be trusted. His real grievances are slighted. He is recognized as a dangerous enemy, and is shut out from the sympathies of all mankind. The consequences of some sins, so far at least as they are manifested in the world can be fully estimated, but it is impossible to estimate the result of falsehood. No reparation can be made for it. It cannot be recalled, and cancelled. It walketh abroad like the deadly pestilence, striking down its helpless victims. No bulwark can be erected against it, no defence is strong enough to resist it. It aims at the merchant, gives forth its whisper that his credit is not good, and his business is destroyed—he becomes a ruined and broken man. It points its venomous dart against the minister of the gospel—and that good name which was better to him than precious

ointment, is blighted and destroyed; he labours in his ministry as a suspected man, and his labours are fruitless. Falsehood strikes down the loftiest and the most beautiful—converts respect and esteem into distrust and contempt—and turns love into loathing and hatred. It bursts the ties of the fondest relationships, creates distrust where there should be nothing but confidence, and converts the most peaceful and lovely scenes in the moral world into an arid and howling wilderness.

It may be met, encountered, and overcome, when it appears in the shape of a definite accusation, but the insinuated calumny it is impossible to grapple with. It is whispered from mouth to mouth, as if men were afraid or ashamed to utter it aloud. But it obtains a place in every one's mind, and exerts its pernicious power without hope of remedy. Like some of those diseases which assail the human frame, and which are almost insensible in their approaches, but which are the most fatal in their results, it cannot be guarded against nor overcome. A raging fever is immediately met by active remedies, and may be subdued, but who can resist the unseen approaches of consumption? A man of ruined fortune may work his way in the world, and regain what he had lost, not so a man of ruined fame. He whom falsehood has blighted, is ruined hopelessly.

' Good name, in man and woman,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.  
Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something,  
nothing;  
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands:  
But he that filches from me my good name,  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
And makes me poor indeed.'

By the pernicious consequences which result from falsehood in this world, God is emphatically teaching us with what abhorrence he regards the crime, and is reminding every liar of the certain punishment which awaits him in eternity. He who has so well done the work, and so well imitated the character of Satan in this world, as the liar, who by his falsehood goes far to anticipate upon earth the miseries of hell, cannot escape the awful retribution of the judgment of the great day. It is a day for the final triumph—the complete establishment—the exhibition of the glory and excellence of truth; and it must be a day of vengeance, of eternal punishment, for falsehood.

## FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts,'*  
Psal. li. 6.

THE law of God has not been given forth merely for the regulation of the outward conduct. His commandments reach the very thoughts of the heart. The purpose of transgression is a sin, although no outward act should follow upon it. He cannot be satisfied with a mere outward observance of his commandments. He desires the willing obedience of the whole heart. He requires us not merely to refrain from doing injury to the good name of our neighbour by the utterance of falsehood, but he desires truth in the inward parts. Without this we cannot fulfill the requirements of the ninth commandment. Unless we have truth in the inward parts, our obedience to it will be like the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. It requires not only that we should refrain our lips from speaking guile, but that we should have a real and heartfelt love of the truth. God himself is emphatically a God of truth. He hates falsehood under every form. He knows the deceitful purpose in the heart, as well as the false utterance of the lips. He regards all guile and hypocrisy with abhorrence. Having an infinite love of truth himself, he desires that men also should possess it, and that they should shun and abhor all manner of guile. It may serve its purpose among men to assume an unreal character—to pretend to hold opinions we do not sincerely believe—and follow a course of conduct most opposite to our secret inclinations. But with him who searches the heart all such hypocrisy is as vain as it is wicked. He knows when the truth is spoken, whether it be uttered in sincerity and from faith. With him all deception is vain. In his view men appear as they really are. His eye penetrates the closest disguises, and looks upon the hidden mechanism within which guides and actuates men in all their deeds and declarations. No matter therefore how successful we may be in imposing upon our fellow-men by fair pretences, we shall gain nothing by such falsehood at the last. No matter though we escape the guilt of uttering falsehood to the injury of others, we shall not escape the condemnation of the false-hearted. It is truth in the heart—the love of it there—the hatred of guile, which God requires. And how urgently should such a requirement come home to us, when proceeding from him who is the truth, and who looketh upon the heart. In all our dealings and communion both with God and man, let us strive after the attainment of truth in the inward parts.

When we approach the throne of grace in prayer, let us be upon our guard against confessing sins of which we are not conscious and of which we do not feel the guilt, against asking for blessings which we have no real desire to enjoy, and against expressing thanks for favours which we are not sensible of having received. To act in this way is to sin against our own souls, to lie unto God. It is an insane effort to destroy every vestige of truth in the inward parts. For as, on the one hand, we know nothing which so much tends to produce and to strengthen a guileless simplicity of character, as the maintenance of those solemn acts of devotion in which the heart seeks to unveil itself, and reveal all its secret sins and its secret wants to him who searcheth all things; so on the other hand, we know no habit which so surely establishes a man in all the arts and wiles of hypocrisy as to practise it as it were in the very presence-chamber of God. In all the communion then which we maintain with God let us study earnestness and sincerity, and he will in his mercy show unto us our secret faults, and deliver us from the snares of falsehood. What has been said of prayer applies to all acts of worship. God looks upon the heart of him who performs them, and when the heart is not in them they are not only vain but sinful. Do we, for example, engage in reading the Bible? We declare by the very act that we are seeking counsel from God, and that we are willing to be guided by it. Yet how very often is there no such purpose in our hearts. And if so, are we not guilty of falsehood? Again, do we assemble ourselves in the sanctuary on the Lord's day? We thereby publicly declare, that we have come to unite with our brethren in celebrating God's praises, in supplicating his grace, in listening to his word. How fearfully would such declarations be belied, and what an awful spectacle of depravity would be presented, were the hearts of all the worshippers unveiled, and their hidden thoughts made manifest! It is very wonderful that the mercy of God should be able to bear with all the guile and hypocrisy of his professing worshippers, when we consider that he desireth truth in the inward parts.

As in these dealings with God we are enjoined to be truthful, so also are we enjoined to be truthful in all our intercourse one with another. We must make no professions which we are not prepared to act upon—pretend no friendships which we do not feel—avow no sentiments which have not a place in our heart. The religion which we profess is eminently spiritual. It spurns and rejects mere bodily service. In the injunctions it gives forth for our

guidance, it aims at the heart. If they do not reach and influence it, they fail of their grand purpose. A man may satisfy the requirements of false religion by the observance of outward forms, but true religion claims that every thought be brought into captivity to the obedience that is in Christ. A man may delude others—he may delude himself, as the Pharisees of old did, into the belief that by outward forms and observances he will render to God an acceptable service. Such delusion is destructive. No matter how fair the outward form, how plausible the profession, God searches the heart, he desireth truth in the inward parts.

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SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'A good name is better than precious ointment,'*  
Ecl. vii. 1.

A GOOD name is precious in the sight of God, because when justly acquired it serves to advance his glory. It is of eminent and obvious advantage to the cause of Christ. The comparison instituted in the text suggests the manner in which this advantage is secured. The allusion is to the practice in eastern countries of anointing the body with spices and perfumes, which diffused their fragrance on every side. So is it with a good name. When a Christian has a good report of them that are without, they are insensibly won to esteem and love not only himself, but the doctrine he professes. His name is as a sweet savour. It goes far to disarm the natural enmity of the heart to the gospel, and to gain for it a favourable attention.

The influence of a good name in promoting a good cause, becomes, perhaps, most apparent, when we look to the want of success which uniformly attends the efforts of a person of doubtful or tarnished reputation. Such a person may display abundant zeal, but his arm is paralysed. Men look not merely to the cause he advocates, but to the individual who advocates it. And there is some reason for this, especially in the case of those who seek to advance the cause of Christ. For one of the most prominent doctrines of our holy faith is that, whosoever in reality possesses it has been transformed, and possesses a different spirit than that which animates the men of the world. He, therefore, that does not manifest this spirit, makes proclamation that he does not himself believe what he has undertaken to advocate, and it is scarcely to be expected that in such circumstances he should succeed in inducing others to believe it.

Such facts as these are fitted to convey a very solemn practical lesson to all who profess the faith of Christ. To them, as instruments in the hand of God, is committed the furtherance of his glorious cause upon the earth, and the facts of history as well as a knowledge of the principles of human nature, are continually teaching that this cause is hindered or advanced very much according to the character of those who have espoused it. Every Christian then, whatever his status in society may be, or whatever office he may hold, is warned to avoid even the appearance of evil; to endeavour, by all means lawful, to secure the good opinion of men, not because he seeks to obtain the reward of men's praise as his end, but because their good-will and esteem are essential to the promotion of that cause which ought to be dearer to him than any other object. Every one may see how much Christ is wounded when any who profess his name walk unworthily; when a minister, for instance, justly forfeits his good name by falling into sin. Such an event is a source of deep affliction to all who love the Lord Jesus. His enemies triumph in it, and through it endeavour to destroy the good name of others. The consequences which result from the errors and sins of ministers are certainly more disastrous than when a private member of the church falls into transgression, and forfeits his good name. But in such instances we only behold the more extensive operation of a universal law, which teaches us that a good name is better than precious ointment; that whenever it is lost our testimony for the truth is nullified and destroyed; and that in proportion as it is exalted and purified, will our testimony win its way to the hearts of men. No Christian occupies a station so obscure as to be unable by his conduct and good repute to advance the cause of Christ, or by his unworthy behaviour to retard it. Every man, therefore, should be studiously careful of his own reputation, and not only guard against what is in itself sinful, but also against what may appear to others to be so. In this the apostle Paul furnishes an example to all Christians. His rule was to become all things to all men, if by any means he might gain some. Not that he would slacken his diligence in Christ's cause, or do what Christ had prohibited in order to please men; but in all matters relating to the conduct of life in which he was left to act according to his own wisdom and prudence, and to be regulated by the circumstances in which he was placed, his rule was to sacrifice all personal conveniences, and predilections, lest he should unnecessarily prejudice the cause of Christ. So ought we to seek to obtain a good name among

men, and for this purpose should it be employed. Actuated by such a principle, we will be equally careful to preserve and to promote the good name of our brethren. We will deal as tenderly with their reputation as with our own. A wound inflicted upon their character we will feel as an injury done to ourselves, and resent as an injury done to Christ, and an attack upon the honour of his name and the integrity of his kingdom. And if it be our part to defend and protect the good name of our neighbour, how much more is it our imperative duty to refrain from doing any thing which may injure it. There is much insensibility to this duty among professing Christians, a lamentable want of tenderness and respect for the good name of others. If we do not originate a false accusation, we are too apt to suppose that we incur no guilt in repeating it. We ought to consider that by spreading an evil report against our neighbour, by merely repeating what we have heard others say calculated to injure his reputation, we really give our sanction to it, and become active partakers in the guilt of bearing false witness against our neighbour. Were we to act according to the commandment we would bear witness against the report, we would denounce it as false when we heard it, and exert our energies to put it down. If instead of this we be instrumental in spreading it abroad, we become guilty of the falsehood, and sin as much as if we had been the inventors of it. A good name is frequently destroyed also by insinuation. In our whole conversation let us be upon our guard against this. It is the most dangerous and destructive weapon which can be employed against a man's reputation. It is most unworthy of a Christian to use it. It is a weapon fit only to be wielded by the hypocrite. It is unsuited to one the basis of whose character is sincerity.

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SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you,' Titus ii. 8.*

This rule has a primary and more special application to ministers. It is more important to the church that their conversation should be such as becometh godliness; and hence it is a more heinous offence in them, than in other men, to be guilty of the least departure from the language of truth and soberness. From the position they occupy, they must be examples to many for good or for evil, and it is of prime importance that in

all their intercourse with their fellow-men, their conversation should be always with grace, seasoned with salt.

But the rule is also applicable to all professing Christians. This is plain from the reason assigned for the observance of it. Sound speech, that cannot be condemned, is enjoined, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed. Whosoever, then, by his unsound speech, is capable of giving occasion of evil-speaking to him that is of the contrary part, is under the obligation of this injunction. But no private Christian, however obscure his station, is able to say that his unsound speech shall not prove injurious, and therefore the obligation lies upon all to order their conversation aright.

The rule of conduct here laid down, condemns all idle, and boastful, and loose conversation. There may be no intentional falsehood stated by those who are thus guilty, but their speech is not accordant with that inward love of truth, and that seriousness which the Christian ought ever to exhibit. In the idle and frivolous conversation which we commonly hear in the society of Christians, there is not only nothing to condemn the frivolity of the world, but everything to encourage it. Christians have nobler topics of conversation than other men, and these surely should not be excluded from their daily intercourse one with another. It is very necessary, moreover, to bear in mind that it is scarcely possible to indulge in or to countenance idle conversation, without in some way affecting the character of others. It is by idle and disjointed speech, perhaps thoughtlessly uttered, that many a fair reputation has been destroyed, and Christians should shun it, were it only for the temptations whereby it is beset. It becomes us also to consider, that by professing the faith of Christ, we declare our purpose and resolution to walk by that faith—to live by the powers of the world to come. Now, every one knows, that out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh, and if, in our ordinary intercourse with men, we show that we are not only willing to be enticed into, but desirous to engage in the idle conversation of frivolous minds, we virtually declare to them that the eternal truths of the gospel have made but a slight impression upon our minds, and have scarcely, if at all, engaged the affections of our hearts. In this way we give men occasion to say of us (and whether they say it or not, they will certainly think it) that our profession is not sincere; and there is no evil thing they could allege against us more serious than this. Such idle conversation, then, is not the sound speech

which the apostle commended, and which the word of God enjoins upon us.

The rule here given is equally condemnatory of boastful speech. There is nothing more unbecoming the character of a Christian than to be a boaster. He who believes that he has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, has, by that very faith, destroyed all occasion of boasting. He has nothing in which to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto him, and he unto the world. It is impossible, moreover, for any man to boast, and be at the same time strictly truthful. He may not directly lie, by stating that he has done what he never even attempted to accomplish. But the language of every boaster is inconsistent with sound and sober speech, and with strict truth. His first desire is to make his achievement bear the best possible aspect; and if in his narration he tells nothing but the truth, it is almost certain that he will not tell the whole truth. But the first and most obvious requirement of truth is that a thing be represented as it really was—that no fact be concealed—that no colouring or undue prominence be given to any one feature. To this rule the boaster never attends, and he is virtually guilty of falsehood.

A loose and uncertain method of making a statement is also contrary to sound speech. It shows a want of due regard to truth. If we have a hearty desire to maintain and promote truth, we will never make a statement which we are not sure of being true. We will refrain from repeating idle rumours. We will take pains to ascertain the real facts regarding any matter which we may think important enough to obtain a place in our conversation. By speaking at random, we do irreparable injury to the truth. We show a practical disregard of it. It is not enough for us to say that we know not whether a report we may have heard be true or false, unless we repeat it for the sake of obtaining more correct information. By circulating it for any other purpose, we show that truth is less regarded by us than it ought ever to be. We expose ourselves to the hazard of having our testimony on other matters questioned, and give occasion to our enemies to speak evil of us. Let us ever consider the obligation which lies upon us to maintain and promote truth, and let us guard against all manner of speech which in any way is calculated to injure and impair our testimony on behalf of it. If in our conversation we seek to exalt ourselves, we are almost certain to do so at the expense of others. If we indulge in frivolous conversation, our own and the char-

acter of others suffer by it. We thus sin against God—defeat what ought to be a principal object of our lives—and give occasion to others to speak evil of us. It is most important, both to the cause of Christ, and to our own comfort and usefulness, that our speech should be so ordered as to give no handle to accusers. If we be really faithful to Christ, we may expect to be falsely accused; but God will bring shame upon our enemies, if they have no ground for the evil they speak against us. But, dwelling as the Christian does, in a land of enemies, he must be very watchful over every word he speaks, that it may be impossible to condemn his speech. His statements will be narrowly canvassed and weighed, and if he give the slightest ground of accusation, his fault will be indefinitely magnified, and Christ will be wounded in the house of his friends.

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#### THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins,' 1 Pet. iv. 8.*

THE exhortation of the text occurs in immediate connection with a solemn warning that the end of all things was at hand, and seems to imply that the meetest preparation which could be made for that awful event was the cultivation of fervent charity. Nor will this seem at all surprising when we remember that it is elsewhere said, 'Charity is the bond of perfectness,' and, 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' But however true it may be that in this view the exercise of fervent and untiring love is the best preparation for heaven, it is not the view which the text most prominently suggests. The reason here expressly assigned for the emphatic manner in which the cultivation of charity is urged upon Christians, is because charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Such a statement as this, occurring immediately after a declaration of the near approach of the consummation of all things, enjoins upon us in the most solemn way the duty of forgiving one another, and forbearing one another in love. For who can contemplate his appearance before the righteous Judge of all, without feeling his own urgent need of forgiveness? We could not answer for one of a thousand of our offences, and we are only encouraged to ask and expect forgiveness, as we forgive men their trespasses. For thus saith the Lord: 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses,

neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.' Under the solemn sanction, then, of the last judgment, Christians are here charged, as they hope and expect their own sins to be covered by the fervent love of God in Jesus Christ, that they exercise the same charity among themselves. That love which they expect to be exercised towards them, in the judgment, in covering the multitude of their sins, even the same love are they enjoined to cherish and to exercise towards their brethren. They are not to expose but to cover the faults of their brethren, as they hope that their own faults will be covered on that day when the secrets of every heart shall be made manifest.

That it is this special exercise of charity which consists in covering and freely forgiving the faults of others which is here enjoined, will become more apparent when we advert to the fact that the latter part of the text is a quotation from the book of Proverbs: 'Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins,' Prov. x. 12. The meaning of Solomon is here sufficiently evident. The two members of the sentence form an antithesis, and the one explains the peculiar force and bearing of the other. Hatred and charity are here placed over against one another. The office of hatred is declared to be to stir up strifes—to set men in opposition to one another—to lead them to traduce, to bite and devour one another. The office of charity, as here described, is just the opposite of this—to bury one another's faults in oblivion—to allay strife where it has sprung up—to bear all things—hope all things—believe all things. This is precisely the exercise of charity enjoined in the text, and when we consider that the religion which we profess is pre-eminently a religion of love and truth, it is scarcely necessary to say that it must be of the very last importance to the promotion and maintenance of it, that we have fervent charity among ourselves. We have the evidence in our own conduct, of hearts full of enmity and hatred, if we be in any way instrumental in stirring up strife; and we are destitute of the only sure testimony that we are the children of God, unless we seek to cover the multitude of sins.

Besides, by such conduct we practically deny the leading and fundamental truth of our holy faith. No man can sincerely believe that Christ died to save him—that such a costly sacrifice was absolutely necessary to atone for his guilt—and, consequently, that the debt he has incurred to the justice of God is really beyond all calculation great;—no man can sincerely believe this without possessing a forgiving spirit. He cannot

in all earnestness cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' without being willing to show that mercy which he craves. He seeks that his own sins may be covered, and his desire will necessarily be to cover the transgressions of others. According as the desire for his own forgiveness arises into fervour and vehemence, and the consciousness of his own guilt becomes deeper, so will he become fervent in his charity. He will be careful of the good name of his neighbour—he will be grieved with their offences—and bear them as part of his own burden. So far from exaggerating an evil rumour, he will endeavour to put the best construction on their conduct. He will rejoice to bear a favourable testimony, and while constrained at all times to speak the truth, he will speak it in love. He will bear with meekness offences committed against himself—destroy so far as he can the seeds of dissension and strife—and seek to realize that union in heart and spirit which may manifest the unity of faith—and that harmony which is the result of kind forbearance, and which is incumbent on all the household of faith, that as brethren they may dwell together in unity.

He will especially remember, that as Christians, they are members of Christ's body, and that by injuring them, he injures their Lord. He cannot speak an offensive word against them—he can say nothing to their discredit, without at the same time speaking against Christ. Were we but to bear these things upon our hearts, how different would our conversation be from what it too often is. We are too apt to be easily provoked against our brother, and our pride and vanity easily lead us to become detractors. Instead of concealing, some men rather seek to magnify every fault. Their presence is a sure harbinger of strife. Their object seems to be that men should dwell together in enmity—that they should bite and devour one another. Wherever the bonds of love seem most strongly knit—wherever the light of faith burns most clearly—they seek to obscure the one, and to untie the other. This is the natural tendency of a heart at enmity with God—the natural tendency of every unrenewed man;—a tendency which nothing will check and destroy but the constant remembrance of his own infinite demerit, and of Christ's infinite love. This will inspire fervent charity, whose object will be to cover all sins.

## THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people,' Lev. xix. 16.*

No one who has mingled with society can be ignorant of the commonness of the sin denounced in the text, and the frequency of its commission affords abundant proof that men are not alive as they ought to be to its enormity. If a man attempted to rob another of his property, society would rise in arms against him; there would be felt an instant revulsion, he would be excluded from the ordinary intercourse of life—and for the perpetration of his crime would seek the covert of darkness, and would practise the most cautious concealment. But in the open face of day—without a blush of shame—frequently without the consciousness of guilt—without rebuke, a man's reputation will be willingly and wrongously blighted. And the tale-bearer, instead of being thrust forth from society, will by the very habit of evil-speaking often win his way into its very bosom, and obtain a more favourable place than he could otherwise hope to reach.

Such indications as these not only prove how very erroneous and inadequate are the views which are generally entertained of the heinous character of this sin, but furnish also the most palpable proof of its frequent commission. For he who lends a favourable and willing ear to the report of the tale-bearer, is prepared to take up and circulate the story. It were well, in such a state of society, amid such manifestations of character by professing Christians, to bear in mind, that the tale-bearer has the same name as is bestowed upon the devil. He is the accuser. This is the very signification of his name, and indicates his office and chief work. Now surely it can be no light and trivial sin, the commission of which obtains for a man such a name as this. The identity of name proves the identity of character. The essence of Satan's character is hatred, and the way in which he habitually manifests it is by becoming the bearer of accusations against the brethren. The tale-bearer among men approximates in his character most nearly to him who is the personation of all wickedness. The actuating spirit of such a man is enmity and hatred. He is an incarnate representation of the devil. And more especially does he assume this character when among his own people he discharges his wicked office. The malignity of his purpose, and the mischievous effects of his conduct, are, in such circumstances, most speedily and most abundantly displayed. He might with comparative harmlessness carry his evil report to

strangers, but to whisper his tale into the ear of brethren and friends, is a most satanic crime. As society is constituted, with so many mutual dependencies, a man's good name is his richest and most precious inheritance. Much of our happiness, moreover, results from the cordial intercourse of friendship and neighbourhood. The tale-bearer poisons this cup of comfort—destroys all confidence—and plants among our people, our relations, friends, neighbours, the seeds of enmity and strife. He is described in the text as busy in his vocation. He is continually going up and down, and in this he exhibits another striking resemblance to him who goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. There is nothing fair and lovely in character—nothing eminent or excellent, which is not the object of his dislike, and he can find no rest till he has blighted and destroyed it.

We read of one who was most instant and unwearied in labour—who went up and down among his people—who had no fixed dwelling place. He had a report to tell, and he lost no opportunity of declaring it. In desert places, and in crowded cities, wherever he could find an ear to listen, he poured forth his tale. But it was a tale of gladness and joy. He was prompted by infinite love to tell it, and there was infinite love in every word by which he set it forth. It was a tale to which the holiest and the best lent the most willing ear—which was fitted to unite all men in the bonds of affection, to change the aspect of universal nature, to make hatred relinquish her malignant contrivances, and to quell all strife and division among men. Jesus Christ, went about continually, but it was to do good, to heal the broken-hearted, to comfort the mourner, to deliver the captive, to bring peace on earth, and good-will to men.

The tale-bearer is almost equally busy—but it is for ends entirely the reverse of these, and he thus also proves his paternity. He is of his father the devil, and like him he goes up and down seeking whom he may devour.

Is it possible that any who bear the Christian name, should manifest a character like this? There is reason to fear that many professing Christians are deeply tainted with this crime. How then should they call themselves Christ's people, when they show a spirit so entirely opposite to his? It is just by practising one of those deceptions, whereby men so easily impose both upon themselves and others. The professing Christian will not bear about his tale with an avowed purpose of malignity. He will not refrain from telling it, but he will disguise from others and

perhaps from himself the evil purpose which animates him, by professing that he was very sorry to hear such and such a report, but he is afraid it may turn out to be too true. This profession is a lie, and under whatever circumstances it is made it should be denounced as such. He rejoices in the evil report which he propagates, and there is a secret hatred in his heart against him whom the report affects. This is capable of easy proof. With this view let us suppose a man seated among his companions, and that the conversation turns upon the character of one for whom he has a very great and special regard. By and bye some fault is hinted, some doubt expressed, and as the conversation ripens, his character is discovered to be less and less amiable, till by aid of insinuation and various other practices with which the slanderer is quite conversant, and which from long practice he can aptly use, the subject of their conversation is made out, to the satisfaction of all parties, to be very worthless. Now it is not necessary to suppose that this man's friend who is present interposes to check and contradict the slander, but he listens to it with secret disbelief and scorn, and retains his old affection for his friend. In these circumstances, would he repeat what he had heard to the very next person he might happen to meet? It is quite certain he would not, but would exert himself to justify his friend's name in the face of the world. Now why is it that such a course is not uniformly adopted? It is just because in this particular instance there was a real sorrow for the evil report, and that in other cases, whatever profession to the contrary may be made, the heart goes along with the accusation, rejoices in the credit which is given to it, and in all the evil results to which it is likely to lead.

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#### FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off,'* Psal. ci. 5.

If it be an evil thing to circulate a false report, it is certainly an aggravation of the crime to invent it. The bearer of a false tale is likened to the devil: he who raises it is certainly animated by the father of lies. The criminality which respectively belongs to those who invent, and those who propagate a slander, may be aptly compared to that which belongs respectively to him who issues, and to him who circulates base coin. He who commits forgery, or who issues base coin is the origin of the evil, but that evil

would be very limited in its extent, did he not find willing and ready agents to put his coin into circulation. Moreover every person who passes a coin, and knows it not to be genuine, shows himself capable of making the coin if only he had the skill. The maker of base coin is subjected to summary punishment when he is detected, the slanderer escapes with impunity. Yet his crime is not less great; it is, if possible, more aggravated, because attended with more disastrous consequences. He who places in our hands a base coin in payment of articles he has received from us, is guilty of the double crime of falsehood and theft. He who slanders us is equally guilty of falsehood, and indirectly robs us to a much greater extent. A man's character is his most valuable property, and precisely that property, in most instances, which secures to him his livelihood. He cannot make his way in the world without it. Almost every office which he may be called to fill, and by the discharge of the duties of which he earns his livelihood, implies some trust in his integrity on the part of his employer; and to blight his character is to deprive him at once of the resources on which he lives. The slanderer then, like the forger, is at once a liar and a thief. And inasmuch as the depredations of the former are both more extensive and more ruinous than those of the latter, he ought to be regarded with so much the greater abhorrence. He is the most dangerous of all enemies, and against his assaults men are comparatively helpless. By ordinary watchfulness and care we can protect ourselves against the impositions of the forger, but he who invents a false report, and circulates it, easily gains for it currency and favour. For men are too apt to listen to unfavourable representations of their neighbours, very narrowly to question the truth of a tale the burden of which is evil. And hence from the encouragement with which the crime meets, it has become general. There is, indeed, no sin more common than the sin of private slander. A public and definite accusation is comparatively rare, because it would meet with prompt punishment if false, and bring shame upon its inventor. But everywhere are to be found men who gratify their malignity by slandering their neighbour privily; and all who are interested in the cause of truth, and in the peace and happiness of society, ought not only to set their faces stedfastly against it, by refraining in the very least degree from giving it countenance and encouragement, but by influencing others both by punishment and reward to refrain from it. In this way it should become a special subject of parental care.

The tendency to slander is early manifested by children, as soon indeed as they learn to covet praise, which is often most easily gained by depreciating others; and as soon as they learn to cherish hatred, which finds its readiest gratification in slander. Let us take one example, to show how the disposition to slander is manifested, even in very young children. Suppose a quarrel to take place among them, and just as surely as the feelings of anger and hatred are excited, so surely will there be mutual recrimination. It may be that a very young child has not ingenuity enough to invent a slander, but if he has heard any evil of his neighbour, it is sure, in that moment of irritation, to be cast in his teeth. Now, this is just the very disposition which, in maturity, and when the capacity was greater, would inevitably lead to the invention of slander. Over every such exhibition of character parents ought to watch with the most sedulous care. It is a solemn duty they owe to their children, that they should train them to speak the truth; and by checking every little slander which they could discover, they might be instrumental in effecting a mighty and most desirable change in the aspect of society. But in their very earliest dealings with their children as moral agents, in their first effort to check and to destroy the disposition to slander, they will discover that though the tongue may be stopped, they cannot uproot the evil without the destruction of envy and hatred in the heart. And therefore along with all the instrumentality they may find it necessary to adopt, to destroy the evil they will have recourse to higher instrumentality than their own. They will lift up their souls in prayer to that God who has the hearts of all men in his hand, and who turneth them as he doth the rivers of water. Were Christian parents so to act, and so to pray, this great and shameful evil in a professedly Christian community would speedily disappear. But it is vain to expect such a result, so long as we find that many parents, instead of adopting such a course, do actually train their children to become slanderers, by telling the evil reports which they have heard in the presence of their children. By so doing they encourage them to lie, and expose them to the just judgment of him who abhors the lying lips. The text solemnly directs us to think of this judgment. He that privily slandereth his neighbour, may escape punishment from men. He may even obtain the reward of their approbation. But God will cut him off. He can have no part in the heavenly inheritance. His portion is with the father of lies.

## FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness—against false swearers,' Mal. iii. 5.*

AN oath for confirmation is the end of strife. This practice has prevailed in all ages, and amongst every people. It is a practice necessary among a corrupted race. So long as men are capable of falsehood, so long will oaths be required in confirmation of their testimony. When they are put upon their oath, as it is termed, they are required under the most solemn sanctions to speak the truth; and, in such circumstances, it is justly regarded as a very heinous crime to make a false statement. To swear falsely, is not only an aggravated transgression of the ninth commandment; it is also the most impious profanation of God's name.

The profane swearer is deeply guilty, because of the levity with which he interlards his conversation with the name of God; but surely that man is more guilty still who, in circumstances of the utmost solemnity, calls God to witness the truth of what he says, and promises, as he shall answer to God in the great day of judgment, to declare the whole truth, has yet no such purpose, but resolves in his heart to conceal what he knows, or to misrepresent and falsify what he thinks fit to state. God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain, even when it is done in anger or in thoughtless levity, but how much more awful is the guilt of him who, with determined and settled purpose, invokes the God of truth to be the witness of a falsehood. It is, were that possible, to make God the author and abettor of a lie. It is to cast the deepest dishonour upon his name, all whose ways are truth and righteousness. It is the worst kind of lie that can be told, for it places falsehood and injustice in the seat of the judge. An oath is required only in judicial inquiries, and it is imposed for the purpose of securing a just judgment. But by perjury this end is defeated. The fountains of justice are poisoned, and law becomes either unjust, or altogether inoperative.

A false oath is a lie told with the worst possible intention. Its object is to put down truth, and to set up falsehood in its place—to frustrate the ends of justice, and make a righteous decision unattainable. It establishes falsehood as the rule of judgment, and hence in its very nature involves a violation of the whole commandments in the second table of the law. It combines and concentrates in itself the essence of every social crime. Its tendency is to loosen, or rather to

tear asunder the very bonds of society—to set every man against his neighbour—to destroy public confidence, and not only introduce disorder and anarchy, but to establish falsehood as the very basis of human intercourse and communion.

Against such a crime, so aggravated in its nature, and so pernicious in its tendency, God has spoken with the utmost severity of which language is capable, that men by the terrors of his denunciations might be taught, if possible, to stand in awe, and commit not this dreadful iniquity. God has declared himself to be a witness of every sin, and that not merely as a beholder of it, and cognizant of the fact, but as one whose testimony has been given against it in his word, and who will give the same testimony in the great day of retribution. But against false swearers he has declared in the text that he will be a *swift witness*—that he will come *near* to them in judgment. Such a declaration as this is well fitted to strike the heart with awe. God is very patient and full of long-suffering, and in the midst of deserved wrath remembers mercy. How abundantly and graciously hath he manifested these attributes in all his dealings with the children of men! But the text indicates that there are sins, the commission of which overcomes and exhausts his patience—sins of so deep a die that even his long-suffering cannot endure them. His judgment is not *near*; it does not speedily overtake sinners in general. His testimony, though ever true and ever certain, is not generally given forth for hopeless condemnation on the commission of the crime. But against false swearers he will be a *swift witness*.

Human observation has abundantly confirmed the statement of the text. God in his providence has shown himself to be a *swift witness* against false swearers. Some visible curse generally descends upon them. God will not suffer them even to flourish in the world. We believe it has been matter of common observation that the perjurer has been thwarted in every object at which he aimed, and that ruin and misery have followed his footsteps; God thereby confirming his word by his visible judgments.

But even were no such results to follow the commission of perjury—though the false swearer might be found flourishing like the green bay-tree, God might still be a *swift witness* against him in the hardening of his heart, and giving him over to a reprobate mind. And, whatever men may think of it, this is the severest of all. A man's worldly circumstances, however desperate, may be retrieved, or he soon escapes from the miseries which they may bring; but it is the

consummation of all woe, to be abandoned by God—to have the heart hardened, and the conscience seared—to be the victim of hopeless, remediless woe. This is a near and swift judgment which the perjurer may expect—it may almost be regarded as a natural and necessary result of the crime he has committed. He has invoked the name of God to bear witness to a lie—and by that act has impiously attempted to make God a liar. He has thus defaced from his soul all reverence and fear of God, and has rendered his heart well nigh incapable of receiving such impressions. He cannot call upon God to help him in his need—he dare not hope for his favour;—for he has cast the deepest contempt upon his name—he has invoked his righteous judgment upon himself. By taking a false oath, he has solemnly prayed for his own damnation, and how can he expect but that his impious prayer will be answered. He has committed the darkest social crime. He has sinned deliberately and deeply against the love of his fellow-men, and by the very fact has steeled his heart against all the tender sympathies which the relationships of life awaken. He is almost shut up to hardened and hopeless impenitence. He has already resisted and overcome the strongest inducement whereby man can be bound over to do that which is right, and by the very extremity of his guilt has rendered it in the last degree improbable that his heart will ever be touched or moved either by the love of God or man.

#### FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*‘What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper;’*  
Psal. cxx. 3, 4.

WERE man's nature altogether pure, the false tongue would be comparatively powerless. The false report, when raised, would be speedily put down, and the liar obliged to hide his head in shame. But it is altogether different in a depraved and polluted world, in which men do not love their neighbour as themselves. The false and injurious report, instead of being rejected and scorned, is listened to with a willing and attentive ear. It gains a speedy currency, and by its prevalence destroys that which man holds to be as dear to him as life. There is no agent more destructive—no power more dreadful—than a false tongue. It is an enemy too subtle to be grappled with, and multiplies too rapidly

to be overcome. The preceding context shows that the same evil, which is widely felt now, was experienced in all its terror and power by the Psalmist. 'In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me. Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.' By evil reports he had been brought into deep distress, and he makes it matter of special prayer to God, that he would deliver him from lying lips. The circumstances under which this Psalm is supposed to have been written are strikingly illustrative of the pernicious results of an evil tongue. It was at the time when the enmity of Saul raged most fiercely against David. By the kindness and affection of Jonathan he had made his escape from the king, and in circumstances of considerable destitution arrived at Nob, where he obtained from Ahimelech the priest, the hallowed bread that was before the Lord, to satisfy his hunger, and the sword of Goliath, whom he had slain. On that occasion, Doeg, an Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsmen, was present, and witnessed the transaction. As was to be expected, Saul soon manifested an anxiety to discover where David was, in order that he might execute his cruel and vindictive designs against him; and when a king is desirous of doing evil, he will generally find some about him who are willing enough to aid him in his purpose. Doeg accordingly told the king what he had seen. The result was, that fourscore and five of the priests were slain, on account of the assistance which Ahimelech had rendered to David. And as if to show that the evil tongue always indicates the cruel and vindictive heart, Saul could find none of his servants to execute his sanguinary edict for the slaughter of the priests, but this very man, whose false and mischievous tongue had been the source of the evil.

It is not often, in God's providence, that the pernicious results of a wicked and false tongue are so manifest as in this instance; but every one who has in any measure experienced them, will be ready to acquiesce in the propriety and necessity of the Psalmist's prayer: 'Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.' God is pointed out in the text as the avenger of the false tongue, and that in such a peculiar way, as not only to indicate his indignation against this pernicious evil, but also to show that no other punishment but that which he can inflict is adequate to the crime. The questions, 'What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?' are just the strongest of all modes of declaring there was

no punishment prescribed by human laws, or which human power was capable of inflicting, which was adequate to the crime; and the false tongue is therefore handed over to the judgment of God, who could alone estimate the evils which it caused, and apportion the punishment to the offence.

There are two forms of punishment here indicated, the one to be inflicted by sharp arrows; the other by coals of juniper. By the former may be understood, either the judgments which God may inflict upon the liar in this life, by making him an object of loathing and contempt among men, and thus piercing his heart with many sorrows: or, more appropriately, the retribution in eternity, whereby God will make his own sin his own punishment. As in this life the false tongue inflicted many and sharp wounds, so in that which is to come, it shall be pierced with sharp arrows. God's arrows will then penetrate the hard heart of the liar, and in the midst of everlasting remorse and despair, it is conceivable that new agony will be given to his torment by the companions of his misery directing against him his own weapons. As he in this life shot his poisoned arrows, winged with enmity, and pierced many a heart, so in the place of torment, where enmity reigns triumphant, his soul may be pierced by arrows dipped in poison more malignant, and directed with stronger and more unerring aim, than his. To such agonies as these will be added, 'coals of juniper.' This figure suggests at once the fierce and devouring flames of hell. The juniper, from its resinous qualities, gives a fierce heat, and the text thus brings before the mind of the liar, that he stands exposed to that fire which shall never be quenched. His portion is in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever. Surely the terrors of such a punishment should be enough to restrain the false tongue. And when we read these awful threatenings of the God who cannot lie, and whose vengeance is as certain as his mercy is sure, how watchful should we be over our tongues! how guarded in all our conversation—how careful to exaggerate no error—to say nothing with a mischievous design—nothing in enmity! God hears every word we speak, and he knows the purpose for which it is spoken. He has, as the God of truth, an infinite abhorrence of falsehood, and, as the God of love, an infinite abhorrence of enmity.

## FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight,'* Prov. xii. 22.

LYING is a very natural result of some other sin. If a man has done any thing which he knows would injure him in the esteem of others, it is very natural he should deny it. The temptation to do so is strong, and it is not often resisted. Much more, if a man has been guilty of an offence which he knows to deserve, and which if discovered will lead to, punishment, it is natural for him to use the most cautious concealment, and if he be charged with the crime steadfastly to deny it. Much has been said by moralists about a natural disposition in all men to tell the truth, and it may be that man's disposition to lie is not so strong, as to lead him to falsify without inducement or object. But if it be natural to seek defence from deserved punishment, it is natural for every one who has done wrong to lie, in order to conceal it. This disposition should be early watched over and checked. Unless children be better instructed, parents may be quite certain that they will seek to screen themselves from punishment by falsehood. In this way the sense of truth is often blunted in early life, and habits of falsehood and deception formed, which increase in strength with increasing years. No parent would desire to see his children act such a part in life, and incur the doom which God has threatened as the sure portion of liars. Parents might do much to prevent such results by exercising that degree of watchfulness and care which their responsible trust imperatively demands. Let them impress upon their children the fear of God, His perfect knowledge of all their ways, and the infinite abhorrence he has of this sin. Let them be solemnly reminded that lying lips are an abomination to God, with whatever view the lie be told; whether with the mischievous purpose of creating strife, or to escape deserved punishment. Let them be spoken to in earnest love, with such a tone and in such a temper as a parent will almost of necessity assume, who vehemently desires the salvation of their souls. Let them know that such is a parent's highest hope, his fondest prayer. When falsehood has been detected, let children be shown that the object of the parent in chastising is to correct, to purify, to save. Let him teach them to deprecate God's judgment, to pray for his forgiveness, and let him show that he also mediates for them—deals with God for their souls.

It behoves a Christian master also to exercise the same kind of watchfulness and care. When

a servant has been guilty of falsehood, told probably for the sake of concealing a fault, it would be most salutary and impressive were a master able decisively to show that he does not prefer his own interests and honour above the honour of God, and the interests of his kingdom. Let the indignation which is manifested for the crime (and it cannot be too deep and strong) be an indignation for the injury which has been done to God's law, and to the honour of him to whom lying lips are an abomination.

It is possible also, and it is an object which ought ever to be aimed at, to encourage confession. This may be done in various ways, but is chiefly to be effected by inculcating and recommending truth, and causing the misery and disgrace of falsehood to be sensibly and deeply felt. In the case of children generally the task would not be a very difficult one. A child who is not hardened in the ways of vice, must feel miserable under the very consciousness of having deceived his parents. Every act of kindness they show towards him will sting him to the heart, when he knows that he would not have received it had they known his real character. He will feel that he is a traitor in the household, unworthy of the love of its members, and retaining his place in their esteem by deceiving them. The undiminished confidence they repose in him will be a new source of grief, not because he would not desire to enjoy it, but because he retains it by falsehood. A watchful parent might almost in every instance detect a falsehood, if not in the utterance of it, at least in the restlessness, and pain, and conscious unworthiness to which it gives rise. This would be the time to solicit a child's confidence, and were it done affectionately and wisely, the likelihood is that a frank confession would be elicited. It is well worth a parent's while to watch for such an opportunity. A great victory has been gained, when a fault has been voluntarily confessed. The relief of mind which will be felt when the burden of unacknowledged guilt is removed, will be a strong inducement to adopt the same course again.

But in every moral reformation which is attempted, it is of the utmost consequence not only to call in the aid of religion, but to make religion the basis of it. Thus the confession of a fault to a parent, presents an opportunity, an opportunity which ought never to be neglected, of directing his child to the throne of grace, to that heavenly Father whom he has also offended, there to lay open his transgression, and pray for forgiveness. It is easy to see the prodigious influence of such a habit upon the whole charac-

ter of him who adopts it. There is nothing tends to keep men sinning so much as the neglect of a full and special confession, in the presence of God of all the sins of which they are conscious.

It is more difficult confessedly for a master to deal in this way with a servant. But were opportunities watched for with that care which the importance of the case demands, it might be possible to elicit confession, and to encourage it. Masters for their own sakes should, at all events, make the experiment patiently and perseveringly, for it is a source of constant vexation and uneasiness when no confidence can be reposed in a servant's truth. On the other hand, there is nothing from which greater comfort may be derived, nothing in itself more morally beautiful, than unsuspecting confidence, the basis of which is truth. All that unites men together in society, that associates them as friends, that binds them in families, the obligations which arise from such compacts, and the virtues which the discharge of these obligations originates, and gives occasion for,—all that is lovely and of good report in life, is based upon truth, and hence truth combines in itself the excellence and loveliness of all virtues. They that deal truly are God's delight, he delights in such, because he recognises in them his own image. They are conformed to his Spirit, and it is by them alone that the honour of his name can be upheld. When truth falls, religion falls with it.

#### SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron,'* 1 Tim. iv. 2.

EVERY liar is, in a certain sense, a hypocrite. It is presumed, unless there be manifest reasons to the contrary, that a man is what he appears to be, and that he speaks as he thinks. He that is guilty of falsehood, therefore, wears an aspect different from his real character. But the special crime indicated in the text is of a more base character than that perpetrated by the common liar. He who speaks lies in hypocrisy, assumes a character precisely the reverse of what he really bears. The common liar, though he state what is precisely contrary to the truth, does not think it necessary to profess that his object in making the statement is the most praiseworthy with which a man can be actuated. This is the very aggravation of the hypocrite's guilt. In his intercourse with his companions he wears the mask of friendship. He veils the most malignant purpose with a cover of affectionate interest. He

courts confidence in order to betray it. None are so loud in commendation of sincerity as he. It is essential to his character to have a truthful air. He is the vilest and basest of all liars. His outward appearance is uniformly fair, while in his heart every malignant and hateful passion lives and operates. He is the painted sepulchre, full of all uncleanness within. His whole life is a lie. He is not merely guilty of falsehood when he states what is untrue, but his whole conduct and conversation, being assumed and not real, is false. Every outwardly good deed he does is a falsehood, every profession he makes is hollow and insincere. When he appears most in earnest he is least so. The kindness he shows is to serve some wicked or selfish purpose. He converts truth itself into a lie, for he converts it from its legitimate uses, and employs it only for the advancement of his own ends.

Such is the character of the accomplished hypocrite as exhibited in his relations to men. His crime appears yet more vile when we reflect that he acts the same part in his relation to God, as if he could deceive him who searcheth the heart. The pattern of the character is presented to us in the history of the ancient Pharisees. There were none among all the Jews who made such a profession of zeal for religion as they did. They were most scrupulous in their observance of the outward rites of religion. They imposed upon themselves many observances which God had not commanded, in order that they might more effectively display their sanctity. They did much that was in itself good—they fasted, they prayed, they gave alms; but such acts were converted by them into crimes, from the purpose for which they were done. The heart had no share in all their religious observances. If they fasted, it was not because they wished to chastise the body and keep it under subjection, or because they were contrite in heart, but that they might establish a reputation for themselves. If they prayed, it was not because they were thankful, or because they felt in need of those things which God had promised to bestow, but in order to exhibit their own righteousness. If they gave alms, it was not because they had compassion on the poor, but in order to gain the reward of men's praise. There was not among all the Jews, blinded and hardened as they were, a class of men who showed such bitter and persevering hostility to real and vital religion as the Pharisees did. Him who was the impersonation of all that was lovely and glorious in religion, they hated, and persecuted to the death.

The character of the ancient Pharisees has been

realized in all ages of the world's history; there is too much reason to believe that it is, in some of its most marked features, very common in the Christian church at the present day. All who bear the form of godliness are not under the influence of its power. All profession among us is not real. There are to be found, perhaps in every congregation, some who stately wait upon public ordinances, who never yet have worshipped God in sincerity and truth. There are many who speak lies to God in hypocrisy, and what renders their character more detestable is, that it becomes essential to its maintenance, not to be satisfied with the exhibition of that cold indifference to divine things which too many nominal Christians manifest. The hypocrite in religion is not a common, he becomes an extraordinary professor. He not only presents himself in the public assembly, but he wears an aspect of extraordinary solemnity and seriousness. He cannot relish the society of the really godly, but he adopts much of their language, and expresses their sentiments in his intercourse with men. Wherever he is seen, he has the same religious air. His object is to deceive men into the belief of his piety, and the issue of his endeavours is to persuade himself of the reality of his own imposture. This was the case with the Pharisees of old. They began by seeking to persuade the multitude that they were righteous, and they ended in hardening their own hearts into the belief of it. This is manifest from the parable of the Saviour, regarding the Pharisee and the Publican who went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee thanked God that he was not as other men, and this language is put into his mouth to show his own conviction of his own righteousness. Such is the common event with those who speak lies in hypocrisy.

The hardening influence of such a practice is strongly set before us in the text, when it is said of them that they have their conscience seared as with a hot iron. They have so long and so steadfastly resisted the warnings of that inward monitor—they have in all that they said and did acted so contrary to its dictates, that at length it ceases from the discharge of its functions, and that most dreadful and hopeless of all punishments—a hardened heart and a seared conscience, is inflicted upon the hypocrite as the appropriate award of his guilt. When we consider how prevalent such guilt has become, and how awful the punishment which God has awarded to it—let us be stirred up to diligent and faithful self-examination. The testimony of God is that the heart is deceitful above all things, and his commandment

is: 'keep thy heart with all diligence.' Let us then keep watch over our own hearts. Let us ever study to ascertain whether there be motives and affections within corresponding to our external demeanour—whether our outward professions, and our inward sentiments harmonize. Without such watchfulness, united with prayer to him who knows the heart, and who alone is able to search out and make manifest its errors to our own consciousness and observation, we are sure to fall into the error of the hypocrite. Our deceitful hearts will betray us into the hateful crime, unless we maintain constant and earnest watchfulness over them. Let us also guard those whom we have in charge, against its first beginnings. Let us teach our children to walk in the truth—let us train them to examine and watch over their own sentiments—expose and punish every false and hypocritical profession which wears the mask of kindness to veil some cruel design. Above all, let us deal with them faithfully to guard them against speaking lies in hypocrisy to God. When they have been engaged in any religious duty, let us examine them, and teach them to examine themselves whether their hearts have entered into it, that we may detect, and check at the very outset, a corruption so gross and odious and fatal in its character.

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#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?'*  
Job xxvii. 8.

THE hope of the hypocrite, so far as regards this world, is frequently successful. If the mask he wears be close enough to secure him against detection, he seldom fails in the attainment of his objects. He wishes to obtain a good repute among men, and he succeeds. He has upon his lips the language of love, and his neighbours become his dupes. If he manifest, what in other men would be called hatred and enmity, he seeks to disguise it under the form of some virtue. If he stir up strife by evil insinuations, he professes to do so because he loves the truth so well that he cannot reconcile his mind to any concealment. If he is envious, and seeks revenge upon his neighbour, he professes great regret that he is constrained by a sense of justice to do what seems so opposite to brotherly-kindness. Thus, while his heart is full of hatred, he speaketh the language of kindness and affection, and men are often weak enough to believe him. He reaches the end he

aims at, which was to secure a place in men's esteem, that he might more successfully prosecute his selfish ends. The hypocrite is often the most successful of all men. When others fail, he is triumphant. His arts obtain the most immediate reward. It often happens, indeed, that before the end of his days the mask is stripped from his face, and he stands revealed in all his naked deformity. His hopes are then blasted even in this life; for however tolerant men may be of the crime in themselves, they are ready enough to see and condemn its odiousness in others.

The hypocrite's success is greatest and surest, however, when he superadds to his professions of brotherly-kindness for his neighbour, the profession of religious zeal. When he obtains a standing as a member of the church, and assumes, it may be, a prominent place in it—when he becomes signalized by all that fervour which can be exhibited in words, but which is never carried into action, his reputation is more secure—his detection less easy—his success more certain. He then wears a double mask, and his real character is more effectually concealed. He mocks God by his false profession, but he is regardless of the crime, so long as by means of it he can obtain what he desires on earth.

The supposition of the text is, that the acts of the hypocrite have been successful—that by false professions before God and men he has gained his end. But the question put is, even on such a supposition, What is his hope when God taketh away his soul? This form of expression is just a strong way of declaring that no hope can be more delusive and vain than that which the hypocrite cherishes. He may, under false pretences, add abundantly to his stores, and become rich in this world's goods; but what shall it profit him though he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? He may stand high in the world's esteem, and men's praises may be sounded in his ears, giving him the credit of virtues he never possessed, and of good deeds he never purposed in his heart to accomplish. He may pass away from this scene, having the savour of a good name—tears may be shed over his grave—and a monument erected to his memory, but what will all the incense of men's adulation avail him in the world to which he has gone. He must appear unveiled before the throne of God—stripped of all disguises—an object of loathing and disgust. No anguish is greater than that which shame inflicts upon the detected hypocrite, and when he and those with whom he companied on earth stand together before the dread tribunal of God, this shame will be his, to bear the loathing and

contempt of those, to secure whose praise he made shipwreck of all things.

“ Great day of revelation ! in the grave  
The hypocrite had left his mask, and stood  
In naked ugliness. He was a man  
Who stole the livery of the court of heaven,  
To serve the devil in; in virtue's guise  
Devoured the widow's house and orphan's bread;  
In holy phrase, transacted villanies  
That common sinners durst not meddle with.  
At sacred feast he sat among the saints,  
And with his guilty hands touched holiest things:  
And none of sin lamented more, or sighed  
More deeply, or with graver countenance,  
Or longer prayer, wept o'er the dying man,  
Whose infant children, at the moment, he  
Planned how to rob. In sermon style he bought,  
And sold, and lied; and salutations made  
In scripture terms. He prayed by quantity,  
And with his repetitions long and loud  
All knees were weary. With one hand he put  
A penny in the urn of poverty,  
And with the other took a shilling out.  
On charitable lists,—those trumps which told  
The public ear who had in secret done  
The poor a benefit, and half the alms  
They told of, took themselves to keep them sounding,—  
He blazed his name, more pleased to have it there  
Than in the book of life. Seest thou the man!  
A serpent with an angel's voice! a grave  
With flowers bestrewed! And yet few were deceived.  
His virtues being overdone, his face  
Too grave, his prayers too long, his charities  
Too pompously attended, and his speech  
Larded too frequently, and out of time,  
With serious phraseology,—were rents  
That in his garment opened in spite of him,  
Through which the well-accustomed eye could see  
The rottenness of his heart. None deeper blushed  
As in the all piercing light he stood exposed,  
No longer herding with the holy ones.  
Yet still he tried to bring his countenance  
To sanctimonious seeming; but, meanwhile,  
The shame within, now visible to all,  
His purpose baulked. The righteous smiled, and even  
Despair itself some signs of laughter gave,  
As ineffectually he strove to wipe  
His brow that inward guiltiness defiled.  
Detected wretch! of all the reprobate,  
None seemed maturer for the flames of hell.  
While still his face, from ancient custom, wears  
A holy air, which says to all that pass  
Him by, ‘ I was a hypocrite on earth.’ ”

#### SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

‘ For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness,’ 1 Thess. ii. 5.

FLATTERY is one of the most insidious, as it is one of the most common forms of falsehood, and there is reason to apprehend that the sinfulness of it is not felt and perceived as it ought to be. When a man tells a falsehood which is disagreeable to the hearer, and with a directly malignant purpose, his conduct is at once reprobated; but it

is frequently different with the judgment which is pronounced upon the soft and soothing language of flattery. And yet this form of falsehood is not less wicked, not less dangerous and destructive than any other. If we represent the character of our neighbour in higher terms than his conduct deserves, if we tell him that he has done well when we know that he has done ill, we encourage and harden him in sin, and to the utmost of our endeavour help to bring ruin upon his soul. If by our flattering words we seek to persuade him that he is highly gifted in bodily or mental capacities, that his endowments are such as enable him to walk with safety when others would certainly fall, we thereby betray him into temptation, and he falls, just because he thinks he stands securely. Pride, or self-love, in some of its various forms, has been often and justly represented as lying at the root of all the sins of which we can be guilty. It is plain, therefore, that whatever tends to strengthen and foster this feeling must be in the highest degree dangerous. But there is not a more direct and successful method of creating and stimulating pride than by speaking the language of flattery. He who employs it, ought to know, that he is acting the part of a subtle and dangerous tempter, that he is labouring to lead the thoughtless and unsuspecting into sin. He cannot escape from the guilt of this crime, by the excuse, which may often be justly pled, that he had no such design. He ought to know the character of the weapon he employs before he makes use of it, and his own judgment and reflection might have informed him, that as humility is the best guardian of virtue, so pride cometh before a fall. The love which he bears to his neighbour therefore should have constrained him to encourage humility, and to check pride; but by the use of flattering words he acts a part directly the reverse, and is on that very account a chief promoter and encourager of sin.

It is the curse especially of those who occupy a high station, or upon whom God has bestowed abundant wealth, to be surrounded by flatterers, whose object it is to destroy all sense of sin, to smooth and paint the face of iniquity, to quell the alarms of conscience, to speak not what they know to be true, but what they think will gratify. There is an inexpressible meanness, as well as hideous guilt, in the discharge of such a vile function. It is assumed for purposes so nakedly selfish, that it is wonderful it should escape detection, and thrive. But, in truth, in every instance in which the voice of flattery is heard, there may be detected the same vileness. The rewards which flattery promises and receives,

may not be so great as when the flatterer is a courtier, and the victim a king, but some purpose of worldly gain prompts the words wherever they are employed. The law of God requires that we use the words of truth and soberness, and the flattering lips he abhors. No excuse will be found sufficient to vindicate, or even to palliate the crime. It is alike destructive to him who receives, and to him who employs it. It converts the latter into a hypocrite, who uses the subtlest acts of the tempter; the latter it betrays to guilt and ruin, fosters thoughtlessness, films over the ulcerous places of the soul, and speaks peace where there is no peace.

Flattery is especially wicked when resorted to by the ministers of the gospel. It is opposed to the whole object and end of their office. It is opposed to the whole tenor and spirit of the gospel, to the example furnished by the Saviour, and by the apostles who walked in his footsteps. In the verse immediately preceding the text the apostle thus testifies to his own use of the ministry with which he was intrusted: 'But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts.' The first object of the gospel is to destroy self-righteousness, to bring down every high thought, to teach men their own vileness. It does not address them as deserving creatures, by whose goodness God was induced to bestow the highest favour he could confer. It assumes their utter helplessness and depravity. Its call is not to the righteous, but to the sinner, There is not a doctrine it sets forth which the self-righteous can fully and heartily embrace. The lessons it teaches are the most humbling a man can learn. The wise of this world are told to renounce their wisdom, and become as little children, before they can receive it. It levels all earthly distinctions, knows no lordship or mastery, all are brethren in Christ; titles, rank, wealth, learning, win not its favour, for God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom, and hath declared that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The minister who uses flattering words, then, perverts the very nature of his office; he preaches another gospel than that intrusted to him, and of such the apostle says, 'let him be accursed.' He was set to watch for souls, and he betrays them. He warps the counsel of God, and lessens the fear of him. Instead of showing the vileness of sin, he seeks to disguise its deformity. He would mitigate the evil not by destroying it, but by conferring upon it sweet and alluring names. One

office of the divine Spirit is to convince the world of sin; he countervails the Spirit's agency by making the sinner pleased with himself. Within God's own house he contends against him, he violates the most sacred and solemn trust, and brings an incalculable load of guilt upon his own head. Thus saith the Lord, 'O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them for me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.'

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SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away,'*  
Job xxxii. 22.

It is lamentable to reflect upon the great prevalence of the sin of flattery. In its more gross and hateful forms, it may be comparatively rare; but there are few, if any, who could acquit themselves of all participation in it. The lesson may have been learned in the halls of princes, but it has now pervaded all ranks, and almost become a part of polite social intercourse. Let a party meet for the sake of showing their esteem for a distinguished friend, and the exhibition they make will in all likelihood be an expression of fulsome and disgusting flattery. Nor is it only on such occasions that this sin manifests itself. As men meet in the marketplace they employ the language of flattery. The simple unvarnished truth has become too plain to suit the taste of the age. They must have it seasoned with flattery, and the vanity which courts it, and feeds upon it, will not wait long in want of it. In this the disposition to bestow is nearly proportioned to the disposition to receive. Hence there is a hollowness, and want of sincerity in our social intercourse. We seek something real, and we are doomed to converse with shadows.

The temptations to a crime so general must be very powerful, and they are sufficiently obvious. They assail us through our benevolence. We are reluctant to give pain, which will often be the result of plain speaking, and we hide the evil we should expose and condemn. We feel it a hard thing to set a man at war against himself, to rouse him from his easy com-

placency, and we speak to him as if his own estimate of his own character were quite just and true.

We are tempted to flattery by our social affections. There are comparatively few who will at all times bear with the simple and honest truth. It is not desirable that we should excite this resentment against us by faithful dealing. We wish to live on good terms with our neighbours, and we know they will meet us with a smile if we speak smooth words to them. Thus again truth is sacrificed, and flattery encouraged.

We are tempted to the same sin by our own vanity. Flattery is seldom, if ever, all on one side. It is the most venal of all commodities. We give it out as we lay out money to usury, expecting a profitable return. No man will long indulge in flattering his equals, if he receives no flattery from them. Our vanity prompts us to bestow it at the expense of honesty and truth, because we expect the same deceitful words to be spoken to us. Or still more frequently, the vain man tells our friends how highly he esteems us, and speaks of our excellent and amiable qualities, that they may repeat to us his flattering report. We study to return his compliments in the same way—perhaps through a different channel. This is the more delicate resource which vanity suggests to flattery, and it is the most eligible investment for it, because it thus yields the largest return. It puts our praises into many mouths, and reconciles many minds to the commission of the sin.

We are tempted to flattery by self-interest. There is not an easier or more open path to success in any scheme of earthly ambition, than that which flattery provides. It obtains access when honesty is shut out. By its skillful ministry we gain the favour of those who occupy the platform above us, we secure their good offices, and by them are raised a step in the scale of society. We have but to look a little above us again, and by the same means we may be raised a step higher. It may be termed the ladder of social life. He who would ascend must climb up upon its steps. For the same reason flattery speaks its smooth language to inferiors, for they can help to lift us up.

Amid so many fearful and constantly recurring temptations to this sin, and considering its alarming prevalence in a community professedly Christian, we cannot surely be too watchful against it. It assails us by the inward promptings of a vain and selfish nature, and by the outward example of a world subject to the same corruptions. We cannot too determinedly set our faces against it.

Our strongest resolutions will be required to resist its influence. If we patiently and willingly listen to it when directed to ourselves, we have already yielded to the sin. Nothing will henceforth restrain us from bestowing it upon others. If, on the other hand, we check and rebuke it when offered, men will cease to expect it from us, and our victory over it is certain.

Let us be animated by the good resolution expressed in the text, and in the preceding verse: 'Let me not accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.' Here is a very weighty reason to restrain us from flattery; a reason stronger far than all the temptations to indulge in it. It is a reason which speaks to our interests—to the best and dearest interests of immortal beings. For what shall it profit us to gain the fleeting favour of men—to raise ourselves in the world's esteem—to become possessed of its wealth, if in the acquisition of these coveted enjoyments we forfeit the favour of our Maker, peril the interests of our souls, or bring upon them eternal ruin? What though all men should unite together to uphold us, because by flattery we court their favour, if our Maker should determine to cut us off? What an awfully solemn lesson, on this subject, does the prayer and declaration of the Psalmist furnish: 'Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour; with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things; who have said with our tongues will we prevail; our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?' This suggests the true cause of the prevalence of flattery, and the radical cure of it. We flatter, because we forget that God is Lord over us; that he hears and marks every thing we say; and that to him we must render an account for every idle word we speak. The tongue of flattery would be silenced, could we but remember, in all our intercourse with men, that the God of truth hears us.

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EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.'* Rev. xxi. 8.

This is a fearful doom which is threatened, and which awaits all liars. It is not directed only

against those who have been notoriously guilty of the crime of falsehood, but against every one who has in any form or to any extent departed from the truth. Such is the plain meaning of the expression, 'all liars.' Not only he who has been guilty of perjury, but he who has concealed a truth which it was his duty to make known, stands exposed to this doom. The man who invents a falsehood, and the man who retails it—the lover of scandal, and the backbiter—he who stirs up strife by evil reports, and he who cajoles and flatters, that strife may be kept down—he who assumes the guise of friendship while hatred lurks in his heart, and he who robes himself in the garb of religion, for selfish ends—all shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. He who is not in all respects what he seems to be, and who does not represent things as they are, is guilty of falsehood in word or deed, and is liable to the second death. No matter what cunning guises falsehood may assume, or what fair names in some of its forms it may bear in the vocabulary of human morality—he to whom all things are naked and open will judge it righteously, and visit it with the punishment he has declared. It is enough to make every man tremble for his own state, when, with the help of that law which is holy and just and good, he regards his own conversation and conduct. How often, alas! will all be obliged to acknowledge, that in the keeping of this law they have come far short. If they have not directly lied, they have not been careful enough to maintain the truth. If they have restrained their tongue, they have not possessed and been animated by that fervent love of truth which God requires in the inward parts. If they have not for selfish ends deceived their neighbour, how often have they wished to appear in his eyes better than they are, and acted the hypocrite's part. Alas! how little is there of real truth in the world, how much guile—how little godly sincerity. And O what a warning does the aspect which it every where presents furnish to us to search our own hearts, to abhor ourselves and to repent in dust and in ashes.

By natural inheritance we have a heart that is deceitful above all things—a heart which suggests to ourselves lying devices, making us the willing subjects of self-deception, and which leads us readily to impose false pretences upon others. Let us not too readily assume then, that we cannot be numbered by God among the liars. There are comparatively few who are ready to acknowledge and who really believe themselves to be liars. The real character of a man is often more apparent to others than it is to himself. Let

us guard then with all diligence against the deceitfulness of our own hearts. Let us strive, instead of trying to forget our sins, to keep them ever before us. Let us, as it were, on every occasion, compel our hearts to bear faithful testimony, and let us in all earnestness pray God to search and try us, and see if there be in us any wicked way, and lead us in the way everlasting. Blessed be God that he has opened up for us a door of repentance. He has written, and all his words are truth, that all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. But he has also said: 'Come now and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be made white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.' He is now calling upon all men every where to repent, and he joins with this call the promise that He will cleanse us from all our filthiness and from all our unrighteousness. Oh! that we were induced to hear and to obey his voice, in this the day of our merciful visitation. The time will come when we shall be compelled to hear it, but then it will be addressed to us in this wise: 'Because I have called and ye have refused, because I have stretched forth my hand and no man regarded, therefore I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.' That voice we shall certainly hear in all its terrors, if we continue liars to the end. Death will come, we know not how soon and how suddenly, and as our frame is sinking under his power, awakened conscience will testify that we are liars, and must abide the liar's doom. All fond deceits shall then perish, hypocrisy shall drop her ample robe, and all that is false and unreal, the unsubstantial pageants of a wicked world, will be seen in their hollowness, and everlasting despair and death will seize upon us. And these are but preludes of the second death—intimations sent from the abyss to warn the living, and which speak with a voice as decisive and emphatic as if the disembodied spirit were to return from its torment to utter it, declaring the unutterable woe which awaits the impenitent sinner. There is a deeper despair than the deepest which can seize upon man in this world, and it is found in hell. All liars shall become its victims. Theirs is a remediless woe—the portion of the fallen spirits. They stand foremost among those that deserve hell; they are the most declared and undisguised servants of the devil, and their appropriate and inevitable doom is to be made the companion for evermore of the father of lies.

## EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another,'* Eph. iv. 25.

THERE are many strong reasons for the injunction here laid down. The law of God expressly enjoins it, and his character confirms his law. He is known as a God of truth, and he has threatened his heaviest judgments against those who violate it. The sin of lying is very hateful in itself. It manifests a character most opposite to God, and most nearly resembling the devil, who is characterized as the father of lies. It is incumbent on us therefore to put away lying—to tolerate it in no form, in no place—under no circumstances.

We are required to put away lying *from ourselves*. Let all our conversation be conducted in truth and soberness. We must shun all idle and boastful language. What we dare not openly declare, we must not insinuate. The feeling which we do not possess, we must not pretend to. The form in which the injunction is delivered, shows that lying is a sin which we must not only guard against, but one to which we have been subject. We are not told merely not to lie, but we are told to put it away. Such a statement as this is fitted to awaken our utmost vigilance. It shows falsehood to be a sin to which we not only stand exposed, but which we have already committed. It becometh us therefore narrowly to scrutinize our conduct—to watch every word and every feeling, that we may attain not only the perfection of that man who offendeth not in word, but the perfection of him who has truth in the inward parts.

We are required to put away lying *from our families*. We are bound not only to watch for ourselves, but for those whom God has committed to our trust. The guilt of their iniquity will be upon us, the blood of their souls will be required at our hands, if we do not warn them against this sin, and use all our power and influence to check and to destroy it. In the case of Eli the priest we have a very striking example of the way in which God punishes parents who neglect the proper training of their children. The cause of the sore calamities which befel him and his house, is expressly stated to be that his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. Such judgments indicate the method of God's procedure, the principles of his judgment; and every parent may be assured that if he suffers the members of his household to lie, without such restraints as he has it in his power to impose, he will be visited

with punishment for his sin. The crime of lying will be justly chargeable upon himself, because by not checking it when he had the power, he encourages and promotes it. It will not serve him to take up the language of Cain and say, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

We are required to put away lying from *the church*. The church has been established on the earth for the very purpose of bearing testimony to the truth; and neither in her collective capacity, nor in her individual members, should any form of falsehood be tolerated. As members of the church we are bound to use every endeavour to secure that the truth be spoken by those who from their office are understood to express the mind of the church. According to the forms of church government in this country, the discharge of this obligation is easy. If church courts in their procedure are not acting out the truth, testifying on its behalf, and protesting against every form of error as it arises, it is incumbent on the members of the church, as they desire to avoid being partakers in the sin, to remonstrate with them in every competent form, to declare to them the truth, and to urge them to act upon it. As members of a particular congregation, Christians are required to act the same part towards their spiritual rulers and guides, to use all means whereby the testimony for the truth may be maintained. Each member of Christ's body, no matter what his standing otherwise may be, is bound to put away lying from the church. The least as well as the greatest lie under this obligation, and must discharge it. Especially, the members of the church in their intercourse one with another, should seek to attain this character of perfect and unchanging truthfulness. No imagination is more dangerous, than that which would lead any one to believe that he may in any way trifle with the truth, or conceal it, without guilt. Our testimony must be uniform,—as uncompromising as the word of God. That testimony must be borne in all places, and under all circumstances. No deviation from truth is excusable. The law of God is absolute and unchangeable. It varies not with the varying circumstances of men. It has not told us merely to speak the truth, when the declaration of it will promote our worldly ends. It has given us no permissive power to withhold or deny it, when danger and difficulty are before us. It has not directed us to make a nice calculation of probabilities to ascertain whether it shall be most for our advantage to speak the truth, or to equivocate and lie. It has told every man to speak truth with his neighbour whatever may be the immediate issue. We may lose much.

we may possibly lose all which this world can give us, by the steadfast adherence to truth. If such a sacrifice should be required, let it be made. It was at such a sacrifice that the apostles declared the glorious truths of the gospel; it was at such a cost that men received and believed them, and by their example they have given the enduring lesson to us to speak the truth, come what may. It would appear, indeed, as if there were a more special obligation laid upon us to declare the truth, when there is danger in doing it; for it is only in such circumstances that the value of truth is fully exhibited, that the testimony is given to the world that there is something more precious by far than all which the earth can furnish. And in such circumstances also it is that the exceeding preciousness of truth becomes fully known. When the maintenance of it involves the loss of all things, its blessed realizations are more near and more intimate, and it is only under such experience that the language of the apostle can be adopted in the whole fullness and energy of its meaning: 'Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.'

The strong and satisfying reason assigned in the text for the injunction it gives, is, that we are members one of another. This reason presupposes the fact, that truth is essential to the healthful existence of the church. It presumes that no member of it can be guilty of falsehood without inflicting an injury upon the whole body. We are members one of another, by reason of our union with Christ. He is the head, and all his believing people are members of his body, and members one of another. The same reason, then, which should prevent us from employing one member of our body to injure another, should constrain every man to speak truth with his neighbour. It is truth which animates and nourishes the body of Christ. It is like the blood to the human frame. We cannot lie without depriving some member of life, and strength, and healthful vigour. We cannot lie without dishonour to Christ our Head. We claim connection with Him, and that in such a way that it is he who lives in us, and his Spirit which animates us, and his will that directs us, and therefore when standing in this declared connection we lie, we are guilty of this most wicked of all falsehoods, the proclaiming Christ to be the author of our lie. We make use of Christ's name to do the devil's work. We rend the body of Christ, crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame.

## NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day,'* Psal. xxv. 5.

THAT man is grossly ignorant of the state of his own heart, and of the character of a world which lieth in wickedness, who hath not learned how necessary it is that he should earnestly and frequently give utterance to such a prayer as this. We are liable to a thousand errors of ignorance, in many things we willingly deceive ourselves, and too often we purposely deceive others. The prince of the power of this world has made falsehood an essential condition of his service, and hence the world lives and apparently thrives by it. Plain dealing is discountenanced and put down. Some form of deception is the condition of prosperity, and hence untruth almost universally prevails. God is provoked and contemned, and his law set at nought or skilfully evaded. For all this iniquity God has in store a day of vengeance, and we are urged by the terrors of his wrath to plead that he would lead us in his truth and teach us. There is for us, otherwise, no hope. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. We want the right knowledge to guide us. Our minds are so blinded that we err in ignorance, not knowing the truth. We want the right disposition. The truth is naturally hateful to us. We love the darkness rather than the light. And our love of error leads us easily to the commission of it. The greatest and most blessed truths are naturally the most distasteful to us, and this shows what a strong affection we have for falsehood.

It is requisite for God to lead and train us a long time before we really love the truth. Our state is just the same as that of the twelve disciples. Even after Jesus had called them, and they had waited for years upon his teaching, there were still many glorious truths which they could not bear. The reason was, that they loved and cherished the falsehoods which were opposed to these truths, and they were not revealed until the Holy Spirit was sent to teach them all things, and to bring all things to their remembrance. This office, which the Spirit was to discharge for the apostles, urges upon us by a two-fold reason the necessity of fervent prayer for light and truth. He was to teach the apostles all things—to make them fully acquainted with what had been partially revealed—to instruct them in new truths heretofore unknown. But he was, moreover, to bring all things to their remembrance. There were many things which

Jesus told them that their minds did not receive and comprehend, because they were in love with certain errors, and would not abandon them. The Spirit, therefore, when the love of falsehood had been subdued, was to bring these truths again before their minds, and then they would joyfully receive them. Now, what was the case with the apostles, we may be sure will happen to us. We are naturally in love with error, and we cannot receive the truth. We have the Bible to instruct us—we have its meaning explained, and its precepts commended to us in our public ministrations; but these are not enough to lead us in the truth and teach us. It is quite possible we may know all the facts of the Bible—we may have its most important precepts on our memory, and yet we may be in the darkness of error, taking refuge in lies. The apostles heard from the lips of Jesus the most important doctrines and commandments which they afterwards preached, but till the Spirit was given they wanted the discernment of spiritual things, and remained under the influence of the most grievous errors. So will it be with us unless the Spirit be given to lead us in the truth and to teach us. The light of the truth may shine around us, but it will not shine into our hearts to give us that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, which is alone the result of the sanctification of the Spirit. In the circumstances in which we are placed, then, we are altogether without excuse, if we neglect to follow the example here set before us—to wait upon God, and to pray that he would lead us in the truth and teach us. And how much more inexcusable when we are encouraged thus to pray to him as the God of our salvation?

With what holy boldness and confidence are we encouraged to come into his presence! He is the God of our salvation! Has he called himself by this name, and will he not save us from the bondage and dominion of error? He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? He is pledged by the bestowal of that best and greatest gift, to satisfy our souls with his goodness. We might ask many things of God which he could not bestow, because it would not be well for us to receive them, nor right in him to confer them. We may not succeed, by prayer, in warding off temporal calamity, in lengthening out our days, in protecting our bodies from disease. But here we are encouraged to ask what God, as the God of truth, is especially willing to bestow—to ask

what is above all well pleasing to him. Such a request he will not deny, and we are thus doubly bound to ask it—to wait with earnest expectation, till he gives us his enlightening Spirit, to lead us in his truth and to teach us. Thus taught and led we shall be safe from the dominion of error.

So long as we are really ignorant of the saving truths of the gospel—until they have really obtained a place in our hearts, we manifest a hatred of the greatest truth, and consequently a love of the most debasing error. In this condition of mind, falsehood is the basis of our character, and we inevitably become liars. When the light of God's truth has shone into our hearts, darkness and error flee away. The darkness hates the light, and is displaced by it, so truth banishes falsehood. By having our minds freed from the greatest falsehood, we become altogether free.

Moreover, the truth of God has a sanctifying power. It was the prayer of Christ for his disciples: 'Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.' By this word we are freed from the love of falsehood. Truth obtains a place in our inward parts, and we are saved from lying by the very hatred we have towards it. But to maintain this hatred of falsehood, we must be careful to maintain our communion with God. This is the way of success, the way that leads to victory. Our flesh and heart fail, but God is the strength of our heart and our portion for ever.

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#### NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father,' 2 John 4.*

How delightful must it have been to the mother whom the apostle here addresses, to receive such an account of her children from such a witness! The instincts of a mother's heart teach her, that an adherence to truth on the part of her children is the most decisive evidence they could furnish of the entire rectitude of their conduct, and no testimony she could give would be regarded by her as more satisfactory, and she could receive none from another which could be more gratifying. Of this we have a striking exemplification in an anecdote recorded by Mungo Park. In an attack by the Moors, a young herdsman had been wounded by a shot. The people supported him on horseback, and conducted him slowly to the town. 'His mother walked on before quite frantic with

grief, clapping her hands, and enumerating the good qualities of her son. "He never told a lie," said the disconsolate mother, as her wounded son was carried in at the gate: "He never told a lie, no never." Such a eulogium, even though undeserved, indicated what her sense was of the highest virtue a child could possess. The mother to whom the apostle wrote had a more assured comfort. The eulogy on her children was pronounced by one who though he constantly spoke the language of gentlest affection, knew not how to flatter. She had the delightful consolation of knowing that the character given to her children, though high, was just. And if the apostle rejoiced greatly, with no common gladness, that he was able to bear such a testimony, how much more delightful must it have been to her to receive it! Her children were walking in truth, and for this cause her heart was glad. They were kept in this good and holy way, in virtue of their union with Christ. He who is the truth dwelt with them, and was in them, and preserved them safe amid the lying vanities and false ways of the world. He had given them a new heart, and written his law upon it, and taught them to delight in his statutes.

Is there a parent who would not rejoice greatly to receive a like testimony regarding his children; who would not regard it as an overpayment for all the toils and cares, the sorrows and fears endured on their behalf, to learn from a witness so free from all suspicion of guile that his children were walking in the truth? If so, let parents adopt the only method by which such a character can be formed? Let them aim at nothing less for their children, than to have them united to Christ, that they may not only be saved from the wrath to come; but from the shame and misery which even in this world wait upon uncontrolled iniquity. It is amazing to what acts of self-denial a mother will submit, for the sake of her child. How unquenchable and untiring her love, and with what patience, and even gladness, she performs the various offices which her affection prompts. She anticipates its wants, and seems to live upon the gratification she is able to afford it. All this love, and watchful tendence, and tireless patience, she is ready to manifest for its preservation and bodily comfort. What a lesson might the natural instinct of a mother's heart teach to every Christian parent! They know that their children are immortal—disposed to every form of evil—depraved in every affection, and exposed to the everlasting wrath of God. And is it not inexpressibly shameful, that they should act as if after all it

were a higher office of affection to preserve the body than to save the soul? Does a mother's natural affection lead her to devote days of toil and nights of restlessness to nurture the body, and save it from harm, and keep it in comfort, and should not her Christian affection lead her to yet nobler offices, to a manifestation of love as untiring and watchful, that its soul may be saved from harm, that it may be nurtured in grace, that it should know the joy and comfort of feeding upon that bread which cometh down from heaven, whereof if a man eat he shall never die?

The main question with every parent ought to be, Am I educating my children for eternity? Has the grace of God touched their hearts? Have they laid hold on the hope set before us in the gospel? Till this end is reached, the duty of the parent is not discharged, and the likelihood is that all his other labour will be fruitless. If children are not taught to walk in the truth of God, there is no security that they will walk in truth at all. They practically tell the greatest lie who deny the testimony of God regarding his Son, and they are capable of every other lie. The belief of this testimony lies at the foundation of all truth, and secures the perfect establishment of it. Let all therefore, who desire to be found walking in the truth, strive to have their faith strengthened, and in lively exercise. To walk in the truth is the most delightful, because the most satisfactory evidence of a renewed heart. All the saints of God rejoice in the spectacle. It gladdens the hearts of the people of Christ, to know of a man that he walks in the truth, for of this man they know that he walks in Christ. It is a delight to God, who is well pleased when he beholds his children walking in truth. Let us then remember the temptations to which we are exposed—distrusting our own deceitful hearts—leaning on the strength of the Lord—and waiting for his guidance, be careful to maintain a consistent testimony—to vindicate and manifest the truth of God by walking in it, as he hath given us commandment, and to rebuke the lying vanities of the world by a conduct becoming the gospel.

#### TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's,'* Exod. xx. 17.

THIS commandment is addressed immediately and exclusively to the desires and affections of

the heart. It does not prohibit any outward sin, it aims at the destruction of its principles within the soul. No commandment of God indeed has any lower aim than this. His law is eminently spiritual. Its demands cannot be satisfied with a mere outward obedience. All the preceding precepts we have considered, had for their object the subordination of the heart to a willing obedience. From the very beginning, indeed, God had made known to men that he could accept of nothing less as an offering than the devotion of the whole heart to his service. His commandment is, 'My son, give me thine heart.' The Jews, even when they had rendered an outward obedience to the first commandment, are thus reproached by the mouth of the prophet; 'Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; therefore I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.' During the earthly ministry of Christ, the threatening quoted above had been fulfilled upon the Jews; the wisdom of their wise men had perished, and they deceived themselves into the belief that a mere outward conformity to the law would please the God of the spirits of all flesh. Among the very first labours of his ministry, therefore, Christ set himself to destroy this delusion: 'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.' He thus showed that the law did not regard merely the withholding of the hand from the commission of crime, but condemned every unregulated and evil passion in the heart. And thus also the apostles taught the will of the Lord. It results, indeed, from the fact that God is a spirit, that he can only be served by the Spirit. The obedience that does not come from the heart, is in his sight no obedience at all. The transgression of the law by the heart in any of its desires, is what he condemns.

But though this be true of all God's precepts, it is the one now before us which speaks most plainly and unequivocally of the cognizance he takes of the heart. It does not prohibit us from putting forth our hand to appropriate that which we covet, as the other precepts do; it prohibits the entertainment of the covetous desire. It may be that there shall no act result from the desire.

The fear of punishment, the fear of shame, may restrain the hand, and the covetous man, as far as he is subject to our observation, may be upright in all his ways. But God looks into the heart. His law is addressed directly to it. He prohibits the unlawful desire as well as the unlawful act.

It is worth while also to notice the perfect unity and coherence of all the divine commandments, and to observe how true it is that he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all. In regard to this precept, for instance, we may observe how impossible it is to violate its requirements without transgressing also the first commandment. The first commandment forbids idolatry, but we are told by the apostle that covetousness is idolatry. To entertain and to cherish a covetous desire, is essentially to worship and love another than the true God; it is to exalt some worldly object to that place in the affections which God claims as exclusively his own. That thing, whatever it may be, which a man supremely desires, is his God, and he renders to it that service which God claims. He gives it the first place in his affections. This character given by the apostle to the sin of covetousness will help us materially to see the extent to which this precept reaches, the authority which it claims over all the desires of the heart, and what it is that in its essence and spirit it prohibits. Thus, for example, should we be disposed to flatter ourselves into the belief that because we do not covet what our neighbour possesses, we keep the commandment, the definition of the apostle is sufficient to undeceive us. Covetousness is idolatry, and if we inordinately love the world and the world's wealth, or other pleasures, more than we love God, though we desire not to obtain them from another, we transgress this law. It is the worldly mind, the excessive love of the world's goods, which constitutes the essence of the sin; the modes of procuring the world's pleasures are but ways of gratifying the covetous desire. Thus also we may deceive ourselves by supposing that we are not covetous, because we have no inordinate desire to obtain more than we have. But it is plainly possible we may have enough to satisfy our worldly appetites, and thus be under no temptation to covet more than we possess. This, however, does not free us from the sin of covetousness, which is idolatry. If we love our worldly possessions more than we love God, we really worship and serve them. The instance adduced by Christ of a contented worldly man is a pregnant proof of this. He is described as saying: 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'

We sin against this commandment, then, when we love and desire the things of the world more than God—when we feel our chief satisfaction in them—when we prefer worldly prosperity above the health and welfare of our souls—when we are distrustful of God's providence, and careful and troubled about many things, to the neglect of the one thing needful—when we repine at our outward condition, and are impatient under losses and worldly injuries—when we use the world not to serve God but to please our own appetites—when we are envious of another's prosperity—when we too earnestly wish ourselves placed in the same circumstances of comfort as our neighbour. All these affections of the soul are prohibited in the commandment. Their dominion over our own hearts may be detected by us, if we are careful to observe the tenor of our thoughts and conversation. If the world constitutes to us the most ordinary and most pleasing subject of our thoughts, we are covetous. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and we have a covetous heart, if our conversation turns habitually, naturally, and easily upon our worldly condition, and the means of making it better. Against all these things the commandment speaks, and it speaks with the authority of God.

#### TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,' Rom. vii. 7.*

THIS is a very remarkable testimony to the peculiar spirituality of the very terms of the tenth commandment. It would appear as if it were possible for a man to persuade himself that he satisfies the demands of all the others by an outward compliance, but this speaks directly and expressly to the inward desires. It prohibits every carnal affection. It revealed to the apostle the lust of his own heart. In the connection in which the word *lust* here stands, it obviously includes every sin in the heart, and before it had any outward manifestation. The apostle is speaking of the method by which he arrived at the knowledge of his own sinfulness. He had at one period of his life regarded himself as perfectly righteous, for he had walked in the way of the strictest sect of the Pharisees. He did not then know that the law condemned sin in the heart as well as in the life. But when he came to reflect that the law said, 'Thou shalt not covet,' he perceived that every lust, that is, every desire after what the law

prohibits, was thereby condemned, and thus he knew himself to be a sinner. The law against covetousness, then, is a law especially directed against the sins of the heart. Every desire and affection of the soul which lusts after things forbidden, is by this commandment condemned. Here we have set before us the entire spirituality of the law. In this one sentence, 'Thou shalt not covet,' we are forbidden to entertain sin even in our thoughts. It is most important that we should thus regard the law of God—that we should have a right knowledge of its extent and spirituality.

The personal experience of the apostle is just the experience of every sinful man. He testifies that he was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died; that is, he thought himself a righteous and just man, until God, in his grace, gave him to see that his commandments reached every thought and desire of the heart, and then he knew himself to be a vile and condemned sinner—that sentence of death had been already pronounced upon him, and then he was led to the cross of Christ. He was first of all brought to cry: 'O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' before he was led to thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And so it is in regard to every man. Faith in Christ presupposes a faith in our own utter hopelessness without him. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. His invitation is to them that labour and are heavy laden, and it is certain that only the convinced sinner will come to Christ, for he only feels his need of such a Saviour. But it is by the law we acquire the knowledge of sin. Without an adequate sense of its depth and spirituality, as condemning every unholy desire, we either know not that we are sinners at all, or we have no proper sense of the utter hopelessness of our condition. And thus the Pharisaical imagination is fostered, that if in any tolerable manner we discharge the duties we owe to our neighbour, and observe the religious rites which have been imposed upon us, we are not in a very bad state. We may possibly need a little mercy extended to us, and this we will look for from a God who has been revealed as very merciful. He will not condemn us for the few sins of which we have been guilty, and so far as we cannot justify ourselves, we will have our transgressions covered by the merits of Christ. His merits will atone for the little that is defective or wrong in our conduct. If we reason thus, we have not yet learned God's law, nor found the real meaning of the words, 'Thou shalt not covet.'

His law requires perfect and unchanging love as the spring of every action—love that knows no forgetfulness—that has the constant and entire ascendancy in the soul—that occupies the whole heart, and subordinates all things to itself. What is it though we do not formally worship another God, if other lords besides him have really the dominion over our affections? What though we do not make an image, and bow down before it, so long as the chambers of our imagination are occupied with visible and earthly things? What though we be not guilty of open profanity, if we take the name of God in vain, by rendering to him the heartless service of the lips? What though we refrain from our worldly employments on the sabbath, when there is not a scene of busier occupation in the world than would be presented were all our memories and hopes, our calculations for the future, and our reflections for the past, laid bare, and discovered to be of the earth? We rest our bodies, and they are refreshed, but our minds obtain no rest from worldly cares, and are not refreshed with the dews of the heavenly spirit. And so of all the commandments of God, did God but unveil to us our own hearts, and show us the entire breadth and extent of his law; it might be demonstrated to our own conviction that so far from doing any thing which came up to the full measure of obedience, our very righteousnesses are as filthy rags. The law as a schoolmaster would bring us to Christ. We would cry out, 'What shall we do to be saved?' Nothing but Christ would satisfy us. O that God would give us more of this divine knowledge! that we might see more of our own vileness! that we might see we had no life in ourselves! We would then cast aside the filthy rags whereby we seek to cover our nakedness, and he would clothe us with that robe which is the righteousness of the saints. Covetousness would then die, when we ourselves became dead, and were unable to say with the apostle: 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now lead in the flesh is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.'

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'And covetousness, which is idolatry,' Col. iii. 5.

THE identity between covetousness and idolatry consists in this, that the covetous man places that love and confidence in riches which are due to God alone. Riches become to him a god. His

supreme affections are placed upon them, and it is in them he confides. He does not in his heart depend upon God; he has no confidence in his wisdom and goodness. It is not because he looks to God, who openeth his hand and satisfieth the desires of every living thing, that he says to his soul, 'take thine ease,' but because he has much goods in store for many years. There is an obvious and deep malignity in this sin, which must make it very hateful to God. It strikes at the root of all religion, and undermines its foundations. It is a deliberate sin, not perpetrated under the influence of some sudden gust of passion, but a habitual state of the soul. All the acts to which it leads are acts of contrivance and forethought. It is a sin of love and choice, the setting up a false end, and steadfastly prosecuting it, not an error in the means of attaining a good end. It is a sin which deposes God from the throne of our hearts, and sets up his creatures as objects of our highest affection. It delights in the creature and not in God, and seeks riches as the highest happiness, and therefore the apostle testifies, 'if any man loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him,'—the friendship of the world is enmity against God. It is a contempt and disbelief of all God's promises, for he who really believes all that God has said of the happiness of heaven, could not prefer the world to it. It brings man nearly to a level with the beasts that perish, for their object and end, like that of the covetous man, is a mere temporal provision. It is therefore a perverting of the very end of existence. Man was made to glorify God; the covetous man gives all the glory to the creature, and he does this as a habit. His covetousness is not an occasional act, but a habitual state of mind, indicated by a habitual course of life. It involves the highest contempt of God—the most hardened unbelief—the vilest ingratitude. It perverts God's creatures to an end the reverse of that for which they were bestowed. It is using the gifts of God to cast dishonour upon him, and converting the mercies bestowed for our use and benefit into instruments of perdition.

Such is the character of this sin, so heinous is it in its nature. It is the basis of all other offences, for it is thus written, 'the love of money is the root of all evil.' As the love of God is the source of all good, the fountain of all virtue, that which destroys this love must be the greatest of all sins, because containing the germ of every other. When its proper character is considered, it is wonderful that men should be subject to it. There cannot be a stronger proof of their blindness and infatuation. Reason herself might teach

us the utter folly of it, as it is shown with such convincing power in the parable: 'The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' It is this certainty of a speedy death which marks the utter folly of covetousness. We cannot keep what we may have spent a life time to acquire. We cannot make a covenant with death that it shall not call away the soul, and what happiness can we have in that from which we may so soon be called away? We add to the bitterness of death. He to whom the last enemy comes in the midst of poverty, in desolation and distress, can leave the world without a pang. But what bitterness must it be, just when we have finished our careful preparations for years of easy indulgence, to be laid hold on by death! But the folly of covetousness is not only to be seen in this. It may fail of its object from other causes than want of time. We have received this admonition, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through to steal.' We may by many accidents be deprived of all that we have amassed in a single hour. Riches take to themselves wings and flee away. The thief may rob us—fire may consume our stores—the storms of heaven may destroy the increase of our fields—those to whom money is lent on usury may become bankrupt. We have in truth no security for the continuance or the increase of worldly possessions but in the goodness of God, and we do our utmost to destroy that security by employing his mercies to dishonour and contemn him. But even suppose we were permitted to get and to retain all that covetousness lusteth after, it would still be stamped with folly. The world could not satisfy us—we would have no lasting enjoyment from it. To use the words of an old English Divine, 'According to continual experience it is the nature of all things pleasant only to sense or fancy, presently to satiate: no beauty can long please the eye, no melody the ear, no delicacy the palate, no curiosity the fancy; a little time doth waste away, a small use doth wear out the pleasure which at first they afford; novelty commendeth

and ingratiate them: distance representeth them fair and lovely: the want or absence of them rendereth them desirable: but the presence of them dulseth their grace, the possession of them deadeneth the appetite to them.' A sin so heinous—so dishonouring to God—so contrary to reason—so destructive of the soul, cannot but be abhorrent to God. He has not only shown this abhorrence by directing a law against it, he has expressed a special dislike to it. The covetous are described as those whom the Lord abhorreth. It should be a special object with us then to strive against this sin. Its remedy lies in the love of God, in confiding faith in the wisdom and goodness of his dispensations. Let us therefore ever pray that the love of God may be shed abroad in our heart, and our affections set on the things above.

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ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,'* Heb. xiii. 5.

THE promise contained in the text is one which has often been repeated for the consolation of God's people. It is peculiarly appropriate to a time of adversity and distress, or when God calls us to engage in any arduous undertaking, in the prosecution of which our flesh and heart faint and fail. But there are no circumstances in which a child of God can be placed in which he may not appropriate the promise, and realize all the blessedness which it is fitted to impart. It is only when we forsake God that he forsakes us. His presence may be realized at all times, and if we but open a door of entrance for him, he will come in and take up his abode with us, and give us to enjoy the blessedness of communion with him. It is because we rather seek our happiness in other things, which is to be found in God alone, that he hides from us his gracious countenance, and leaves us to ourselves. The promise is here given to enforce the injunction contained in the text. We are enjoined to let our conversation be without covetousness, and to be content because God hath said he will never leave nor forsake us. It therefore plainly sets before us this truth, that when God is our portion, we have nothing farther to desire; and truly the Lord is an abundant and satisfying portion, even though we had nothing besides.

This may in part be made apparent, even to those who have never tasted of his grace. It is

true that the sinner, who retains his enmity against God, cannot possibly derive consolation from such a promise; for to him the abiding presence of God would be the very consummation of misery. Yet it may be plain, even to them, that when this enmity has been destroyed, and the soul has been taught to delight in God, the constant feeling of his presence may cause such a fulness of satisfaction as to leave nothing else to desire. This might be inferred from what reason and experience tell us of the sources of consolation and happiness opened up to us in the world. It is admitted that the highest enjoyments which the world furnishes, arise from the relationships in which God has placed us. It is not in the gratification of the mere sensual appetites that the most complete satisfaction is found on earth, but in the communion of heart with heart. And were we desirous of presenting a picture of earthly comfort, we would be obliged to colour it with the felicities of friendly and affectionate intercourse, to place on the very foreground of the picture a representation of that loving intercourse which opens up the heart, and brings into activity the strongest and best sentiments of which it is capable. We would imagine a fellowship constantly maintained springing from deep affection, developing itself in the communion of mind with mind; the interchange of thought and sentiment. And it might be conceived that such a communion as this was maintained throughout a long lifetime, and daily becoming closer and more dear, till there could be no enjoyment felt apart and alone, but the most grateful happiness in union. Still farther we might conceive that there is a wide disparity between the parties who maintain this intercourse; that, on the one hand, it consisted very much in bestowing, and on the other, of receiving, and that such affection being hallowed by the tenderness to which comparative helplessness gives rise on the one side, and by docility and reverence on the other, gave free scope for the exercise of all the tender susceptibilities of the heart. And wherefore should it be regarded as a visionary and delusive thing that the child of God, in a communion with him, which, from His very nature, must give scope for the exercise of the highest and best faculties of the soul which must enkindle and invigorate every fresh and delightful emotion of the heart; should enjoy a happiness inconceivably greater than could elsewhere be tasted, and withal so full and perfect, as to leave no room for covetousness to desire more! In the habitual contemplation of all that is majestic and powerful, of all that is lovely and desirable; of the infinite in every perfection; in the delightful

consciousness that God is our dwelling-place, our refuge, and that he will order all things for our good; in the exercise within our own souls of all the emotions and faculties to which such a communion and confidence gives rise; in reverence, and wonder, and adoring loving; in gratitude, and faith, and hope, and in all the heaven-born graces—there is enough to constitute happiness, and to give it the very impress of perfection. The soul is by this communion raised above the world. Things are seen in their just proportions, and it is felt that the whole world would be nothing without God. Covetousness is therefore destroyed. Its objects are divested of their false tinsel, and they cease to be objects of desire. Thus contentment finds room to grow, and expands into perfect peace. Without God all is dark; in his presence is light and joy; and the glad confidence remains to light up the eye of immortal hope, that whatever be our worldly state and condition, God will not at any time, on any occasion, for any cause, withdraw from us. He will uphold us by the right hand of his righteousness. He will never leave nor forsake us.

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TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*‘But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content,’* 1 Tim. vi. 6—8.

THE gain of godliness is of such a kind, so incalculable in its amount, and so precious in its gifts, as pre-eminently to deserve the character here given to it of being great gain. It hath a promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. It opens up new fountains of enjoyment, and gives a new relish to every comfort. It raises the soul to the contemplation and enjoyment of divine things, and earthly comforts are by its influence sweetened, received in gratitude, and awakening new love to God who bountifully bestows them. Without godliness the possession and enjoyments of this world's goods contract and harden the heart, and make it less and less susceptible of pleasure. They withdraw the soul from its sweetest pleasures, and become snares for its destruction.

Men in general have acted as if they judged differently. They have not only pursued gain to the neglect of godliness, but many have assumed an aspect of godliness that they might add to their gains. They have made religion the pander

to their covetousness—valued it only so far as it promoted their worldly views, and abandoned it so soon as it became unprofitable.

We scarcely need be told that there is a liability in all men to such a shameful and wicked prostitution of godliness. The corruption of the heart is ever manifesting itself by a preference of the things of sense to the things of faith. Even in the churches which were planted by the hands of apostles, and so plentifully watered by the outpouring of the divine Spirit, this depraved tendency to some extent prevailed. In the context the apostle points out for reprobation some who were destitute of the truth, supposing that gain was godliness. To reprove such a spirit, and show how irrational their conduct was, he adduces the argument of the text, with a view of showing the propriety of contentment when the barest necessities of life were furnished. The argument is altogether invincible. We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The gain we make, the wealth we acquire, is not really ours, it is but borrowed for a day, and we must ere long, and however reluctantly, be deprived of it. Nay, it is worse than useless, for it is declared, ‘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.’ There is enough in the bible to make us afraid of being rich, rather than to induce us to court wealth, if we would but believe its declarations. ‘How hardly shall they that are rich enter into the kingdom of heaven.’

But if we will not be persuaded by God's word, surely we might listen to the testimony of our own experience. We know that we cannot carry anything out of the world, and therefore it is not worth our while to strive for the attainment of any of its possessions, or be beyond measure distressed by the want of them. Moreover we know that contentment and covetousness cannot dwell together in the same breast. Yet we wish to become rich that we may be more happy. No man courts riches for any thing else. At the same time we banish contentment, which is the larger portion of happiness, by the very circumstance that we desire more. Contentment is more valuable than riches. There is not a blessing we can enjoy on earth to be compared with it; none can be truly enjoyed without it. It blesses every condition of life. It is precious alike to all. It cannot be purchased with gold. Poverty cannot wrench it from us. It makes our desires level to our condition, and we are happy when we have no desire ungratified. It is no less

blessed in its results than in itself. It prevents most of the evils to which we are exposed. In the noble and great of the earth, it curbs ambition, and destroys envy, while it brings peace. In the rich, it saves care and trouble in keeping wealth, the desire of increasing it, the suspicion and fear of losing it, and quells the thousand painful and injurious passions which spring from these affections. The poor it renders patient, able to endure hardships; it converts disasters into blessings, and frees from the dominion of those fierce passions which spring from envy and resentment against our worldly state,—suspicion, hatred, malice, the consciousness of oppression, and the desire of revenge. If we would learn the holy lesson of contentment, and so be continually in peace—if we would acquire this greatest of all earthly gains—let us look to him who had not where to lay his head, and from whom no murmur was heard amid all the persecution to which he was subjected, and the trials he had to endure; who was throughout content, though he endured miseries which made him pre-eminently a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; or if this be to look too high, if this be regarded as an attainment beyond the reach of human nature, let us look to the apostle, who gives us this testimony of himself: 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.' Let us also so learn of Christ.

TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name,'* Heb. xiii. 15.

THE prayer of the wicked is abomination unto the Lord, and as guilty creatures we have only one way of access to him. Our prayers, perfumed with the much incense of Christ's holy sacrifice, ascend with acceptance before God. Thus the text directs us to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanks continually through Christ. We cannot acceptably offer any sacrifice in any other way, not even the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Nor is it difficult to understand how from the perfect purity of God's character this must be the case. Even to offer thanks for benefits conferred upon us, except through Christ, is to reflect

upon the justice and holiness of God. When we ask any blessing from him, especially those spiritual blessings which are the gifts of his grace, it is on all hands admitted that we must ask in the name of Christ, and in dependence on his merits, otherwise we presume that God's mercies can be exercised towards us at the expense of the other attributes of his character. We deserve nothing from him but wrath, and we can hope for nothing but through Christ. In the same way, when we have become sensible to gratitude, and are constrained to render thanks for blessings already bestowed, our sacrifice must be offered by Christ, otherwise we presume that God's favour has been bestowed upon us at the expense of his holiness and justice. We thus cast dishonour upon his character, and our offering cannot be received. This is true regarding all the mercies of which we are partakers, both temporal and spiritual. For the former, as well as the latter, thanks must be rendered in the name of Christ, for they are all received through him.

In the text we are directed to offer the sacrifice of praise continually. This injunction, in the very terms of it, is fitted to set forth the extent of our obligations to God. We have nothing that we have not received, and for every blessing praise and thanks are due. Every moment we receive favours, and therefore every moment we owe gratitude and thanks. Who shall number God's countless mercies, or set bounds to our obligation of gratitude? To him we are indebted for every good and perfect gift—from him we receive all good things—whatever is necessary for sustenance convenient for use or pleasant in enjoyment—all that we possess—all that we hope for—our very capacities of enjoyment—whatever gratifies the eye with its beauty, or pleases the ear with its melody. To him we owe every delight which the ministry of the senses provides for the mind—every pleasure which the actings of affection creates—all that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, resulting from communion with himself, and from the actings of the new heart which he has formed, and endowed with noble and imperishable affection. Surely the contemplations of his unnumbered benefits is enough to awaken perpetual gratitude, which in its fullness shall continually overflow in glad songs of praise and fervent thanksgiving.

But how much more deep will gratitude become, how much more lively in its exercise, how much more fervent in its expression, when we consider our own utter want of desert, nay, our desert of wrath instead of the least mercy! Thus again we find that not only if we desire our

sacrifice of praise to be accepted, but if we desire that it should be at all adequate, we must offer it through Christ. This is the argument for thanksgiving which prevails over all others, which gives force and urgency to them all, that we deserve nothing but wrath, and that Christ has purchased eternal redemption for us. But for this we must have been cut off in the midst of our transgressions. This is the new song which was put into our mouths when the Word became flesh: 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will to men.' Let us then offer through Christ continually the sacrifice of praise. Every blessing we receive for which we do not render thanks, will steel our hearts against gratitude, and become to us a curse, the savour of death unto death. By the faithful discharge of this duty, on the other hand, we increase the sense of our obligations—our souls are made more alive to God's mercies, and the most delightful of all communion with him is maintained. We thereby save ourselves also from some of the worst evils to which we are exposed. We become contented with our condition, and covetousness ceases to afflict us. We maintain the exercise of one of the most delightful sentiments which the heart can cherish, and render it almost incapable of becoming the prey of those passions which afflict and torment us. In all situations we are better than we deserve to be—and therefore in all thanks are due. Why should we desire more of this world's goods, when God, who is all-wise and who orders every event, judges that we have enough? That situation is best for his children in which he has placed them. Even for afflictions and persecutions thanks are to be rendered, for they are instruments of purification, and excite many noble and godlike graces. Such is the testimony of the apostle, 'We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.' What argument then hath covetousness, even in the most destitute conditions of humanity? Here is an invitation, and a resistless one, for sweet contentment to come and dwell with us for ever, and enlighten our abode with her care-dispelling smile; to sit beside us and dictate the gladsome and ever-recurring duty of 'giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

## THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers: and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread; 1 Kings xxi. 4.*

WHAT a picture of wickedness and misery is this! Ahab was a king, the king of a powerful people; and he could command by a word whatever was necessary, not only for comfort, but for luxury. Yet so enslaved was he by covetousness, that all his own abundance failed to satisfy or please, and Naboth's vineyard, on which his heart was fixed, alone possessed value to him. He must have it, otherwise he would be miserable; and because Naboth, from a natural attachment to his paternal inheritance, refused to surrender it, Ahab shut himself up from society; not only 'laid him down upon his bed, but turned away his face, and would eat no bread!'

Covetousness is termed in scripture idolatry. All sin is essentially idolatrous, since it puts some creature or created thing in the place of God; but covetousness is peculiarly so. It is one of the most despotic forms of sin. Its objects are for the most part visible, often familiar, and confer importance on their possessor; while the temptations to it are both frequent and powerful. The covetous man concentrates the whole ardour of his mind on the object of his desires. He cannot forget it; he cannot think of any thing else but in connection with it; it haunts him wherever he goes, and will not let him rest. The tendency of our nature to this sin, as well as its heinousness, may be inferred from its prohibition forming one of the commandments of the decalogue. Some of the leading objects of covetousness are specified in that commandment; and it is evident from these, that while covetousness, as meaning excessive desire, is sinful in itself, it is particularly to be shunned and hated,—as leading to numerous and most aggravated violations of the divine law. Injustice, cruelty, theft, adultery,—all follow in its train. Achan's account of the manner in which he had been led into sin after the fall of Jericho, strikingly illustrates the operation of covetousness. 'I saw,' says he, 'among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them.' Here we have the eye as the medium of impression; then, the covetous desire springing up in the heart; and last of all, the overt criminal

act necessarily flowing from the indulgence of this desire. Covetousness is thus the prolific seed of many crimes. Let it once find entrance into the heart; and though at first nothing but a desire, which no one sees, and which even he who is conscious of, does not readily suspect, yet it becomes imperceptibly stronger and more intense, till it bursts through all restraints, rushes on to its consummation in the perpetration of atrocious crimes, and involves its victim in disappointment, misery, and shame.

As covetousness begins with the desire of the heart, our Lord repeatedly called the attention of his hearers to the necessity of checking it in its beginnings there. Men often deceive themselves with respect to this sin, and imagine that it is nothing merely to desire what others possess, provided they abstain from acts of theft, injustice, and oppression. But the pure and comprehensive morality of the gospel forbids even the desire; and requires the strict and conscientious government of the heart, as indispensable to the obedience of the Christian life. If men were careful to check covetous desires when they first arise, they would find it comparatively easy to abstain from covetous acts; but when the desire is secretly and long cherished, it acquires an extent of influence, and facility of operation, which render it dangerous in the extreme. What we ourselves possess should be considered as the allotment of Providence concerning us, to be enjoyed with gratitude, and faithfully applied to the uses for which it has been given. What others possess should be surrounded with an idea of sacredness, which should at once check all desire to disturb their possession, or to deprive them of it. The covetous man makes the objects of his desire his supreme good; and hence our Lord in warning his hearers against covetousness, emphatically added, 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' The covetous man therefore seeks in these things a happiness which they cannot afford; and his life is one of bitter disappointment. He overlooks the sovereignty of Providence in allotting the conditions of men, and is habitually discontented with what he has, from a desire to acquire what he has not. Covetousness, however, is to be distinguished from the mere love of worldly gain or substance in this, that its desire is fixed on what others possess. We covet their property, and would deprive them of it. We are not only discontented with our own lot, but we envy the lot of others. Hence the answer to the question in the Shorter Catechism, 'what is forbidden in the tenth commandment,' is thus expressed; it forbids 'all discon-

tentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbour, and all inordinate motions and affections towards any thing that is his.'

We see from this passage how wretched the victims of sinful passions are. There is no peace to the wicked, even on earth. Sin is essentially misery. The sinner, in indulging a corrupt desire, cherishes a serpent in his breast, which, if not destroyed, will sting him to death. The apostle might well ask the members of the church at Rome, 'what fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.' The sinner seems to be prosperous, and to spread like a green bay tree; and at times so powerful is the influence of delusion, that he even imagines himself to be a wise and happy man. But sooner or later misery overtakes him; his enjoyments prove to be the apples of Sodom. Some passions are particularly prolific of misery to those who indulge them; and covetousness is one of these. There is a peculiar meanness in it, which degrades its victim, and embitters all his possessions. 'Ahab turned away his face, and would eat no bread.' Miserable man! his own covetous desires darkened the whole world to him, and turned his heart into a fountain of bitterness and anguish.

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart upon them,'* Psal. lxxii. 10.

WEALTH is one of the principal idols of fallen corrupt men. It gives them importance in society, and enables them to procure whatever enjoyments are most agreeable to the depraved and ungodly heart. Hence in that vast scene of idolatry which society incessantly exhibits, multitudes are seen crowding around the shrine of wealth, undergoing severe penances, and submitting to the most irksome and degrading labours, that they may win the smiles of their idol. As long as men confine themselves to lawful occupations, which are necessary and useful, while they involve no injury to the rights and property of others, their idolatry of wealth, though often extreme, does not present its darkest and most revolting aspects. But when, to gratify their desire, they are seen disregarding the claims, and trampling on the rights of others,—when fraud, and duplicity, and artifice are resorted to,—when they put forth violent hands on their neighbour's substance, and

extort by oppression what they cannot obtain by justice, their idolatry of wealth stands out in a hideousness of aggravation from which we turn away in disgust.

Much of the robbery and oppression which have disturbed and desolated society, has proceeded from this idolatry of wealth. Scarcely any sinful passion has led to more injustice and cruelty. Under its influence, men in authority have perpetrated the most heinous crimes against nations, plunging into bloody and exterminating wars, and overrunning fertile and cultivated provinces with rapacious troops. A yoke of bitter bondage has often been imposed, to fill the treasury of a prince. In the humbler conditions of life, the same passion has prompted to endlessly varied schemes of cunning and oppression. The pharisee, under the guise of devotion, has robbed the widow. The pretended guardian, beneath a mask of counsel and prudence, has appropriated the inheritance of the fatherless. Every virtue has been feigned to gratify it. Human ingenuity has been exhausted in the contrivance of devices to rob others. How much of the wealth, accumulated in society, may be ascribed to this passion? Well has the apostle said, 'The love of money is the root of all evil.' In itself, money has no moral character, but is like dust, mindless and powerless. But the covetous dispositions of men invest it with interest and attraction. It is the instrument of power. It is the price of pleasure. To possess it is to possess influence, reputation, luxury, and outward splendour; and therefore the whole force both of mind and body is bent upon its acquisition.

Oppression and robbery, like all sin, are vanity. There is no profit in them. When we see the oppressor, indeed, rushing on in his course, heaping up stores, and gratifying his wishes as they arise, we may be disposed to conclude that his lot is prosperous and happy; but there is a disquietude lurking within which forbids peace, a war of feeling, inseparable from his flagrant violation of righteousness and truth; and when the curtain is drawn aside, there is often much to awaken pity,—nothing to excite desire. There is a taint in all his gains. The curse of injustice is upon them; and though that curse may not always be felt, yet does it imply a state of moral disorder, incompatible with true joy. There are times, too, when that curse utterly blights all the pride and triumph of the oppressor; and he trembles amidst his abundance. The doctrine of the divine sovereignty is a burden which he cannot bear. While he has been gratifying his corrupt heart, and injuring his neighbours, God continued to reign

in righteousness, and only by his permission and forbearance, had the oppressor the means and the opportunity of success. From his throne, the infinite Ruler beheld all his criminal devices and cruel acts. The eternal enemy of all sin and injustice, he was the witness of every circumstance of secret fraud. Not a coin put into his coffer, but he knew whose lawful property it was. Not a morsel of bread snatched from the fatherless and the poor, but he saw in the oppressor's hand. How vain, as well as criminal, injustice is! If the earth was a scene of atheistic anarchy and confusion, oppression and robbery would be foolish enough; but as it is a province under the sceptre of an infinitely righteous and powerful Sovereign, they darken into acts of absolute insanity. For not only does that Sovereign know all their devices, but, though silent and forbearing, there is a time at hand when he will punish the unrighteous for their injustice and cruelty. He will no more keep silence, but speak out. He will disclose the secret courses of the ungodly. He will set forth the unhallowed sources of their gains, and vindicate the injured rights of the helpless and the poor. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' He who would not answer the widow, will be compelled to answer God. He who seized upon his neighbour's vineyard under false pretences, will be shown to be no better than the thief on the highway, or the outlaw in his den. Instead of honour, he will reap shame—instead of prosperity, wretchedness, wailing, and woe! Having sown the wind, he will reap the whirlwind. For all his unrighteous gains, a reckoning will now be made; and in that reckoning, not a tear which he ever caused to stain the orphan's cheek, not a sigh which he ever drew from the widow in her solitude, not a wrong, however artfully inflicted, nor an unjust scheme however skillfully framed, will be lost sight of. 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.'

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#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate,'*  
Esth. v. 13.

THIS is the language of Haman, the favourite and prime minister of Ahasuerus, king of Persia. He had been advanced by his sovereign to the highest dignity of a subject, so that all the other princes of the court were required to do homage to him. Mordecai, the cousin of queen Esther,

who sat at the king's gate, alone refused to bow to Haman. Enraged at this, Haman resolved to destroy not only Mordecai, but, if possible, the whole of the Jewish nation; and by representing that people to Ahasuerus as peculiar and disobedient, prevailed on him to issue a decree for the massacre of the Jews, throughout the wide extent of the Persian empire. The execution of this decree was prevented by the timely interposition of Esther, who, being in high favour with Ahasuerus, invited him and Haman to a banquet. The proud heart of Haman was elated by this supposed honour. He went to his house with joyful steps, told his wife and friends of all his wealth, preferment, and honour, and particularly referred to his distinction, in being invited to a banquet with the king and Esther. One circumstance alone galled and vexed him. On leaving the palace, he had seen Mordecai in his usual seat, refraining from all reverence as before; and now that he dwelt, in his swelling vanity, on his glory and riches, he added: 'Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.'

In the character of Haman, we see a multitude of low selfish passions. His heart was set upon the world. He was vain of the honour, which had been bestowed upon him. He was resentful, blood-thirsty, and discontented. He was full of malice and envy, hating all who opposed his wishes, grieving at their privileges and prosperity, and earnestly desiring their ruin. He enjoyed, even by his own confession, whatever was most desirable in life. He was the favourite of his prince. He had banqueted with him, and was to enjoy the same privilege again. He had ample wealth. Possessing all these things, there was no lot to be compared with his own. Yet his prosperity availed not. He hated Mordecai, and wished his destruction; and because he saw him sitting at the king's gate in security, and withholding, as before, the homage which he received from the very princes of Shushan, he was restless and miserable. In this, there was wounded vanity, a spirit of uncontrollable discontent, and a hatred of Mordecai, because of his sincerity and firmness. We might suppose him to have said, 'What is it to me what others are or do? My desires are fully gratified. The most distinguished in Shushan is less honoured than I.' But no! When one evil passion is cherished, it brings others in its train. Man never exhibits sin in one form only. The worldly-mindedness of Haman was associated with vanity, arrogance, wrath, hatred, malice, revenge; and towards Mordecai his hatred darkened into

envy. What was Mordecai, compared with him? A humble Jew—a subordinate officer about the palace, one on whom no honour had been conferred, to whom no one bent the knee. All this was true, but his firmness in refusing to honour Haman, wounded the pride of the latter; and as he witnessed it, he hated him, would most willingly have destroyed him, and poured his blood like water on the street.

What a fearful passion envy is! While it is most unreasonable, there is no limit to the excesses to which it impels. The envious man finds in the prosperity of him who is the object of his passion, only the fuel of a raging fire. He regards him as resisting his own claims, and robbing him of his own property. He considers whatever he possesses as so much taken from himself; and, in the bitterness of his hatred, is often prompted to devise the most cruel and sanguinary schemes. There was envy in Cain, when he slew his brother Abel. He hated him for his worth, and for his privilege. This passion has been the cause of many of the most atrocious crimes, which have stained and blackened the earth. Though Haman passed by Mordecai, as he sat at the king's gate, what would he not have done had he gratified his hatred? His eyes looked daggers, if his tongue did not speak them. Time and place alone prevented his envy from rushing into murder. The apostle has well stated the gradation, when he says, 'envy, debate, deceit, murder.' Bishop Hall, speaking of Cain's treatment of Abel, breaks out, 'O envy, the corrosive of all ill minds, and the root of all desperate actions! The same cause that moved Satan to tempt the first man to destroy himself and his posterity, the same moves the second man to destroy the third. There was never envy that was not bloody.'

While envy is so fierce and deadly towards its object, it is a prolific source of misery to those who indulge it. The sight of Mordecai embittered all the joy of Haman's preferment. His own confession proves this. 'All this; my wealth, my preferment, my seat at the queen's table, my invitation to partake of the queen's banquet to-morrow, the homage of the princes, the admiration of the people—all this availeth me nothing.'

Let us examine our hearts, lest this fruit of sin should lurk in some plausible disguise there. We are commanded to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep. The latter is more easy than the former—at least, the appearance of it is more frequent. Do we rejoice then in the good of others? Is it an addition to our own happiness, when we behold them pro-

sperous and happy? Are we prompt and cheerful in aiding them in their plans of industry and usefulness, and when these are crowned with success, do we feel as if the smile of Providence had shone upon our own heads? We are all brethren; and true charity leads us to dwell together as such. Sin has broken up the human family, and darkened and troubled the earth with strife; but divine grace is given to restore order, heal breaches, and put an end to division; and in heaven, where grace will be perfected in glory, the old picture of love which gladdened Eden before the fall, will once more be realized; for all will love and live as brethren. There will be no envy there, and there can be no meetness for that blessed place, as long as one emotion of envy ruffles and pollutes our hearts.

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FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate,' Rom. xii. 16.*

THE members of the Christian church form, in reality, but one family. When the church was first constituted in Jerusalem, after the marvelous effusion of the spirit on Pentecost, it exhibited a picture of perfect union, harmony, and peace. It was the first manifestation on a large scale of the tenderness and confidence of domestic affection, and extorted from heathen spectators the emphatic eulogium, 'See how these Christians love one another.' In a well-ordered and happy family, all the members are knit together by strong and endearing ties; they have common interests, common enjoyments, common hopes, and common trials. In that small circle, there beats, as it were, but one pulse. When one suffers, all suffer; when one rejoices, all rejoice. Whatever doubts there may be as to the good opinion, or the cordial sympathy, or the zealous co-operation of others, beyond their circle, there are none among themselves; with individuality of person and interest, there is combined unity of affection. So should it be in the church; so was it at the period to which we have referred. The church was but a larger family, from which discord, jealousy, wrath, and all evil passions were banished, and all whose members, amounting to several thousands, recognised, in each other, one filial tie, and one fraternal relation.

When the apostle exhorts Christians to be 'of the same mind one to another,' he reminds them that they form but one family before God. Pro-

fessedly they were united in the belief of the same great truths, in the acknowledgment of the same spiritual institutions, in the enjoyment of the same inestimable privileges, and in the contemplation of the same objects of desire and hope. There was no difference among them, at least as respected essential matters, as to creed or practice; but his exhortation relates to the dispositions of the heart, which are often found to be widely different, even when there is no difference as to the standard of opinion or duty. He exhorts them, therefore, to cherish kind and sympathising dispositions; to recognise each other's claims to confidence and good offices, and to check the first movement of a tendency to coldness or disunion. As a preservative from estrangement, he enjoins them not to mind high things, that is, not to set their hearts on objects and distinctions, deemed important and valuable by the world. The connection intimates that the desire of worldly grandeur is apt to estrange us from those with whom we associate, and among whom our lot has been cast. Of this, we have numerous proofs in the history of worldly men. We see the desire of grandeur springing up, while they are yet in obscurity, and surrounded by those who have been reared under the same roof with them, and have long shared in all their pleasures and pastimes. As it gathers strength, they become cold and careless in their demeanour; the little circle of home loses its charm, and though still members of it, their thoughts and affections are wandering elsewhere; and at last something like a feeling of contempt is indulged towards those, who were once felt and acknowledged to be companions and friends. The primitive church consisted principally of the poor, and if the members of it allowed their hearts to go forth after the vain pomps and glories of this world, their brotherly love would be chilled, and the duties to which it prompts overlooked. In all ages, the church has consisted of the poor as well as the rich, and the former, for the most part, in larger proportion than the latter; and if Christians aspire to be great or influential according to the standards of the world, they will lose their relish for the society of their brethren, their sympathy in their tastes, pursuits, and trials, and their desire to promote and perpetuate their happiness. Their hearts will be where their treasure is. They will seek the company of those who can aid them in their worldly plans, and, in conversation with them, will lose sight of those pure and noble truths, which proclaim God's favour alone to be life, and moral excellence alone to be honour.

The apostle farther exhorts Christians to con-

descend to men of low estate. This is a far more profitable, as it is a perfectly safe exercise. By those described as of low estate, we may consider the apostle as meaning those in humble condition, whose hearts by grace have been weaned from the love of the world and its possessions. These persons are morally great in the midst of outward meanness. Their estimate of things is founded on immutable and sublime principles; and in condescending to commune with them, we not only exercise and strengthen our sympathies as Christians, but we derive elevation from the nobleness of their sentiments. We learn to look at things from the same commanding points of view with them, and we come forth from their society more deeply impressed with the vanity of the world, and more keenly alive to the grandeur of spiritual things. In the atmosphere which they breathe, the deceitful colouring of the world is cold and faint; while objects are seen there, which overshadow by their majesty and duration all that the children of the world idolise and contend for. It is a good exercise for the heart to sympathise with the poor; and if the poor are Christians, adorning the meanness of their lot with the dignity and the lustre of holiness, their society becomes a school where the sublimest truths are taught, and the purest sentiments cherished.

How becoming is this condescension among the members of the church? We have spoken of them as a family; they are also represented as a body; a figure which conveys the most perfect idea of union, which material objects can supply. When one member of the body suffers, all the other members are more or less affected; and so when any member of the church is visited by trial, every other member ought to feel as if the trial were in some measure personal, and should strive to soothe and support the suffering member under it. Were one member to boast against another, it would be considered a violation of all propriety and relationship, in condemning which no language could be too strong. Of the mystical body, the church, Christ is the glorious and ever-living Head. All the members derive their life and honour from him; and their union to, and dependence on him, form a common ground of sympathy, which should bind their hearts together as with an adamant cord.

FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Now, the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned,' 1 Tim. i. 5.*

CHARITY undoubtedly signifies here brotherly love, though it is something used in the more comprehensive sense of love to God, as well as to man, and sometimes in the more limited sense of love or kindness to the needy and the poor. The two first significations may be considered as identified; since wherever there is true brotherly love, there is implied love to God as the principle from which it springs. Now charity is the end of the commandment; the sum and substance of the law; that which the law requires, and which being rendered, the law is completely fulfilled. The law requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves; and if this be done, the duties which we owe to others, will not fail to be discharged. Self-love is deeply seated in our nature, and is wisely designed to lead to the preservation of life, the protection of property, the avoidance of evil, and the increase of happiness. Under proper regulation and control, it contributes largely to our welfare, comprehending all the circumstances that bear upon our interest, being keenly sensitive, unceasingly watchful, and unweariedly active. Like all the other principles of our moral constitution, it has been perverted and injured by sin; and so prone is it to run into excess, to degenerate into selfishness, that it requires to be carefully checked, wisely directed, and firmly governed. In enjoining us to love others as we love ourselves, the law is eminently wise. There is no danger that we will love ourselves too coldly; and if we love others in the same proportion that we love ourselves, our love to them will be the best possible check to a selfish disposition. The golden rule, as it has been justly termed, is founded on this principle, for it requires us to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us, thereby making self-love the standard by which to determine the measure of relative duty.

As this brotherly love is the end of the law, so is it much more the end of the gospel. The law enjoins the principle of love, but the gospel expands and applies it. The gospel, indeed, is one continuous and emphatic expression of love. It reveals the most amazing love in God, in the mission and work of his only-begotten Son. It exhibits an example of unparalleled condescension and tender pity in the humiliation of the Redeemer, his shame, sufferings, and death, in behalf of sinners. It is a message of peace, and breathes all the gentleness of peace in its style,

doctrines, and promises. It is an offer of pardon, and possesses the winning pathos and persuasive beauty, which affectionate solicitude bestows. The truths which it announces, though grand and awful, all appeal to the heart, and present the most attractive views of the divine nature and government. It abounds in promises the most endearing, and invites to the enjoyment of privileges the most elevated and delightful. It inculcates love between man and man in the most earnest and forcible terms. It condemns the prejudices which separate mankind into classes, and uniformly contemplates man in his essential character, as accountable and immortal. Whatever is adventitious or external is merged in the consideration of the moral nature. Eternity in its pages overshadows and eclipses the world and time. Man is the brother of man—everywhere, and under all circumstances. 'By this,' said Christ, 'shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.'

The charity which Paul commanded Timothy to inculcate, can only proceed from 'a pure heart.' As long as sin reigns in the heart, corrupt self-love, one of its principal fruits, will pervade the life. The heart must be renewed by grace, the claims of the Creator acknowledged, the authority of his law submitted to, the evil of sin felt, and its dominion deplored. It is only when this change has been in some measure undergone, that love to God will acquire its ascendancy, and love to man, which flows from it, take root in the heart. Selfishness in all its forms will then be shunned as sinful; and a desire to do good to others will soften the heart into tenderness, and prompt to kind and charitable deeds. The charity of the renovated heart is no conventional form, or capricious effusion of sentiment. It springs from a sense of duty. It possesses the stability and progressive nature of a living principle.

To a pure heart, the apostle adds a good conscience. The office of conscience is to direct and control. When the heart is in some measure purified, the principle of charity is implanted in it, and conscience must point out the way in which the principle is to operate, the extent of the sphere which it must occupy, and the nature and amount of the sacrifices which its due operation requires. It is of great importance that conscience, exercising such high functions, should be kept tender, vigilant, and prompt, because if it be dull, or negligent, or undecided, opportunities of duty will be lost, and the standard of duty lowered. That conscience may be thus good, it must be accompanied with faith unfeigned: that is, a true, honest, and lively faith. Faith

contemplates and brings near those realities and truths by which pure principles are nourished, and the knowledge and sensitiveness of conscience maintained and increased.

Let us then seek after the purity of heart, tenderness of conscience, and sincerity of faith, from which alone true charity can spring. Without these we may have the form, but we cannot have the principle and spirit of charity. Corrupt self-love must be subdued, and love to God made supreme. Conscience must be watchful, prompt, and decided, adhering strictly to the infallible standard of divine truth, and piercing through all the delusions by which the heart, in its deceitfulness, attempts to obscure it. Sincere faith in divine truth must supply conscience with just views of duty and its solemn sanctions; and thus the heart purified from the pollution of selfishness, conscience pointing out the path to be pursued, and exercising an authoritative superintendence over the heart and life, and faith supplying the evidence of things not seen, and exhibiting the substance of things hoped for, brotherly love will flow forth as a stream, diffusing over the whole deportment a silent beauty, and throwing back upon the gospel the light of a living and progressive illustration.

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#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work,' James iii. 14—16.*

THE apostle, in these words, seems to have had in view the manner in which the doctrines of the gospel were taught by some Judaizing teachers in his time. These persons blended in many instances pernicious errors with the pure truth, and in teaching it, sought rather to gratify their own passions and dislikes, than to instruct and correct others. No combination could be more unseemly than that which was thus exhibited, of envy or anger and strife, with the office of teaching the blessed and soothing doctrines of salvation. These doctrines breathe the very spirit of love. They are revealed in terms of unspeakable tenderness and beauty; and they are designed to root out all bitterness and malice from the heart. To combine with the profession of belief in them, envious and contentious feelings, was a fearful inconsistency. It conclusively proved that their genuine influence was unfelt, and that the heart

retained all its original selfishness, uncharitableness, and unbelief, unsubdued. More especially to boast of these feelings, as if they were allowable and becoming, was to manifest an utter ignorance of the design and nature of the gospel, and could not fail to awaken suspicions, and to foster prejudices, unfavourable to it in the minds of others. It was to lie against it, directly to contradict it, to make it appear what it was not; nay, to turn it into the instrument of hostility against itself.

The teachers to whom the apostle especially referred, supposed this course of conduct to be wise, a proof of superior knowledge and discernment, and adapted to spread the truth. But he forcibly describes its real character, representing it as the very opposite of that wisdom which comes from God, a wisdom like its infinite Author, pure, generous, condescending, involving the sacrifice and suppression of every selfish feeling, and subordinating all its schemes and arrangements to the advancement of spiritual truth, and the salvation of perishing men. On the contrary, the mingling of bitter envy and strife with the profession of faith in the gospel, or the exposition of its doctrines, was *earthly*. It savoured entirely of the policy of unrenewed men. It could not proceed from that love of the truth which is implanted in the soul by the Holy Spirit, and is one of the earliest evidences of his renovating power. It belongs to man as the slave of sin, grovelling in the dust, and unable to rise above it. It had no affinity to the seraphic purity of heaven, whose inhabitants live in an atmosphere of untainted spirituality and unruffled love. It was *sensual*. It gratified only the low sordid desires of the mind. It was *devilish*. It resembled the wisdom of those evil spirits who put forth their power only to injure and annoy, who, whatever plausible pretexes they may make use of, turn the hearts of those who are enslaved by them, into scenes of turbulence and inquietude. The devil has a pleasure in involving others in the same misery with himself. And so this wisdom aims at increasing, not mitigating or removing, misery. It delights in strife, as a mean of annoyance, a source of vexation, uneasiness, and pain. It does all this under the pretext of supporting the truth, and brings dishonour upon the truth by the instrumentality to which it degrades it.

How revolting the picture of the selfishness of our nature which is thus exhibited! The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is also enmity against man. At first man was all love; not merely the object of love to his Maker, but a fountain of love to all around him; but the dis-

ruption of the one master-tie which bound him to God, was followed by the enthronement of corrupt self, from which all social evil now flows. When restrained by education and circumstances, we do not see,—we could not imagine the excesses to which selfishness impels; but when we observe it, as brought before us in this passage, indulging envy and fomenting strife, on the ground that these are allowed by Christ, it is felt to be truly hideous. This indeed is to make the Saviour the minister of sin,—to make him, who came to die for sin, to sanction that to which he is infinitely opposed, and which his glorious work was intended to destroy.

The apostle most justly adds, that envying and strife are the parents of confusion and all wickedness. Envy is placed in immediate connection with strife, as causing it. If the heart within were calm, the life without would be so also; but passion in the heart leads to disorder and violence in the life. Of all passions, envy is one of the most restless and insatiable; and if we observe the conduct of men in society with care, we shall perceive that a great proportion of the troubles and tumults of life arises from its indulgence. It makes its own victims most restless. The envious heart, of all hearts, is the most deeply disquieted. It finds matter for disquietude in every object, event, and scene. It invests all things with its own dark disfiguring colours. There is no limit to the wretchedness that flows from strife. Nor is there any limit to the crimes to which it prompts.

As no union can be more unseemly or flagrantly inconsistent than that of envy and strife with the profession of faith in the gospel, we should be careful to hold the truth in love. Let us check evil passions in their beginnings in the heart. Let us remember what the apostle James has so forcibly said, 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?' If evil passions or selfish feelings are indulged, strife will follow, and strife, instead of advancing, will bring discredit upon, and hinder the truth. There is nothing more characteristic of Christianity than the love, deep and tender, which pervades it; and if we are really embued with its spirit, the desire to do good will prompt us in all cases rather to conciliate than to provoke, to soothe than to irritate. No doubt, it is good to be zealously affected in a good cause; but Christian zeal, though ardent, has no uncharitableness or bitterness in it. It is a noble, a magnanimous quality, as remote from the baseness of selfish feeling, as it is from its turbid violence.

## SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,' 1 Cor. xiii. 4—7.

As a piece of moral painting, nothing can be finer than the portrait of charity drawn in these words. It has been well said by a distinguished critic, that 'it would be difficult to find a finer passage than this in the writings of Demosthenes himself.'

*Charity suffereth long, and is kind.* It is patient and forbearing. There may be great faults in others, but the truly charitable do not dwell upon them, or allow themselves to be irritated by them. There is a forbearance which springs from contempt rather than pity. The truly charitable, however, bear with others from kindness. They respect them as rational and accountable amidst all their faults and sins, have a lively interest in their welfare, and earnestly seek for opportunities to promote it. They bear with them not as an hardship, but as a duty, which a sense of the claims of others, and of their own unworthiness and obligations, renders agreeable.

*It envieth not.* It does not repine at the advantages which distinguish others, or covet the good things which they possess. It rather desires that the possessors of valuable blessings should enjoy and continue to possess them, not only as they are, but in more abundant measure. It wishes well to all men, not conventionally, but heartily; and its chief regret is, that men are not happier, as well as better, than they are.

*It vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.* Christian charity is based upon profound humility. It is a grace of the Spirit, who, in his mighty and gracious work, shows the sinner his true character and state, in the view of the divine law. It regards itself, therefore, as vile, without a shadow of merit, without a syllable of title, and honoured and blessed only in the privilege of its reliance on the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has no proud or flattering things to say of itself. In the comparison of itself with what it ought to be, it loses sight of every thing by which it may be distinguished from others, and cannot allow itself to dwell with complacent approbation, even on its best deeds. It is conscious of no really good deeds; and were it to boast of itself before others, it would feel that the unalterable

law of God would thunder its condemnations in its ear, and lay its presumption in the dust.

*Doth not behave itself unseemly.* Humility prevents it from encroaching on the claims of others, as well as from unnecessarily and unostentatiously obtruding its own. It does not pretend to be what it is not, labouring to establish a reputation for excellence which it does not possess; and hence it is free from affectation, the source of so much that is offensive, trifling, and absurd. Over its deportment, there is spread the grace of true modesty.

*Seeketh not her own.* A brief expression, but most comprehensive in its import. It indicates that true charity is opposed to selfishness. There is an enlightened self-interest, no doubt, which it is our duty to attend to. But this is very different from that mean creeping selfishness which is ever intent on its own gains, and distinctions, and pleasures, without attending to the welfare of others, and carefully shunning whatever would injure it. The selfish live for themselves alone. But the charitable, while they seek their own true happiness, as in duty bound, seek it in connection with the good of others. They seek not their own, but the things of Jesus Christ.

*Is not easily provoked.* Charity is not easily roused to resentment or complaint. There is an anger which is without sin. But the truly charitable are slow, even to this. They are calm, patient, reluctant to take offence, averse to perceive matter of blame. Even when an action seems unjust, they are disposed to give it the benefit of every palliation, and to wait that they may judge of it, in the cool and clear light of reason.

*Thinketh no evil.* It does not readily sit in strict judgment on the motives and actions of others; but rather endeavours to regard them in a favourable light. Even when injury has been done, it would ascribe it to inadvertence or haste, rather than deliberate purpose.

*Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.* How often we find that the faults and sins of others are dwelt upon and exaggerated by men, as if in proportion as others failed, they themselves were excellent? But true charity is grieved by the sins of others. It feels as if personally wounded by the tale of their imprudence and guilt. It has no pleasure in hearing of the faults of men. On the contrary, it rejoices in the contemplation of their virtues. It loves moral excellence as beautiful in itself, as agreeable to the infinite mind of God, as, in the believer, a proof of the efficacy of grace, and as inseparably identified with the proper dignity and the

permanent happiness of our nature. The report of a virtuous action is as good news.

*Charity beareth all things.* It does not readily take offence, or complain of injury, but would rather forget and conceal the unjust and violent conduct of others.

*It believeth all things.* Not that it is weakly credulous, or blind to palpable evidence, but that, wherever there is a probability in favour of others, it eagerly admits it. It requires strong evidence to convince it of what is unfavourable to them.

*It hopeth all things.* When the issues of a course of conduct look dark or doubtful, it anticipates the best. When an action seems bad, it waits for an explanation, and clings to the expectation that, when given, it will dispel every shadow of doubt and suspicion.

*It endureth all things.* Though unjustly treated, it is unwilling to murmur. Even when persecuted, it is patient; even when calumniated, it is silent. In the words of a very beautiful paraphrase, it—

'Meekly suffers many a wrong,  
Though sore with hardship press'd.'

#### SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,'  
John xv. 13, 14.

LOVE to their fellow-creatures has at times led men to make astonishing sacrifices. But the greatest sacrifice of all is life. A man will part with substance, raiment, office, home, kindred, that others may be benefitted, rescued from danger, or restored to freedom; but when it comes to life, he pauses; for this is the sacrifice of all,—that which is dearest, deepest, most precious. 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life.'

The instance of Damon and Pythias is well known. When the former was condemned to death by the tyrant Dionysius, having obtained leave to go home and settle his affairs, the latter engaged to die in his stead, if he did not return in time. He returned when Pythias was about to suffer, and the tyrant, penetrated by the example of their friendship, remitted the punishment of Damon, so that both were preserved. There was an undoubted sublimity in the friendship of these two persons, a merging of selfish feeling and sordid consideration, and a measure of mutual confidence, which it is impossible not to admire. We feel it

indeed to be so much beyond the ordinary standard of excellence, among even generous and disinterested friends, that we regard it as an extreme case, altogether an exception to the general rule, which it were unreasonable to expect, and absurd to require. It certainly exhibits the very farthest point to which, in unnumbered cases, the love of friendship can go. The sacrifice of substance; the renunciation of home, kindred, country; the surrender of reputation, rank, privileges; bodily torture, self-mutilation, and penance in its severest forms; are all short of the laying down of life.—A man might give up these, and yet live; but when he gives up life, he has nothing more to give. Life includes all.

When our Lord stated that the laying down of life was the strongest proof of love towards friends, he was referring to his own sacrifice as a proof of his love towards his disciples. In the verse immediately preceding, he says, 'this is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.' His love was unparalleled. There is no instance of love on record that can be said to approach it. It has circumstances peculiar to itself, which remove it beyond all comparison. Love between man and man, even when it leads to the sacrifice of life, is love between equals; love founded on the perception of excellence in its object; love cherished and strengthened by acts of sympathy and kindness, and a course of endearing communion; love whose offices are repaid in kind. But the love of Christ was love on the part of one infinitely exalted above those whom he loved; of one who was independent, and needed no return of love from others to complete his happiness; of one whose nature was infinite, and whose resources were inexhaustible. Men are, in some measure, constituted for friendship, and require the support and consolation which it is fitted to yield. Like the vine, they are made to cling to, and to lean upon others; and left altogether to themselves, they do not expand into that fulness and tenderness of affection, without which they can never be said to reach their proper measure of enjoyment. But it was not so with the Son of God, who is the 'same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' 'Herein indeed is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.'

In estimating the love of Christ to his disciples, it is most important to advert to the fact, that they are naturally not friends, but enemies. The friendship which subsists among men, is founded on mutual confidence and esteem. Hence friendship, in its more intense forms, has been poetically termed the 'mysterious cement of the soul'

But in men naturally, the Saviour could behold nothing to please or to attract. He is holy—they are impure. Sin is an abomination to him—it is their delight. His happiness is spiritual—their enjoyments are of the earth, earthy. We cannot conceive a more complete opposition of natures. There is not merely difference, but enmity; and hence men are described in scripture as 'enemies to God in their hearts,'—disliking all that the Creator loves, and violating all that he commands.

This supplies a view of his love altogether astonishing. His love to them involves the strongest possible claims to their confidence and love; and as he is supreme, stands to them in the relation of Lord and King, the appropriate expression and evidence of their love is obedience to the laws which he proclaims. He requires this obedience at their hands. It arises out of the relations which he bears to his church. We can conceive of friendship between equals, in which there is no obligation to obey, though there will be a disposition to do whatever is likely to please, or make happy. This is the ordinary case of human friendship. The friendship, however, subsisting between Christ and his disciples is, as we have already said, not friendship between equals. It is friendship between a teacher and his scholars—a lawgiver and his subjects—a sovereign and his dependents; and as such, there is involved in the very nature of that friendship on the part of those honoured, the most powerful obligation to learn with meekness, to obey with diligence, and to honour with profound and grateful reverence.

It is a decisive test of our being the friends of the Saviour, if we keep his commandments. It is impossible that we can be his friends, if we refuse to do any thing he requires from us. For why, and how are we his friends? Why, but because of his stupendous work in our behalf; and how, but by the renovating power of his Holy Spirit? Our friendship implies not only love and confidence, but intense gratitude and unreserved submission. Whatever Christ has said will therefore be sacred to us; whatever he has enjoined will be cheerfully, heartily done; whatever he has instituted will be carefully and reverentially observed. If his love be rightly apprehended and felt, it will overwhelm and constrain the soul. The utmost we can do will be regarded as a poor expression of the desire to please him, which we ought to cherish. Let no one imagine for a moment, then, that he is, or can be a friend of the Saviour, if his laws are not precious to his heart, and, in some measure, embodied

in his life. What he said to his disciples, while he tabernacled on earth, he says to all his people in every age, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.'

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SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them,'* Ezek. xx. 19.

THE relation which God bears to his people, is set forth in scripture by a rich variety of illustrations, borrowed from the wide fields of nature, art, and human life. He is a Sun, a Rock, a Fortress, a Shield, a King, a Guide, a Husband, a Father; while nothing can exceed the tenderness and endearment with which he is represented as dealing with, and addressing his people. All of these names, however, are lost in the immensity of the expression: 'I am your God.' The very perfections of the Godhead, infinite as they are, are, by this expression, pledged to the happiness and salvation of the believer. There is amazing condescension in this. For who is it, who thus addresses sinful men? It is the Almighty Creator, the supreme Governor, the Lawgiver and Judge of angels and men. He who has but to speak, and it is done; but to command, and all things stand fast. He needed not the love or the service of man, for our goodness extendeth not to him. He is eternally happy in himself, independent and unchangeable. Yet he declares himself, in these words, to be the property of his people, places himself on their side, undertakes the maintenance of their cause, and thereby surrounds them and their interests with the light and the protection of his incommunicable glory. It is impossible fully to estimate the dignity of the privilege which is thus conferred upon the members of the true church. They can call God theirs in no merely figurative or doubtful sense, but as a real Portion, as an omnipotent Guardian, as an unfailing Friend. Whatever they need, he will supply; averting ruinous evil, and overruling for good that which is inevitable; bestowing important privileges in discipline, and finally crowning his love by the completeness of their salvation in heaven. Well may they say in the darkest hour of trial, in the fiercest conflict of faith, 'Greater is he who is for us, than all they that are against us.' 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.'

This covenant relation, subsisting between God and believers, involves the most weighty obliga-

tions to obedience on their part. Gratitude for the privilege conferred, and love to the Being who has manifested such unparalleled generosity and condescension, could not fail to impel to whatever surrender of themselves or their property he might be pleased to require. But men, being naturally insensible to the value of the privilege, are dead to those emotions of gratitude and love, which it is fitted to inspire. God in conferring it, however, has made arrangements for such a change in the hearts of sinners, as leads them to prize this privilege above life itself, to seek its enjoyment as their proper happiness, and to shrink from whatever would impair or disturb it. When they are thus changed in the spirit of their minds, the amazing condescension and grace of God soften and subdue their hearts. They surrender themselves entirely to him; soul, body, and spirit, are dedicated, without reserve, to the obedience of his will, and the advancement of his honour. They feel this, not to be a hard, but a reasonable service; and the subject of regret with them is, not that too much is required, but that the requital which they render, is so utterly insufficient and poor.

These are the feelings and views of all who are renewed, and admitted into covenant with God. But in the present state, believers often fall away from their first love; the fervour of their feelings subsides, the energy of their resolutions decays; and though at one period bound up to all the sublimity and perils of the spiritual life, yet at another their affections are cold, their views indistinct, and their zeal languid. When such seasons occur, surely the remembrance of the endearing relation which God bears to them, is powerfully fitted to rekindle their zeal, excite their affections, and stimulate to obedience. All other sanctions and obligations may be said to be summed up in this,—Is the Lord their God? Then how ardently they should love, how reverentially honour, and how diligently obey him? Most reasonably may he, who has condescended to bear this relation to them, require them to 'walk in his statutes and to keep his judgments, and do them.' These statutes and judgments are most reasonable and righteous in themselves. They are such as, independent of all claim on the part of him who enjoins them, are worthy to be honoured and obeyed; but as proceeding from him who has conferred such honour on them, distinguished them so largely by his grace, and afforded them assurance of all that is most needful and precious, they rise into an importance and urgency, which it were the very extreme of obduracy to resist, and of ingratitude to neglect.

The claim of God upon his people, then, is that they should do whatever he has been pleased to enjoin. His statutes and judgments include his whole revealed will; both the laws which we are to obey, and the institutions which we are to observe. His will must give a commanding sacredness to all his word. It announces both what we are to believe, and what we are to do; and the truths which it reveals, as well as the precepts which it enjoins, must be regarded with supreme reverence and confidence by us. No words should so solemnize and impress as these, 'thus saith the Lord.' Seeing we are so unspcakably indebted to him, and stand in a relation so dear, our obedience should flow like a warm and gushing stream from the heart. It should not only be a uniform but a willing service; not only willing but delightful. We should be ready to say, 'His commandments are not grievous;' or still more emphatically, 'His yoke is easy, and his burden light.' We should exclaim with David, 'O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!'

#### SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;  
and quicken thou me in thy way,' Psal. cxix. 37.*

VANITY is stamped upon all earthly things. Many of them look most beautiful and inviting, but they fail to satisfy, and even when most fully possessed and enjoyed, leave a void in the heart, which is painful and oppressive. Men are eager in the pursuit of them from day to day, straining every nerve, and putting forth every energy that they may secure a certain amount of them, which they consider to be suited to their desires. Society is, in fact, a vast field of competition, where, on the right hand and on the left, these things are sought after with an ardour which knows no abatement, one crowd of competitors succeeding to another, so that the noise and the stir never cease. Yet the confession of the wise man is, more or less, sooner or later, that of all,—'all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' How much need, then, have we to utter the prayer of the text! These things, vain unsatisfying as they are, too easily awaken interest in our hearts. They are congenial to our corrupt nature,—of the earth, earthy;—and even believers, living under the power of the Spirit, and, by his teaching, in

some measure enlightened to estimate things according to their real value, often find their desires wandering in search of these things, and seeking happiness in them. We need divine help that we may refrain from looking at them. It is foolish, it is criminal, to set our hearts upon them, and the pursuit of them is sure to involve us in disappointment and shame; but the grace of God alone can enable us to turn from them, to seek after things spiritual and enduring, and to cherish the pure thoughts which these things awaken.

The habit of looking at vain things is a great hindrance to our advancement in holiness. They divide attention; they weaken the influence of evangelical motives; they indispose us for spiritual exercises, and render us sluggish and dull in the use of means. We cannot both fix our eyes on vanity, and be diligent in duty. The Psalmist, therefore, properly connects the turning of the eye away from vanity with quickening in the way of the Lord. That way has been pointed out by the divine law, which is holy, just, and good. There is no other rule of life but the law which God has given us; but that law both proceeds from a Being of infinite love, and is in itself most reasonable. Its claims upon us are absolute and supreme. Whatever else may interest or occupy, this law must control; so that, not only must nothing be done contrary to it, but every thing must be done in accordance with its spirit. As the light colours all things, so must this law, sending forth its pure influence over the whole life. It is directly opposed to the wisdom of the world. The world knows not God, and in its maxims, customs, and pleasures, seeks not his honour. On the contrary, though it professes to be friendly to religion, and does not openly and directly deny its authority, it cherishes a secret and deadly hostility to it. It puts the creature and the thing created in the place of God. It strives to banish every thought of God and of his claims from the mind. It surrounds its slaves with associations and circumstances, unfavourable to all serious feelings. It sanctions many things which the word of God condemns, and, even when it is most virtuous, fears not to touch on the borders of vice. What it terms, and boasts of as its wisdom, its gravest and most deliberate decisions, is limited to the things and interests of the present fleeting life. It grovels on its own surface, and among its own perishing things; and it shrinks from the vast sphere of eternity, as a region whose very light turns its possessions into mockery and dust. This wisdom, in its most boasted forms, is vanity.

It pretends to lift up to high aims, to suggest maxims of prudence for the right regulation of the conduct, to point out excesses to be shunned, joys and distinctions to be sought after; but even when it has been most implicitly followed, what is the issue? Disappointment and shame. This boasted wisdom, after all, is folly—consummate folly. It 'sows the wind and reaps the whirlwind.'

It is indispensable to our peace, then, that we should learn to look upon the world in its true light, to estimate its objects according to their real value, and to give ourselves wholly to the obedience which the divine law requires. We greatly need to be quickened, but we cannot quicken ourselves. The agency of God's Spirit is necessary for this end. He alone reveals the vanity of the world, and inclines the heart to the ways of holiness and peace. He alone awakens the desire for a better portion than the world can give, and makes the sinner bow to the authority and claims of that God, whom the world knows not, and seeks not to honour. But such is the hold of the world upon us, that it is very apt when we have voluntarily renounced it, and turned to God, to recover some measure of its influence, to hinder us in our duty, to chill our zeal, relax our diligence, and obscure our views. There is at times a severe conflict in endeavouring to shut it out. There is no little stir in the heart in consequence of its temptations. The Spirit must therefore continue to quicken, reviving us with fresh power, recalling us to correct spiritual views, and casting the world down into its native meanness. Daily must the prayer of the text be offered, 'Turn our eyes away from viewing vanity, and quicken us in thy way.' 'Let us not be deceived and misled by the world. Let us not imagine that its objects are what they seem to be, or that there is any truth in its professions, any wisdom in its counsels. But let us cleave to the path of duty; regard God's service as alone truly profitable; and wait for divine grace, that we may continually advance in the performance of duty.'

#### EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons,' Deut. iv. 9.*

How true it is of us that our 'goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth

away.' We are powerfully impressed with the truths of religion for a time. We are roused to the solemn consideration of our obligations and dangers. We are surrounded, as it were, with the realities of eternity: and then we rise to a vigour of purpose, before which difficulties and disappointments vanish like mist. But ah! how easily we descend. Before we are aware, the vision has fled; not a trace of its splendour remains; and we seem to have fallen into a lower region, where we are surrounded with objects which are gross and perishing.

There is great necessity, then, for taking heed to ourselves, that we do not fall away from the elevation of privilege and enjoyment, to which, by divine grace, we have been raised. If we leave ourselves to the influence of passing events and circumstances, and are hurried on without consideration, we may be involved in fearful delusion. We may lose the idea of our spiritual state, and be betrayed into sins from which, a short period before, we would have instinctively shrunk. There is great diligence required in the right keeping of the soul. Worldly things must often be shut out. Delusive opinions must be condemned; and the glorious realities of faith kept before the mind in all their magnitude and brightness. There is a perpetual obligation to watch what thoughts enter the mind, as well as what thoughts are cherished there; and the remembrance of the divine goodness in past times, as well as of the warnings with which we have been favoured, should often be referred to, that we may be excited to diligence, and rendered more fervent in prayer. The things seen by the ancient Israelites were no doubt wonderful; miracle on miracle had passed before them, revealing at once the power and the mercy of God; and one would have supposed it impossible that these could ever be forgotten. But they were forgotten; forgotten so completely, that the very people who seemed borne down to the earth with awe, in a few days were found rioting in idolatrous rites, and surrendering themselves to the gross abominations of the heathen. And if the Israelites forgot even the marvellous things which they saw, need we be surprised if Christians lose sight of the lofty views of divine truth which at times have cheered and comforted them, of the passages of happy experience which have given them assurance that they are indeed in Christ, and of the aspirations after heavenly blessedness, which, succeeding to seasons of high privilege, seemed to bear them on, as on eagles' wings, in the path of duty?

There is evidently a close connection between

taking heed to ourselves and teaching our children. There can be no doubt, that the habit of teaching the young is eminently fitted to promote the knowledge, and the improvement of Christians. In any science, any department of human knowledge, the mere effort to impress its principles upon the minds of others, is eminently useful. Indeed, though it may seem a paradox, we may say that the best mode of learning any science, is to teach it. The advantage of teaching is, that it brings principles before you. It never allows you to escape from them. It presses them upon you, not only in general, but in their details; so that if they should fail to impress when stated in a broad and expansive form, they are likely to be carried home in some of those more minute and incidental relations, which, in the process of teaching, we are frequently called upon to state. With respect to religion, this is most important; for owing to our dislike of its spiritual truths, we require 'line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little.' We are reluctant scholars,—slow to learn, and swift to forget. It is not by one, but by many lessons, that the truth is to be impressed on the heart. And there is no teaching so effectual as that which has for its object the instruction of our children. Their claims upon us, the interest which we feel in them, the familiarity of the circumstances in which instruction is imparted to them, all combine to give to our efforts to teach them a peculiar character of earnestness and simplicity. This is most profitable to the parent. It keeps divine truth before him in all its grandeur. It connects it directly with its practical influence. It presents the truth in such a variety of lights, as well as surrounds it with such a multitude of associations, that it can scarcely fail to become incorporated with the whole frame of thought and feeling.

Intimate and important, however, as the connection is between teaching our children the truths of religion, and taking heed to ourselves, it is nevertheless necessary we should earnestly pray for the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Unless, he writes the divine law upon our heart, the best impressions produced otherwise will be very transient and superficial. He must soften the heart by his renovating power to receive right impressions. He must impart knowledge, so that the impressions made may be accurate and distinct. He must sanctify more and more, so that the truth may continue to be relished and enjoyed. We must daily say with the Psalmist, 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes.'

## EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates,' Deut. vi. 8, 9.*

PRAYER for divine teaching must be accompanied by the earnest and diligent use of the means, which God has appointed to aid us in learning and remembering the truth, as well as in following out its practical design. The office of the Spirit is not, in any way, intended to supersede the utmost effort and anxiety on our own part. On the contrary, the promise of his mighty power supplies a most encouraging motive to diligence and care. The glory of our salvation, in all its stages, belongs to the free and sovereign grace of God; so that nothing, at any time, done by us, is or can be meritorious in his sight. But the divine wisdom is made manifest in combining our exertion with the agency of the Spirit; and though nothing we do is efficacious in itself, yet is it as necessary we should do our utmost, as if we were able of ourselves to do all that is required. The Bible which reveals God's message of grace to a lost world, is the most practical of all books. The believer, who is set forth as a debtor to divine grace for every blessing, is represented at the same time as the most active, zealous, and energetic of labourers. The work of the Spirit does not set aside the ordinary exercise of our powers; it does not reduce man from an active into a passive being; or come in with a blind sovereignty like that of instinct, and impel man to action, without allowing him to judge of the fitness and propriety of what is to be done. On the contrary, the mind under it puts forth its powers as in reference to things not spiritual. It reasons, it compares, it remembers, it imagines, as it does in the ordinary business and pursuits of life. But the Spirit gives to all these faculties a new direction, supplies a powerful influence to excite them, and gives weight to motives, formerly unfelt, or not understood.

It is generally true, that an opinion or rule, in order to have any permanent or powerful influence on the conduct, must be often in the mind. It must frequently form the subject of reflection, and be so familiar as readily to recur with vividness and force. With a view to secure this, men have sometimes resorted to the practice of inscribing valuable maxims in prominent places, where the eye was likely often to fall upon them, and the mind to be led in the direction of the trains of thought, which they were fitted to

suggest. The Jews, in like manner, were enjoined to inscribe portions of the divine law upon the posts of their houses, and on their gates; nay, to wear them as ornaments on the brow, and on the hand. The meaning of all this clearly was, that the divine law should be frequently thought of; that besides those special occasions, when it was made the subject of serious meditation, or of formal instruction, it should be brought before them even amidst the business and engagements of life; and thus that even the brief intervals of leisure, which are ever recurring in the lives of the busiest men, should be turned to profitable account, by fixing the mind upon important spiritual truth.

This language is figurative as respects Christians, but it is very significant. It means that the divine law is to be frequently in the mind, to be remembered not merely at stated seasons to be fixed on for that end, but even when we go forth on business or relaxation, and to be connected with all that we see and do. It is entitled to this attention, as coming from God, who is infinitely wise, just, and good. It is entitled to it, as given us for great ends, being designed to purify, to guide, to comfort; being, in fact, in its comprehensive sense, the grand instrument by which the Holy Spirit enlightens, converts, renovates, and sanctifies the soul. That it may have a suitable influence on the mind, it must be often in it as a subject of thought, and that it may be often in it, means must be used for that end. It is the more necessary to use these means with earnestness and care, from the strong tendency of the mind to yield itself to the delusive influence of merely secular things. How easily the world acquires an undue ascendancy! and when its objects and interests are once allowed to possess the mind, how difficult it is to shut them out, to withdraw the thoughts from them, and to turn the mind towards spiritual things! The things of this life, as to a certain extent necessary and important, must often be attended to; and it is no small part of the believer's discipline to keep them in their subordinate places, to narrow the sphere of their influence, and to prevent them from throwing into the shade the things which are unseen and eternal. We must labour, therefore, to keep the truth of God before the mind. It must be as the atmosphere which we breathe, and as the food which we eat. We should carry it with us, wherever we go. We should multiply the associations by which it is likely to be made interesting, and to be easily recalled. When we go forth from our houses, it should be within us, and around us, shedding

fragrance on all we say and do. When we are in the world, it should be, as it were, written on our hand, so that when we stretch it forth or raise it, it should meet the eye as a witness for God. When we return from our engagements, we should behold it in inscription on our gates, calling us away from the influence of the world, and awakening us to the claims and the glory of Jehovah.

Thus means being accompanied with prayer, we may reasonably expect, in some measure, to live under the influence, and enjoy the comforts of the truth. God will fulfil his covenant with us; 'After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts: and will be their God, and they shall be my people.' Happy, honoured state! in which we are enabled to exclaim with the Psalmist, 'O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.'

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#### NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?' Deut. iv. 8.*

GOD conferred a high distinction on the Jewish nation in giving them a revelation of his will. From the brief occasional notices of scripture on the subject, and also from the history of the heathen nations of antiquity, it appears that, at a very early period, all knowledge of spiritual truth was, in a great measure, lost. Men did not 'like to retain God in their knowledge,' and though they had idols and a form of worship, yet this was merely a proof that religion was an essential part of their nature; while the extreme corruption mixed up with religious observances, indicated the most profound ignorance of the real character and claims of God. Thus before the flood, which happened little more than 1500 years after the creation of man, the power of sin, in darkening the mind and corrupting the heart, had been fearfully shown; and after that appalling catastrophe, a few hundred years only elapsed, till we find the earth, with scarcely any exception, overspread with spiritual ignorance and heinous sin. The truth was preserved in the family of Abraham, and when his descendants grew into a nation in Egypt, they already stood alone upon the earth, distinguished from all other people by opinions, customs, and hopes, in which, more or less, some of the leading truths of religion

were embodied. When they were travelling through the wilderness, their peculiar economy was fully revealed and established. The law was written on tables of stone, and read in their hearing. A variety of ceremonial observances and remarkable typical institutions was enjoined; and the whole was sanctioned and enforced by promises and threatenings,—the former powerfully fitted to encourage, the latter to solemnize and restrain.

In the possession of their peculiar economy, the Jews were distinguished above all other nations. Among them alone the knowledge of the true God was spread. As when felt darkness was upon the land of Egypt, there was light in Goshen; so when spiritual ignorance prevailed among all other people, there was spiritual knowledge among the descendants of Abraham. They alone enjoyed a revelation of the divine will; they alone offered spiritual worship; they alone were cheered by the hope of the great Deliverer, promised after the fall. Some of the nations around them rose to high distinction in war, science, literature, and the useful arts; so that, in many of these respects, the chosen people were greatly inferior. Even Egypt, at an early period, was the scene of civilization and learning; and at a later period, Assyria, Chaldea, Persia, and Media were remarkable for their conquests, luxury, and refinement; not to speak of Greece and Rome, which became the fountains of philosophy and elegant literature, from which all other nations received supplies. But Judea was the only seat of true religion on the face of the earth. There, men not only knew the true God, but knew how to please him. There, a light shone from heaven to guide into the ways of peace and truth. What elsewhere, on the subject of duty, was doubtful, uncertain, or altogether unknown, was to the Jews a clear, definite, and authoritative rule, made familiar from childhood by parental instruction, and in the more advanced stages of life, kept vivid and distinct, by public ordinances and national rites.

It is an high privilege to possess the knowledge of the divine will. Even when our own will is opposed to it, this knowledge is the grand instrument by which the Spirit operates in convincing and renewing the soul. When the soul is renewed, this knowledge is its food, by which it is nourished and strengthened. He who values it aright, is a happy and honoured man. He may be without the distinctions which the world idolises, ignorant of the wonders of science, and incapable of enjoying the beauties of literature; but he possesses a treasure beyond the gold of east or west, compared with which science in its

boldest flights, and literature in its most exquisite forms, are empty names. How justly and forcibly does the Psalmist express his satisfaction and joy in possessing a knowledge of the divine law? 'O how love I thy law,' he says, 'it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients.' If David felt thus, how much more should not we, who possess a revelation so much more full and explicit? What was to him and his contemporaries a comparatively dim light, is to us a noon-day blaze. The whole scheme of grace is now unfolded; prophecy has become history, type reality; and the law is as the handmaid to the gospel. We have the knowledge of the divine will from its earliest communications, when it was a simple promise, down to the latest, when it was given in long discourses, and familiar epistles. Contrast a Christian with a heathen nation,—a bible land with one abandoned to superstition and idolatry. In the one, whatever the practice may be, all is light; in the other, all is darkness. In the former, there are spiritual institutions; in the latter, the ordinances of religion are incentives to vice. Even where the divine law is not made the standard of duty, it is a mighty treasure to possess the knowledge of it. It is all pure, a contrast to the laws and opinions of men; and by its silent testimony, serves as a check to error and sin, even when it is not honoured and obeyed as a rule.

NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes,'* Psal. xix. 8.

THE law of God, as proceeding from a Being of infinite wisdom and holiness, must be right in itself, as it is binding on all his intelligent creatures. He can only will what is in accordance with perfect justice and truth; and as we are accountable to him, so whatever he is pleased to prescribe, we are bound to do. So man felt, when as yet sin had not made him a rebel against his Maker. His own conscience responded to the law which God gave him to obey. He approved it as holy, just, and good; as necessary for the advancement of the divine glory, for the maintenance of peace and order, and for his own happiness. Then, the statutes of the Lord were

right. Enough that God had spoken—there was instant and cordial assent; and in that happy state of the moral constitution, the will inclined to whatever the judgment approved. But when sin entered, the divine law was no longer honoured and obeyed. It was the same law as at first—as holy, as just, as good; but the heart was now estranged from God and holiness; the understanding was darkened, the will perverted, and the affections debased. The statutes of the Lord were no longer felt to be right, and did not rejoice the heart. The Psalmist describes the experience of a renewed mind. The Spirit subdues the enmity of the heart to God, awakens a love of holiness, and disposes to obey the divine law. When this great change has taken place, the statutes of the Lord are again felt to be right: their wisdom, their purity, and their obligation are, in some measure, understood; and as an expression of the divine will, and an instrument for promoting the happiness of men, they impart a lively joy. The renovated mind perceives their consistency with the perfections of Him from whom they proceed, and regards them as springing from those immutable principles upon which the moral constitution of the universe depends. The laws and opinions of men are fluctuating and capricious, taking their complexion from capricious dispositions and passing events, and admitting of being accommodated to circumstances, as they arise. But the love of God, like himself, is unchangeable. It can no more be modified than his own nature. This, however, is the very property in which the renewed mind rejoices. Amidst the ceaseless changes of human opinion, the divine law is ever the same, and the believing mind turns to it with confidence, as to a rock amidst the restless waters. Its rectitude meets with a prompt and fervid response within. Its adaptation to high moral ends fills with admiration; and the knowledge of it, as pointing out what is best to be done, is regarded as a precious treasure.

The divine law is pure. It breathes the very spirit of holiness. It condemns and forbids all sin. There is no defect in it, no laxity whereby the corruption of the heart might find scope and sanction. Emanating from a Being of infinite purity, it is consistent with that attribute of his nature. Amidst the fearful pollution which has flowed from sin, it supplies a perfect standard of moral excellence, by which the errors of the judgment may be corrected, and the corrupt tendencies of the heart restrained. When savingly applied, it enlightens the mind. It removes the moral ignorance which sin has occasioned. It marks out the boundary which separates duty

from sin. While there is an utter confusion as to moral distinctions in the world, many actions being sanctioned and enjoined by it, and more connived at and tolerated, which are impure and degrading, this law alone tells man what he ought to do, and what to shun, if he would avoid the divine displeasure. This law, in short, is a rebuke to the world, frowns upon many of its pleasures, and shows it to be a scene of defilement and error. Hence, how wondrous the transition made by a sinner, when by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he is enlightened to discern, and purified to relish, the purity of this law! How different the aspect of his life from what it once seemed to be! He detects sins and short-comings numberless, where before all had the appearance of propriety and uprightness. The heart, which he once imagined to be good, now appears to be a scene of pollution and guilt; and his notions of duty, once thought to be correct and lofty, are now considered as conventional, inconsistent, and dishonouring to God. He has passed, as it were, into a new region. He resembles a man let out of the gloom of a prison into the broad sunshine of a cloudless day. All is comparatively distinct, definite, clear. New objects, unknown before, now stand out in brightness and beauty. Objects, once seen in imperfect lights, are now revealed in their true places, colours, and proportions. His eyes are not merely opened, but enlightened. How truly he may say, 'Once I was blind, but now I see.'

The divine law continues to be a light to the believer. In his intercourse with the world, he may at times fall from its rectitude and purity, and find himself lowering its high standard to meet the tastes and habits of those around him. But the law continues unchanged. Like the sun in the heavens, it shines on and on, piercing through the mists and shadows by which it may be, for a time, obscured, and pouring its light on every object and scene. By meditating upon the law, the believer imbibes its spirit; corrects the errors into which he has fallen; learns to judge of the world, its opinions, and practices, according to its requirements; and becomes more firm and decided in his opposition to every encroachment on what he considers to be duty. His ideas of what is duty, and what is not, become more vivid and minute; and thus, he is a child of the light, and of the day, and therefore he walks in light. Let us seek then to understand the law of the Lord. Let us be concerned that it may be to us a source of joy, and that enlightened by the saving knowledge of it, it may be 'a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.'

TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God,' Rom. iii. 19.*

THE law was the covenant made in the beginning between God and man; and it continues to be the covenant under which each member of our race enters this fallen world. It is true that man is not now qualified to fulfil this covenant, as he was at first; but this is because he has sinned; sin having incapacitated him for the obedience which the covenant required. The covenant itself, however, still continues in all its original entireness and purity; and is as strictly binding on each descendant of Adam, as it was on that federal head and representative of our race. As all men are under the law, and no man can obey it, all men are guilty before God; and this great fact lies at the foundation of that economy which announces a new and better covenant, designed to supersede the law, and to raise sinners to the hope of life through a Saviour. In this epistle, therefore, the apostle sets himself diligently to establish the doctrine of the depravity of all men, inasmuch as all are under the law, and being unable to obey it, are, without exception, liable to its righteous condemnation.

The doctrine thus asserted by the apostle, applied, as we have said, to all men, Jews as well as Gentiles; but it was felt by the former to be peculiarly offensive. They were ready to admit the truth of the strongest statements regarding the moral character and condition of the Gentiles, whom they regarded with contemptuous pity and dislike. But they considered themselves as occupying a very different place, and insisted that, though the Gentiles were under condemnation, they were not. This opinion was founded on a false estimate of their privileges. These were undoubtedly high. They had been chosen from among the nations of the earth to be the depositories of divine truth. They had been favoured with a peculiar economy, in whose typical institutions the leading doctrines of a new and restorative dispensation were shadowed forth, while they had a revelation of the moral law, pointing out the path of duty, and reminding them of their obligations to pursue it. They had also many temporal blessings connected with the purpose which they were chosen to fulfil. But they were under the law, as all men naturally are; as such, they were liable to condemnation, and from that evil there was no deliverance to them any

more than to the Gentiles, except through the new dispensation, whose leading doctrines the apostle was now anxious to explain. The great advantage of their case was, that those doctrines were already revealed in part to them, through the prophecies and types with which they had been favoured.

The apostle had quoted some passages from the Old Testament scriptures, which expressed in remarkably forcible terms the depravity of human nature; and as a Jew might be ready to say, 'this applies to a Gentile, but not to me,' he declares the quotations to be applicable to all who are under the law, or, in other words, to all men. No one can say, 'this is not true of me.' What the law says, it says of all. It therefore stops the mouth of every man. It leaves no one an inch of ground on which he may build a favourable judgment of himself. It meets the sinner as an accuser. It exhibits its charge in clear and forcible terms; and appealing to the conscience, it compels him to silence. Whatever difference may exist among men, as to the forms in which the depravity of the heart appears, or as to the privileges with which they are favoured, no one can answer the accusations of the divine law, or show that he is exempted from its claims. If a man really knows the law in its purity, he will be silenced by it; and indeed, we may add, that in proportion as his knowledge of it becomes more spiritual and correct, will his self-condemnation be more strict and severe. He will then feel more deeply his short-comings and sins. He will see more distinctly the dark spots which stain his heart and life. The law will be like the direct unshaded sunbeam, showing dust and defilement where before we saw none.

Such then are the impartiality and strictness of the divine law. It stops every mouth. It declares all to be guilty. The various pretexts under which men endeavour to get rid of its conclusions, originate in an erroneous view of their condition and relation to God. They overlook the great fact that the law as a covenant is binding on every man, till he is brought under grace; while they are accompanied by a profound ignorance of the law itself, and a fearful insensibility to its tremendous sanctions. How humbling is the view of our natural state which the divine law supplies! and how widely different from that which multitudes entertain! Men shift the dark picture from themselves. They may admit some slight defects; but they put away the deeper and more disfiguring shades, regarding them as only applicable to men of revolting depravity, with whom they would consider it

insulting to be brought into comparison. Thus was it with the proud Jews, who refused to be placed under the same law with the Gentiles. But the law is the law of our race; of rich and poor, of learned and unlearned, of civilized and savage. It makes the same righteous demand on all, on precisely the same conditions, and denounces against all the same condemnations. There is no respect of persons. One class of men may say to another, 'we are not chargeable with these vices which so deeply stain your lives.' But no man can lift up his head before the accusing condemning law, and say, 'I am not guilty.' No. For 'what the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.'

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#### TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.'* Gal. v. 17.

THESE words express forcibly the state of conflict which exists in the minds of believers. Naturally no mere man can obey the divine law. Sin has caused an utter aversion to its spirit, as well as entailed a liability to its course. God is dethroned, and sin reigns. When the sinner becomes a subject of grace, this state of things is, in some measure, reversed. God once more reigns, as he did in unfallen Adam; and sin is the object of hatred. The sinner is pardoned and accepted through faith in Christ; so that he is freed from condemnation, and has filial access to the divine presence; and as a change of character suited to this change of state, he now desires to yield the obedience which the law requires, and to shun all those acts which the law condemns. In short, he is a new creature, as well as a justified sinner. But there is this difference, that while his justification is complete, as complete as if he were already an inmate of heaven's palace, his renovation is partial. Sanctification is a work, while justification is an act. The latter is perfect the moment it takes place; the former is progressive, and continues to extend, till it is completed in the believer's meetness for heaven.

Hence in the believing mind there are two principles; one is spiritual and pure; the other is carnal and corrupt. The former is expressed in this passage by the term *flesh*; the latter by the

term Spirit. The term flesh means the corrupt nature; the term Spirit, the Holy Spirit, or the spiritual principle which is his fruit, of God. The latter has the ascendancy, but the former strives against him, and in this strife, it at times prevails, involving the believer in shame and sorrow. In some Christians, the ascendancy of the spiritual principle is more decided than in others; and hence their religious experience is more equable and calm. But in all there is a conflict; the two principles are irreconcilably hostile; and as long as they exist in the same nature, there will, and must be strife. In the unrenowned mind there is comparatively little conflict, because sin meets with no opposition except from the natural conscience, which being confused and indistinct in its perceptions, is, for the most part, far from being troublesome. As conscience is deadened and seared, the despotic power of sin becomes more absolute; till at last the sinner is, in reality, its unresisting slave, and then he sinks into the torpor and awful silence of consummate spiritual death. In the believer, again, the implantation of a spiritual principle prompts to active and vigorous resistance to sin; and though, as that principle is strengthened and matured, it will become more effectual and easy in its operation, yet there is always more or less of conflict, and this conflict forms an important part of the discipline which prepares for glory. The believer would wish to obey the divine law; he is persuaded that law is holy, just, and good; nay, he readily admits that obedience to it is inseparably connected with his own highest interests, and that it were worth rendering, even for the blessedness which it tends to produce. But he is drawn back by the corrupt tendencies of his heart. He is like a man pulled in opposite directions. He would prefer going entirely in the one direction, but the corruption which dwells within will not let him; and thus his movements are irregular, contradictory, and exhibit an aspect of indecision, which grieves and humbles him. The power of evil within is increased by the arts of enemies, and the influence of temptations from without.

The conflict thus occasioned is at times very violent; and it most conclusively shows that the whole heart is not given to God, and to the claims of his law. If God reigned with the supremacy which belongs to him, no rival would for a moment influence or mislead; and if his law were loved and honoured as the expressed will of a Being of infinite purity, truth, and goodness, its minutest requirements would command an instant and cheerful obedience. But

the heart is divided. Grace so far determines the controversy for God, but it does not at once destroy sin. It leaves it in the heart; deeply fixed, watchful, malignant, inveterate; and thus the principle of new obedience is surrounded with unfavourable and hostile circumstances, against which it must earnestly contend, otherwise it will perish. O! how often it seems ready to die! Borne down and harassed by ceaseless opposition, it seems as if it would never more rise up again, and strive for its rightful place. But the Spirit who implants it, watches over it; in the midst of seeming weakness, he secretly imparts strength; and after many struggles and changes, it comes forth with a vigour and fulness, which prove that the trials of the past have been useful, while they render the promise of the future most cheering. The Spirit suffers not his own work to be frustrated. He cherishes the life which he bestows;—protects the principle which he implants. In the meantime, the duty of believers is to cleave to the truth and to the law; to declare for God, and against sin; to follow out the leadings of the Spirit, and to be watchful in avoiding whatever would frustrate them. The help of the Spirit is necessary every moment, otherwise sin will hurry us into deeds which we feel to be sinful, but to which we are driven by a force, which we cannot withstand. Let us be thankful, that in this course of conflict the help of the Spirit is freely promised, and is always near. 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?'

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TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one,'* Psal. xiv. 2, 3.

It is a very awful and humbling truth, that the eye of the holy and righteous God is unceasingly fixed on the conduct of men. He occupies, as it were, a place of commanding elevation from which he looks down upon the nations and families of the earth; and in all the immense multitude, there is not one whose heart is hid from his sight, or whose most secret deeds he does not observe. His throne in heaven is as a watch-tower of observation; and while sinners are rejoicing in their security, and hurrying on in their wicked courses

without regret or fear, he is the unseen witness of all they think, say, and do. When we consider his infinite abhorrence of sin, and his inflexible justice, this doctrine may well alarm us. Who, among us, is able to bear the scrutiny of his eye. If we, whose consciences are so full of darkness, yet feel constrained to condemn ourselves, what must we appear to him, before whom the very heavens are not clean? He has not a mere general knowledge of our spiritual state, but he sees us as we are, nothing hid, or partially observed; but the whole naked truth disclosed, —all our sins, and all their aggravations.

The Psalmist represents the Creator as deeply interested in the conduct and condition of men. No delusion is more common than that which the wise man has so concisely and forcibly expressed in the words, 'Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' It is the mere device of the sinful heart. God is silent, as discipline, for the most part, requires he should be; for were he uniformly or even often to interfere judicially, discipline would be at an end. But he is not indifferent to what men, or any of his intelligent creatures do. Wherever he sees sin, he abhors it, and he sees it, wherever it is. Sinners would wish God to be indifferent to their sins, and therefore they believe him to be so. But he cannot be indifferent; his holiness and his justice equally forbid it. His abhorrence of sin is the same, at all times, and in all places. Sin is the 'abominable thing which he hates.' Hence we find various occasions mentioned in scripture, on which God is represented as specially observing the wickedness of men. Thus before the flood, when there was a time of fearful depravity and unbelief, it is said that 'God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' In like manner, before the destruction of Sodom, we find him saying, 'Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.'

The Psalmist represents God, as looking down from heaven to see what the moral state and conduct of men are. This is a mode of speech borrowed from the ordinary language of men, with a view to convey a more distinct and vivid impression of God's watchful observation of human actions. He does not need either the report of a witness, or the confession of the sinner himself,

to make him acquainted with the state of the heart, or the tenor of the life. His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth. Hell is naked before him, and destruction has no covering. But, as an earthly prince leaves the metropolis of his kingdom, and goes forth into its distant provinces, that he may ascertain by actual observation the condition and wants of his subjects; so the infinite Jehovah is represented as withdrawing his regards from the other portions of his immense empire, and looking down with a steadfast and scrutinizing gaze on the conduct of men. And how dreadful the result of the scrutiny! In all the crowd of human beings, he sees not one acquainted with his real character, or disposed to seek his favour as life. Not one! for hear his description of men—'They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.'

These are appalling words. When man was created, his own conscience pointed out the path of duty; and what conscience sanctioned, the heart approved. Then the life was as a bright mirror reflecting the dispositions of the mind; man held on in a holy and consistent course, swerving not to the right hand or to the left; duty was the joy and strength of his nature. Now that man is fallen, the path of duty is still the same; but no one walks in it. All are wandering in devious tracks, neither willing nor able to return. The divine law points out the path, but men habitually transgress the law. They are polluted and vile. Sin has not only led them away from God and holiness, but has marred all their beauty, covering them with loathsomeness in the sight of pure creatures. Their favourite thoughts are mean and debasing. They glory in that which is their shame. 'God has given them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts.' Like the leper under the ancient economy, who was to rend his clothes, make bare his head, and put a covering upon his upper lip, they may well cry out, 'unclean, unclean.' They deceive themselves, no doubt, into the belief that their characters are not so defective, nor their lives so sinful, as the scriptures affirm; but not one of them acts as the law requires. Not one of all the millions of our race is animated by that supreme love to God, which is the principle of all pure obedience. Not one fulfils the requirements of the divine law, even in what may be termed the humblest and most ordinary branches of duty. There is a radical defect,—an universal taint; and in short, to make use of the concise but most emphatic language of scripture, which alone describes justly the moral state of man, 'The whole

head is sick, and the whole heart faint.' There are differences among men, as compared with one another; but 'there is none that doeth good, no, not one.'

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 TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

'*They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,*' Matt. ix. 12.

SIN is often compared in scripture to a disease. Disease disorders the constitution of the body, unfits it for proper action, wastes its strength, causes pain, and turns the very life-blood into pollution. Similar are the effects of sin in the soul. It has disturbed the right exercise and direction of its powers, indisposed it for the pursuit and enjoyment of those things which were originally most agreeable to it, impaired its moral power, embittered its pleasures, and spread its deadly taint over all its thoughts, affections, and desires. Indeed no single disease is a fit type of it; for disease, for the most part, is confined to a part of the body, and it is through its violence in that part that it affects the system; whereas sin taints and wastes the whole moral nature, leaving no part of it exempt from its defiling and desolating influence. The leprosy was its most appropriate type; as it was spread over the whole body, was not only most painful to its victim, but extremely loathsome to all who looked upon him, and was deemed incurable by human skill and care. We may justly describe the effects of sin in our nature in the language of the prophet, when speaking of the spiritual state of the ancient church: 'From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.'

There is need for a physician then, urgent, immediate need. This moral disease is wasting the soul, and if not checked and removed, will end in eternal death. How much reason we have to be thankful that a physician has been promised, and the means of certain cure revealed! We would suppose that, being diseased, men would immediately apply for the exercise of his skill, and that the most earnest attention would be given to the rules prescribed for the recovery of spiritual health. When disease attacks the body, men lose no time in calling the physician to their aid; and when he waits by the sick-bed, his countenance is narrowly watched, his words are carefully considered, the very tones of his voice are dwelt upon, and his commands are faithfully obeyed. But they act far otherwise,

with respect to the disease of the soul. They are ignorant of its existence; they imagine themselves to be whole; they reject the offer of a physician; they turn away from the doctrine of an efficacious medicine. When it is said, 'they that be whole need not a physician,' the meaning is not, that there are any whole. The human race are, without exception, deeply, fatally tainted with disease. Sin has poisoned the very fountains of life. But many, nay, all men, naturally imagine themselves to be whole. They entertain most favourable ideas of their character and state. They feel not that the moral constitution is disordered, its powers mis-directed, its privileges lost; and though they are at times conscious of much misery and disquietude, yet they consider this to be accidental, not inevitable,—to spring from transient and physical, not from permanent and moral causes. They see no deformity or defilement in themselves. They resemble men in the delirium of a fever, who, at the very moment the disease is exhausting their strength, and rushing on to a fatal crisis, suppose they are fit for all the ordinary functions and duties of life; while, to an intelligent spectator, they seem most urgently to require the care of a physician, and the prompt use of medicine, to snatch them from the grave.

The *sick* are they who have been awakened to a consciousness of spiritual disease, and to a lively apprehension of its dreadful consequences. By the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the doctrines revealed in scripture regarding the fallen and corrupt state of our nature, have been savingly applied; and as when the Spirit teaches, he also renews, sin, now seen to pollute the soul, is loathed and shrunk from as the prolific source of all evil. Its taint is felt to be death. There is an intense desire for the restoration of spiritual health. In this state of mind, the cry of conviction, which will not be silenced, is uttered,—'what must I do to be saved?' As the sick, conscious of pain, and apprehensive of danger, send for the physician, and make known their case to him; so awakened sinners feel how necessary are the care of the spiritual physician, and the application of the only efficacious remedy of their spiritual disease. Sometimes, it is true, there are long passages of troubled experience before the awakened sinner is brought to Christ; and during the continuance of these, he is frequently misled both as to the physician and the remedy. He turns to the world, or he trusts to himself; and he imagines that in the maxims and pleasures of the former, or in his own good deeds, he has found the remedy, which will give him

health. All this is delusion; and when it is felt to be so, the sinner is shut up to Christ, and applies to him. He is the physician of the soul, and his blood the grand remedy of sin. He came to heal not merely those who were oppressed with bodily disease, but those who were groaning under the power of sin; and not more effectually did he say to the sick, 'Take up thy bed, and walk,' than he says to the awakened sinner, 'Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee.' What a wise and condescending physician he is; and how infallibly efficacious is the remedy which he applies! No case is so complicated or difficult, as to baffle his skill and care. He waits to be called. He is always near, and always kind. Divinely qualified as he is to cure, he yet cures all who apply to him. If any perish, it is because they will not avail themselves of the offer of his skill. 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.'

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,'* 1 John i. 8.

THE scriptures very clearly assert the doctrine of the universal depravity of men. The language, indeed, made use of by the inspired writers on this subject, is remarkably strong. 'We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin.' 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' 'There is none righteous, no, not one.' The experience of the awakened sinner confirms the truth of this language, strong as it is; for he feels the power of sin to be deeply fixed in his heart, and is conscious that in thought, word, and deed, he comes fearfully short of the requirements of the divine law. Men, however, are prone to think most favourably of themselves; and, till they are brought under the convincing work of the Spirit, they are even heard to say, that they have no sin. They may not affirm, in so many words, that they are perfect, free from all infirmities and defects; but they regard themselves as generally pure, fit to bear the scrutiny of the Creator, and warranted to expect his approving sentence. They probably look upon those criminals, who are the outcasts of society, as polluted with sin. These, however, are, in their estimation, separated from them by an almost immeasurable distance, and are therefore considered as a class with whom they have no sympathy; as to their habits, their own have no resemblance. Sin, as polluting and ruin-

ous, has not tainted themselves. Virtue sheds around them its soft and attractive lustre. Other men may be sinners; but they, at the very worst, are merely frail.

There is a fearful self-deception, in the view of their own characters, which multitudes thus entertain. Conscience, no doubt, has been sadly darkened, and the idea of pure moral excellence lost. Still, there is enough of light to show that sin has degraded and defiled the best of men; and, if the whispers of conscience were attended to, very distinct intimations would be heard that there was much in thought, word, and deed, which must offend the righteous Judge of all. More especially, this may be said, where the truths of scripture are known. But it is part of the corruption which we inherit, that self-love has acquired an undue and most dangerous ascendancy. Its influence is strikingly shown in the flattering estimate which men morally form of their own characters, and in the exaggerated worth which they ascribe to their daily conduct. What is not gross in their lives, is not only good, but surpassingly so; what is good, according to the standard of the world, becomes lustrous; and the character is as a polished surface, where, beyond a few irregularities, or insignificant fissures, there is nothing to mar its splendour, or to impair its entireness. What a virtuous man the sinner often supposes himself to be! He is compassed about with the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Instead of being the victim of disease, he is full of health; instead of being weak, he is conscious of strength for duty, and of magnanimity for trial. Self-love has hid all his sins and short-comings; while it has given to whatever is plausible, in his character and life, a surpassing consistency and beauty.

This is to believe a lie. Conscience and the word of God are both declared to be false by these views, which the sinner entertains of himself. They are altogether delusive. While the delusion continues, the sinner is prevented from receiving benefit from the scheme of grace; for that scheme proceeds on the fact, that all men are sinners, and requires a profound conviction of this fact, in all who would enjoy an interest in it. Sometimes we see the sinner thus blinded to his real character, till the season of grace is gone. His whole life is a dream of infatuation and ignorance. He resembles a very poor and wretched man, who imagines himself to be rich and happy; and who, when offered a provision for his wants and comfort, turns away from those who make the offer, as enemies, who calumniate his worth, and seek to destroy his peace. The gold

of Christ has no value to him. The peace of faith is unnecessary.

In such a man, there is no truth. The whole economy of grace is unintelligible to him. He can see no necessity for, and therefore, no wisdom in it. There must be the teaching of the Spirit to impart a just view of his character and state. Till he is made to know what sin really is, to feel its power in his own heart, and to apprehend the danger to which he is consequently exposed, he never can care for the truth of the gospel, or be brought to acknowledge its suitability to his need. He must see his vileness in the glass of the law; he must be convinced of his absolute poverty in respect of pure enjoyment; and no longer crying out in the vanity of a boastful spirit, 'I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,' he must be made to exclaim, 'Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee?' 'Lord, save me, I perish.' Enlightened by the teaching of the Spirit, he sees himself to be one mass of corruption; the gold is become dim; the most fine gold is changed. He wonders that he should have been so blind to his sinfulness and shame. The truth of scripture humbles him in the dust; and he cannot rest, till he finds a resting-place of safety in the knowledge and belief of the finished work of Christ. All this is the effect of divine teaching; nothing but the illumination of the Spirit can break up and for ever scatter the dream of self-deception, and cause the truth of scripture to be felt in all its abasing and alarming power.

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,'* Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.

THIS prayer implies the importance of self-knowledge, and the difficulty of attaining it. 'Know thyself,' is a maxim which was acknowledged to be important, even by the wise among the heathen; and indeed, we cannot reflect upon the constitution of our nature as accountable, without perceiving that this species of knowledge should take precedence of every other; since it is necessary to enable us to understand the motives by which we are influenced, our principles of action, and our relation to the infinite Creator, with whom we have to do. We are endowed with consciousness, which reports to us all the dangers that take place in the world within; and the highest

use of this faculty is to supply us with facts, by which we may ascertain our moral character and state. Conscience sits in the breast as a judge; each action, with the principle from which it springs, passes in review before it; and according to its decision, the action is approved or condemned, is a source of peace or a subject of regret. In the original state of man, there was perfect harmony among all the powers of his nature. Pure actions flowed from pure principles; conscience approved; and peace filled the heart. Then all was clear, bright, happy; there was no conflict to agitate, and no confusion to perplex; the reports of consciousness were simple and direct, and the facts reported were holy and consistent.

It is as necessary as ever that man should know himself; for though he is now fallen and corrupt, yet the constitution of his nature is the same as before, and self-knowledge is indispensable that he may understand his moral character and state. The highest exercise of reason is its application to moral truth, and the most interesting moral truth is that which relates to ourselves. If we are ignorant of ourselves, we frustrate the very design of our constitution, and deprive reason of its highest functions. But while the importance of self-knowledge is necessary, it is most difficult to attain it. It is not now as when man had only to look within, and the state of the heart was naked to his view. There was an absolute singleness in the constitution then, which prevented all confusion or mistake. But man is now corrupt; there is a division in the heart; sin reigns, no doubt, naturally, but it is, in some measure, opposed by conscience; and though the opposition be feeble and ineffectual, yet it still leads to confusion, deceit, and consequently error. The heart often loves what conscience condemns; the heart prevails, but conscience offers opposition; and, as opposition occasions uneasiness, it is desirable to overcome or silence it, and for this purpose false pretexts are resorted to by the sinner.

Hence the delusions which prevail in the unrenewed heart. An action is bad; conscience condemns it. The sinner tries to persuade himself that it was inadvertently done, or under the influence of sudden and powerful temptation, or from a good motive, or in circumstances which made it almost unavoidable. Conscience is soothed; its opposition ceases. A duty is neglected, and conscience condemns again. The sinner tries to persuade himself that the neglect was apparent, not wilful; that there was a variety of engagements, leading to confusion, a want of

time, or a call to do something else, or simply, a vague resolution to be more careful in the time to come. Conscience is soothed, and silenced again. The heart thus shows itself to be deceitful; and self-knowledge becomes unattainable.

In the renewed mind, the conflict is still greater than in the carnal and corrupt. Sin is cast down from its ascendancy, and holy principles reign. But sin still retains considerable power, and hence there is often a keen struggle. As in the heat of strife, we often lose sight of many things, which, in our calmer moments, are perfectly obvious and distinct; so, in the conflicts of spiritual principle with the corrupt inclinations of the heart, our feelings, motives, and desires become confused; and when the believer proceeds to examine himself regarding them, he finds it extremely difficult, and even impossible to arrive at the truth. Conscience, no doubt, in him is more enlightened than in the sinner; but still there is a strong tendency to self-deception, conscience is misled, pronounces wrong decisions, and is found to approve, when it should condemn, as well as to convince, when it should continue to restrain. It is difficult indeed to know the heart; but it is most important; most important for the sinner, as otherwise he will not feel his need of Christ; most important for the believer, as otherwise he may be lulled into false security, betrayed into many sins, and thrown off his guard in the hour of temptation.

The prayer of the Psalmist shows his anxiety to know himself, and, at the same time, his conviction, that this knowledge was unattainable, without the help of God. He had made repeated attempts to come at the truth regarding the state of his heart; but they had all been fruitless, and now he implored the aid of him, to whom the heart is as an open book, every line and letter of which he can trace at a glance. The prayer is one which all Christians must often feel to be appropriate. After they have endeavoured to search out the state of their motives and principles, after they have weighed themselves in the balances of the sanctuary, they are still conscious that there is much only imperfectly ascertained, much of which the estimate is incorrect, much that has escaped observation, or merely been suspected to exist. They go to him, who alone can effectually assist them. 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

#### TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members,' Rom. vii. 23.*

THIS is, in some measure, the experience of every Christian. There is a conflict, it is true, even in the breast of the sinner; but it is far more feeble and undecided than that of which the believer is often conscious. Conscience, in the sinner, only opposes sin in its more gross and aggravated forms; and seems to take no cognizance whatever of the principle of sin, enmity against God, and consequently, the entire exclusion of him from the thoughts of the heart. It has been so injured by sin that it is very incorrect and undecided in the judgments which it pronounces; in many instances, not condemning sin at all; even when it does condemn it, doing so feebly; while it may be so weakened and darkened by a long course of sin, as to cease to reprove actions against which it once remonstrated, and to become comparatively torpid and dead. Sinful habits have a searing effect upon it, insomuch that though at one period it occasioned conflicts in the heart by its reproaches and censures, at a subsequent period it became indifferent. Conscience, like the rest of our nature, is in ruins. Enough of it remains to show what it once was, and to form a hindrance to the absolute and undisturbed ascendancy of evil.

There is comparatively little conflict in the unrenewed mind, and that little becomes less, as the power of sin increases. The language of the apostle applies, in its full force, to believers only. Conscience in them has been enlightened by divine teaching, so that it is greatly more sensitive and acute than it is naturally; and the principle of obedience has been established in ascendancy in the heart. This ascendancy however, is not complete. Sin is unquestionably dethroned; it is no longer the supreme power. But it possesses considerable influence, watches for opportunities of resistance and strife, and occasionally breaks forth with bold and successful violence against the new kingdom which grace has set up. There are, in short, two rival principles in the heart, the principle of obedience and the principle of rebellion; the former is paramount, but the latter strives against it; and as it is the natural principle of the heart, and reigned, before grace overthrew it, over all its powers and affections, it often causes a severe conflict. It is 'the law in the members, warring against the law of the mind.'

We have said, that sin is at times successful, in striving against the new principle of obedience, which the Spirit has implanted in the heart. Hence, the believer is occasionally hurried even into the commission of gross sin, sin thereby attaining a temporary triumph, and regaining its lost ascendancy. The conflicts, thus experienced, form no inconsiderable part of that discipline, through which believers are appointed to pass in preparation for eternal life. By means of them, divine principles are rooted more firmly in the soul, as trees are fixed more deeply in the soil by passing storms; and the believer acquires a facility and vigour in the exercise of faith, and the performance of duty, not otherwise to be attained. While they continue, they may have the effect of obscuring the evidence of his being in a state of grace, and thereby may cause much uneasiness and doubt; but, as the Spirit always, sooner or later, makes them end in the establishment of holiness and faith, they ought to be considered as symptoms of spiritual health, and not as signs of decay and death. The believer, shaken and agitated by them for a season, often comes forth out of them, strong and joyful; while the deliverance imparted to him, forms a passage of privilege in his history, on which he looks back with lively gratitude, as a pledge of safety and triumph in the time to come.

It is easy to see, that these conflicts are very useful, as reminding the believer, of what he is prone to forget, that his state on earth is one of imperfection and trial. A course of temporal prosperity has too frequently the effect of leading us to suppose ourselves independent of divine providence, and of inflaming our vanity and pride; and so a course of uniform spiritual privilege is apt to lull us into security, to relax our diligence and zeal, and to weaken the feeling of dependence on divine aid. We need trials to keep us humble, to quicken our apprehensions of danger, to stimulate to watchfulness, and to rouse to prayer. They disclose to us the weak points of our character; they remind us of the deceitfulness of sin, and the power and malignity of our enemies; and above all, they strengthen our conviction of the necessity of grace, without which we can do nothing. Grace made us free from the captivity of sin at first. Grace alone can enable us to maintain the freedom which it confers. Grace must contribute to the increase of knowledge, of spirituality, of affection, and of heavenliness of desire, otherwise its own noble work will be frustrated, the hideous dominion of evil restored, and the blessings of redemption prevented for ever.

There is no perfection here. Unruffled and abiding peace belongs to a higher state, in which there will be no sin. As long as we are on earth, there will be war; and, only when we reach the heights of glory, will that which 'is perfect be come, and that which is in part be done away.' In the meantime, we must fight the good fight of faith; we must put, and keep, on, the whole armour of God; and trusting in that grace, which, while it is all-sufficient, is freely promised, we must strive for the masteries, rejoicing that all our sufficiency is of God. 'Be not weary in well-doing; for, in due season, you will reap, if you faint not.' 'Greater is he who is for you, than all they that are against you.' In all, we shall at last be 'more than conquerors, through him that loved us.

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#### TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 24.*

THIS is a remarkable exclamation to be uttered by a Christian, and that Christian the apostle of the Gentiles. When the angels announced the introduction of the new dispensation in the birth of the Saviour, they are represented as singing this song, as they hovered above the plains of Bethlehem, 'Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, good will to men.' In perfect conformity with this description of the effects of the gospel was our Lord's invitation to sinners, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' and his assurance to his disciples before his death, 'Peace I leave you, my peace give I unto you.' Peace was thus set forth as the peculiar blessing of his religion; as the Psalmist indeed had expressed it under the ancient dispensation, 'Great peace have they who love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.' It seems at variance with these views of the privileges of Christians to represent them as wretched; not only so, but wretched to such an extent, that they are ready to sink under the burden of their misery.

The difference appears still more strange and irreconcilable, when we consider 'who it was that uttered the exclamation, 'O wretched man that I am.' The writer of these words was not an ordinary Christian, who might be supposed to be limited in his knowledge, obscure in his views of divine truth, greatly deficient in zeal, spirituality, and courage; and who, not having been much or severely tried, held his principles

loosely, and therefore derived less comfort from them than they were fitted to impart. He was the chief among the apostles. He was a 'chosen vessel to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.' Naturally distinguished by his endowments, he was most abundantly enriched with grace, and was honoured to be the instrument of more spiritual good to mankind than any other, even of the inspired servants of our Lord. His writings contain the most complete and argumentative exposition of the leading doctrines of the gospel; and they furnish indubitable evidence, that his practical excellence kept pace with his speculative knowledge. He was a burning and shining light, not only as a minister, but as a Christian. He stood forth in a singularly pure age of the church, as not less eminent for personal worth, than for public usefulness. No where are such lofty expressions of vigorous faith, sublime devotion, steadfast assurance, and lively hope, to be found as in his writings. His trials were most painful and varied, as well as almost incessant. If in any one we had expected to find the perfect peace of believing, most certainly it would have been in this wonderfully gifted and holy man. Yet he cries out, 'O wretched man that I am!'

The reason of the exclamation is to be found in the existence of two opposite principles in the heart of the believer,—the spiritual, and the corrupt. These at times are brought into active and keen collision; and strife necessarily follows, together with disquietude, its inseparable concomitant. The renovation, undergone by the believer, implies the overthrow, but not the entire destruction of sin. It still lurks in the heart. It is ever ready to break forth, sometimes suddenly and with remarkable effect; and when the believer, trusting to a security which has been long continued, is off his guard, it surprises him into error, or doubt, or inconsistency; his heart is turned into a scene of disorder; his peace is disturbed, and many fears start up. He had perhaps supposed, that after passing through a variety of struggles, and persevering in a course of regular duty, he had succeeded, in so effectually scotching the serpent, that it would not any more greatly trouble him. But he finds he has been mistaken; that his enemy, though silent and inert for a season, has considerable power; and that there remains a burden, which he must bear with patience,—an obstacle to progress, which he must strive to surmount.

This exclamation does not imply that the believer has no real peace. Paul prays that God 'may fill' the converts at Rome 'with all joy

and peace in believing,' and writing to the Philippians, he says, 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' Christ gives peace to his followers, a pure and abiding peace: but this peace is not perfect, nor is it beyond the reach of disturbance. It is peace enjoyed in circumstances of peril. It is peace, of which the course is broken by intervals of agitation and strife. The peace of the believer can never be perfect, till sin is finally destroyed. As long as it remains, it is felt to be offensive, loathsome, and degrading; and, as the believer advances in the divine life, this feeling becomes more painful. The more spiritual he is, the more does he hate sin, shrink from its pollution, and dread its power. It is a body of death. It is all corrupt, —all ruinous,—all destructive.

The language of the apostle has been supposed to allude to what was sometimes inflicted as a punishment in ancient times, the chaining of a dead body to a living person. This was unspeakably offensive; death and life brought into contact, corruption and health. Sin, adhering to the believer, grieves and distresses him. He would shake it off,—he would be free from it; but it is part of his discipline that he must bear it. He is in the condition of one whose tastes and dispositions are above his circumstances; who has much in himself, as well as in his connection with others, to try his temper; and who looks forward with earnest longing to a time, when he will drop the burden which now oppresses him, enter on a state in harmony with his spiritual affections and desires, and be for ever freed from what is offensive and painful in the discipline of faith. This longing becomes more earnest, as his sanctification advances; and it is accompanied, as the context shows it was in the case of the apostle, with lively gratitude for the deliverance made sure by the Saviour's work, and with delightful hopes, which embrace the full blessedness of heaven. The imprisonment of the soul, in its present state, is degrading; the burden of indwelling sin enfeebles and hinders; but he thanks God through Jesus Christ his Lord, because the day of his redemption draweth nigh, and, that day arrived, his fetters will be struck off, and his burden left behind. He will rise to the region of spiritual freedom and eternal joy; and will enter on a career of improvement, which no strife will interrupt, and no trials embitter.

## TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse,'* Job ix. 20.

As man was originally made under the covenant of the law, and his constitution was adapted to the obedience it required; so, though he can no longer fulfil the terms of that covenant, we still find him manifesting a strong tendency to trust in works, as the ground, of his acceptance and peace. This tendency appears in all, and is only overcome by divine grace. It is what we term the self-righteous spirit, which every man brings with him into the world, and which forms one of the most formidable hinderances to the full and cordial reception of divine truth. Every where, and under all the different forms of government, and modes of education, which prevail in society, this spirit shows itself. Where, we may ask, is the man, who does not seek to justify himself by the good actions which he does, and who does not suppose himself capable of doing all that is necessary to please God and to secure his own happiness? Hence, when the humbling doctrines of the gospel are preached, they are felt to be offensive; they speak of a remedy, when there is no disease; they offer salvation, when there is no bondage. The sinner has need of nothing; and yet the gospel says, that Christ became poor to make him rich. The gospel commands the sinner to go and wash in the Jordan; and the sinner turns contemptuously away, exclaiming, 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?'

The high estimate of himself, which the sinner entertains, continues, till he is humbled to the dust by the Spirit, under convictions of sin. The Spirit, as it were, takes the mirror of the law, and puts it into the sinner's hand; and when he looks into it, he is amazed and overwhelmed by the view of his own deformity and corruptions. He sees himself to be vile,—vile to an extent, which before he never dreamt of, or imagined; his character, before plausible, is now a mass of pollution; his life, before consistent and becoming, is now a tissue of acts of rebellion and ingratitude; there is not only nothing to admire in himself, but nothing to be satisfied with. What was, at one time, considered as the exaggerated language of scripture, is now felt to be appropriate and just; and he wonders at the infatuation which could ever have led him to suppose, that he was any thing but a rebel against God, and an heir of wrath.

His own mouth condemns him. If, after this

renewing and illuminating work of the Spirit, he were to attempt to extenuate the criminality of sinful actions, or to judge of himself favourably, he would be compelled to say, that he was in error. His conscience would reprove him. That conscience, at an earlier period, would probably have been silent, or careless; but it is one important effect of the Spirit's teaching and renewing power, that conscience knows better than before what the law requires, and is much more sensitive with regard to the violation of that law. It is true, the Spirit imparts no knowledge, but what is contained in the written word; but that knowledge, instead of being dead speculation, is carried home in living power. It is made vivid, definite, authoritative. The effect of this work of the Spirit on the mind, resembles the introduction of a man into a new world, where he sees new objects, new relations, new sources of pleasure. In one sense, the objects and relations were always there; but he did not see them; and now, as by the withdrawing of a curtain, they burst in freshness and glory upon his view. While conscience has thus an immense field opened up to its observation, the Spirit further renders it acute and active. It is no longer sluggish and dull, as it once was,—slow to decide, and reluctant to condemn; but it is prompt in its decision, vigilant in reproof, bold in censure, and compels the believer, when self-righteous thoughts arise, to condemn himself.

It may seem extravagant to say, that the sinner should ever suppose himself perfect. Where is the man, who says he is perfect? This, in one sense, is true; but you will find multitudes, who suppose themselves perfect in the sense, that the law has no claims against them. They are, no doubt, ignorant reasoners; but they flatter themselves into the belief, that they are well enough, need not seek to be better, and may safely continue as they are. It is only, as we have said, when the Spirit convinces of sin, when he makes the law a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that this delusive view of our spiritual state is broken up, and can no longer be entertained. Then, there is sin in all we do, and think, and say. Then, there is not only no ground of confidence in any thing we have done, or do; but matter of condemnation crowding upon us from every scene, and every occasion. When a man is brought into this state of mind,—most distressing and painful, but most important, as preliminary to the future comforting operations of grace, nothing but a sufficient refuge will comfort or soothe. It is, at this stage, that Christ bursts upon us, in all his fulness and power. He is the refuge

from the storm,—the covert from the wind. He has ample merit for the justification of all who believe; and, looking to him, the fearful problem of the sinner's guilt and danger is completely solved. The law has no sentence, the judgment-seat no thunders. God in Christ is love; his anger quenched; his righteousness vindicated, and his rich, overflowing grace made completely and for ever sure. What a change to the sinner! From a state of death, he is raised to one of life,—from despair, to hope,—from danger, to security,—from misery, to peace and joy.

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TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,'*  
Isa. vi. 5.

THE vision briefly described in the preceding context, is unspeakably sublime. It seems to have been beheld in the temple, and to have been vouchsafed to the prophet, with a view to reassure him, in a time of abounding guilt and impiety, of the authority of his commission, as well as to convey a deep impression of the majesty and holiness of the divine nature. The Creator is represented as appearing with the pomp and splendour of an eastern monarch. He is seated on a throne, and the throne is high and lifted up; not merely a seat of dignity, but so elevated, as at once to excite the admiration of all who approached it. He is further described as wearing a costly and magnificent robe, of which the train filled the temple. Near him, and around him, were numerous bright attendants; 'each with six wings, four of which were used to express humility by covering their faces and feet, and two were kept for flight, intimating their readiness for active service. From these attendants, an anthem of praise alternately rose, brief but expressive, setting forth the infinite holiness and majesty of the Creator, and exhibiting the earth as specially filled with the effulgent manifestation of his glory. The effect of this anthem was fitted to inspire intense awe; for the very foundations of the temple were shaken; while a cloud of smoke filled the building, as if to veil the insufferable brightness. The prophet was overwhelmed by the vision, a conviction of his own utter unworthiness rushed upon him; and unable to check the expression of his feelings, he cried out, 'Woe is me! for I am undone: because

I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'

One of the principal sources of the mistakes into which men fall in forming an estimate of their characters, is, that their ideas of excellence are taken from the standards and examples which prevail in the world. The apostle refers to this, when he says, 'we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.' When we look no further than the opinions and conduct of our fellow-creatures, we find it easy to accommodate the idea of excellence to our own tastes and desires; for in these we see it only in broken and indistinct portions, presenting no approach either to the entireness, or the splendour, which belongs to it, as reflected in the glass of the law. As a man, sojourning with outlaws, finds it easy to soothe his conscience, and maintain a character for virtue, even although his daily life be stained with robbery, cruelty, extortion, and murder,—crimes, the least suspicion of which, would drive him from the least fastidious haunts of civilized society; so fallen corrupt men, judging of themselves by each other's conduct and rules, are satisfied with a measure of virtue, which, in the light of the divine law, is no better than polluted worthless rags,—a revolting deformity,—a heap of ruins. Just views of the divine nature show, how disfigured and defaced is the image of virtue, which men, in their ignorance and corruption, set up; and supply conceptions of holiness and rectitude, before which all human excellence is utterly dim. There is nothing so humbling, as a full and clear view of the perfections of God. The law, no doubt, is an expression of the divine will; and, as such, is perfectly righteous, and holy, and good. But in God himself, we behold the law outshone; personality giving intensity to its pure spirit; and infinitude branching its brightness out into a field of glory, from which we are in haste to turn away, as too much to be borne. From the vastness and splendour of divine excellence, the renewed mind shrinks, as if overpowered by the sense of its own unworthiness and shame. Hence we find Job, when favoured with a vision of the Almighty, exclaiming, '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.'

The prophet was an accepted worshipper, and had, no doubt, on many former occasions, received encouraging and delightful tokens of the divine

regard. It might be that so elevating had been his joy, that he had been led to exclaim with Moses, 'Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.' But on the present occasion, the holiness of God was chiefly brought before him; and the sense of his own sinfulness overpowered every other feeling. He felt himself to be so vile, that he was at a loss for words to express his shame. It is a profitable exercise to the believer to place himself occasionally, by a strong effort of faith, in the full brightness of the divine presence. There is no exercise so fitted effectually to abase, and to correct those false estimates of moral excellence, into which we are incessantly in danger of being betrayed, in our intercourse with our fellow-men. The abasement thus produced casts down to the earth; but it is always followed by peace, comfort, and joy. Grace is richly given. Abasement brings us near to Christ; and puts us into a right frame and disposition for appreciating the infinite suitability of his office and work. It is at the moment our own vileness takes away all confidence and hope, that our need of Christ is most deeply felt; and, then too, we are best qualified to understand the wisdom and the completeness of the provision made for our guilty race.

The divine presence may be said to be brought near in the person and work of our Lord. We properly enough speak of these, as most marvellously displaying the love of God to men; but the truth is, they manifest the whole of the divine perfections, the justice, truth, and holiness of God, not less than his compassion and love. The goodness of God in redemption is a goodness to be feared. A just view of Christ is a full contemplation of God, not only as our Lord is, in his own nature divine, but as in his own work the glory of the eternal Godhead most brightly shines,—holiness opposing sin, justice protecting law, truth fulfilling claims, and love shedding a softening and soothing radiance upon the whole. At the foot of the cross, the believer, beholding in it the divine holiness and justice, is often ready to cry out, —'Woe is me! for I am undone.' 'If God hate sin with such a perfect hatred,—if he be so jealous of the honour of his law, and so righteously strict in its vindication, then how vile am I?' But the cross also supplies the antidote to the abasement and shame thus produced. It is the throne of love. A voice of authority says to us, when we are lying in the dust, 'Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.'

#### TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away,'*  
1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

OUR highest attainments in knowledge, and our best gifts, are comparatively imperfect here. The Christian on earth is, as it were, at school; life is his infancy and childhood; and as the thoughts and conceptions of a child are indistinct and limited compared with those of his maturer years; so the thoughts and conceptions of the Christian here are utterly poor and dim, compared with those which will fill and expand his soul in glory. His present imperfection is essential to his proper discipline; and whatever progress he may make, he can never get entirely rid of it, till he becomes an inhabitant of the eternal world. How few men possess the knowledge of divine truth which enriched and elevated the mind of Paul! Yet even he only knew in part, saw but a hand-breadth of that immense field, which will be disclosed to the purified soul hereafter, and saw even that hand-breadth under shadow and cloud. In teaching others, he was felt to be a master in Israel. He imparted to the church, both by his living voice, and by his writings, the most comprehensive and sublime views of the truth as it is in Jesus; so that to his contemporaries, and indeed to all future generations, he was as one who had gazed upon heavenly realities, face to face, and had not, like themselves, a few distant and faint glimpses. But how little, after all, could he teach! He could only prophesy in part. He himself needed to be taught; and when he had communicated all he knew, he but placed the hearer, or the reader, on the outer stone of the threshold, which admitted into the magnificent temple of truth.

Heaven is the region of perfection. There redemption will be complete. All the infirmities and disadvantages, by which it is now hindered, will be left behind, while, whatever is defective in the powers and acquirements of the believer, will be, at once, and for ever, supplied. Such is the view uniformly given of it in the sacred writings. Perfect knowledge will then be come. The truths which are now dimly seen, will shine out with a brightness that will astonish and overpower; others which are dark and unintelligible, will burst on the mind with a simplicity and clearness, not now to be conceived; while even those which are now considered as most elementary and plain, will be surrounded with a flood of illustration, which will add unspeakably to

their interest and power. Who can tell what accessions will then be made to the believer's knowledge? What new and glorious fields of thought and inquiry will be opened up to his mind!

Perfect holiness will then be come. To the very last, the believer is borne down by a body of death. Sin adheres to all he thinks, and says, and does. After a long course of duty and discipline, after years of high privilege, and the utmost diligence and zeal in the use of means, he feels that he comes far short of the standard of obedience, and offends in all things. He has only to look calmly and honestly within, to see many stains; he has only to weigh his actions in the sanctuary balances, to discover many defects. But sin and suffering cease at death. The former will no longer pollute, as the latter will no longer annoy. Into heaven, nothing that defileth can enter. There will undoubtedly be a great change at death in the state of the soul. Every stain will be effaced, every defect supplied, every infirmity removed; and, shining in the splendour of a perfect conformity to the divine image, the soul will enter on a course of service, which will never more be interrupted by trial, or marred by defect.

Perfect happiness will then be come. The happiness of the Christian, on earth, is mixed with much evil. It is never so complete as to fill the whole heart, leaving no void. No doubt, he has a peace and a joy, to which the world is a stranger, but along with these, he has many fears, regrets, and sorrows; not to speak of those trials and distresses, which he shares in common with all men. There are times, as we have seen, when he cries out, 'O wretched man that I am!' His joy resembles the light of a shadowy day, now brightening into splendour, then overcast, and shaded into twilight by a cloud; while it is not to be denied, that there are cases in which the life of faith advances under a sky of perpetual gloom, with few intervals of sunshine to relieve it. But in heaven, there will be nothing to hurt or to destroy. Sin, the prolific source of all evil, cannot, as we have said, enter there. The sufferings which arise from the disorders and conflicts of the heart, will all cease. The burden of the body of death will be for ever taken away. Outward troubles, disappointments, and privations will disappear with discipline. The joy of the Christian will be full. How chaste, yet expressive, are the passages of scripture, which allude to the future state of the redeemed! '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.' 'And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.'

When the apostle says, 'that which is in part will be done away,' the meaning is, that in heaven such will be the measure of knowledge and gifts, that the knowledge and gifts of the present state will be comparatively lost and forgotten. The light of the stars is lost in the glory of the rising sun, the waters of a river are lost in the immensity of the ocean; and so the attainments of the believer here will be lost in the inconceivable measure of intelligence and blessedness, to which he will be exalted in heaven. What a consummation, for poor guilty creatures, such as we are, to be raised to a condition of such transcendent felicity and honour! 'I go,' said our Lord to his disciples, 'to prepare a place for you.' Had he not prepared it, it could never have been ours. No merit of ours could ever have earned a title to it, as no skill or effort on our part could ever have qualified us to enjoy it. It is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 'Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.'

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved,'* Eph. i. 6.

In the context, the apostle, after the customary salutation, expresses, in forcible terms, his gratitude to God for the inestimable spiritual blessings, which had been conferred both upon himself, and the members of the church at Ephesus, to whom this epistle was addressed. Among these blessings, he specifies election and adoption, two blessings, or rather, classes of blessing, which very strikingly show the love of God towards his people in Christ. In the former, God appears as choosing believers before the foundation of the world was laid, fixing his love upon them, arranging the various circumstances connected with their conversion, growth in grace, and final admission into glory, and thus surrounding their salvation with the infallible certainty of a decree. In the latter, we behold him, with infinite condescension, raising them from their fallen and wretched state, not merely distinguish-

ing them by remarkable tokens of kindness, but restoring them to their forfeited rank as members of his family, giving them free access to his gracious presence, admitting them to the enjoyment of intimate and endearing fellowship with himself, and conferring upon them a full and unquestionable title to all the blessings, privileges, and triumphs of a complete salvation. Well might the apostle say, that such unparalleled love was 'to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'

There is an extraordinary emphasis in the language of this verse. The apostle does not merely say, that the blessings to which he referred bore testimony to the grace of God, but that they were to the praise of that grace; and not merely to the praise of that grace, but to the praise of the glory of that grace. The grace of God, as displayed in the election and adoption, and consequently, in the redemption of believers, is indeed very glorious. Consider the objects of that grace,—poor, worthless, ungrateful rebels; alienated outcasts, who, though originally formed to love and serve God, and to find their happiness in his favour, had refused to acknowledge his claims, heaped dishonour upon his law, and set at nought all its sanctions. Consider the cost at which this grace was shown. Before it could even be made known, or indeed allowed to operate, there behoved to be the mystery of mysteries, incarnation; the humiliation to atoning death of the incarnate Son; and the offering up of his life,—the most valuable life, fit for sacrifice, in the universe,—upon the cross. Consider the blessings included in the provision of this grace. The pardon of sin by the dishonoured Lawgiver, the offended Sovereign; the acceptance of the sinner in the spotless court of heaven, though he had not a particle of merit; the adoption of the rebel into the same family with the seraphs and angels of heaven; the renewal of the divine image in the fallen and corrupt soul, together with the rebuilding of that soul in the beauty of holiness; the peace that passeth understanding, the joy unspeakable, and full of glory, and the hope that maketh not ashamed; and finally, the full qualification of the soul for heaven, and its admission there; these are some of its blessings, and to say they are incomparable, is to say little. They are not only beyond expression, but far above all thought. The grace, which has provided, and which patiently offers them, beyond all question, is glorious grace.

In this grace, says the apostle, 'we are accepted in the Beloved.' Naturally we are excluded from the divine presence, and are totally

disqualified for the enjoyment of the happiness inseparable from it. Into that presence, nothing sinful can be permitted to enter. 'God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.' 'The heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?' Nor is it possible for us to acquire by our own efforts a title to acceptance with God. The law, under which we come into the world, is holy, just, and good. It is spiritual, reaching to the very thoughts and purposes of the heart; and failing in one particular, we offend in all. Even the believer, who is under the quickening power of the Spirit, cannot obey it; far less the sinner, who is at enmity with God, and hates all holiness and truth. Men, no doubt, are prone to imagine that they may yield a sincere obedience, and that this obedience, though imperfect, will be accepted on the ground of its sincerity. But this is a grievous error. The claims of the law are absolute and unchangeable; to be obeyed at all, it must be obeyed perfectly; while if we come short in any one particular, we are excluded from its blessings, and condemned to suffer its penalty. Justification by the law, in every sense, is utterly hopeless.

The grace of God is most wonderfully shown in providing for our acceptance. Before we can appear before him, the law must have no claim against us; in other words, we must be righteous; and, as we cannot become so by our own efforts, there is a righteousness placed to our account, through faith, so that we stand before God, with as clear a title to his favour, as if we had never fallen from obedience, or having fallen, had recovered our original privileges and rank. The provision of this righteousness, whereby God is a just God and a Saviour, is the most astonishing manifestation of grace, which, as far as we know, the universe can supply. 'We are accepted in the Beloved.' This endearing name is applied to Christ, who is often termed the well-beloved Son of God. The Father is represented as looking on him with infinite complacency, and regarding him with intense and peculiar love. We are accepted in him, because he has fulfilled all righteousness by his obedience unto death; and faith uniting us to him, his righteousness becomes ours, for all the purposes of pardon and acceptance before God. We are clothed with his righteousness as with a garment, which hides all stains and defects, and adorns us with faultless beauty. The acceptance of the believer is as complete, as that of Adam in Eden. His title to eternal life is as clear, as if Adam had

never fallen. God is his Father, Jesus his elder Brother, heaven his home, and the throne of divine glory a seat of mercy, before which he may stand with filial confidence and joy.

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 TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes,'* Psal. 1. 21.

In the context, God addresses sinners among the Jews, and reminds them of the heinous offences, with which they were chargeable before him. These offences had been committed under a variety of delusive pretexts; but all of them, with the minutest circumstances of aggravation, had been observed by the infinite God. No doubt, God had not spoken amidst the rebellion and iniquity, which had been recklessly displayed. In his own emphatic words, he had kept silence. This silence however, did not proceed from ignorance, or indifference. Men put this interpretation upon it, and went on sinning boldly, as if there had been no God in heaven, or a God, ignorant and immoral as the gods of the heathen. But God beheld, and abhorred every act; was the witness of every secret scene of guilt, and cherished purpose of impiety; and the reason why he did not come forth out of his place, and thunder forth the words of condemnation, was simply and solely, that he chose to forbear. In keeping silence, he had not relinquished any principle of his government, or relaxed any sanction of his law; but had merely refrained from judicial interference, that he might give his creatures free scope for the gratification of their desires, and the trial of their principles.

The sinner is very prone to think of God, as a creature like himself, limited in knowledge, lax in principle, and ready to accommodate, so as to meet the call of circumstances, whatever these may be. He deals with God as if he could deceive him; as if he could prevail upon him to wink at his sins; as if he could take advantage of his ignorance; as if, at times, God would lower his claims, and be satisfied with less than his law requires. There is thus a flagrant dishonouring of God in his thoughts. He makes God a man; he robs him of his divinity; he brings him down to his own level. This view of God is favourable to the execution of his sinful purposes and plans; for all the hindrances to a course of wickedness, arising from the omniscience, holiness,

and justice of God, are thereby removed; and God is dealt with as if he knew no more, as well as was not holier, or more righteous, than himself. Under the influence of these delusive views of God, the sinner rushes on in his wicked courses. The idea of God is the standard of conscience; and if that idea be broken down, conscience falls in proportion. Take away this standard, and conscience is amenable only to itself; for conscience will never cease to mutilate any idea of God, but that which is revealed, and therefore immutably true, till it brings it down to the level of its own knowledge. God thus put out of the way, there is no longer any restraint; for though you have a God to whom conscience may refer, yet he is no longer the spotlessly holy, and inflexibly righteous Jehovah, but a pliant, fallible, and changeable being, like the sinner himself.

God, in this verse, intimates to the sinner, that there is a time coming, when he will reprove him, and set his sins in order before him. That such a time will come, sooner or later, follows from the perfections of the divine nature. For, if we believe that God regards sin with infinite abhorrence, and condemns it, in all its forms and degrees, by his law, then wherever, in the wide compass of the universe, sin is committed; scrutiny, judgment, and condemnation must ensue. God may forbear, for wise and gracious purposes, for a time, as he does in the government of this world; but he cannot be indifferent, and therefore, cannot always continue silent. He is pledged to judgment by his own attributes. He must judge, otherwise he could not continue to reign. The integrity of his government would be broken down; the very bulwarks of law would be levelled with the dust. But there is no fear of this; he is silent, not he is forbearing, not indifferent.

Sometimes, in this life, he reproves sinners, and sets their sins in order before them. When the sinner is rejoicing in his iniquity, and there seems to be no hindrance to his success, or end to his security, God breaks in upon him by calamities, which rouse conscience, and turn it into a fierce accuser. The past passes in review. Dark scenes, long forgotten, are vividly remembered. Sins, unheeded at the time of commission, rise up as witnesses; and conscience, long silent and torpid, is compelled to condemn. Sometimes, before conversion, there is such a searching out, and judgment of the sins of the past. The subject of grace is made to consider in detail the vast sum of his transgressions; conscience, as it were, makes out a catalogue of his sins; and, dwelling upon their enormity and aggravations, shuts him up to

the bitterness of a sorrow, which lays him in the dust at the foot of the cross.

But the judicial dealings of God with sinners here, are little more than nominal, compared with those which will give its darkest hue to the solemnities of the last day. God will be silent no more. Discipline at an end, judgment will begin. How fearful will be the disclosures of that eventful day! There will be three books opened; a book of life for the righteous, a book of death for the wicked, and a book of remembrance for both. Long forgotten sins will then be summoned up from the depths of the past. The sinner will be reminded of scenes, of which the last trace had long been effaced, by the swift wing of time. His sins will be set in order before him. Conscience, quickened, enlightened, and made powerfully authoritative, will respond to the accusations of the judgment-seat; and the poor miserable sinner, without power to escape, yet unable to answer, will perish under the frown of his Maker's wrath! How terrible the doom of the impenitent, and unbelieving! Let sinners hear the solemn appeal, 'behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'

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 TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver,'*  
 Psal. l. 22.

It is stated in the preceding verse, that a time would come when God would break the silence which the sinner had misinterpreted, would reprove him, and set his sins in order before him. Sinners are solemnly called upon to consider the certainty of this. Their character is truly described,—they forget God. It is said in another portion of the inspired volume, that God is not in all the sinner's thoughts, and the reason of this is undoubtedly to be found in the fact, that 'the carnal mind is enmity against God.' God is disliked as holy, just, and true; the spirituality of his nature offends; and hence, whatever brings the thought of God near, is carefully shunned, as likely to cause pain. The life of the sinner is, in reality, one of practical atheism. If you deliberately ask him, whether there be a God, he will answer in the affirmative; but to the term God, he attaches no correct or comprehensive idea; and the moment he is led to do so, he turns away from it, as from a subject fatal to his peace. In the forgetfulness of the true God alone, he is secure; for when the idea of his holy and righteous nature breaks in upon him, it resembles the

writing on the walls of the banquetting room of the Eastern monarch, which instantly turned his festivity into sadness, and his pride into despair. How appalling, yet how just, the description of the feelings of sinners with respect to God, given in the book of Job,—'they say unto God, depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.'

This forgetfulness of God is a mere artifice of the corrupt heart to get rid of what is painful to it. There is a God; he is the holy, righteous, and unchangeable being, which the scriptures declare him to be; and though he is silent amidst the inequalities and the crimes of discipline, yet his own perfections render it absolutely necessary, that a time should come, when he will vindicate his dishonoured claims in the punishment of the wicked, and establish his justice by the reward of the good. Since such a time will come, it is wise in men to anticipate and prepare for it; and no infatuation can be more dreadful than that daily exhibited by sinners, in living as if that time would never arrive, and in contriving delusions, by which they may escape from the conviction of its certainty. Nothing less than the entire subversion of religion, natural and revealed, especially of the latter, is necessary to justify the conduct they pursue. If men look forward to a time of reckoning, even in the affairs of this life, it is felt to demand anxious thought, and careful preparation; and if an important issue be at stake, no one is surprised to find, that the whole interest of the mind is concentrated upon it, that night and day are devoted to the correction of errors that may prove hurtful, and the use of means from which benefit may result; and in short, that the anticipation gives its peculiar colouring to the whole aspect of the intervening time. How solemnly then, should men live, since God will one day reckon with them? How carefully should they consider the nature of the trial, which they are to undergo! How anxiously regulate their conduct, and guard their thoughts, that the joys of acquittal may terminate their fears, and crown their hopes!

The consequences of neglecting to prepare for our final reckoning with God, are very powerfully expressed in this verse. The figurative language employed is intended to convey a strong idea of the fearfulness of the ruin, which will overtake the impenitent sinner at last. It is taken from the destructive effects caused by the attacks of the wild beasts of the forest, when, ravenous from hunger, they spring upon the passing traveller, tearing limb from limb, till the mangled carcase loses all trace of its former shape

or vigour. There is intense suffering, utter ruin, revolting deformity. Resistance is vain. So, when sinners fall into the hand of an angry God, they will be irretrievably destroyed. The sense of his displeasure will consume them, as with fire. Their own thoughts will prey upon their peace. Unquenchable regrets will annoy and torment them. Their noble nature, once capable of bearing the image of God in all its beauty, but now hopelessly abandoned to the power of evil, will stand forth in awful ruin, a monument of vengeance. He, who endowed it with its high faculties, will condemn it as worthless. The sublime uses, which it might have fulfilled, having been frustrated, it will be cast forth from the divine presence, as no longer fit to occupy a place in the pure world over which the Creator reigns. Then comes the imprisonment from which there is no release; the night of anguish on which no morn will ever rise; the abode of misery and shame, on which no hope will ever dawn. God, at last, has forgotten to be gracious, and his mercy is clean gone for ever.

There will be none to deliver. When the traveller is attacked by the wild beast of the forest, some one may come unexpectedly to his relief, and snatch him from the destruction which appears to be inevitable. But when the sinner once falls into the hand of God, none can deliver. Who can resist the Omnipotent? Who can meet the God of hosts in battle? The shields of the earth belong unto God. The devils, the victims of his righteous indignation, tremble at his glance. The innumerable company of angels wait to obey his will. When the Lord cometh forth out of his place, 'the strong shall be as tow, and the makers of it as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.' In that terrible day, vain, utterly vain, will be the cry to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.'

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TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell,'*  
James iii. 6.

A MORE striking and just description of the sins which flow from the abuse of the noble privilege of speech, was never given by any author, sacred or profane, than the fearful picture before us,

painted to the life by the inspired apostle. When we consider that the tongue was intended by the former of our bodies, and the father of our spirits, to proclaim the glory of the great Creator, and to celebrate his praise; to make mention of the righteousness of Christ, and to hold edifying fellowship with our brethren, how humbling and saddening the thought that the very instrument with which we should seek the honour of God, and speak peace to men, is converted into an engine for kindling strife, for blaspheming the name of the Highest, and denying the Lord who bought us; and thus bringing on ourselves, and others whom we corrupt by our evil communications, certain and swift destruction! A melancholy change in the moral condition of man must have taken place, before what was designed for the accomplishment of good could be the source of such varied and soul-destroying evils. And therefore we must turn our eye to the deplorable event which occurred in paradise, if we would see clearly why a rational being, created in righteousness and true holiness, has lost his original rectitude and delight in God, and become the slave of every impulse which leads him to speak unadvisedly, irreverently, and impiously with his lips.

The heart is naturally a complete stranger to religious influences, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. When the spring is polluted the stream must be troubled and deleterious. The mind is alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, and proud of its fancied dignity, and exhibiting the utmost complacency in its self-acquired attainments, it gives expression to its sentiments by an organ after its own likeness; and the effects of those three characteristics of fallen man are deeply displayed in self-sufficiency, infidelity, and all unrighteousness. The tongue then, in the present circumstances of an apostate race, as an index of the depraved and unrenewed heart, is as a devouring fire among the most inflammable materials; a world of iniquity, an incalculable amount of mischief, is contained in and produced by it. In this appalling light ought we to view 'the tongue among our members, defiling,' literally blackening, 'the whole body' of the individuals over whom it obtains the ascendancy; and not confining its ravages within so limited a sphere of action, it has extended, and still extends, its baneful operations to all the past and existing generations of men. And can we wonder at such things, when we are assured that 'itself is set on fire of hell,' and know that it derives its power from the great adversary of God and man, the father of

lies and the murderer of souls, from the beginning? If such be the state of 'the tongue' when divine grace has not subdued and sanctified the heart, whence it receives its poisonous qualities, can there be a subject in which we should be more deeply interested than how to get its inherent propensity to sin taken away, its moral 'filthiness' cleansed, and its every expression guarded and guided by a constant reference to the omniscience of him to whose inspection every thought is laid open, and in whose continual presence we should repeat with the feelings of the Psalmist, 'There is not a word on my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether?' And though God may have visited us in mercy, and seen our spiritual diseases and healed them, still let us remember that the holiness of the believer is not complete till death is swallowed up of victory. Let us watch unceasingly over ourselves with a godly jealousy, and experiencing as we often do the weakness of our best resolutions, and knowing, as we are frequently compelled to confess, that we have not implored God to 'set a door upon our lips,' let us seek not only a remedy in the blood of Jesus, but an unfailling safe-guard in the might of his Spirit. Let us contemplate the consequences of the sins of the tongue as they are manifested in the world around us, and determine, in the strength of the Sanctifier, that in so far as we are concerned they shall not be increased; let us consider by what name we are called; the purity, which he who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, requires, and the encouragement which he holds out to us, to struggle believingly with the risings of whatever is opposed to our Christian principles, and to our inward peace. 'In Christ dwelleth all this fulness of the Godhead bodily;' and from this fulness every one that studies 'to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,' and thus leads and smooths the way, has received, and will receive, overflowing as he is, 'with grace and truth.' 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' This love has been planted by divine power in the heart of the regenerated; for it has no existence in any of the offspring of the first transgressor till Jesus has 'breathed upon them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost;' and therefore can have no more connection 'with bitterness, and envy, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and all malice, than light with darkness, Christ with Belial, or he that believeth with an infidel.' Every consideration then, which ought to weigh with a professing Christian, should secretly and irresistibly—because the work of the Spirit that he may be glorified—constrain us to

ponder seriously and prayerfully the sins which the apostle here so forcibly describes and condemns. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,' even when God's cause is the motive, and in how-ungodly and unmanly a light must wrath appear when its origin is in the forgetfulness of God, and its effects a still more dreadful 'treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.' Impressed then with a due sense of the truths now brought before us, let us, in faith, and with souls engaged in the appropriate and earnest supplication, hear the pleading of the great apostle of the Gentiles at the throne of grace: 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God that your spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.'

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TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment,'* Matt. xii. 36.

Our Lord here places the 'sins of the tongue,' exemplified in practice, in the clearest light, by showing that not only the higher crime of blasphemy against himself, and especially the highest of all, that against his Spirit, are registered in the book of God's remembrance as of peculiar enormity, and almost beyond the reach of forgiveness, but that every idle or unprofitable word is there recorded also, and must be accounted for on that day when the individual who utters it shall be tried by the omniscient and holy Judge, and the sentence passed on him be unchangeable and eternal. Such a view of the conduct in question is surely well calculated to awaken reflection in the most thoughtless, and to lead to serious meditation on the consequences that are here declared to follow from speaking, not merely to no good purpose and without any wish for edification, but as is evident, from the language employed, when strictly examined, with an intention to injure the reputation of others who may become the objects of remarks, begun, it may be, in idleness, but ending in defamation. There are cases, it is true, where it would be not only pusillanimous, but positively sinful, not to utter our sentiments with freedom; ungodliness must be condemned, and the ungodly dealt with in terms best fitted to express our disapprobation and abhorrence of his guilt, and to deter others from

imitating his pernicious example. The Lord who gave himself for us, and to whom we profess to look as the author of eternal salvation to them that believe and obey him, rebuked, in the strongest language that could be used, the hypocrisy, illiberality, and licentiousness of his depraved countrymen 'according to the flesh;' and we must be strangers to the graces of *his* Spirit, and virtually apostates from his religion, whatever may be our pretensions to 'a name to live while we are dead,' if we contemplate vice, no matter where existing, with complacency, or choose the profane or the immoral for our companions. 'And withal,' says the apostle Paul, 'they,' that is, certain individuals or classes of individuals that he is describing, 'they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle but tattlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not.' Idleness is the parent and patron of many sins. It is equally destructive to the secular and spiritual interests of man. The human mind was formed for action, and if it be not directed to worthy objects, it will to a certainty employ itself on such as are base, degrading, and condemning.

It is a well ascertained fact, that persons who have not cultivated their understandings, and have no taste for reading, especially useful edifying reading, but who feel that they are designed by their Creator to do something, too frequently find subjects of exercise in the characters and affairs of their fellow-creatures. A more humbling view of our common nature, bad as it is, cannot be contemplated than that which is exhibited in a circle of 'busy bodies,' who have 'learned to be idle,' seeking pleasure—and what a pleasure! in conjecturing, hinting, asserting, and deciding respecting the state and fate of their neighbours. Here no man is safe, no character sacred. These judges have a shade to throw on the fairest reputation, an 'idle word' to whisper against whatever 'is true, honest, just, lovely, or of good report.' One of the group assembled for mischief is led perhaps to profess his belief that such a one, naming him, means well, and is really, on the whole, a very decent sort of person. Another observes, that he had the same opinion till a certain circumstance, not worth mentioning, convinced him that he is no better than he should be. Now scandal is roused, the game is up, and each comes forward with his or her circumstance in supplement, till at last their victim is stripped of every estimable quality, and becomes a creature whom, if we paid any regard to their assertions, and would preserve our respectability, we will make it our study to avoid. In this inquisition,

as much entitled to the name of *holy* as any court under the special protection of the holy father of Rome himself, every art is practised to discover subjects of defamation; every torture applied to force the absent culprit to confess his guilt, and as in such a judicatory justice and humanity must not expect to find an advocate, a verdict is quickly brought in, judgment speedily given, sentence instantly pronounced, and the condemned character, without regret and without a sigh, delivered over to the proper authorities for execution. The effects of such conduct may be viewed in two aspects; as they affect those who 'speak idle words,' and the persons against whom they are spoken. This practice then degrades the rational powers of man as an intellectual being, and destroys also the sensibilities of the heart. If the failings, either real or supposed, of our brethren be the theme on which we delight to expatiate, how can we feel affection for them? How can we rejoice in their joy, and make their sorrows our own? How, in short, can we enjoy the true luxury of doing good? Again, let us consider the consequences of this 'evil thing, and bitter' on those against whom the 'idle words' are uttered. It is admitted that the really Christian portion of the community will not, on unexamined and insufficient grounds, give credit to reports circulated to the disadvantage of their fellow-Christians. But that such reports have often their influence, we know from observation, and perhaps from experience cannot be denied. Is it then our wish to be followers of Christ in sincerity and truth? Let us guard against this sin which we have been contemplating. The religion of the cross, by the mouth of its Author, declares every 'idle word' to be a crime for which we must give an account in the day of judgment. The characteristic of the gospel is love. This was to be the distinguishing badge of our holy profession, the indubitable evidence of our walking worthy of the high vocation whereby we are called. 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.' 'Love,' one of the brightest jewels in the believer's crown, 'thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' Let this divine grace then fill our hearts. Its presence will confer the purest joy, and its exercise show that the Sanctifier is preparing us for the society of those glorified spirits, who now 'perfected in love,' serve the Saviour 'who loved them even unto the death,' in the upper sanctuary.

## TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me,'* Psal. xl. 12.

If the whole of this psalm be what a remarkable portion of it undoubtedly is, as we are informed in the epistle to the Hebrews, prophetic of the Messiah and of what he endured as our substitute, nay, the very language of Jesus himself before he was manifested in the flesh to expiate our guilt, we have here a most wonderful account of the manifold evils of sin, from which we should study to learn wisdom. We behold the Son of God as the Surety of his people given to him in covenant, and with all their transgressions bound up and laid on him, feeling and expressing the sentiments awakened in his mind by the sense of what the sins imputed to him deserved. He experiences the pressure of the whole load of guilt, original and actual. He sees through all their varieties of heinousness the particular breaches of the divine law, which go to sum up the amount of depravity derived and personally contracted by his elect. He regards conscience, roused from the slumber into which it had been cast by the accumulations of iniquities that had long oppressed it. He views the place appointed for the exercise of everlasting and undiminishing retribution, and all the unimagined and untold, because unutterable, agonies of which that place is the dreadful scene. He beholds the arrows of the Almighty drawn from the quiver, and directed by an unerring hand against the objects of his hot displeasure, 'the poison whereof shall drink up their spirits, the tortures produced by the wounds which they inflict on the undying soul. And on surveying such a mass of horrors, the Saviour must have despaired of bringing salvation, had he not been God, the Father's equal, the head of all principality and power, 'the first and the last.' Such is the light in which this remarkable passage of a remarkable psalm should be viewed, if we would see and feel the truths contained in it in all their importance to man fallen, and to be redeemed only by one higher than the heavens 'humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death even the death of the cross.' And in this state, to a certain extent, must the believer be placed at the moment when the Spirit has convinced him of his sin and misery, and called him out of thick spiritual darkness into marvellous light. The sleep of moral death has been broken in upon

by the omnipotent agent, who alone can dispel its slumbers. The rational being who had long lain unconscious of his danger, has now his eye opened to the magnitude and multitude of the perils which surrounded him. What he once in his dreams supposed and believed to be pleasures worth the enjoying, are now found to be violations of God's commandments, destructive to God's righteous government, and exposing him to God's indignation. A complete change has been effected in his mode of apprehending objects presented to his mind. There are no longer any venial faults and trifling errors, formerly regarded as beneath the attention of a being so far removed from a world inhabited by necessarily fallible creatures, whom he has made what they are, and will not strictly reckon with for their unavoidable failings. Sin is sin in his estimation; and viewed by the new organ of vision through which he now looks, he sees and feels it to be 'exceeding sinful.' He throws a humbling glance on the 'innumerable evils which encompass him,' each one of which compel him to exclaim with the first murderer, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.' His conscience, touched, purified, and strengthened by its Lord, tells him, in a voice of thunder, that his 'iniquities have taken hold on him.' Humbled in the dust, and crying out under a sense of his spiritual wretchedness, Unclean, unclean, he 'is not able to look up' to a holy God, or to raise his thoughts 'to the place where his honour dwelleth.' The longer he surveys the mass of iniquities rising up before his now busy memory, the more do they increase in number, and the more anxious he is that not one of them may escape his scrutiny. He wishes to know them all, to examine them all, to feel them all. There is now no disguising, no palliating, no attempting to lessen, not the most indistinctly formed intention to apologise for any one of them. Too long had he laboured to conceal them from himself, and when they refused to be concealed, to explain them away as matters of no importance. But the time of his visitation being come, and the Spirit working through the law, brought home to his conscience; the captive ready to be delivered, views himself as he really is, and from the conviction of guilt, and his felt and acknowledged inability to cancel it, his heart faints within him, and the unfeigned language of his cast-down and disquieted soul is; 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' He now experiences that to be a truth 'worthy of all acceptance,' of which he was formerly ignorant; or if he has read or heard it, which he esteemed a fanatical figment, 'that he

is carnal, sold under sin.' He feels that he has taken shelter in a refuge of lies, and that vain is the help of man. He once imagined, nay, firmly believed, that he was 'rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing,' but his fond imaginations are for ever dispersed into thin air; his utterly groundless belief is for ever annihilated, and the truth now made clear to his understanding, and impressed on his heart, is that 'he is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.' In this deplorable condition he finds himself, but the Spirit who hath begun the good work, carries it on, directs his faith to an all-sufficient remedy, and bids him listen to Jesus, 'giving him the valley of Achor for a door of hope;' thus addressing him, 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.' Happy are we if we have been thus dealt with by God in the dispensation of his grace. In our circumstances the storm must go before the calm, and sin felt as reigning unto death, before we can sing of mercy as well as of judgment.

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TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me,'* Psal. xl. 13.

In the view which we consider ourselves warranted to take of this prophetic psalm, we have here the divine speaker still in the character of Messiah, 'wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquity; stricken for our sakes, smitten of God, and afflicted.' He had tasted by anticipation the bitterness of imputed guilt: he had borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He had undertaken the recovery of his chosen from the foundation of the world, and the astonishing enterprise necessarily involved the assumption of the nature in which sin had been committed, though he was without sin; 'his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; his being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.' As our substitute then, he graciously condescended to be manifested 'in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.' The powers of darkness were combined and arrayed against him. His agony in the garden showed the extremity of his mental sufferings as the voluntary 'daysman' between God and his people, the victim soon to be laid on the

altar in their stead, the scape goat that was to bear away their sins into the wilderness, and the object of the Father's displeasure, when, under a sense of the hidings of his countenance which had smiled on him from eternity, he exclaimed, on the ignominious 'tree,' in language the most fearful that ever struck the ears of mortals or immortals, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' The spirituality and holiness of the divine law were thus fully exhibited. The cup which the Father had given him to drink was filled to overflowing, and the very dregs thereof he must wring them out and drink them. He entreated his Father with strong crying and tears, to save him from that hour, though it was for that very hour he came into the world; and in the prayer which he here presents to him who heard, but who seemed as if he heard him not, he puts into the mouth of the believer in every age, the supplication which he also should address to the God of his salvation. 'Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me.' The very terms here employed to mark the state of the awakened and convinced transgressor's mind; the hurried tone of the expression; the repetition of 'O Lord,' so appropriate to his existing circumstances, and indicating such irrepressible anxiety for a favourable, comforting, strengthening, and soul-sustaining answer—all prove, beyond the possibility of a single doubt, that the law has been set before him in its utmost extent, and in each and every one of its requirements, and that by it he is condemned. But the day has dawned and the Day Star has arisen in his heart. He beholds Jesus now revealed to him as travelling in the greatness of his strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save. He now feels the meaning of the declaration that a man shall be a hiding place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest. Christ is made savingly known to him as 'the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely;' as saying to them that 'are in darkness, Go forth, and to the prisoners, Show yourselves;' as pressing his invitations to come to the fountain of living waters, and offering pardon and peace, grace and glory, 'without money and without price.' Hence prayer is his new exercise—humble, faithful, earnest, and importunate prayer. The life of God is begun in the soul, and it is by communion with God that this life is sustained. 'Old things are passed away,' and it is by fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, that they are prevented from returning. Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, have been cast down, and it is by a conversation habitually

in heaven that they are kept in subjection to the obedience of Christ. The enemies of the Christian's progress in holiness have been subdued by 'the Spirit, who worketh effectually in them that believe,' and it is by the communications of the same Almighty agent perseveringly sought and given in answer to the prayer of faith that they are restrained. The object of the Saviour's love is now taught experimentally; the use of the Saviour's parable to establish and illustrate the important truth, that 'men ought always to pray and not to faint.' After many anxious wrestlings with the angel of the covenant, the Lord may continue to hide his countenance 'from his servant, though he is devoted to his fear.' He still 'holds back the face of his throne, and spreads his cloud upon it.' But the believer knows that there is 'the hiding' of his grace as well as 'of his power.' Like the widow in the gospel, he ceases not from his entreaties. He becomes more fervent in his solicitations; more unrestricted dependence is placed on his advocate's sufficiency; more unwearied applications are made to the Spirit of holiness. The gloom is dissipated, and the 'sun of righteousness again rises on him, with healing in his wings.' All his past trials are now seen in the light of mercies, by which his faith and patience were proved. A once reconciled God, is a reconciled God still; and the rescued soul can now say, from the full and abiding enjoyment of his blessedness, 'Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness to the end, that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee, for ever and ever.'

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TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants,'* Luke xvii. 10.

WE have seen that our sins are innumerable, and highly aggravated by the favourable circumstances in which we are placed, connected with the opportunities of religious improvement which we have neglected or despised. How inadequate soever may be our conceptions of what a life of faith on the Son of God actually is, we all admit that the Lord has deservedly a controversy with us, and that if he were strict to mark our iniquities, we could not stand before him. If we have been brought to a knowledge of the truth, and tasted of the good word of God, we

are fully satisfied that there is no ground of safety for us as sinners, but an interest 'in the blood of sprinkling, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' But it is more difficult to learn the important and indispensable lesson, that there is enough for condemnation in the mere fact of our being 'unprofitable servants.' The apostles of our Lord had been told of their privileges, and knew that they possessed them. They had implored their Master to increase their faith, and it was increased. They had professed the most devoted attachment to his cause, and had hitherto 'followed him through good report and bad report.' They were endued with miraculous gifts, and had believingly and efficiently exercised them. They had encountered persecution, and many dangers in his service, and were to engage with still more formidable trials before they finished their appointed course, and entered into the joy of their Lord. Still they were to confess, that 'when they had done all those things which they were commanded, and enabled to do, we are unprofitable servants, we have done only that which it was our duty to do.' It ought, then, to be a matter of the utmost consequence, for us to consider how we really stand in this respect in the sight of God, from whom we have received all our blessings, whether they concern time or eternity. We are too apt, and remarkably willing, to be deceived, on this subject of such vital importance to us Christians in name, and laying claim to the Christian's advantages, and cherishing the Christian's expectations. We are disposed to rest contented with our present attainments; and though we would tremble at the very thought of being in the number of such 'as draw back into perdition,' we are far from being so anxious as we should be, 'to press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Though the expression may be singular, there is no progress in our course of well doing. We have faith, but there is little 'diligence to add to our faith, virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly-kindness, and charity.' We forget the declaration of the apostle, immediately subjoined to his injunction of practical religion, exhibited in these fruits of the Spirit. 'For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It would be well for us also, to ponder attentively the following words of the same inspired servant of God, in the gospel of his Son: 'But he that lacketh those things is blind,' sinfully blind to the extent of Christian

duty, 'and cannot see afar off,' what is requisite to the completion of the Christian character, 'and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins,' not merely that he might guard against their again obtaining dominion over him, but that being freed from their burden, and 'standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free,' his path, being that of the justified, might be as the shining or dawning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Let us read the doom of the 'slothful servant,' who, when he was entrusted with the sum which his lord saw fit to commit to his management—'for all is of grace, nothing of debt lest any man should boast,'—instead of improving it as he was bound to do by the solemn command of his master, who may justly do what he pleaseth with his own, 'went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.' He did not squander it. He did not abuse it; but he did not use it, and that was sufficient for his conviction and condemnation. 'Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. For I say unto you, That unto every one who hath improved what he has already received, 'shall be given; there is duty for duty, because there is grace for grace; 'and from him that hath not' improved what has been as gratuitously entrusted to him, even that shall be taken away from him. 'But these mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.' The terms of the law are express. There is no misunderstanding them. 'If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments.' But then if entering into life depended on keeping the commandments, the 'everlasting doors would never be lifted up' to admit one soul to the glories and the joys of heaven. For supposing the precepts of God were observed as completely as we can possibly imagine them to be obeyed, still the truth meets us; and there is no gainsaying it; we have done only what we are bound to do, as the creatures of the universal Lord, the hourly pensioners of his bounty, and the subjects of his government, owing all we have and all we hope for, to him, on whom we have no claim whatever for any thing.

But though the law is utterly worthless as the means of saving the sinner, it is indispensable as a rule of life. When the conviction of this truth has been deeply wrought in the mind, and strengthened, and kept in lively exercise, and in still enlarging activity by the Spirit of God, then every root of self-justification is eradicated. The ground on which this antichristian principle was attempted to be raised, is undermined. All reliance on any thing done, or capable of being

done by us, is cast from us as an impious imagination, and cordially and rejoicingly do we unite with an eminent saint in exclaiming, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.'

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TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground,'* Luke xiii. 7.

NONE of us can plead against the rectitude of this sentence, or urge any reason why it should not be immediately executed. We justly deserve to be cut down, whatever may be the palliations to which we have recourse, arising from the belief that we are not flagrant sinners, and therefore not to be thus summarily dealt with by a God 'whose tender mercies are over all his works.' Have our improvement in religious knowledge, and our progress towards the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, been at all proportionate to the privileges we have enjoyed, and to the advantages which we believe to be almost exclusively our own? Can we look back on the years that are past with feelings of satisfaction and delight flowing from 'the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world; and do we anticipate in the years that may yet be in reserve for us, a recurrence of the pleasures which we have already derived from a sense of God's favour, secured to us by the Saviour's sorrows, and from the performance, through the Spirit's operation, of those duties which have ever evidenced and cheered the followers of Jesus? We are esteemed respectable, strictly honest, and even regular in our attendance on Christian ordinances. And yet with all our respectability, honesty, and regularity, the great proprietor of the spiritual vineyard has visited during every hour which has elapsed, since we knew perfectly well what the Lord required of us, seeking fruit and may have found none. We cannot, ourselves being judges, complain that we have not been frequently warned and admonished. We have been addressed in the language of kindness, and invited, affectionately invited, to 'seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near.' He has shown himself to many of us in all his winning loveliness. 'He has given us every thing richly to enjoy.' He has preserved unbroken

the strongest ties which bind us to existence, and continued us in the undisturbed possession of our Christian privileges and Christian hopes. But has this gracious manifestation of his unmerited forbearance and long-suffering, made any thing like a suitable impression on our minds and hearts? Do we gratefully acknowledge that this is 'the Lord's doing, and that it is marvellous in our eyes?' 'Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.' This is the language of those whom God has spared for good, and some—O that we were in the number!—are authorised to adopt it. But how many are there who have never reflected as they ought, and how many more never at all, that the blessings which they have received were intended to accomplish higher purposes than any which they have as yet been made to serve? Such persons are living, and apparently happy, in a very precarious and dangerous situation. They are lulled into a security which it is fearful even to contemplate. They are slumbering in the midst of a calm as deceitful as it may be transient. They are sleeping the sleep of death, and may be roused from their dreams only to feel that the Lord, whom they are now provoking by their insensibility, 'is a consuming fire.' 'What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon thee that thou perish not.' Mercy is still within thy reach. The city of refuge, with its clear highway, and its expanded gates, is still before thee. The fountain opened for the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, is still flowing, bearing purity, health, and refreshment on its waters. But the stream which gushes from thy heart may be soon stopped, 'the silver cord loosed, the golden bowl broken, thy dust return to the earth as it was, and thy spirit unto God who gave it.' 'Awake then, thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light.' On us also whom the Lord may have visited with his chastisements, He has called with a voice of 'lamentation, mourning, and woe.' He has summoned the relatives on whom we doated to their account, and the place which lately knew them knows them no more. His arrows transixed our souls when we numbered our friends with the spirits of the departed. These were moments ever to be remembered, when the last wish was expressed, the last injunction laid upon us, the last look exchanged, the last pressure felt, the last quiver witnessed, and the last sigh breathed into our bosom. Our trials have indeed been severe, and the wounds

thus inflicted still bleed, and may never be healed. What then is the use which we have made of God's dispensations both of mercy and of judgment? Have they weakened our attachment to the world? Have they led us to meditate on the uncertainty of every earthly enjoyment, and prompted us to look to heaven as the only refuge of the weary? Have they fixed our thoughts and our hopes more firmly on Him who 'hath the keys of hell and of death, who is the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star?' Is he become our prophet, our priest, and our king? Are our affections his, and do we delight ourselves in the prospect of soon beholding him in his beauty? If these be not our feelings and our expectations, God has not only waited for us, but afflicted us in vain; and finding no fruit of holiness in us, Jehovah no longer, as it respects us, full of compassion, and the justifier of the ungodly, may at this very instant be saying to his commissioned angel, 'Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?' 'Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.'

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#### THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,' Titus ii. 11, 12.*

WHEN we consider that it was sin, that rendered the interference of the Son of God absolutely necessary for the deliverance of our souls from the power of the second death; that it was sin, which brought him from heaven, subjected him to persecution, nailed him to the cross, and exposed him, for our sakes, to the wrath of an offended God; when we contemplate these its dreadful effects on the only-begotten of the Father, are we not convinced, that as the objects of the Redeemer's purposes of love, we should 'deny ungodliness,' the cause of his sorrows, 'and worldly lusts,' the polluting source of our spiritual miseries, and, through the influences of the Spirit, 'live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?' We are taught by the law, but how much more emphatically by the gospel 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.' It will then, by the divine blessing, tend greatly to edification, to dwell for a little

on the duties which are here pointed out, as evidences of our faith, and thus showing that we have been enabled to choose the good part, that shall not be taken away from us. What then is to be done? The Christian must 'live soberly, righteously, and godly.'

1. We are to live soberly. The term here used by the apostle is very comprehensive in its nature, and denotes self-government, in the most extensive meaning of the word—strict watchfulness exercised over the affections, and keeping the heart with all diligence, since out of it are the issues of life. 'Shall we allow any sensible object to enslave us by its attractions, and to lay up in store for us, those agonizing reflections, which will infallibly destroy our repose?' If we forfeit the approbation of our consciences, and of God, who is greater than our consciences, where shall we look for tranquillity? Not to ourselves, for our inward peace is gone; not to the external world, which is beautiful only to the good man, and not to the heavens, where is the throne of him who has said, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'

2. We must live righteously, by performing the duties which, as the followers of Christ, we owe to our brethren, and these duties may be included in justice and charity. We must be just, by forbearing to injure our neighbours, in their property, and in their character; in judging with rigid impartiality on any subject of controversy between man and man, and in discharging regularly, conscientiously, and kindly, the important duties of domestic life. We must be charitable, by assisting the poor in their temporal necessities, by giving advice to the young, and endeavouring to establish religious principles in their minds, as the motives and the guides of conduct; by administering comfort to the distressed, and consolation to the afflicted, and by 'loving our enemies, blessing them that curse us; doing good to them that hate us, and praying for them that despitefully use and persecute us, that we may be really the children of our Father who is in heaven.'

3. We are to live godly, by devoting the hearts which the Spirit has sanctified, and the affections which he has made to aspire to things above, to the love and service of him 'who has by his own arm brought salvation.' United to him by faith, and having received of his fulness, we should delight in the contemplation of his excellencies, and have no object of pursuit equal to the attainment of still greater conformity to his likeness. We should regularly wait on God in his courts, and entreat him to cause his face to shine upon us, and to be gracious unto us. We should

habitually and fervently seek his favour, in the retirement of our families. We should cultivate closet devotion, when with no eye on us except our God's, and no ear open to our petitions but his, we dwell on our personal state, and meditate 'on the wonders he hath done;' we confess our individual sins, and implore him not to cast us away from his presence; we acknowledge the surpassing value of gospel privileges, and with Jacob's faith and perseverance, wrestle till we have power with God, and will not let him go except he bless us. These are the public and private exercises of the Christian. Thus we see the necessity and the means of holiness. And to convince the world that we are as far removed from enthusiasm, as the workings of a sound mind are from the raving of insanity, we should 'live godly,' by displaying the effects which the purifying and ennobling influences of the gospel produce, on our whole walk and conversation. The believer knows, that it is only through his being justified by the Saviour's righteousness, that he can be 'made an heir, according to the hope of eternal life.' But he knows at the same time, that 'they who have believed in God, will be careful to maintain good works.' He places no reliance on his conduct, as the procuring cause of his salvation; but he is persuaded, that Christian conduct will assuredly follow Christian principles, and that if he do not 'live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, he is not warranted to look for that blessed hope which cheers the people of God amidst all their trials and sorrows,' or to expect with the joy of the Redeemer's chosen ones, 'the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we sleep or wake, we should live together with him.' Here is the faith and the patience of the saints. 'Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have a right,' through Jesus, 'to the tree of life; and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.

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#### THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men'* Titus iii.8.

In the various epistles which Paul wrote for the edification of the saints, whom he strongly and affectionately terms 'the body of Christ,' he

insists, with all that ardour which belonged to his character, on the necessity of their receiving the doctrines which he taught by special commission from heaven, in their fulness and power, as setting before them the only foundation of the sinner's pardon, hope, and safety. But not one of his inspired letters does he close without repeated, and the most urgent exhortations, 'to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.'

Here then we have the rule by which the minister of the gospel should be directed in declaring the will of his Master; and by the same rule ought every disciple of Jesus to be guided in his estimate and appreciation of what has been revealed. On no subject has greater misconception arisen, or more unwarranted phraseology been employed, than on the topic of faith and works. There is much danger in extremes in every department of speculation, and no where has such evil appeared in a more striking light than in the case before us. Some have dwelt so exclusively on faith, as to render works unnecessary. While others have, by their bold and unauthorised statements, led the unreflecting to believe that works are the only ground on which we can expect to obtain eternal life. But the man who has sought for information, and found it in God's infallible records, has not so learned Christ. He knows that both faith and works are equally without desert in procuring the sinner's deliverance, and that the merit on which he must rely absolutely and confidingly, is that which belongs to the righteousness of the Saviour, imputed to him freely, and clothed in which alone he stands perfect and complete in all the will of God. Faith is the hand which the Spirit enables us to put forth, and strengthens in the putting forth, to lay hold on this righteousness, and works are the evidence which the same Spirit enables us also to give of our being put in possession of this righteousness, transferred to us by the Redeemer, 'who was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' While therefore, we look unto Jesus, and to him exclusively, for redemption, and feel that we are no longer our own, but bought with a price of infinite value, even with his precious blood, we must never forget that the inference inevitably deducible from this astonishing transaction is, that 'we should glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are God's.' Christian morality then is as intimately connected with Christian faith as light with the sun, and internal peace with 'a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.' 'Finally,

brethren, whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure; whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.' Here we have the morals of the bible condensed, and presented to us in all their combined excellence, by 'one' who was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. And to what condition of life do they apply? The possession and practice of them dignify the meanest station in the world's estimation, and without them the highest is contemptible, let the world and the world's slaves say what they will. They have a charm to the unrenewed in the spirit of their minds themselves, and even to the most indifferent respecting the truth of the gospel and the worth of their own souls. For though they see not the foundation on which these graces rest, and feel not the influences which they diffuse in the believer's heart, they sometimes, in a serious hour, regret that they have not taken them home to their hearts, been warmed by their flame, and encouraged by their presence on their way to heaven. Thus, even in the opinion of those who are practically unacquainted with it, is the morality of the bible clearly and triumphantly vindicated. How much more strongly then can they bear testimony to its excellence who have traced it to its source, the 'putting on of the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness? They know that before they were brought out of their natural state, they had the lowest and most inadequate views of duty; that they spoke and acted as if the supreme Being would be quite satisfied with the measure of obedience which it suited their convenience or their caprice to yield to him, and though they unhesitatingly asserted that morality was everything, yet with an inconsistency, we cannot call it strange in their circumstances, but certainly most palpable, they imagined and maintained that the Lord would be pleased with such fragments of it as they chose to practise, and reward them for their work's sake.

But when the grace of God that bringeth salvation appeared to them personally, and they were drawn to contemplate and desire it, then their aims were enlarged. They saw the commandment to be exceeding broad. They had a lively and increasing conviction of the obligations by which they were bound to its observance. Their obedience was no longer restricted to certain duties of comparatively easy performance, to the exclusion of others of equal, if not higher impor-

tance. They are persuaded that there is no duty which has God for its object, enjoined in the gospel, paramount to another. He is to be loved and obeyed, with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; and all this from the new principle implanted in us. And where this principle is in active operation, and grace is fully recognised as the beginning, the middle, and the end, then are our labours more abundant, our humility more conspicuous, our prayers more frequent, our watchfulness more exercised, our progress more marked, our being with Jesus more taken knowledge of, and greater diligence given to make our calling and election sure. May our life be thus 'hid with Christ in God, that when Christ who is our life shall appear, we also may appear with him in glory.'

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness,'* Psal. lxxviii. 17.

He found them in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led them about: he instructed them; he kept them as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange God with them.' This exquisite description of the sacred historian, and inspired leader of the chosen people, was, in all its beautiful tenderness, literally applicable to the Lord's dealings with them. They were correctly informed, respecting the history of their nation, from the period when Abraham, their venerated ancestor was called by God from his father's house, and rescued from the idolatrous slavery which then shed its deadly and cheerless influences over the ancient world. From the time when the son of Terah left Uz of the Chaldees, and commenced his wanderings in the distant land, promised as a 'sure possession,' to his descendants, till his posterity heard the voice of the Eternal from Sinai, his magnificent tribunal, the Lord alone had been their God, their guide, and their avenger. Well authenticated, long past events concurred with their own experience, to convince their understandings of the obligations which lay upon them, to worship and serve him 'who rode for their help in the heavens, and whose excellence is in the sky.' We need not inquire whether the effects which these manifestations of divine

power and mercy produced, were actually such as became a people so highly distinguished. We know the transient impression which the 'doings' of the Lord Almighty made on the object of his undeserved and unwearied care. 'They sinned yet more against him, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness,' and though their dependence on him, and their helplessness in themselves, were so evident, and God's goodness so astonishing, yet 'for all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.' But as an exercise most useful to ourselves, we should inquire at our own consciences, and entreat them to say what effects these extraordinary operations of God ought to have produced? If in answer to this question, we can reply, Warm undivided love, believing, unlimited, undeviating obedience, then have we evidence as satisfactory, as it is cheering, that we bear no resemblance to the Israelites, that we have formed a right estimate of the blessings wherewith the Lord has crowned us, and that every additional mercy which we receive at the hand of our heavenly Father, will be an additional reason for our being still more strongly persuaded, that 'he is a sun and shield, that he will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from us,' if, through the indwelling of his Spirit, we continue 'to walk uprightly.' But if we do not see the guilt of the Israelites in its true light, and feel that, to act as they did, is the extreme of ingratitude, and a heightening of their punishment in proportion to their sin, then we may rest assured, that whatever may be the judgment which in words we pass on their perverseness, we are in no better a condition than they, and must have recorded against us, in the book of God's remembrance, the fearful fact, that we also 'sinned yet more and more, by provoking the Most High in the wilderness.'

We have divine authority for believing that God will take into account, not only the sins of which we are guilty, but the circumstances in which they are committed, and the aggravations with which they are accompanied. This is God's mode of procedure, and let it be ours, when we enter on the duty of self-examination, and sit as judges on our iniquities. We should carefully call to mind the means of knowledge with which we are so abundantly favoured, and the many mercies temporal and spiritual, with which we are blessed. We have the word of God in a language which we all understand, and therefore cannot honestly plead ignorance of his will. We have the ordinances of religion established, and regularly dispensed among us, and a peculiar blessing pro-

mised to the conscientious and devout observance of them. We have a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly, and find grace to help us in every time of need. At the right hand of the majesty on high we have an Advocate with the Father, whose ear is ever open to the voice of our supplications. He marks the sorrow, which a sense of our unworthiness, and the recollection of our transgressions, awaken within us. He listens to our prayers for pardon, and for omnipotent strength to be made perfect in weakness. 'Father, forgive them,' is the request of our great Intercessor. His blood was shed, his mediation prevails, and we receive an answer of peace.

Let us meditate also on 'the long-suffering goodness of God,' often provoked, and yet 'waiting,' as patiently as ever 'to be gracious, because he delighteth in mercy.' He has borne with the sins of our youth, and with the iniquities of our maturer years. He has hitherto watched over, and provided for us 'in the wilderness,' though like the sons of Jacob, 'we have often turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.' Let us fear then, lest he should 'be weary with repenting, and make a way to his anger, and spare not our souls from death, but give over our life to the destroyer, and assign us our portion in the regions of outer darkness, where he hath forgotten to be gracious, and where there is no place of repentance, though we should seek it carefully with tears.' 'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.'

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THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed,' Mal. iii. 6.*

God is the self-existent Jehovah, the 'Am that I Am,' and therefore 'without variableness or shadow of turning.' He is equally unchangeable in his goodness and in his severity. His purpose shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. His decrees originated with himself and are coeval with eternity. 'Jehovah is his name for ever, and this is his memorial to all generations.' 'For he saith not only to Moses,' but he said it from everlasting, 'I will have mercy on whom I

will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' He had chosen the seed of Abraham to be a people unto himself, that he might manifest in them the sovereignty of his counsels, and the freeness of his love. He called them in their great progenitor, and the covenant into which he entered with the father of the faithful, not only in his own name, but in the name of his posterity, was to continue for ever. The breach of it on their part might, and would, and did for a time deprive them of the blessings, temporal and spiritual, included in the solemn transaction, but he did not cast them off for ever. 'He will not alter the thing that is gone out of his lips.' This pledge of divine faithfulness has been, and is the security of the Jews. They are, notwithstanding, of their out-cast and deserted condition, still beloved for their father's sake. They are preserved amidst all their wanderings and oppressions as a distinct community; and God will yet 'remember them, the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals when they went after him in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.' Israel shall then be what he once was, 'holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase. All that devour him shall offend: evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord.' And in precisely the same manner will God act towards all in every age who are in the blessed state of 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people,' elected for the very purpose 'of showing forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.' The experience of every believer supplies him with perpetually recurring proofs of this eternal and soul-satisfying truth. Who of us, really entitled to the name of Christians, are there that have not had abundant reason to regard him as faithful who hath promised, and who also hath done it? Who of us are there who have not heard the voice of our consciences, and the declarations of God's word, and our very sins themselves, testifying that our backslidings are multiplied, that our provocations are numberless, and that our continued privileges are to be accounted for only on the ground that the Lord whom we have offended is unchangeable, and that his electing 'mercy endureth for ever? Had his purposes depended on our conduct, 'the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble,' because a time of forgetfulness of God, would have been 'as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth' not 'aside to tarry' even 'for a night.' He would

have been 'as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save; and yet thou, O Lord, art still in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name.' O leave us not to the consequences of our iniquities, thou forbearing, long-suffering God of our salvation.' How unremittingly, anxiously, and prayerfully should we ponder these truths, which we feel cannot be disproved or denied.' We have left the path of duty; 'we have loved to wander in ways that are not good; we have not refrained our feet,' and justly may we fear that 'the Lord will not accept us, that now he will remember our iniquity and visit our sins.' Our only refuge is in Christ, whom the 'Father bruised and put to grief, that when he made his soul an offering for sin, he might see his seed, and prolong his days, and that the pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand.' Whether then but to him can we go with any hopes of deliverance from our aggravated guilt? He only is 'the way,' as well as 'the truth and the life.' Let us enter into our chambers, and shut our doors about us. Let us hide ourselves, and confess our sins under a deep impression of their multitude and malignity, and wrestle for pardon till we are assured by the Lord, who meets us there, that the indignation is overpast.' Let the domestic circle also be the witnesses of our convictions of unworthiness, of our godly

sorrow, of our firm apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and of our rightly founded resolutions of new obedience. There we are the priests to offer those sacrifices of broken hearts and contrite spirits with which God is well pleased. There we lay the spiritual wants of our households before the hearer of prayer, and transmit their confessions, their thanksgivings, their wishes, and their vows to heaven. The believing Christian parent, engaged in the act of adoration and supplication before his God and Saviour, and the partner of his life, and children of their love joining with him in this delightful exercise, form a scene on which angels look down complacent, and and to whose prayers the Father of Jesus and their own reconciled Father bends a listening ear, and smiles. He commissions his 'ministering spirits who minister for them that are heirs of salvation,' to guard them through the wilderness, and to conduct them at the end of their journey to the land of rest, where they shall strike the harps of seraphs, and their song through eternity be Alleluiah. '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 and ever. Amen.'

## S E P T E M B E R.

### FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them,' Rom. i. 32.*

THESE words form the closing charge in the catalogue of infamy here presented by the great apostle, to our attentive consideration. The several items composing the amount of guilt described in this passage, were supplied by sinners of the Gentiles, who even in their heathen state were 'without excuse, because the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' The Lord's 'ways' then, 'were equal,' even when he had communicated to them no special, direct revelation of his will. But 'their ways were not equal,' inasmuch as 'when they knew God'

from the effects of his omnipotence, displayed around them, and within them, 'they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.' Hence the dreadful statement of their sins which immediately follows, and grows blacker in its progress, till it concludes with the most terrible picture that can be drawn of depravity consummated—compelled to stop because it can go no farther—that of men 'knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.'

We must not for one moment suppose that we have no personal concern in the awful truth here placed in such a vivid light before us. We must not for an instant flatter ourselves that it is impossible it can be realized in our individual experience. If the heathen could be, and were guilty of the sin here denounced, with their comparatively imperfect acquaintance with what God is,

and required of them, what shall we answer now—and, O how shall we appear before him on the judgment day when we reflect that our sins are committed in the full knowledge that we are transgressing his laws explicitly delivered, and powerfully sanctioned? We dare not plead ignorance of the consequences, as an apology for our perseverance in our keenly-contested race for perdition. We know well that conscience is against us. We have often felt its accusations wringing our souls with agony, and rendering what was designed by our Maker as the scene of our Christian warfare and Christian triumphs, the birth-place of our coming, certain, and everlasting punishment. We know equally well that the revealed laws of the Most High, are in direct opposition to our ungodly practices, that as professing Christians we pretend to be governed by these laws, and that if we fail in our obedience, we must pay the penalty expressly threatened by the great Lawgiver against the wilful, infatuated, presumptuous, and incorrigible offender. We are sinning against mercies, and judgments, and warnings, and exhortations, and entreaties; 'crucifying to ourselves afresh the Son of God' by our transgressions, and 'putting him to an open shame' by obstinately refusing to turn from them. We are doing despite to the Spirit of grace, by constraining him to 'strive' no longer with us, and 'counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing' by delighting or taking pleasure in the society, conversation, and friendship of those who, like Ephraim of old, are 'joined to their idols,' and to whom the Lord may be saying, in token of his being about to leave them for ever, 'Let them alone.'

Is it possible that sinners of this description can be pardoned? that they can be restored to soundness of mind, made to receive cordially the offers of the gospel, and to rejoice in that faith which they once speculatively rejected and practically destroyed? 'Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that he cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear,' and though 'our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid his face from us, that he will not hear, till we are brought low and see our wretched state, and declare that 'there is salvation in no other,' He has still the same almighty power, and the same divinely benevolent anxiety to deliver. 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.' It matters not what may be the number of our transgressions, and their aggravations, the heinousness of our original apostacy, and, as flowing from this corrupt spring, the frightful and condemning amount of

our actual disobedience, the blood of the Lamb of God shed on Calvary, and sprinkled on the heart and conscience by the Spirit of holiness, 'cleanseth from all sin.' Let us lay hold as with a miser's grasp on this blessed truth, and not let it go till we feel in ourselves that it is indeed 'glad tidings of great joy.' Let us ever remember that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost to apply to the objects of the Father's everlasting love, 'the redemption purchased by Christ.' He must convince the transgressor of sin, before he can perceive its enormity. He must exhibit it in all its loathsomeness to the revived moral sense of the spiritual sleeper, before he can feel its extreme bitterness. He must 'humble the lofty looks and bow down the' natural 'haughtiness of man before the Lord alone can be exalted,' and he must display in all its attractions to the lately 'carnal mind,' the fullness and freeness of the covenant of reconciliation, before the ransomed captive can have his chains burst asunder, and rejoice and be 'exceeding glad, and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free.' It is now that repentance hath its perfect work. It is now that Jesus is contemplated in the character of an all-sufficient Saviour. It is now that his offer of salvation is seized on, and pressed to the believer's heart, as 'the pearl of great price,' and it is now that the forgiven soul 'is 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 him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord.'

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#### FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required,'* Luke xii. 47, 48.

THE perfect justice of the principle here laid down by Him who spoke as never man spake, because 'in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,' is beyond all challenge and controversy. 'That servant who knows his lord's will, and prepares not himself,' for the duties required of him, in consequence of this knowledge, 'neither doeth according to his lord's will,'

though he is completely acquainted with it, and enabled by him who has revealed it to act in terms of his requisition, 'shall be beaten with many stripes,'—shall be severely punished here, and if his lord's mercy prevent not, eternally hereafter. 'But he that knows not his lord's will,' because he has not been pleased, in right of his sovereignty, to make it known to him, by a particular communication from heaven, 'and commits, through ignorance, things worthy of stripes,' 'shall be beaten with few stripes,'—is still held guilty to a certain extent, and must not expect 'to escape unpunished.' Now there cannot be the smallest shadow of a doubt, to which of these two classes of 'servants' we belong. And it most nearly concerns us to inquire what are our privileges, and how we have improved them. We cannot, with any appearance of honesty, or even of decency, assert that we have not opportunities of knowing our Master's will. In this land, enlightened by the beams of the Sun of righteousness, the scriptures are, or may be in the hands of all its inhabitants; the means of education are abundantly supplied to every one who chooses to use them, and religious ordinances are regularly administered, and may be attended by each individual, whatever be his station or circumstances, who has been taught by the word of God to value them. With such advantages, if we attempt to plead ignorance of 'the things which pertain to our peace, we must stand condemned as guilty, by our own confession, of the most glaring, degrading, and sinful negligence. We are placed, as it were, beside 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,' the precious fruit is within our reach, and if we will not take, and eat and live, we must not endeavour to transfer what is entirely our own fault, to any want of goodness in the arrangements of God's providence, or to some imagined defects in the humane institutions of our country. It cannot be denied that we are in possession of inestimable privileges, and neither can it be denied, that many of us have grossly misimproved, and still more of us have altogether neglected them.

Christ has been, and is stately proclaimed to us as 'the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth,' and yet we have either kept at a distance from the place where the message is delivered, or if we have entered 'the house of prayer,' we have heard as if we heard it not, the wonderful history of a Saviour's meritorious sufferings, atoning death, triumphant resurrection, and glorious ascension to the right hand of the throne of God.

We have been invited by our bibles, by Christ's ambassadors, by Christ's Spirit, and by Christ's friends, among our brethren, to 'come to the waters,' and yet we have shut our ears to the affectionate call, and will not drink of the salubrious, refreshing, and invigorating streams. The Lord has spoken, and still speaks to every feeling by which human beings can be affected; he addresses every motive by which creatures desirous of happiness can be influenced; he threatens, and entreats and expostulates with us, in all the warmth of divine solicitude, for our eternal welfare, and still we 'refuse him that speaketh to us from heaven.' We still continue to reject in reality, whatever our professions may be, the oft repeated and earnestly pressed offers of mercy, and remain insensible of the extent, as well as fervour of that 'love which passeth all understanding. Do we not then deserve many stripes? And how dreadful the thought that they may, and if we consider not our ways, that they will be inflicted, without diminution, without interruption, and without end! Let us apply this admitted truth to our own state, and then our attention will be withdrawn from curious and unprofitable speculations, respecting the purposes of God towards the heathen,—whether he will save or condemn them, according to their use of the light which they enjoy,—and fixed upon ourselves. 'The Lord hath dealt most bountifully with us, and crowned us with loving-kindness, and tender mercies, and if there be no return of gratitude, love, and obedience on our part, corresponding, in some measure, to the benefits which we have received, and are daily, nay, with every breath we draw, receiving, 'it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for us.' 'The men of Nineveh, and the queen of the South, shall rise up and condemn this generation, for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and she came to hear wisdom from Solomon, and behold a greater than Jonas and Solomon is here.' These explicit declarations of him, through whom we are made partakers of every blessing, and to whom we must account for every blessing with which our 'cup runneth over,' are of vast importance, and the state of our spiritual health may be ascertained, from the impression which they produce on our minds. If they are attended to, with an interest in any degree proportionate to their intrinsic value, and their bearing on our true happiness, they will lead us to 'strive' more prayerfully and vigorously, to 'enter in at the strait gate,' impelled not only by the consideration, that 'many are called, and few chosen,' but encouraged by the gracious assurance, that 'Jesus,

because he continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood, is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for him.'

SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

'Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience,' Eph. v. 6.

THE 'things' which the apostle is so very solicitous that the converts at Ephesus should avoid, are the particular violations of the divine law which he had just enumerated, and pronounced deserving of exclusion from the light of the Redeemer's countenance, and from the society of 'the spirits of just men made perfect' for ever. Influenced by that spirit of self-dependence, the most difficult to be subdued of any of the dispositions which 'war against the soul,' we are strongly inclined, instead of trusting in God, 'to lean to our own understanding.' We endeavour to represent him, whom we cannot by searching find out unto perfection, as so good and benevolent, that he will not be strict in marking our iniquities, or severe in punishing them; that he has created us weak and fallible, and placed us in a world full of temptation, and therefore, that the trivial failings by which we regret to say our conduct is now and then distinguished, will be overlooked by a being who remembers our frame, and who knows that to 'step aside is human.' The causes in addition to those already mentioned, of such an unscriptural, irrational an opinion as this, are either an excessive sentimentalism in the persons who entertain it, whose delicate sensibilities are shocked by the very enunciation of the terms *malignity*, *satisfaction*, *substitution*, and *retribution*, or the influence of what are called—how justly we leave others to determine—philosophical principles, or what we believe is most frequently the reason, a wish in men to make the Almighty just such a being as suits their own interest, because they are conscious that if 'justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne,' they must exist the suffering victims of sinning against him for ever. This selfish theory, which lies at the foundation of the efficacy of sincere, though imperfect obedience, as a ground of safety, is not more at variance with the word of God, our only infallible standard of faith and duty, than that which is founded on vague notions of the divine goodness. It has been strongly but truly said, by the poet, that 'a God all

mercy, is a God unjust.' For on the unsupported, wild, and dangerous supposition, that 'a God all mercy' did exist, the Lord Jehovah would be divested of part of his attributes, and of course, cease to be perfect; the distinction between right and wrong, in human conduct, would be abolished, and piety and virtue end in nothing but 'vanity and vexation of spirit;' the heinousness of sin, would not appear in its native deformity, and in its ruinous consequences, and the crown of glory be thus torn from the sacred head of 'Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.' Admitting these to be the statements of scripture, let us be careful to know the truth, and begin and 'accomplish a diligent search' of our own hearts, and by the guidance of the Spirit we shall find out exactly how matters stand between God and us, and be induced to 'flee' immediately, 'from the wrath to come.' In all his dispensations, the Lord is manifested as supremely benevolent and merciful, but at the same time, consistent, holy, and just. His goodness prompted him to save us, but he could not forgive the guilt which had excluded us from his favour, without asserting the holiness of his nature, and vindicating the rectitude of his administration. We could not give a sufficient ransom, or any ransom at all, for our souls. He looked to his angels, who 'excel in strength, and who do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word,' but none of them, nay, not all of them, were able to redeem the fallen race of men from the curse of the law which they had transgressed. The 'hand-writing' remained uneffaced, and ineffaceable, by creatures, whatever might be their rank or their power. 'The book was' still 'shut, sealed with seven seals,' and no created intelligence 'could open it, neither look thereon.' There was one plan only, which could be successfully adopted, for executing the astonishing scheme of man's recovery from the penal consequences of his rebellion, and of his restoration to his forfeited privileges and expectation. A being equal in dignity to the Lord, who had been so grievously offended, must become the substitute of the offenders. A sacrifice of infinite value must be offered up, as an atonement for sin committed against a God of infinite purity. 'The lion of the tribe of Judah' must interpose, 'and take unto him his great power,' and subdue Satan, and redeem his captives, and reign as mediator, 'till all his enemies shall be made his footstool.' It was thus, and thus only, that mercy and truth could meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. 'Truth, in the person of the

Saviour, must spring out of the earth, as a root out of a dry ground,' and then, but not till then, could righteousness, well pleased, look down from heaven. 'The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe.' Our hope of salvation depends altogether on the glorious fact, that the sacrifice required, and without which there could, and can be, no remission, was both offered up and accepted. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul.'

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SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all,'* James ii. 10.

ONE of the most common opinions entertained by the unregenerate is, that there is nothing very serious or at all condemnatory in many things which are reckoned sinful by 'the righteous over-much.' And therefore the truth here stated so expressly by the apostle, is remarkably difficult for the natural mind to receive, nay, it will give it no reception at all. That such is the fact, we have the testimony of every past age, and if we would speak out, and dissemble not, the evidence of our own experience. It has its rise in the same troubled fountain whence flow the various streams of spiritual error and moral degeneracy. It proceeds from the inherent unaptness of fallen man, to the study of the divine character, and his innate disinclination to admit the universality of the divine law. It subjects the mightiest as well as the meanest to its perverting influences, who assuming that an all-perfect God bears a striking resemblance to themselves, attempt to make him see with their eyes, and would fain believe that his purity is to be measured by the standard of their holiness. Such gainsayers may hear, or they may forbear; 'but let God be true, and every man a liar.' Let us consider the author of 'the law' as he is revealed to us in his own word, and 'the law' itself as contained in the 'lively oracles.' We there learn that the Lord is a perfect Being, possessing every attribute essential to one 'whose kingdom ruleth over all,' that he is 'Holy, holy, holy' in his nature, in his works, and in his ways, and therefore, that 'the law of the Lord is also perfect, converting the soul, that the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; that the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; that the commandment of the Lord is

pure, enlightening the eyes; that the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; that the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.' Every precept contained in the law then has his authority and sanction, and He, yes, even He who is, who was, and who is to come, cannot suffer 'one jot or tittle' to be taken from it or 'to pass away,' without breaking in on the perfectness of the Godhead, and giving up a part of that majesty that supports his throne. 'Be ye holy for I am holy.' We have here God's explicit command, which 'we must observe to do,' being strictly prohibited 'to add thereto, or to diminish from it.' The law is enjoined on every rational being wherever existing, in whatever circumstances placed, or by whatever privileges distinguished. It respects not a mere external conformity to the will of God, but especially the possession of religious principles in the heart. It engages by the strongest obligations, the whole soul to the service of God, the complete surrender of all its powers, volitions, and desires to his disposal, the utter abandonment of every pursuit that would interfere with his interests, and the utmost exertion of every energy of which He, by his mighty working and upholding grace, has made it capable for the advancement of his glory. If any one part of the law then be broken, the great Legislator is dishonoured by the very act; and as each individual statute is inseparably connected with what goes before and follows it, the whole law is unquestionably dishonoured also. Take any member, or any joint of a member from the human body, and it instantly ceases to be a complete body. The law is a fence to hedge in our path, and if a breach, however small, be made in any portion of it, *there* is an opening by which we may go out, and wander where we please. We are no longer under restraint; the fence is no more a fence, and it is to us the same thing as if it were removed altogether. Who then is justified by the deeds of the law? None; no, not one. 'We know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law,' who are subject to its authority—and this, we have seen, is the real state of us all; that, every mouth may be stopped,' which would venture to plead exemption from any of its enactments, 'and all the world,' from the force of conviction, 'may not only become,' but confess themselves 'guilty before God.' If this account of man's condition in consequence of sin has not been received by us as the declaration of scripture, it is no wonder that we are still strangers to the truth, that the holiness of God is such that he cannot look on iniquity in any of its forms, but

with abhorrence, and the necessary determination to punish as an 'accursed thing,' that which 'his soul hateth with a perfect hatred.' Let us pray earnestly, 'that the same mind may be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus,' who magnified the law, and made it honourable; and then we shall regard it as a perfect system, and see that 'offending in one point,' necessary infers that we 'are guilty of all.' It may be that before we attained to the knowledge which we now have, much precious time was lost which we thought we were improving; many golden opportunities passed away which we supposed had been usefully employed, and deeper additional guilt contracted of which we had no idea there was the least fear of accumulating. Still, 'there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.' The bible is yet open to us: the Holy Ghost is still the great teacher: the throne of grace is still occupied by the Mediator; the mercy-seat is still without a cloud upon it, and the breathings of 'the humble and contrite spirit,' still 'rise in sweet memorial before God.' Self is now annihilated, and the Lord alone exalted. The scales of ignorance having fallen from our eyes, 'because of the anointing,' we are enabled 'to see all things clearly'—the absolute purity of the divine nature, and our own spiritual wretchedness; the comprehensiveness of the divine law, and our own liability to punishment as the effect of our violation of 'the least of its commandments; the all-sufficient remedy provided, and the way in which it must be applied in all its healing efficacy to our souls; the reality of heaven's blessedness, and the means whereby we are to become prepared for 'glory, honour, and immortality.' We are now satisfied that whosoever is not 'for God, is against him,' and that 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' We are now, but never till now, qualified aright for the performance of duty, and knowing whom we have believed, and in whom is all our confidence, for time and eternity, 'we hope continually, and will yet praise him more and more.'

### THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others,'* Eph. ii. 3.

THE apostle, as a converted man, speaks here to those who had been also converted. The language

employed could be properly used by, and to, no other. While we remain in our natural state of alienation from God, the eyes of our understanding being darkened, we are utterly incapable of spiritual vision. The Lord with whom we have to do, though we rightly know it not, is a being who hideth himself from us, and we engage in any pursuit, except that of 'seeking after him, if haply we may find him.' The primeval curse resting on us, and displaying all its corrupting and blinding effects in us, 'we are dead in trespasses and sins, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, the children of wrath even as others.' Terms more precise, cannot be found whereby to describe that state of mental darkness and moral perverseness, in which the 'home-born slave' is placed; and it is a convincing evidence of our having been rescued from this state, when we are able to perceive that this is the condition of every man, and still more, that it was our own. By the new light which has dawned on us from above, we have been led to see what we were before the Lord, who pitied and 'brought us from a fearful pit, out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, establishing our goings.' It is a further proof, that God has been merciful unto us, and redeemed us for his name's sake, that so far from rejecting the doctrine of *original sin*, as derogatory from the dignity of man, we believe and receive it just as it is revealed in the word, and confirmed by our own experience. Pride of intellect, and the exalting of natural reason, to a sphere in which it is altogether unfitted to move, are two of the most fatal effects of our inherited depravity, and contribute very materially to establish the melancholy fact, without the belief of which there can be no salvation, because there is no felt need of it, that we personally, with all our faculties, and aspirations, and excellencies, 'are children of wrath even as others.' How dreadful this state appears to those who have been made acquainted with it, as the very state in which they were born, and from which they have been delivered, not by human 'power,' or created 'might,' but by 'my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' Such persons, and such only, see it in all its sinfulness, misery, and danger, and the more clearly do they see it, in proportion as they are removed farther, and yet farther from it, by being 'enabled to die daily unto sin, and to live unto righteousness.' How careful should we be to apply these truths to ourselves, that we may fully ascertain, whether we 'have passed from death unto life, and are in Christ Jesus new creatures!' Has a complete revolution then been effected, in the moral empire of our understandings and

hearts? Have old abuses been done away, and inveterate corruptions cut up by the roots? Have the tyrants who ruled us with a rod of iron, been banished, and their unworthy ministers along with them? Have new privileges been granted to us, as fellow-citizens with the saints, and new rights secured to us, as our own certain possession, and our children's inheritance, as 'the seed of the blessed of the Lord!' Is our Deliverer now our King, mighty as he is merciful, and in his days, 'and he shall reign for ever and ever,' shall righteousness flourish, and abundance of peace, while the moon endureth? And when the sun and the moon shall be blotted out from the things which are, have we the promise that the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and our God our continually increasing glory? If such be our state beyond the reach of change, because 'he who hath begun the good work in us, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ,' then have we the animating and ennobling assurance given us by Him, who 'hath perfected that which concerneth us,' that we are adopted into the household of God, and 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord.' We now recollect with a joy which the Christian feels, but is unable to express adequately, the time when we 'lingered' among our worldly pursuits and pleasures, unwilling to leave what had been so long dear to us, and when Jesus laid hold on us with his saving right hand—the Lord being merciful unto us, and 'brought us forth, and set us without the city' of destruction; and 'that it came to pass,' when he had placed us in the way of safety, he said unto us, with all the earnestness of one that watched for our souls, 'Escape for thy life, look not behind thee; neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.' And O what praise is due to the riches of his grace, that when we were without strength, incapable of self-motion, and might have stood there a monument of his just indignation for ever, 'the everlasting God the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who 'fainteth not, neither is weary, enabled us to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint,' till we arrived at 'Zoar,' our house of refuge, and 'our souls did live.'

## THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.'*  
1 Tim. i. 15.

So deep is the sense of sin in the enlightened convert, that knowing it in his own heart, as he cannot know it in any other, he is willing to regard himself as the chief of sinners. And if this was the state of the apostle Paul, who among the disciples of Jesus, stood, and stands, and will ever stand, pre-eminent for holiness, self-denial, and devotedness to his Master's cause, how much more must it be the state of us, who can lay no claim whatever to his 'revelations,' his peculiar privileges, and his direct communication with the Lord of glory, who in his sovereignty, and from eternity, had 'made him a chosen vessel unto himself, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.' How precious, because 'faithful,' then, 'is the saying,' that Christ Jesus came into the world to redeem the guilty, and how still more precious, because it is 'worthy of all acceptation,' that he was manifested in the flesh to save me, who am the chief of sinners! Did the eternal Son of God leave the glory which he had with the Father from everlasting ages, and descend to the earth, inhabited by a fallen, condemned, and perishing race of intelligent and immortal beings, that he might by humiliations without a parallel, and sorrows, which he alone could endure, satisfy the righteous demands of insulted and incensed Deity, and open up a way of reconciliation, for 'the chief of sinners,' to the holiness which they had defied. And was I, O my soul, in the number of the apostate, the revolted, and the obdurate, who called forth the exhibition of such astonishing condescension, and such unutterable love! Were my sins of every shade and dye among the causes of all that Emmanuel endured 'in the days of his flesh, when he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death,' and drew these words from his bursting heart, 'Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour?' I bless God, who has revealed his Son in me, that I am at last enabled to see guilt, where I never saw it before, and to feel that I ought 'to hate, even the garment which is spotted with the flesh.' I rejoice that I am now led to take a very different view of myself; my condition, principles, motives, and prospects, and to experience my spiritual destitution, poverty, and

wretchedness, that I may thus be constrained to have recourse to the almighty Physician, and to say from under a deep sense of my indwelling corruptions, of my exceeding weakness and dangerous disease, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' I exult on hearing his voice uttering the reviving words, and at the same time increasing my faith, and supplying me with strength to lay hold on his promise, 'I will: be thou clean.' I adore Him that 'standeth in the midst of the throne, having the appearance of a Lamb as if it had been slain,' that he has completely satisfied me of the utter insufficiency and worthlessness of my own fancied 'righteousness, which I went about to establish, not submitting myself to the righteousness of God, even that righteousness which is of God by faith,' and that he has brought home to my understanding, and securely lodged there, the belief that if I would see his face in mercy, and 'be for ever with the Lord,' I must cast myself unconditionally on his grace, depend unreservedly on his infinite merits, and take him alone for 'my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.' 'Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.' 'I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.' Shall I any longer continue in the commission of any thing which the bible declares contrary to the law of God, or in the neglect of any duty which the same authority pronounces to be indispensable as the evidence of faith, when it has been made known to me by the teaching of the Spirit, that I am inexcusable, and can expect nothing but greater condemnation, if after I have been 'made acquainted with the truth, and escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I am again entangled therein and overcome, and thus the latter end shall be worse with me than the beginning, convinced as I am that it had been better for me not to have known the way of righteousness at all, than after I have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto me?' When we behold Jesus in his incarnate state—when we think on the persecutions to which he was exposed; the dangers through which he passed; the calumnies that were heaped upon him; the injustice to which he was subjected; the cruelties which he experienced; the mockings by which he was set at nought; the malignity of the spiritual enemies by whom he was assailed;

the agony of his last moments, when there never was any sorrow like unto that sorrow wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger,—O when we dwell on such scenes as these, and know that sin in general, and our sins in particular, were the cause of them all, shall we henceforth take pleasure in or countenance any thing which contributed to such an accumulation of woes, or wilfully be guilty of any one transgression that added to the anguish of Him who 'saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor, therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him?' Let us remember that the evil heart of unbelief, in all its modifications, is ruin. Let us pray fervently and perseveringly, that the Lord the Spirit may take every 'root' of it entirely away; that we may taste and see that God is good, and be more and more established 'in the present truth,' that it is indeed a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom we feel that we are the chief.

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#### FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' Is xxxiii. 14.*

It is indeed a melancholy fact, that there are sinners in Zion, hypocrites among the sincere servants of the living God. None are more regular perhaps in the observance of ordinances, and none more apparently serious and attentive when engaged in the services of the sanctuary. They join in celebrating the praises of God for his creating power, his preserving goodness, and redeeming mercy. They unite in the prayers offered up as if they really felt all the spiritual wants expressed, all the unworthiness confessed, all the guilt deplored, all the anxiety for pardon breathed out, all the desires for conformity to the will of God uttered, and all the confidence in Jesus, as alone able to redeem, professed by him who acts as the interpreter of their thoughts at a throne of grace. They hear the word read as if they were intimately concerned in its declarations, and as if God's statutes were the joy and rejoicing of their heart. They listen as if they were interested in the truths drawn from the sacred records, and explained in simplicity, and pressed upon them with earnestness and solicitude for their

edification. They do not confine their religious duties to the temple or to the Sabbath. They stately, it may be, engage in family worship during the week. And yet they are hypocrites still, 'having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.' They have private ends to serve. They see that a religious profession gives respectability. They are in hopes that what it has done for others it may do for them. Self, in some of its forms, is the centre of attraction, and draws towards it every scheme in which they embark, and every plan that they either devise or assist in carrying into effect.

But such a course, though often successful for a time, must end in detection. 'The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.' Conscience has long been quiet, and its possessor imagined that its deep sleep was peace. But at the command of its Lord it has shaken off its slumbers, and the dreadful conviction of having dealt treacherously with the Omnipotent, fills the stoutest hearted sinner that ever was 'at ease in Zion' with terror, and causes 'fearfulness to surprise' the completest 'hypocrite' that ever said, 'How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?' What consternation will seize the guilty soul when God's threatenings against Jerusalem shall be fearfully executed! 'What then will ye do in the time of visitation? To whom will ye flee for help, and where will you leave your glory?' Escape is impossible; for the Lord himself has 'awaked to judgment, and guards every avenue by which the doomed objects of his displeasure might hope to find a way of deliverance.' 'They had made him to serve with their sins; they had wearied him with their iniquities.' He is now about to bury them in the ruins which his outstretched arm is undermining, and causing to totter to their fall. And over whose heads are the crumbling and trembling masses impending? Over the heads of those who were perfectly aware of their danger, for they had been unceasingly warned by the Lord's messengers to avoid the spot on which, if they continued to stand, they must inevitably be crushed, and hidden from the face of the living world, and from the face of God in mercy for ever. Extend thy thoughts, O sinner, to that state where the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious, and mercy no longer rejoices against judgment. Think what it must be to 'dwell with the devouring fire,' what they are enduring 'who dwell with everlasting burnings.' Could we draw aside the veil that covers futurity, with what overwhelming force would the truth be presented to the mind, and press closely on every feeling of

the heart, that 'sinners are' no longer 'at ease in Zion,' and 'that fearfulness hath indeed surprised the hypocrites.' We know; yes, the most imperfectly informed among us know the threatenings denounced against the obstinate sinner; threatenings which by every rule of interpretation, and according to the plain meaning of plain words, can be understood only as relating to what is eternal; and if we continue to 'live at ease in Zion,' and to act the part of 'hypocrites,' do we not provoke the eyes of God's glory; and dare we complain of his government when, in terms of his own solemn declaration, he appoints us to utter destruction? When the books shall have been opened and examined, and 'the fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable' separated from those whose 'names are written in the Lamb's book of life,' the Judge pronounces the sentence which fixes their unalterable state. With a countenance beaming with love ineffable, and completely 'satisfied with the travail of his soul,' he welcomes those on his right hand to their rest; 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world.' What then, O sinner, must be the feelings of those on the other side of the august tribunal, when instead of looks of inexpressible affection, He who sits thereon turns on them eyes in which justice is lighted up without mercy, yes, O my soul, Jesus, even Jesus, without mercy! and utters the withering soul-convulsing words, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' God in Christ forbid that we should ever experience the agonies of that dreadful moment! But the word is gone forth, and it is irrevocable. In vain they 'call on the hills to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the Lamb.' The hills are no more, and the place appointed by the Almighty for the scene of their endless torment, opens beneath them; it receives them, and hides them for ever. 'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' 'Now is the accepted time: now only is the day of salvation.'

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#### FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing,'* Zeph. iii. 17.

THE Being here so beautifully and affectingly described is the Messiah, the Branch, the Lord

our righteousness, and as is very usual in prophetic language, he is spoken of as if he were already come, and actually engaged in his glorious and gracious undertaking. His supreme divinity is recognised in the title given to him. He is 'the Lord thy God,' the Father's equal, 'who was from everlasting by him as one brought up with him, and daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.' He is therefore 'mighty to save' them 'who are at ease in Zion, hypocrites, and the chief of sinners.' How striking and attractive is the picture here presented to the mental eye, and conveying its spiritual charms to the renewed heart! Every expression shows not merely the intensity of the Redeemer's love, but also the pleasure which he felt in its manifestation. He had from eternity 'set' his people 'as a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm;' and his desire to save them was as unchangeable as the nature and attributes of himself, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' He foresaw their fall and its consequences. But he had 'predestinated them unto the adoption of children.' His love to them, then, 'was an everlasting love, and,' therefore, 'with loving-kindness did he' determine to 'draw them' unto himself, 'that they might be one with him, even as he and the Father are one.' But with what a price must their ransom be paid? The Son of God must 'appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemn sin in the flesh.' 'He came to his own, but his own received him not.' Still he knew whom he had chosen, and his thoughts were still thoughts of love. 'Many waters could not quench it, neither could the floods drown it.' Grace, sovereign, free, all-subduing grace, when the hour of the sinner's redemption has arrived, must lay the foundation; grace must raise the building; grace must strengthen the bulwarks, and grace must crown the battlements, for they are the Lord's. Such, O my soul, is thy Redeemer's love, eternal, immutable, and inextinguishable. And who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, whither he had descended in the fulness of time, that he might 'turn the dry land into water springs, to give drink to his people, his chosen; that the solitary place might be glad for them, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose; that the glory of Lebanon might be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon;' that they, his eternally loved and elected ones, might 'see the glory of the Lord' in their immovably fixed redemption, 'and the excellency of our God,' satisfied with the meritorious sufferings of 'the Heir of all things,' and therefore repeating and confirming the declaration of his purpose, 'that the moun-

tains 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?' 'Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.' 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?' The brightness of the Father's glory; the Head of all principality and power; the Angel Jehovah, who conversed with man in paradise, when man was holy and happy; the promised seed of the woman in the hour of sorrow; the messenger from heaven to the patriarchs who 'rejoiced to see' the day of his incarnation 'afar off,' 'the Redeemer who liveth, and is to stand at the latter day upon the earth;' 'the King who is set on his holy hill of Zion, and declares the decree, The Father hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;' 'the Lord,' in short, 'whom his people had long sought, the desire of all nations, who was to come suddenly to his temple, in whom they who waited for consolation in Israel delighted, and of whose fulness the children of his adoption, sanctified through the truth, his own by purchase, in every age of his church were to receive, and grace for grace.' Can there be love like this, any where else? Can there be one more able and willing to redeem all the pledges of his love?—love that was felt for us when we were altogether unlovely, and meriting any thing but love?—love that was awakened in the breast of him who 'was in the beginning with God, and who is God,' for creatures degraded, lost, and ruined; and the influence of this love so mighty, all-conquering, and overpowering, that to express, satisfy, and gratify it, 'the Creator of all things visible, and invisible,' became a man, and as a man submitted to and endured every trial by which the world could testify its hatred of godliness, and its firm determination 'to die the death,' rather than turn from its ungodliness and live. And if we have formed any thing like an adequate idea of this love which, in its whole extent, is 'unsearchable and past finding out,' is it possible to conceive of any fact recorded, in the history of heaven or of earth, so admirably calculated to constrain us to believe that 'the Lord our God in the midst of us is mighty; that he has saved us, that he rejoices over us with joy; that he rests in this love, that he joys over us with singing.' Love is as powerful as ever in the heart of the glorified Saviour in his heavenly kingdom, 'thrones and dominions be subject unto him,' and

is displayed in his all-prevailing intercession, and in the influences of the Sanctifier and Comforter shed abroad in the soul, purifying the believer more and more; strengthening 'the pilgrim to the celestial city,' and giving him, in the consolations by which his journey is cheered, a foretaste of what is reserved for him in that happy land; 'whereas the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so thy God,' O thou follower of the Lamb, shall 'rejoice for ever over thee.'

FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,'* 2Thess. i. 9.

'TO-DAY if you will hear God's voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works. Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.' This denunciation of Jehovah against the unbelieving, murmuring, and disobedient Israelites, excluding them from the temporal Canaan, is addressed in reference to 'a better country, even a heavenly,' to those who to the last moment of their existence, wilfully 'know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Their day of grace is gone, and the time of their fearful visitation is at hand. Messiah as judge, is 'come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.' When he was manifested to save those given to him by the Father, in an everlasting covenant, 'he had no form, nor comeliness,' and when the fallen 'saw him, there was no beauty in him that they should desire him.' 'They hid, as it were their faces from him; he was despised, and they esteemed him not; he was oppressed, and he was afflicted; he was taken from prison, and from judgment, and made his grave with the wicked.' But 'he will appear the second time, without suffering for 'sin,' as a sinner, in the sinner's room, 'unto salvation.' He will then be arrayed in his own majesty, for he and the Father are one, in all the splendour, and holiness, and irresistible power of the uncreated God. Angels shall be his adoring and ministering attendants, the clouds his chariot of conquest, and the thunders of the Almighty Triune Jehovah announce his descent. He once came the messenger of glad tidings—a free and full deliverance from guilt and its consequences, 'not crying, nor lifting up, nor causing his voice to be heard in the

street, nor breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax,' but then the terrors of the Lord shall be around him. On earth his sceptre was peace, and the transgressor, 'the chief of sinners,' was warmly invited to draw near, to touch it and live; then 'justice and judgment shall be the habitation of his throne.' In his state of humiliation, his affecting words were, 'If thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life:' but then his language will be, O hear it now ye 'who are at ease in Zion,' that you may not hear it then, 'and wonder and perish!'—'Repentance is hid from mine eyes; vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' The universe, through all its bounds, shall feel the approach of its Creator 'to judge the world in righteousness.' Then the sublime language of the Psalmist shall be strictly applicable to him, who though David's son is also David's Lord, (Psal. xviii. 7—15). In such awful circumstances, and with such an accumulation of horrors, will he manifest himself to the unbelieving and the half-believing, the obstinate and the unimpressed, the unconvinced and the unjustified, the unwashed in the blood of sprinkling and the unsanctified by the Spirit of holiness. Their sin is wilful, their contempt of salvation evident to all, and borne witness to, by their own conscience; and to heighten and complete their punishment they shall behold 'afar off,' the glory in which the saints delight themselves, in the abundance of peace, and the 'great' and impassable 'gulf fixed,' which shall separate them from the abodes of blessedness for ever. While the appalling scene is yet only in prospect, let us consider how the Judge shall appear to us individually. He has long addressed us as a Saviour; he has long told us that we are 'children of wrath,' and deserving the outpouring of wrath. He has long offered himself, in all his sufficiency, to our acceptance, and entreated us to receive him as our 'all in all.' He has long called, and have we answered? He has long stretched out his hand, and have we regarded? He has long stood at the door and knocked, and have we heard his voice, and opened the door; and has he come in and supped with us, and we with him? He has long implored us to put on the robe of his righteousness, as the only covering for the soul, and the only unfailling defence against the enemy, and are we indeed clothed with the garments of salvation? He has long assured us that every shelter which self can supply is a refuge of lies, and have we

abandoned it as spiritually destructive, and sought and found 'a hiding-place from the storm,' in the one strong-hold, where alone the prisoners of hope can enjoy safety, security, and undisturbed repose? Let us put these questions to ourselves in the presence of God, and remember that the Omniscient is the witness of this our appeal. How then do our consciences authorise us to answer them? Now, and now only is the time, when they can be asked and replied to, so as to avoid the effects which must follow from inability to give satisfaction to our own minds, in the self-examination to which they are intended to conduct us. Let thy meditations, O my soul, rest on these truths, of unspeakable and directly personal importance; Christ, now thy Saviour, shall come as thy Judge, in majesty ineffable; and art thou prepared to stand before him without fear, and 'rejoicing in hope of the glory of God?' This is the question of questions. Put it not away from thee. Delay not to ask it. Every thing essential to thy happiness depends upon it. 'To-day, if thou wilt hear his voice;' to-morrow, I may be incapable of hearing it. Death may have shut my eyes, and sealed my doom for ever. And what must that doom inevitably be? Heaven or hell, and no after change possible. All fixed, fixed unalterably and eternally. The soul won or lost for evermore. God in Christ be merciful to me a sinner!

'When thou, O Lord, shalt stand disolosed  
In majesty severe;  
And sit in judgment on my soul,  
O how shall I appear!'

#### FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?'* Jer. viii. 22.

THE prophet was commissioned, by the God of Israel, to expostulate with his people, on the conduct which they had pursued and were still pursuing, and to set before them the consequences which had followed and were still following, from their apostacy. For this purpose he employs all the powers of his pathetic and persuasive eloquence. He pours out the feelings of his troubled soul in language worthy of the subject, and with an earnestness which displays at once the peculiar characteristics of his genius, the strength of his religious principles, and the warmth of his social affection. He adverts to every circumstance particularly calculated to make a favourable impression on the minds of those whom he addressed.

He collects the most striking incidents from their interesting and varied history, and combining all by his splendid and sanctified talents, he remonstrates, he reasons, he threatens, he implores with an energy of thought and expression which has perhaps never been equalled, and most unquestionably has never been surpassed. Never was grief for the sins and calamities of others more deeply or acutely felt, and never was it more patriotically and touchingly expressed. His whole soul is absorbed. There is a complete identification of himself, with the objects on account of whose 'treacherous dealings' his harp strings sound only 'lamentation, mourning, and woe.' 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt. I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.' In this dark day of my country's visitation for her sins, I feel that she has deserved it all, but I feel at the same time that she is still my country. 'Is there then no balm in Gilead?—O is there no physician there?' Yes, O sinner, there is balm of sovereign virtue, an infallible Physician, who can apply it in all its healing efficacy to thy diseased and dying soul. The balm is the blood of Jesus, of which the celebrated production of Gilead was the type, and the physician is Jesus himself, who by his Spirit applies the unfailing remedy—unfailing because it is his blood, and because it is thus applied. It is the high privilege of the Christian teacher, to point out to the sinner the alarming symptoms of his disease, and to assure him that if he will use the means provided, and indispensable for his particular desperate case, he shall be rescued from spiritual death, and restored to spiritual health, and translated at last to that happy land 'where the inhabitant shall not say I am sick, because the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquity.' But how often, like the prophet, does the 'watchman on the towers of Zion' call, and warn, and admonish in vain! The balm is here, the physician is here. But the one has no value, and the other is regarded as not worth the inquiring after. Thus are the messengers of Jesus met in their anxious endeavours to rouse attention, and affect rational creatures suffering under a malady that must bring them to hell, and yet boldly maintaining that all is well with them. Thus is the Spirit of God grieved and constrained to strive no more with man determined on self-destruction; and thus are millions of miserable souls lost in the full blaze of gospel light, and in the very midst of Christian ordinances. Place the great bulk of a professedly religious community within reach of a contagious

disease, which is raging around them, and carrying off its victims in rapid succession, and laying families desolate, and covering the population of the district where they reside with mourning. How anxiously are inquiries made respecting the progress of the malady! How tremblingly alive are the inquirers to every new report of its increasing inveteracy! How strongly is alarm depicted on every countenance! How crushingly does fear master and subdue every heart! How quickly they hasten from the scene of danger, and if they are seized, or imagine they are seized by the frightful pestilence before they reach a place of safety, how eagerly do they implore advice, assistance, and relief? The plague spot has appeared, it is spreading, and what would they not give or do that it may be removed? They would spend their all, they would beg—only let their life be spared, and they ask no more. But how melancholy and humbling the reflection forced on us by observation, yes, and by our own experience, that the soul may be sick, sick unto death, without awakening any fears for its state! The moral leprosy has commenced, for the seeds of it are naturally in our frame. Every hour is adding to its virulence and establishing its power. The vital parts, the heart and conscience, the understanding and the will, are deeply infected, and eternal death is unavoidable except by the prescriptions of the one physician, and the application of the one medicine. The mind becomes more and more alienated from God, the conduct gradually darkened with deeper shades of corruption, and the soul by steps accelerated in proportion to their number more irretrievably sunk in guilt. 'The harvest is past' with sinners of this description; 'the summer is ended, and they are not saved.' But while they are yet 'in the land of the living,' and within the reach of mercy, let us pray that the Lord in Christ may visit them 'in the multitude of his compassions,' and by his Spirit convince them of their sin and danger, and lead them to the cross, and enable them to behold there the 'man' Jesus suffering and dying, 'the just for the unjust, that he might bring them unto God.' Affected with the scene presented to the eye of their faith, may they say with the gospel penitent, 'Lord, remember us when thou comest into thy kingdom,' and hear Emmanuel replying in answer to their prayer, uttered with a full recognition of his divinity and power to save to the uttermost, and unreserved reliance on his merits as the only ground of their pardon and acceptance, 'In the day when I call you to leave the world, which you now feel is not to be your home, you shall be with me in para-

disc.' And O let us examine carefully our own state, that we may know whether we have had the healing balm applied to our wounds, and thus have satisfactory evidence that He who is now our physician, shall rejoice over the souls that he has 'redeemed from destruction, and crowned with loving-kindness and tender mercies' for ever.

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SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,'* Matt. xxv. 41.

FAITH, when really the gift of God, and otherwise it has no right to the name, looks to a distance, and views, as the proper objects of its exercise, the realities of eternity. 'If a man die, shall he live again?' This question has been asked with feverish anxiety by every thinking being, since death, through the fall of Adam, established his despotism over a sinful world. And it has been answered in the affirmative, in proportion to the degree of knowledge attained by the accountable creature, who felt that much of his happiness or misery depended on the kind of response which could be returned to the important inquiry. But though the immortality of the soul, in some form or other, has found a place in every creed, except the atheist's, with which history has made us acquainted, the doctrine of a *general judgment* is peculiar to the Bible. The resurrection from the dead, and the appearance of the world's inhabitants, past, present, and to come, at the bar of the world's Judge, were truths too vast for unaided reason to discover, or to comprehend. They formed part of those 'secret things which belong to the Lord,' and have ceased to be mysteries to such favoured lands, alone, as have been visited and enlightened by 'the day spring from on high.' The certainty of judgment is an object of faith, as 'the substance of things not seen,' because it was taught to the people of God under both the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. See Jude xiv. 15; Job xix. 25, &c.; Psal. ix. 7, 8; Dan. xii. 1—3. When we turn to the evangelical records, we have the particular Person of the adorable Trinity pointed out, who is to be the Judge; and a sublime and minute description of the 'great day of dread, decision, and despair,' given by him who is ordained by the Father to conduct the awful proceedings. See Matt. xxv. 31, &c.; Acts i. 10, 11; xvii. 31; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rev. i. 7. The *sureness* of judg-

ment being thus established on the ground of the divine testimony, its righteousness follows as a matter of course, when we consider the attributes and character of the Judge. 'In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;' and, therefore, the actions of every subject of God's government are known to him, and their 'most secret sins,' or 'labours of love,' placed 'in the light of his countenance.' Their thoughts, words, and deeds, will be examined and estimated according to the opportunities which they have enjoyed, of becoming acquainted with the will of God, and the improvement which they have made of the privileges wherewith the Lord, in his wisdom and goodness, has been pleased to bless them. 'From them, to whom much has been given, much will also be required; and it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment,' than for us to whom the Lord has been, and is so peculiarly gracious, if we do not listen to the invitations of mercy, and close with the Redeemer's offers on his own terms, 'and take fast hold of his covenant.' The inhabitants of those guilty cities sinned in a great measure through ignorance; but we who have the light of the gospel shining on us, who acknowledge that to us 'the word of this salvation is sent,' and have long heard 'the joyful sound,' can have no excuse for our indifference, and 'no cloak' whatever 'for our sins.' 'Our own mouths condemn us' as well as the law of God. 'Yea, our own lips testify against us' in fearful accordance with the declarations of the Most High. From the sentence then solemnly pronounced there is no appeal. The jurisdiction of the court is supreme; for he who presides in it 'is God over all.' 'His throne is for ever and ever; the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre. He loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity. He hath on his vesture, and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.' And while 'God, even his own God, hath anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows,' that even 'in the judgment' his followers may rejoice; yet 'out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he may smite the nations,' and the individuals, who 'would not that he should rule over them;' when he spoke to their hearts, and entreated them by all that was dear to them here and hereafter, to 'take upon them his yoke, which is easy, and his burden, which is light.' Considering, then, the certainty of judgment, the perfections of the Judge, the righteousness which shall distinguish all his procedure, and the impossibility of any appeal from the decision then finally given, let us weigh well the awful words of the declaration before

us, and see how the terror rises at every step of the dreadful denunciation, 'Depart from me,' who once made myself known to you as a Saviour, 'not willing that any of you should perish,' and imploring you by my Spirit, and my ambassadors to be reconciled unto God. 'Ye cursed, ye devoted without shelter, and without hope, on whom the wrath of the Lord, as a 'mighty terrible One,' is just about to fall, 'into everlasting fire,' kindled by the breath of the Omnipotent, and decreed to burn while he that changeth not exists, 'prepared for the devil and his angels,' made completely ready, by your sins, your spurning away from you offered grace, and your perseverance in ungodliness for associating with those rebellious spirits 'who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, and are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of *this very day.*' 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.' Imagination has often been employed in attempting to describe the place and the torments of the damned. But what fancy can pourtray what is indescribable, and even inconceivable? The Lord grant that we may be kept in a state of ignorance on the subject from our own experience for ever! Emmanuel 'came to seek and to save that which was lost.' Lord, lead us to thyself, and enable us to rest in perfect security on the Redeemer's blood for taking away our sins, and laying sure the foundation of our peace with thee! 'O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.' O by thy Spirit working in us mightily, make us feel the full import of the words, death, judgment, and eternity!

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#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little,'* Psal. ii. 12.

THIS psalm is expressly applied to the Messiah by his own inspired servants in the gospel, and we must fail entirely in seeing its true meaning, if we are not convinced that 'a greater than David is here.' In the midst of his threatenings against the mighty of the earth, 'who set themselves, and took counsel together against the Lord and his Anointed, he forgets not that the great object of his mission was to pity, and to save. He therefore exhorts rulers and judges, whatever may be the extent of their dominions, or the irresponsibility of their authority, 'to be

instructed by him, the only infallible Teacher, and to learn that wisdom which leadeth unto salvation. He entreats them to humble themselves before the Lord, who is their Master, and to cast their crowns and their sceptres at the foot of the cross. He counsels them with warm solicitude for their everlasting welfare, to 'serve the Lord,' Christ as the King of Zion, 'with fear, and to rejoice,' even in the plenitude of worldly glory, 'with trembling.' It was love to man, fallen and miserable, that brought Jesus from the Father's right hand. It was love to man that made 'the accursed tree' an object of desire to the only begotten Son of the Eternal. It is love to man, which still glows in the heart of the exalted Intercessor, and graciously constrains him to say unto us, who have long thoughtlessly and contemptingly turned a deaf ear to his invitations, 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.' The expression here used, 'Kiss the Son,' takes it for granted, that we are in a state of alienation from him, and are become his enemies, and the exhortation implies that we listen to his voice entreating us to be reconciled to him as our best friend. When enmity had for years existed between Jacob and Esau, and the wrath of the latter subdued, by time, had passed away, a 'kiss' at meeting was at once an evidence of all former animosities having been forgotten, and a seal of fraternal amity and love restored. Our own interests as rational, but sinful creatures, are intimately concerned in our complying with the reasonable and tender injunction here expressed, or in our disregarding it. When we compare the state of our hearts and affections with what the word of God declares it should be; when we think on our continued impenitence, on neglected opportunities, on unheeded warnings on particular providences, on unimproved afflictions and solemn calls to be 'ready, because we know not the day nor the hour' when the summons shall be put into our hands, peremptorily commanding our immediate appearance before God, can we entertain a doubt of 'the Son being angry,' and of the extreme danger of our 'perishing from the way?' Do we not feel that we have given just cause for his 'wrath being kindled,' not only 'a little,' but to make it 'burn with a most vehement flame?' And if Jesus, even the meek, the long-suffering Jesus, with all his 'bowels of compassion,' and all his yearnings of love, be sore displeased, and about to say, if he has not already said it, 'I will go and return unto my place,' to whom shall we flee for help, and where, O where can we seek and find a shelter? If he abandon us, who

shall undertake for us? If we compel him to leave us, willing as he is to stay with us, and to 'justify us freely,' all is over with us; and unrepenting, unforgiven, and utterly unprepared for meeting with God, we must enter into eternity. If he cease to intercede for us, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, no other name whereby we can be saved. Reflect then, O my soul, if such be the peril of the sinner, when the anger of the Son is kindled 'but a little,' what must be his dreadful condition, when the remainder of his wrath he doth not, and will not restrain. Hast thou then made up thy peace with him? Hast thou formed a just estimate of what this peace really is? Hast thou heard, by faith, the words of thine own Redeemer describing it? 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' Hast thou experienced the richness of the blessings which go to its composition; pardon of sin, which lies at the foundation of spiritual joy; all thy transgressions forgiven, and thine iniquities covered; Jesus 'made of God unto thee wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption?' Thou hast felt what it is to be tortured with a sense of guilt, and to anticipate that 'fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary. But blessed be his glorious name to all eternity; thou hast felt, also, what it is to have the assurance of pardon given thee by him who is unchangeable, and 'a promise left thee of entering into that rest which remaineth for the people of God.' Thy sins, like 'the hand-writing of ordinances that was against thee, and contrary to thee,' have been taken away by the dying Redeemer, who triumphed over them openly, nailing them to his cross.' As the effect of pardon, hast thou experience of the delightful truth, that thou art now in favour with thy God, and canst say with the saint of old; 'O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me?' Hast thou the influences of the Spirit of all grace shed over thee, and the Sanctifier himself dwelling in thee? Hast thou felt him to be the silent and unseen, but Almighty Agent in thy regeneration and progress in holiness, the Planter of right principles, and Inspirer of pious dispositions, the Giver of every good gift, and thy Comforter in all the trials, difficulties, and conflicts of thy spiritual warfare? And being thus privileged, endowed, and blessed, art thou chcered with the belief, that thou art an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ of immortality? O! magnify his name, who has thus rescued thee from destruction, and is sustaining thee with the certainty of a better country, an eternally enduring inheritance, pur-

chased for thee by 'the Son' whom thou hast 'kissed,' and who thus addresses thee, 'Because I live, thou shalt live also.' 'I have gone to my Father, and to thy Father, to my God, and thy God, and I will come again and receive thee unto myself; that where I am, there thou mayest be also.' Amen, and Amen.

SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,' Acts xx. 21.*

IT is from an attentive view of the whole law that we have the knowledge of sin. We must consider the character of the God who delivered it, and each precept contained in it, so connected with its every other enactment, 'that he who offends in one point is guilty of all.' It is in this way we are led to perceive that it is by the law thus contemplated in all its extent, strictness, equity, and holiness, we can become sensible of the true nature, and when the Spirit works effectually, 'the exceeding sinfulness of sin.' What shall we say then? God forbid! Nay, so far is the law from being sinful, 'I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust,' strong evil desire, 'to be sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence,' the strong desire of all things forbidden, and thus discovered to me my natural depravity. 'For without the law sin was dead,' in a dormant and inactive state, and I was altogether unconscious of my inherent corruption. 'But when the commandment came' in its extent and power to my conscience, and I beheld it in its spirit as holy, and requiring holiness 'in heart, speech, and behaviour,' 'sin revived,' it was now understood and felt to be a real, living, and active principle of mischief, working in me all unrighteousness, and rendering me, with all my fancied excellence, an object of the divine displeasure: 'And I died; I saw myself spiritually dead, and was convinced, 'that by the deeds of the law no man,' though like Paul himself, 'he had lived a pharisee after the most strictest sect of his religion, could be justified.' The law provides no pardon; perfect obedience is its absolute condition, and no grace to help; because in the very terms of it, we undertake to do all that it demands, on the ground that we are fully able, by our own exertions, 'to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.' Well, then,

may we ask, Who shall be saved? 'There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.' This is the unequivocal language of revelation; and equally explicit is the declaration of the same record, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' There is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' The *first* point then to which the apostle called the attention of all, whether they were 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' or worshippers of 'dumb idols' among the heathen, was 'repentance toward God;' and to this topic the ministers of Christ have as much need as ever to direct the thoughts of the flocks, 'whose blood,' if they fail in their duty, 'will be required at their hand.' If we think at all on the subject; if we cast even the hastiest glance at the duties incumbent on us, and reflect on the manner in which we have performed them, can we, with any thing like common honesty, to say nothing of Christian sincerity, affirm that we have 'walked in God's statutes and ordinances blameless? If then iniquity has often prevailed against us; if we have frequently been guilty 'of secret faults,' and even of 'presumptuous sins,' can there be any hope whatever of ascending the hill of the Lord with all our imperfections, to speak as gently as we can, on our heads, with affections bound to the world, and with passions which will allow no limits to their gratification, though we know that God is the perpetual Inspector of their every movement, and that hell, if we 'die, and make no sign,' must be our abode through eternity. 'What resource, then, have we in such alarming and dangerous circumstances? How shall we be delivered from the body of this death? Only by immediate, sincere, and complete repentance. 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,' Repentance must not be delayed to a 'more convenient season.' It must be instantly begun. It must not be assumed to give a false peace to the soul, and to soothe the conscience with the belief that we are passed from death unto life. It must have its rise in the heart, and be as entirely 'without partiality, and without hypocrisy,' as we shall wish it had been on that day when 'the dead, small and great, shall stand before God.' It must be rigid in condemning every vice; uncompromising in its opposition to 'all appearance of evil,' and determined, in exclusive reliance on the Spirit's agency—for his grace must commence, carry on, and complete the saving change—to 'draw water from the wells of salvation.' But the gospel 'testifies also faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' The conviction that we are sinners by nature and prac-

tice, and that salvation is utterly unattainable by ourselves, leads to the conclusion, that a very different scheme of restoration to the friendship of God must be sought and found by the anxious inquirer before he can say, with any prospect of a satisfactory answer, 'What shall I do to be saved?' The plan so essential to our peace is fully disclosed in the gospel, and this plan we must regard as 'worthy of all acceptation,' and feel to be indispensable to our everlasting well-being. We must consider it in its origin, emanating from the sovereign mercy of God the Father, and view it in its accomplishment as conducting our 'Daysman' through humiliations which are incomprehensible, and through dangers which he only could overcome, till the cross on Calvary carried our sins bound up in our adorable Substitute, and thenceforth became the emblem of redeeming grace to all them that believe. God forbid, then, that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. God forbid that we should go about to establish a righteousness of our own, to the loss of our immortal souls, and God forbid that we should continue a moment longer indifferent to the important truth, that 'if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his! 'Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there, and there only, 'is liberty.'

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#### SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,'*  
John iii. 36.

THERE is a blessedness in believing, which they only know who have experienced its workings and its effects in the soul. 'A stranger' to the Redeemer's saving power, 'intermeddleth not' with the Redeemer's communicated joy; a joy which gladdens the Christian's heart in the hour of sickness; a joy which cheers his spirit on the bed of death; a joy which accompanies him to God's right hand; a joy which shall continue, nay, increase, through eternity. And while such is his support in every change, of a changeable, because mortal scene, he has the outward conduct to point to, as evidence of his faith, 'purifying the heart, overcoming the world, and working by love.' 'He knows in whom he hath believed,' and on whom he rests, as his all in all. Love that 'passeth understanding,' has done every thing for him, saying unto him, when he 'was cast out in the open field,'

and no eye to pity him, 'Live;' and adding gift to gift, and grace to grace, till he is 'perfect through my comeliness, which I have put upon him, saith the Lord God.' And now the natural expression of his soul, renewed and sanctified, is love to God, and love to all that bear his image. The great objects of his wishes, and the things which 'he longs for,' and prays for, and labours for, are 'glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will to men.' 'He that believeth *hath*' indeed 'everlasting life.' Though it is to be enjoyed fully only in the kingdom prepared for the Christian by his heavenly Father, the possession of it is secured, and he receives an earnest of its being his as assuredly as if he were already there, in the joy which the prospect of it imparts to his mind, in all the difficulties, hardships, struggles, sicknesses and pains of his earthly pilgrimage. If such then be the spiritual triumphs, and even the temporal advantages of faith in the Son of God as our Saviour, 'our shield, and our exceeding great reward,' what must be the guilt and the danger of unbelief, to which the human heart is so prone, even after it has 'tasted of the heavenly gift and the power of the world to come?' The sinfulness of this principle consists in its 'making God a liar,' by denying the truth of what he has declared to be as certain as the propositions that *he is*, and is the rewarder of all who diligently seek him, or that *he is*, and is the avenger of his own cause, on those who will not receive his testimony, and perfer 'darkness to light, their deeds being evil.' While unbelief continues to spread its blinding, benumbing, and demoralizing influences over the soul, every other sin remains there as in its strong hold, and of course wrath also abideth on that soul; wrath originally incurred when man rebelled against his Maker, and dreadfully heightened and deepened by the sinner's obduracy, and confirmed opposition to whatever has for its object the destruction of Satan's dominion in the heart, and the establishment in its stead of that 'kingdom which is love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Hence we see, that the lives of unbelievers are in fearful consistency with their pernicious principles. The word of God is to them a despised, and therefore 'sealed book,' a series of 'cunningly devised fables,' beneath the attention, or even notice of the independently thinking mind, and regarded as divine by those only who are the slaves of prejudice and superstition. And what is the cause of their thus hating the gospel, and contemptuously spurning away from them its transcendent blessings? The love of sin. The characteristic of 'the scoffers who were to come

in the last days,' is that they would 'walk after their own lusts.' The gospel levels with the dust the natural pride of man. The gospel declares goodness of heart, till it be 'created anew in Christ Jesus,' a fiction, and self-righteousness 'a broken reed,' which will 'pierce and kill the soul,' of him that 'leans' on it. The gospel proclaims Jesus a perfect Saviour, and allows no merit to be mixed up with his, in the sinner's salvation. The gospel lays restraint on every passion, and pronounces the smallest deviation from the law, as a rule of life, a ground of God's displeasure. And therefore the gospel, and its doctrines, and duties, are disliked and hated by the unbeliever. 'He rejoices in his youth, his heart cheers him in the days of his youth. He walks in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes, but' he will not 'know, that for all these things the Lord will bring him into judgment.' 'I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned. For the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

Will such scenes as these which thou art contemplating, O hardened, presumptuous sinner, continue to smile for ever? Will thy sun shine always without a cloud? Is there no danger of his setting in everlasting darkness? Thou art not placed here in a garden of delights, where the fruit is abundant and tempting, and thou mayest pluck when thou pleasest, and eat. Thou art indeed only of yesterday, but to-morrow thou art not, even though death should lay his cold hand upon thee, to cease to be for ever. Thou art not then, thou pilgrim of a day, to enjoy the little sunshine as thou listest, and permit no flower of the spring to pass thee by. Eternity is not a mockery, and a future judgment is not the churchman's dream. Heaven and hell are not the visions of fanatics to embitter the cup of humanity. Conscience is the minister of God, when he arises to take vengeance on his adversaries; godliness is a reality, and Christian 'virtue,' any thing but an 'empty name.' 'Consider this, ye who forget God.' Stop in your headlong, sinful career. 'Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.' Remember who it is that hath said, 'He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.' 'Look unto him whom

you have pierced,' by your sins, *each* of your sins—and O how many wounds must have been inflicted on such a Saviour!—'and mourn.' The door of mercy is still open, and your impenitence only can shut it. 'From his side' still issues 'blood and water;' blood, without the 'shedding of which there can be no remission,' and 'water,' by which, as typical of 'the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,' you are 'cleansed,' refreshed, strengthened, and enabled to go on your journey, 'faint' it may be at times, 'yet' still 'pursuing.' Every step you advance in your progress Zionward, will convince you more and more, that 'wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are paths of peace.' 'My lips shall greatly rejoice, when I sing unto thee, and my soul which thou hast redeemed.'

#### EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me 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,' Zech. xii. 10.*

As the Jews are here represented to feel and act, when they are brought to a knowledge of their guilt in having crucified the Lord of glory, so will be the feelings and actings of every sinner who has been awakened to a just apprehension of his state, and has had Jesus set before him in all his sufficiency and willingness to save. The promise of his Spirit is the plea which he uses in prayer for the fulfilment of it. Jehovah hath spoken, and pledged his faithfulness to do as he hath said. No doubt remains to cloud the believer's mind, or to shake his confidence in the divine veracity. He experiences what it is to have his heart enlarged, his views more exclusively directed to heavenly objects, and his desires more steadily, warmly, and reposingly fixed on 'the glory which is to be revealed.' The shadows and the vanities of time disappear, and the certainties of eternity are brought before him with a vividness, and an overpowering sense of their importance, which testify that the Spirit is 'triumphing gloriously,' detaching his thoughts from the earth, and the earth's concerns, and making Jesus and his salvation all that should engage the attention of a soul redeemed. But he rejoices with trembling.' The

promise realized leads to sorrowing over his sins. They are now a burden difficult to be borne; for they rise up before him in all their multitude, and with all their aggravations. Not one of them is left unnumbered—not one of them does he attempt to explain away, or even to modify. They are 'set in order before his face,' and all of them tending to this conclusion as to a centre, that he has 'crucified' the Lamb of God 'afresh, and put him to an open shame.' The lovely and glorious Jesus has been 'wounded in the house of his friends,' and 'pierced' to the quick by one 'whom he loved, even unto the death.' How deep the mourning! and how agonizing the groans bursting from a heart that is now subdued, and made susceptible of every good impression, when the sinner, now a saint, recalls the wonderful work which has been wrought in his soul, and dwells on the character and doings of that Saviour, 'whose arrows were sharp in him' as an enemy, before he displayed in his redemption the riches of his grace! No coldness or indifference on his part could quench, or even allay for a moment the Redeemer's love. As Jesus revealed himself to those who surrounded him, when he hung on the cross, and amidst the tortures of his dying hour, prayed to his Father for pardon to the inflictors of his pains, so does he still manifest himself as full of compassion and ready to forgive; and in the unutterably benevolent and affecting petition which he then presented, the mourning believer sees and feels the source of his hopes, and of his 'strong consolations.' The very words, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' are a balm to his wounded spirit. When he contemplates such a scene as this, and listens to such expressions as those, and is persuaded that he was not only the cause of the Saviour's sorrows, but has an interest in this, the Saviour's prayer, which has been graciously answered in his individual case, surely he will 'look on Him whom he has pierced' by his ingratitude, 'and mourn' for him, on account of what he has done by his sins, to repeat the Redeemer's ignominy and agony, 'as one that mourneth for an only son' in whom all his hopes were centered, 'as one that is in bitterness for his first-born,' the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. The very identification of himself with the accusers and 'murderers of the holy One and the Just,' is a powerfully constraining motive to view every sin which he has committed as adding another thorn to the crown of mock royalty which lacerated his Saviour's sacred head, as putting another bitter ingredient into the draught that was presented to his parched lips, as giving another excruciating

wrench to the nails which transfixed his hands and his feet, and as whetting to a sharper point, and causing a more deadly plunge to the spear which penetrated his side, 'and forthwith came thereout blood and water.' If this be the truth, and nothing but the truth, and if we are convinced that it is so, the effect must be that sin will appear to us in all its hatefulness, in every aspect in which it can be looked upon, an entirely new train of emotions will be awakened within us, by the change which has taken place in our moral perceptions, and estimate of a Redeemer's love, and the language of our hearts be that of the keenest remorse for our having, by our every transgression, increased the load of Messiah's physical sufferings, and given greater poignancy to the mental anguish that wrung his righteous soul, when for our sakes, and in our stead, he 'bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Such, O my soul, are the reflections called forth by 'the Spirit of grace, and of supplications poured' on thee from on high, in causing thee to take into thy serious consideration thy grievous guilt, when viewed in connection with the vicarious humiliations, sufferings, and death of the Son of God. It must be beheld in the scenes which it produced in Gethsemane and on Calvary, if thou wouldst see it in all its essential and unqualified wickedness, baseness, and malignity. It must be regarded in the effect which it had on Him, 'who knew no sin, that thou mightest be made the righteousness of God in him,' if thou wouldst feel the full force of the Lord's questions to the prophet Ezekiel, and through him to thee, 'Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah, that they commit the abominations which they commit here? 'Is it a small matter to weary men: but will ye weary my God also?' Hast thou experienced what it is to be agitated and disquieted with a sense of thy sins, even after thou hast received the remission of them? flee more anxiously to Jesus, and cleave still more closely to him as thy strength and thy Redeemer. Plead gospel promises, and rest assured of gospel blessings. 'Trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon thy God.'

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#### EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee,'* Psal. lxxxvi. 5.

*'JEHOVAH sits upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filleth universal nature as his*

appropriate 'temple.' Above it stand the seraphim; 'each one having six wings; with twain he covereth his face; with twain he covereth his feet, and with twain he doth fly.' And what are their acclamations? 'One crieth unto another, and saith, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' A Being so unspeakably glorious and independent, is infinitely happy in the possession, exercise, and enjoyment of his own incommunicable perfections. He has no need of us, or of our services. He would have continued the same though man and angels had never been called into existence. Dwelling in unapproachable light, his uncreated splendour, because the reflection of himself, would have supplied the want of their songs of gratitude, and of their anthems of praise, 'for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' But how much are our conceptions of the divine attributes enlarged, when we think on the condition to which we are reduced by the fall and our own folly? 'Shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin; transgressors by imputation, and transgressors by practice, the image of God has been effaced from the soul. The seeds of all moral evil have been sown within us. The standard of rebellion has been raised; and by its inscription, as well as by our thoughts, words, and actions, we have proclaimed ourselves traitors. The entire inner man is struck with the spiritual plague. 'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.' 'A sinful generation, a people laden with iniquity, we have forsaken the Lord, we have gone away backward.' 'And yet though we have held fast deceit, and refused to return,' the Father, in terms of his covenant with the Son, 'is good and ready to forgive.' Though 'he hearkened and heard, but we spake not aright; no man repented of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle,' still the Lord 'is not willing that any should perish.' 'Yea, though the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but we know not, and will not know the judgment of the Lord,' still his language, by his own servant, is, 'Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy and plentiful redemption.' This is indeed the Lord's doing, and it should be marvellous in our eyes. The seed of evil-doers, we had forfeited his favour, and incurred his displeasure. The gates of Eden were closed against Adam and his lapsed posterity; 'and the Lord God placed cherubims, and a flaming sword, that turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.' The

sentence of exclusion was executed. No creature, how exalted soever in the scale of being, could open the everlasting doors of a better paradise, or effect our restoration to the rank from which guilt had displaced us, by reconciling us to that God, whom we had compelled to become our enemy. But O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! 'He who was his Shepherd, and the *Man* that was his fellow,' had voluntarily undertaken our cause, and when the time appointed for the deliverance of the condemned and bound prisoners waiting their execution, had arrived, Emmanuel descended from heaven, appeared on earth as our Substitute—yes, 'great is the mystery of godliness.' He who made the worlds, the Substitute of his revolted subjects, offered that atonement without which there could be no possibility of safety to the sinner, and by the shedding of his precious peace-speaking blood, commanded the 'everlasting gates to be lifted up, that the King of glory,' with his ransomed millions, 'might enter in.' 'For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Do we then entertain just ideas respecting him as the Author of eternal salvation to his elect? Are we convinced of his omnipotence as the Lord our righteousness? Do we really feel that without his atoning sacrifice of himself, we can have no hopes of pardon, acceptance, and never-ending glory? And are we resolved, in the strength of the Spirit, that his religion shall have a commanding influence over our affections, life, and conversation? Are these indeed our views, convictions, feelings, and determinations? They should be so, if the truth has been made known to us in its power by the Sanctifier, and we have been led by him to embrace, and to act upon it. 'Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon thee.' But if it be otherwise with us, and we have yet to learn wisdom, the highest kind of wisdom, 'Why will we forsake our own mercies? Jesus, in all his fulness, is freely offered to us who have so long and obstinately rejected him. In him we have every thing which, as sinners, we require, and which, if we receive not, we must die the death; a purifying fountain to wash away our guilt; a healing medicine to cure our festering deadly wounds; 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for a spirit of heaviness, that we may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.' Why will we refuse, when he opens his heart, his large, tender, compassionate heart, to admit us to the participation and enjoy-

ment of his friendship and love? 'He is fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into his lips. Sweet is his voice, and his countenance is comely.' But let us remember that he has an arm strong to smite, as well as to save, and that if we continue in our unbelief, 'if the love of Christ do not constrain us thus to judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all,' given to him by the Father, 'that they should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again;' and if we 'will not come unto him, that we may have life, and have it more abundantly,' his smiles will be changed to frowns, and his sentence on that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, will be, 'Depart from me, I know you not' now, for you would not know me when I offered you myself and all my blessing, 'ye workers of iniquity.' 'Lord, save us, we perish.' O say unto us, 'Fury is not in me. It is I, be not afraid.' 'We will take hold of thy strength, O God, the Father, that he may make peace for us with thee; for we know and rejoice in the knowledge, that he has made, and will make peace with thee for all that believe in his name.'

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NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,'* Psal. lxxviii. 18.

OUR Lord, at his last appearance to his disciples, reminded them of the repeated intimations which he had given them of the 'sufferings' wherewith his life of humiliation was to be closed, 'and of the glory that was to follow.' He blessed them with the most satisfactory knowledge of the predictions of the Old Testament as applicable to himself, 'the end of the law for righteousness,' and pointed out the necessity which there was for their exact accomplishment, that the decrees of the Almighty might be executed, his justice vindicated, his mercy exalted, and his 'word have free course, and be glorified,' Luke xxiv. 45—53. The guilt of God's elect had been expiated, and 'a new and living way opened into the holiest of all.' Jesus, 'the resurrection and the life,' had been 'declared to be the Son of God with power, and became the first-fruits of them that slept.' 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do: and now, O Father, glorify me with thine ownself, with that glory which I had with thee

before the world was.' Of this glory in all its fulness and extent, he was now to resume the possession. In the presence of his beloved followers, whose faith, once wavering, was now as immovable as complete conviction produced by the Spirit could make it; and while in the impressive act of pouring out his benediction on those whom he had chosen and qualified as the heralds of salvation, 'he was parted from them,' and ascended a triumphant conqueror to his everlasting kingdom. Their eyes, it is true, could not follow their glorious Lord to his throne; for 'while they beheld, a cloud received him out of their sight.' But that 'he did then enter into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us,' is proved by the promised descent of the Spirit on the day of pentecost, 'when the disciples were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.' 'Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart,—and he was now gone—'I will send him unto you.' And what is his office as the Sent of the King of Zion? 'When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine—and all things that the Father hath are mine—and shall show it unto you.' 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whether it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' The operation is invisible, but its effects are visible; for the 'fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law; and they who are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' These are the gifts which Jesus having purchased by his death, 'received for men,' when 'he ascended on high leading captivity captive,' and these are the very graces which the Spirit, one with the Father and the Son, bestows on 'the called according to his purpose.' It will tend greatly to exalt and sanctify our conceptions of the Redeemer's love to consider, and with particular reference to ourselves, what they were for whom he has procured, at the expense of his own blood, such astonishing, unspeakable, and unperishable blessings. They were 'rebellious' in open hostility to their rightful Sovereign, trampling on his laws, and setting his power at defiance. But 'he girded his sword upon his

thigh,' he the most mighty, with his glory and his majesty. And in his majesty he rode prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, and his right hand taught him terrible things. His arrows were sharp: the people fell under him. Omnipotent grace has conquered. Their weapons of war are thrown down, and they who lately asked proudly, 'who is the Lord that we should serve him? are now the believing, unyielding supporters of that government which they so very recently attempted to overthrow. And for what end has 'the Captain of the Lord's host' become so glorious in power? For what purpose has 'the eternal Spirit' wrought so irresistibly? That 'the Lord God,' the adorable Trinity in unity, 'might dwell among them.' Are we then filled with love to God, when we view him thus exercising towards us his unwearied loving-kindness, and his never-ceasing tender mercies? And do we really feel that if this principle did not spread its influence over our souls, and draw us, 'with the bands of a man,' to 'love him who first loved us, and gave himself for us, we should stand convicted of the most revolting ingratitude by which our characters can be degraded, and could have no communion with him on earth, and no share of his purchased blessings, as these blessings are dispensed to his faithful servants in his own kingdom? Let us remember also that the important design which the God of all grace intends to accomplish by distinguishing us so remarkably by his goodness, is to lead us to himself, 'that we may serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.' Let our 'conversation then be in heaven from whence we look for the Saviour.' Let us earnestly pray that 'that mind may be in us which was also in Christ Jesus,' who 'fulfilled all righteousness,' and is calling upon us, from his throne of glory, to follow him by the way which 'he hath consecrated, to the abodes of everlasting rest. He beholds in our lives, directed by his Spirit, 'of the travail of his soul and is satisfied.' He died that he might redeem us from the curse to which sin exposed us, and to make 'us a willing people in the day of his power.' He lives as our intercessor, that being 'made partakers of the Holy Ghost, we may, 'by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality.' Has a fellow-mortal conferred on us important favours of which we had no expectation, and to which we could lay no claim? Has he by his counsel enabled us to bear with patient minds the pressure of misfortune, or by his beneficence caused our dejected spirits to sing for joy? Has his hand smoothed the bed of our languishing,

and his tongue in our despondency encouraged us to trust in the Lord? The very name of such a generous friend must be ever dear to us, and his form, with all its attractions, ever before us. And if such are our feelings to a benefactor for blessings which perish in the using, what love, warm, burning, sin-subduing love is due to that Saviour, who has secured for us justifying righteousness, and a 'far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.' O that we were authorised to say individually, 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.'

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#### NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins,' Acts v. 31.*

THE apostles, in consequence of their adherence to the cause of Christ, and their determination to preach salvation by his blood, had been imprisoned by command of the high priest, and miraculously delivered by an angel. Immediately on their release, they were found in the temple, as devotedly engaged in their 'holy vocation' as ever. They were again apprehended, though 'without violence,' for their persecutors 'feared the people, lest they should have been stoned, and brought in and set before the council.' 'Did we not straitly command you,' said the imperious president, 'that ye should not teach in this name, and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.' But Jesus had breathed on his ambassadors, 'saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost,' and they were far superior to the fear of man. 'The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree.' You acted from the worst motives, and to gratify the worst passions; but God over-ruled all for the advancement of his own glory; and employed you as the instruments 'to do whatsoever his hand and his counsel determined before to be done.' The very Jesus whom ye mocked, and scourged, and crucified, as 'an evil-doer,' even 'him hath God exalted with his right hand as Mediator, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins.' Christ was 'despised, and rejected of men;' but 'God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' He rose from the dead; he 'ascended on high, leading captivity

captive,' and is now seated on his kingly throne, 'the head over all things to his church.' And for what purpose? It must be one of transcendent importance. And so it is; for it is 'to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins.' These two gifts are essentially connected. They cannot exist in a state of separation; they have one origin; Jesus Christ is the author of both. There is a frequently occurring and dangerous error on this subject, which must be carefully guarded against, if we would understand the gospel aright, and see clearly how the sinner becomes one of the children of God. This error consists in imagining, if not in broadly asserting, that repentance is our own work, and merits forgiveness. We have been guilty, we admit, of acting contrary to the dictates of reason, and the express declarations of the written word. The deeds thus committed are followed by suffering, and the disapprobation of the moral principle within us. We feel that we have done wrong, and we resolve to do better. We are sorry for our misconduct. We turn from the evil of our ways; and we claim pardon, as a something to which we are fairly entitled by our self-managed, thorough repentance! O how many souls have thus been deceived and lost, going into eternity with a lie in their right hand, and never knowing that sentence was pronounced against them, till, as it has been strongly expressed—perhaps too strongly 'for ears polite'—till they read it at the flames of hell. 'Repentance unto life is a saving grace,' entirely the gift of God, 'whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin,' awakened in him by the 'Spirit of truth,' 'and apprehension,' or laying hold by faith, 'of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin,' wrought in him by 'that one, and the self-same Spirit,' 'turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience,' formed, strengthened, and sustained by him alone, 'who doeth whatsoever it pleaseth him, in heaven and in the earth, in the sea, and in all deep places.' In this scriptural account of repentance, every thing is represented as the 'doing of the Lord, who will not give' the 'glory' of this great work 'to another.' He changes, and renews, and inspires, and leads, and we are made willing to follow. We are the 'dry bones in the valley, yea, we are very dry,' and the Spirit of God and of his Christ alone can cause breath to enter into us, and then 'we shall live.' Having received the gift of repentance, we are assured that our sins are forgiven; and being put in possession of these two blessings invariably accompanying saving faith, let us prize our peculiar privileges as the

adopted into God's family, and show that we are his sons 'in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.' Having a way of access to the divine presence, and claims on the divine mercy, established for, and made over to us 'by Jesus, the surety of a better testament,' founded on better promises, 'let us seek by instant prayer, supplies of grace from the fountain of grace,' 'that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.' God is for us, and who then can be against us? Is our faith at times weak and like to expire? Let us run to the mercy-seat, and there make known our fears of making shipwreck of our Christian confidence. Our Intercessor is still there as kind and compassionate, though he may have withdrawn his face for a little, as ever. Are we attacked by the temptations of the world, the instruments which Satan employs, to regain possession of souls that have been rescued from his thralldom, and restored to the liberty of the gospel? Let us immediately raise our eyes and our thoughts to heaven, and as certainly as God has been reconciled by the one free-will offering of his Son, his Spirit will bring relief, subdue the adversary, and enable us to adopt the prophet's language, and to join in his song of anticipated, and soon to be completed victory, 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy. For when I fall, then shall I rise.' Are we beset with spiritual fears, and troubled with despondency, under the hidings of the Saviour's countenance! Let us besiege the throne of grace with still more importunate prayers, and calling to remembrance all the past tokens of the Redeemer's love, let us plead and implore till he has heard, and shall thus graciously address us: 'Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines, with the tender grape, give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

#### TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me,' Luke x. 16.*

JESUS Christ spake these words to the seventy disciples, whom he sent before him, to prepare the people for his coming, in those places which he was about to visit. They contain weighty matter for meditation—

1. *In regard to the work of gospel ministers.* 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.' Jesus Christ identified himself with these his servants, and he does so still with all ministers who truly preach the gospel. A minister of the gospel is avowedly an ambassador for Christ. He must, therefore, be careful to know and speak the mind of Christ, as revealed and recorded in the scriptures, for the Lord's sake whose ambassador he is, for his own sake, and for the sake of those to whom he is sent. It is an awful thing to misrepresent the character and will of the Lord Jesus Christ,—to announce that which is not true with a 'thus saith the Lord.' May the Spirit of God preserve his servants from this dreadful sin! And is there not deep guilt in misleading, to their eternal ruin, precious souls inquiring the way to be saved? When a simple, honest-minded man, reads in the scriptures this passage, in which our Saviour says, 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me;' and when in consequence, with all sincerity and earnestness, he listens to his minister, as to one whose teaching has the weight and authority of Christ himself; and when his minister largely mingles error with the truth, and thus perverting the understanding, and hindering the faith, and making the man's very light to be darkness, ruins the man's soul—O better to be one of God's irrational creatures, than such a minister: better had it been for such a minister, that he had never been born.

It must be the first care of Christ's ministers to speak as Christ speaks. By study, by meditation, by prayer, they should seek acquaintance with divine truth. And in expounding scripture, they should be more anxious to bring forward what is true, than what is new. For it is not enough, in expounding scripture, that a truth be set forth: it is needful that the truth contained in the passage be brought out—that the mind of the Spirit in that portion of the word of God be unfolded. Fanciful interpretations of the word are sinful and dangerous. Why, for the sake of being thought striking and original, torture a passage of scripture to make it teach an important truth, which is plainly and repeatedly taught in other passages?

But our Lord's words also teach that a *responsibility*, equally weighty and solemn, attaches to those who enjoy a *gospel ministry*. To this responsibility many, in hearing the gospel, are utterly insensible. It is the preacher only that they see or think of. The fact that Christ is addressing them through the preacher, never once occurs to their mind. If I regarded the preacher

as one sent by Christ, and entrusted with a message to me, that would bring me at once into the position of one dealing with Christ. The only way in which we can now hear Christ, is by hearing his servants speaking his truth. The King hath gone into a far country to receive a kingdom, and to return. Meanwhile, his ambassadors are sent with a message from him, to those who have rebelled against him, in this province of his dominions. They speak not of their own, but of Christ's things, and by his command: so that he who heareth them heareth Christ.

What a vast importance does this give to the gospel message! How foolish to let little excrescences distract my attention from the truths claimed, in which I have so deep an interest! When I go to the house of God, let me remember that it is not to my minister merely that I go to listen, but to my Saviour speaking to me by my minister. And when I retire from church, let me treasure up, and value, and observe what I have heard, as my dear Saviour's message to me for my correction, my comfort, my instruction, or my guidance. For I read that Jesus said to his followers sent forth to preach the truth, 'He that heareth you, heareth me.'

The fact that the gospel set forth in preaching is Christ's word, and not the word of the minister, also involves in *deep guilt and awful danger* those who despise the gospel message, or hear it with indifference or neglect. When I despise a fellow-creature labouring truly and rightly for my good, I am guilty of sin: but when I despise the eternal Father, who sent his own Son to humiliation and agonies for my sake, what name should be given to my conduct? When I hear, with utter indifference, or cold unconcern, Christ telling me of his love, and his sufferings, and his death, and the deliverance from hell that he hath purchased, and the heaven of holiness, and happiness, and glory that he hath prepared, how should such behaviour as mine be characterised?

But surely few are guilty of such sins? Nay, verily, but many are. How many statements of gospel truth on these points have I and others despised—either treated them as fanatical imaginations, or heard them with inattention and indifference? No matter though it was only a minister, perhaps a minister weak in gifts, or awkward in manner, or rude in speech, that made the gospel statement. Was he a servant of God, and did he speak the truth of God? Then Christ in sending him forth said to him, 'He that despiseth thee, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.' Every time, therefore, that I treat with neglect or indifference gospel

truth which I hear, I am really guilty of despising the Son and the Father. Lord, is it even so? How great, then, my guilt! To despise or treat with indifference my Saviour and my God! Lord, pardon thy servant this thing.

When God sends his truth to me, he always furnishes me with means by which, if I rightly use them, I may satisfy myself that it is the truth of God which is spoken. If I fail to do so, and thus am led to neglect the divine truths, I am verily guilty much, because I am not at the pains to ascertain the important point whether God be speaking to me or not. When, therefore, I wait on the public exercises of the sanctuary, and listen to a preached gospel, it is my duty seriously to think with myself whether or not it be the truth of God which I hear. And in as far as my mind admits and owns it to be that truth, I am to listen to it and obey it, just as if Jesus Christ, with his own lips, was addressing it to me. To act otherwise—to sit under what I admit to be a declaration of divine truth, with coldness, indifference, or disregard, is to despise not the minister who is preaching, but Jesus Christ, and his Father who sent him—no light sin, surely, and to be avoided with all earnestness, and by much watchfulness and prayer. May God the Holy Ghost give me that watchfulness, and make me continue instant in prayer.

#### TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes,' Luke x. 13.*

TYRE and Sidon were two famous cities, situated near each other, on the shore of the Mediterranean sea. They were in that portion of Canaan which fell to the tribe of Asher, but the ancient inhabitants, the Phœnicians, were never possessed by the Israelites. Tyre and Sidon were, therefore, heathen cities. They became exceedingly opulent and powerful, and at the same time exceedingly proud, luxurious, and corrupt. They never recovered their ancient glory after they were taken, and almost destroyed by Alexander the Great, and in our Saviour's time they were poor, miserable, little towns.

Chorazin and Bethsaida were cities of Galilee, visited by Jesus Christ, and the scenes of many of his miracles. But the men and women of these cities seem to have heard unmoved the words

of him who spake as never man spake, and to have gazed with wonder on his miracles, and then gone away, and sinned as before. The wondrous works that Christ did in them, though accompanied by his divine teaching, produced no general reformation of manners. He found them wicked; he called them earnestly, affectionately, powerfully to repentance, by his teaching and his miracles, and notwithstanding all, he left them as wicked as he found them. Then he uttered against them the solemn woe that we have read. When he spoke these words, Chorazin and Bethsaida were fair and flourishing cities, and the hum of a busy population was heard in their streets. But a woe denounced by the lips of the compassionate Saviour is a fearful thing. It falls where it is thoroughly deserved, and it blasts, like the lightning, the things, the places, the persons on whom it falls. For where is Chorazin now? where Bethsaida? Utterly perished. No one can even tell where they stood. Travellers dispute which of the ruins that they visit were once Chorazin and Bethsaida.

The heathen cities of Tyre and Sidon, and the Jewish cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, then, have all been visited with destruction. For the sinfulness of their inhabitants they have been so visited. But Chorazin and Bethsaida enjoyed advantages which Tyre and Sidon did not. The latter cities indeed, were near the land of Israel, and their idolatry might have been rebuked by the worship which the Israelites paid to the living and true God. But in the streets of Chorazin and Bethsaida did the Son of God oftentimes teach; and in testimony that he was a teacher sent by God, he wrought many wonderful works before their eyes. It did not manifest such hardened and daring wickedness in Tyre and Sidon, to resist the influence of their intercourse with the Israelites, wayward, perverse, and rebellious as these Israelites often were, as it did in Chorazin and Bethsaida to resist the divine teaching of the Son of God, and the many striking miracles of mercy which he wrought among them. Had matters been reversed, or had Tyre and Sidon enjoyed the teaching, and beheld the miracles of Christ as did Chorazin and Bethsaida, our Lord declares that these heathen cities would have repented a long while before. That they did not enjoy such advantages was the will of God. They had means, but did not improve them, and therefore they perished in their sins. But deeper was the guilt, and heavier the condemnation of the two Jewish cities, who despised and resisted means and privileges so exceedingly great as those which Chorazin and Bethsaida

enjoyed, and which would have prevailed to bring to repentance, the luxurious and corrupt heathen cities of Tyre and Sidon.

We do not profess to explain how these means would have been effectual to produce repentance in the one case, when they were not so in the other. We believe Christ that things would have been as he says. His word on this, as on every other point, is enough for us. May the Lord ever preserve us from the pride which refluxeth instruction, because God's ways are deeper than our understanding.

But do no cities except Chorazin and Bethsaida neglect privileges, and reject means of grace? Have none but the inhabitants of these cities turned a deaf ear to heaven's calls to repentance? It is easy to find fault with others: it is safer to judge ourselves. There are cities in these lands which equal, or perhaps surpass Tyre and Sidon in wealth, luxury, and commercial greatness. Much, and very awful wickedness is to be found in these cities, and were it not that there is also to be found in them a number of those who are the salt of the earth, and who preserve them from utter putrefaction and corruption, we might expect those cities speedily to share the fate of Tyre and Sidon. Nay, with regard to religious privileges, the cities of our land are as highly favoured as were Chorazin and Bethsaida. For though the mind dwells with a pleasing fondness on the personal teaching of Jesus Christ, it cannot be doubted that a fuller and clearer revelation of the gospel was given after his ascension, than was previously unfolded. The latter times being come, and all the revelation of divine truth that God judged necessary being about to be given and recorded, the Holy Ghost taught the apostles a fuller measure of divine truth than even the Son of God himself taught to men.

And what the Holy Ghost taught to the apostles, is now freely and fully taught to us. We behold not with our eyes the miracles which Jesus Christ wrought in the cities of Judah; we hear not the living voice of the Son of God. But we profess to believe (do we really believe?) that these miracles were by Jesus Christ assuredly wrought; and we read, and we hear a fuller statement of divine truth, than it was consistent with the divine will that the Son of God should make, when he tabernacled as a man on the earth. How, then, shall they escape, who neglect so great salvation? Was it only with Chorazin and Bethsaida, and their inhabitants, that God was displeased? Is there no risk of his being angry, even to destruction, with cities and persons in the present day, who are as guilty as they? As

guilty! Nay, guiltier. For Chorazin and Bethsaida never acknowledged the divine authority of Jesus Christ, whose miracles and teaching they resisted. But how many of us profess to acknowledge the divinity of Christ, and to admit that he is the only Saviour, and that his doctrine unfolds the only way of a sinner's escape from hell, and of admission into heaven; and yet we treat Christ and his doctrine with utter coldness and indifference. It was a fearful sin to refuse altogether Christ, and his miracles, and his teaching, treating him as an impostor. But surely it is a sin more fearful still, to admit that Christ is a divine Saviour, and that his doctrine is absolutely necessary to our eternal well-being, and notwithstanding to neglect or despise him.

Who is guilty of this fearful sin? Lord, is it I? Do not I admit the reality of Christ's miracles, of which the evangelists testify? Do I not hear many a time, in terms plain and earnest, the doctrines of the gospel; and do I not allow the heavenly origin of these doctrines, and their unspeakable importance to sinners of mankind? Yet these miracles have, in truth, had as little weight with me, as if they had been the tricks of an impostor. I have many a time heard the glorious gospel with less attention than I have given to an idle tale; and its statements, warnings, entreaties, promises, threatenings, examples, revelations, affect not my heart, nor influence my conduct. My bible, how little prized, read, pondered, understood, believed, obeyed, enjoyed! My Sabbaths, how little are they my delight! My minister, the Lord's servant and messenger, how carelessly do I hear him, how little thoroughly believe him, to how small an extent do I obey his teaching!

So then I am not free from the sin of Chorazin and Bethsaida. Am I safe from their woe? No voice is heard proclaiming it against me; but is it therefore not in existence? It hath not yet come; is that a reason for believing that it shall never come? Methinks I hear the Saviour saying to me, and to my fellow-sinners, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' May the example not be lost. May the call not be refused or neglected.

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight,' Rom. iii. 20.*

LAW, in this passage, means all those rules which God has given to man for the direction of his con-

duct,—the law originally written on Adam's heart, and of which fragments still remain in man's natural conscience; the ceremonial law given to the Israelites; and the moral law summarily comprehended in the ten commandments. 'Deeds of the law,' are whatever things are done towards obeying the law. And the assertion of the inspired apostle is, that by works of obedience to law, there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight—no flesh, no human being, shall stand clear and righteous in regard to all that any law requires of him. There will not be an exact agreement between the conduct of any human being, and any law that God has given for man's direction; so that no man can look at any law of God, and then at his own conduct, and say to God, 'I am a just person; I have done all things required of me by this law of thine.'

At the same time, it must be understood, that it is not owing to any defect in the law, or in obedience to the law, that no flesh can be justified by obeying the law. The law is good, and obedience is good, and if the obedience met the law on all points, and was a perfect obedience, then the man who rendered it would be, by that obedience, justified. The expression 'no flesh,' shows that the apostle is speaking of fallen man. His obedience is, in every instance, an imperfect obedience, and it is this imperfection of the obedience which causes that 'by deeds of law there shall no flesh be justified in God's sight.'

This doctrine is of great practical importance, inasmuch as the right reception of it prepares a man for God's way of salvation, whilst the disbelief of it leaves a man seeking for salvation, in a way that shall end in his everlasting ruin. Why should any of us wish to shut our eyes to the truth? May the Spirit of God be our teacher in this matter, on which our soul's salvation depends.

Is it, or is it not true, that our best services and all our holy things have in them a taint of imperfection and sin? It is true, if the testimony of scripture, to which agrees candid accurate observation, is to have any weight. For it is written in the word of God, that 'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth,' and that 'all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God.' But if a man knows so little of scripture, and of himself, as to believe and maintain that some of his actions are perfect, without stain of sin, will any one be found to maintain that his every thought, word, and act, are of this description? Folly and blindness cannot go so far as that. Almost all are ready to admit that in many things they offend, either coming short

of duty, or doing what they ought not to do. And as many as admit this, must perceive that by deeds of law they cannot be justified in the sight of God. Granting that their own view of themselves were the correct one, and that some of their thoughts, words, and deeds were perfect, and exactly such as the law of God requires them to be; still some of them being either not conformed to the law, or transgression of it, in respect of these latter, when he is compared with the law, he cannot be justified. Nay, we may go a step farther. We may suppose a man to be altogether conformed to the law of God, except in one point; to have throughout his whole life done exactly what was required, except on one solitary occasion: that one point, that one occasion of transgression or omission of duty, even in the midst of an else perfectly blameless life, would constitute him a breaker of the law, and bring him under condemnation. This is the judgment of both scripture and right reason. For scripture says, 'Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;' and 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' Our first parents were an example of this, for their one offence placed them among law-breakers, and subjected them to the penalty attached to disobedience. God is the judge, and when man is called before him and asked, Hast thou kept the law? and he begins to say, In most things I have, but—or even, in all things I have, but in one particular; he is instantly stopped and told that the question is not, In what particular hast thou kept the law? It simply is, Hast thou kept the law? And unless thou canst give a true unflinching answer that thou hast kept the law, by works of obedience to the law thou canst not be justified.—Verily I am constrained to admit that this is a reasonable view of the matter. My understanding approves of it. What should be its practical effect on me? Doubtless to make me feel and act as one who cannot, and who does not expect to be regarded as just by God, in virtue of any works of obedience to the law.

Under the first covenant, or covenant of works, in which Adam was the representative of the human race, life was to be by obedience to the law. But when that covenant was broken, and man's nature became corrupt by the fall, there could be no longer life by the law, for by not one individual was it fully obeyed. It spoke only of condemnation and death, because not one of those to whom it spoke but was a transgressor. The law now does not justify; it condemns. So that if I go to it seeking life, it will speak to me

nothing but death. O how sad my condition, and that of my fellow-creatures, had we been left under this righteous, strict, condemning law. For the condemnation would be all the more terrible that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.—This holy law is not withdrawn, and yet there is life for the sinner. In the gospel scheme, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. The law remains a rule of life, a light unto the feet, and a lamp unto the path, to those who receive life as a free gift, and are justified through the righteousness of Christ, which is counted their righteousness by faith in him. The law condemns, that men be compelled to seek life and justification elsewhere. And when man has found life in Jesus Christ, and justification through an act of God's free grace, by faith in Christ's blood, the law shines forth as a holy rule of life, a transcript of the divine will, leading the believer, by the paths of holiness and peace, to the kingdom of heaven. How gracious is God! how wise! how holy! The broken, condemning law, he placeth under Christ, to guide Christ's children to heaven! Its accusations are silenced, its thunders are hushed, yet it is pure and strict as ever.

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ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory,' Isa. xlv. 25.*

ALL are not Israel that are of Israel. All are not Christ's disciples who bear Christ's name. There is a hidden church in the bosom of the visible church. In the whole nation of Israel there were only seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. In a numerous congregation of professing Christians, how few converted persons are to be found! In a household, how seldom are the members all members of the family of God! Am I a real Christian, a converted person, a child of God? And have I thus an interest in those glorious statements and promises of God's word, which relate to his redeemed people? Teach me, O Spirit of God, to know myself, my present spiritual state, and the everlasting condition of being towards which I am journeying.

1. 'In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified.' The seed of Israel are true believers. And who are true believers? They who have received God's testimony in the word regarding Jesus Christ, and the way of a sinner's salvation:

they who have received and rested on Jesus Christ alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel. They are justified. They are regarded by God as perfectly free from any transgression of the divine law. They are in God's sight as if they had obeyed the law in every particular.

And how are they thus justified? In the Lord. All suffering that was due to believers on account of their sins was expended on Christ, even till it was wholly exhausted. All the obedience that was required of them, in order to their being just in the sight of God, was rendered by Christ. By faith they are united to Jesus Christ, so that they become one with him. He is the head, they are the members, and together they constitute a mystical body. They, then, are as he is. The righteousness which is his, is also theirs. He is the just one, and hence they are just. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. They stand acquitted even as Christ stands acquitted, who having died for our sins, rose again for our justification. His resurrection testified that his atonement had been accepted, that no further demand could be made on him, that as man's surety he had done all, and paid all, and was acquitted, and that therefore those for whom he answered must be acquitted also. Thus the seed of Israel—true believers, are justified in the Lord. Glorious privilege! to be made one with Christ Jesus! Most important blessing! to be justified in him! And this privilege and this blessing are to all the saints. No matter how weak in faith, how desponding, if thou hast true faith as a grain of mustard seed, that indissolubly and eternally connects thee with Jesus Christ. No matter though thou be so utterly weak as to be unable to keep hold of Christ, thou shalt lie in his arms as the infant lies in the safe kind arms of the mother. And he will take care that thy union with him shall never fail, and that thou shalt be a partaker of all the blessings which flow from that union.

2. 'In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel glory.' And wherefore should a believer justified in the Lord, glory in the Lord? Manifold reasons he has. The Lord hath purchased for him *pardon*—the complete and everlasting remission of all his sins. This he hath done of free grace. The salvation of the believer was not necessary to the felicity of the Lord. He could have left him and all our fallen race to perish, and if needed, he could have created myriads of other creatures to do his will, and give him glory. But of free grace he interposed, and by a way wonderful as it was effectual, he blotted out sin, made an end

of transgression, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. The pardon thus graciously provided, is of free grace bestowed. And when the believer has by faith received and rested on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus obtained a pardon of his many sins so needed, yet so entirely beyond the reach of his own efforts, is he not naturally led to glory in the Lord, through whose merits this great thing has been done unto him?

But further, being justified in the Lord, the believer is *sanctified* in him by the work of the Spirit. Out of Christ's fulness have all believers received, and grace for grace. The pardon of sin is a great matter, but when the sinner has rightly become anxious about the pardon of sin, he has become anxious about a great deal more. The removal of sin, the destruction of its power, the purifying of the heart, the hallowing of the affections, he earnestly pants after. Provision is made for these in the scheme of redemption. The holiness which the believer desires is laid up in the Lord Jesus Christ, and is communicated out of him to the believer by the Holy Spirit. In virtue of the union which subsists between Christ and believers, the holiness which is in him diffuses itself to them, even as the blood and nervous energy are diffused through all the members of the living body. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ is made unto believers sanctification. He came to destroy the works of the devil. By the Spirit, and through union with Christ, the believer has carried on in his soul and life that deliverance from sin, and that progress in holiness, which he so earnestly covets. And finding that thus holiness is of the Lord—holiness, that attribute of character so much desired by the renewed and justified, the believer glories in the Lord.

But again, being justified in the Lord, the believer is *preserved unto the glory of God's heavenly kingdom*. Whom God calleth, them he also justifieth; and whom he justifieth, them he also glorifieth. Ah! when we think of this wilderness state, of the cares, the pleasures, the entanglements of this life; and along with these, of the assaults of spiritual enemies, and of the treachery of one's own heart, it sometimes seems as if one would never reach the kingdom of heaven, its perfect holiness and joyful rest. But to dispel such fears, and revive the drooping spirits of God's child, the word of truth testifies that he who hath begun a good work in us, will perfect it unto the day of the Lord—that neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, nor 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. It testifies that all things work together for good to them who love God. So that contemplating the power and faithfulness of Christ as engaged for his preservation in the faith, his protection from spiritual enemies, and his perseverance unto the kingdom of heaven, the believer has ample reason to glory in the Lord. O, the riches and goodness of God! To provide for fallen man a way of justification, when, through breaking the covenant of works, justification by works of law had become impossible because of the imperfection of the obedience rendered!

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#### TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,' Rom. x. 3, 4.*

THE passage which is the subject of the present meditation, though originally written regarding the Jews, is equally true of those who are only nominal Christians. Unconverted men, whether called Christians or Jews, being ignorant of 'God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, do not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God.'

1. Now what is *God's righteousness*, of which Jews and professing Christians, whilst unrenewed and unenlightened, are ignorant? It is that which is righteousness in the sight of God, the perfect fulfilment of the law by Jesus Christ. It is called 'God's righteousness,' either because God esteems it to be righteousness; or because it has been wrought out by God the Son, in human nature, suffering and obeying. The Son of God exhausted, by his humiliation and sufferings, the penalty due, the curse that belonged to the sins of his people; that was his passive obedience. He yielded a perfect obedience to every one of the law's requirements, he obeyed the law of God fully and constantly; that is called his active obedience. These two taken together, Christ's passive obedience, and his active obedience, constitute his righteousness. And this is the righteousness of which all unconverted sinners are ignorant.

How stands it with me as to this matter? Have I never before heard of the righteousness

of God as explained and set forth above? Is that view of it as yet to me an unknown thing? Or have I heard of it but neglected it? Have I refused to believe that Christ Jesus made atonement for sin, or that he obeyed the law to merit heaven for believers? Or admitting an atonement, have I refused to believe that it is for Christ's righteousness that the sinner is accepted by God? If so, then I am ignorant of God's righteousness. Fearful ignorance that! Observe what it leads men to do; they

2. 'Go about to establish their own righteousness.' Few men can live altogether without a righteousness. They must have something to trust to. And, therefore, if they are ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own. They do this when they rely on ordinances, or on a Christian profession, or on their attention to moral duties. Nominal Christians go about to establish their own righteousness, when they betake themselves to prayers, or church-going, or works of charity, or acts of justice and benevolence, and rely on these for acceptance with God, or think them necessary along with what Christ has done, to secure their acceptance. This is man's own righteousness at the very best. And what say the scriptures regarding it? 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God.' Vain the attempt to establish such a righteousness. It is like building a castle of sand on the wave-washed beach. And yet how many are relying on this righteousness of their own for their eternity! Am I doing so? Is it, in any measure, on what I have done, that I am venturing my precious soul into the world of spirits, and on its unchangeable, eternal state?

3. Unconverted men, going about to establish their own righteousness, 'do not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God.' They can see no need for the righteousness of God—that righteousness which Jesus Christ had fully wrought out for his people. They think that their own righteousness is sufficient. To be wholly indebted to God's righteousness is by far too humbling to man's pride. It goes against his unenlightened, unsanctified reason to receive from God that for which God blesses him. Therefore he will not submit to the righteousness of God; he will not submit to receive it, to rely on it exclusively. Though God has provided it at a costly price, man, for whom it is provided, refuses to submit to it—proudly refuses to receive it. Is there gratitude in this? is there wisdom? is there safety? The worm man, refuses to submit to God's righteousness—to receive righteousness in

God's way—righteousness of God's providing—righteousness that God will accept; and so refusing, he yet expects to prosper! Strange infatuation! Lord, suffer me not to be guilty of it. By thy Spirit teach me the corruption of my own heart, thy holiness, and the perfect obedience which thy law requires, and then I shall never more think or talk of mine own righteousness, but be willing and joyful to submit to thy righteousness.

4. The end or perfection of that which man might have obtained by obedience to the law is everlasting blessedness, or eternal life. But spiritual life, the continuance and perfection of which is eternal life, depended on continued perfect obedience to the law; if the obedience failed, as in the case of the rebel angels, and of man, it did, the spiritual and eternal life were lost. But Christ's righteousness is the perfection of that which can be obtained by obeying the divine law. It is an infinite and everlasting righteousness. There can be no interruption in the connection between it and eternal life. It is not only a righteousness to-day, as the righteousness of a fallen angel was before he rebelled, or as the righteousness of man was before he fell, which righteousness of the angel or of man might be lost by after disobedience; but it is a righteousness extending into all the future, even an everlasting righteousness. So that every one who believes in Christ, and receives thus Christ as his righteousness, is secure of eternal life; nothing can ever happen to deprive him of it.

And this seems to suggest the meaning of the scripture, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' For the man who had life by obedience to the law, might fail in his obedience, and lose the life; but the man who, by the power of the Spirit, once believes on Jesus Christ, enters into the possession of a spiritual and eternal life, which he can never lose. In the case of life by obedience to the law, the life shall be eternal if the obedience be eternal. In the case of life by possessing Christ as our righteousness, the life shall be eternal, because the believer is at once, on his believing, put in possession of an everlasting righteousness, which can know neither change nor failure. Hence the life which is by Christ, is more abundant than that which man, by the most perfect obedience, could have wrought out for himself. In the one case, there is an absolute certainty of its enduring to all eternity; in the other case, there is a possibility of its being lost through a failure in the necessary obedience. Precious Christ! be thou my portion.

## TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,'* Luke xviii. 14.

IN the parable of which these words are the conclusion, Jesus Christ told of a Pharisee and a Publican who went up into the temple to pray. The Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jews, great professors, and for the most part full of self-righteous pride. The Publicans were the tax gatherers, who farmed the taxes from the Roman government; and as their profit depended on what they could collect over and above the sum which they had agreed to pay to the government, they very generally used every means in their power, whether just or unjust, to wring money from those who paid the taxes. They were consequently held in thorough detestation by the Jews, and were, for the most part, persons of very bad character. But the worst are not beyond the grace of God. Nay, there is more hope of one who is counted by all, and who also counts himself to be sinful, than of a self-conceited, self-righteous person.

Our Lord represents both the Pharisee and the Publican as praying. The Pharisee stood by himself, and prayed thus, 'God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.' The prayer of the publican was after a different fashion. He, 'standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner.' Mark the judgment of Jesus concerning these two persons; 'I tell you, that this man (the publican) went down to his house justified rather than the other,' (the pharisee)—words which unquestionably mean that the publican was accepted and justified, whilst the pharisee was rejected, and his religious services held in abhorrence.

What are the grounds of this judgment, and how does it appear to be consistent with the whole tenor of God's revealed will? Observe the temper and conduct of the two men. When the pharisee went to pray, he stood by himself, apart from the other worshippers, to mark the opinion that he entertained of his own superior sanctity, to attract attention, and to draw the admiration of men. His prayer agreed well with his behaviour when presenting himself to offer it. It was nothing but a laudation of himself. There was not in it, one expression, or one hint, that

he who offered it up was a sinner, a humble dependent on the mercy of an offended God. He looked at himself, and said to God, Behold what I am. He never thought of the divine mercy, in connection with himself. He had no feeling that he needed mercy; he thought that he deserved favour.

And after all, to what did the good amount that he had to relate of himself? Freedom from some few gross sins, and the scrupulous observance of one or two of the minor matters of the law. Marvellous folly! that a man who has no more to say for himself than this, should trust in himself that he is righteous, and despise others!

The publican stood afar off, probably in the court of the Gentiles, as unworthy of a place among God's chosen people, and especially as unfit to stand near that eminent saint, the pharisee. Thus shrinking from observation, and his heart almost sunk under a feeling of his sinfulness, he would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven. He felt as David did, when that man of God poured out his prayer, saying, 'Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me.' But though he would not lift up his eyes, by grace he was enabled to lift up his soul, and as he smote on his breast in bitter grief, he prayed from his very heart, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'

The whole scope of scripture, and many express statements, teach us, that it is God's method of salvation to make the sinner deeply sensible of his sinfulness, to convince him that he cannot save himself, and to show him that God can save him, and is willing to save him, through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ. Now, not one of these things was found in the Pharisee. He had no deep conviction of his sinfulness; he was not at all aware of his inability to save himself; he had no apprehension of God's pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. In the Publican, on the contrary, they appear all. He saw the corruption of his heart, and the transgressions of his life, to be far beyond any remedy that he could apply, and it having been taught him that there is forgiveness with God, he presented himself at a throne of grace, earnestly desiring to be a partaker of that forgiveness. The condemnation of the pharisee, therefore, and the justification of the publican, entirely agree with the bible method of salvation; for Jesus says,

*'Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'* Our Saviour repeated no one sentiment so tre-

quently as this. We find it recorded no fewer than ten times in the evangelists. That is no doubt intended to teach us the importance which our Lord attaches to evangelical humiliation. Such humiliation lies at the very entrance into a state of grace. The sinner who, like the publican, stands self-condemned, grieving for his sinfulness, and crying for mercy, God receives in at the strait gate that leadeth unto life. To such a one he says, 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.' And then, in the exercise of free sovereign grace, he begins to exalt the poor sinner abased by evangelical humiliation, uniting him to Christ, bestowing on him the privileges and dignity of a child of God, and at last receiving him to perfect happiness, and heavenly glory.

On the other hand, pride, and especially the pride of self-righteousness, is exceedingly offensive to God; for it is a plain denial of man's fallen and ruined condition, and of the utility and necessity of that amazing plan which has been devised for the recovery of sinners. It puts man in a position in which he does not desire, and will not accept, the salvation which God offers. And it makes God a liar, for he declares that there is none righteous, no not one; and that all the imaginations of the thoughts of man's heart are only evil continually. The man who possesses this self-righteous spirit indeed exalts himself: but ah! what a humbling awaits him! He shall be stripped of his fond conceits, and cast down to hell, a miserable, hopeless wretch, to dwell with devils and everlasting burnings.

Lord, make me know myself. Make me understand thy character as revealed in the scriptures. Then shall I lie low before thee as a sinner; my prayer shall be for mercy, for Christ's sake; thou wilt hear the prayer, and receive me graciously, and love me freely, and bless me abundantly

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' Rom. x. 17.*

THERE are persons who, when told to believe on Christ, do not know where to begin, or what to do. They express a willingness to do something, or any thing; but then what to do, they are utterly at a loss. It is true that their difficulty originates in their attachment to the works of the law, and in the blindness of their mind to the glorious simplicity of the gospel. They could understand you at once if you ap-

pointed them some laborious penance, or a work requiring a great effort, the fruit of which was to be salvation; and they would know how to set about performing the penance, or accomplishing the work. But when it is said, 'believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' the sinner is often greatly puzzled how to proceed. Now though saving faith is the gift of God, some simple statements can be made of the way in which faith is attained, and some directions given to those who are anxious to possess it.

But first, let me ask myself, how far am I really desirous to possess true saving faith? Do I deeply feel that I am sinful, deserving wrath, under condemnation? For what is the use of my inquiring about the way in which I may attain to the possession of faith in Jesus Christ, unless I be sensible of my ruined and dangerous state, and be convinced that I can be saved from that state, in no other way, but through faith in Jesus Christ? O my soul, thou hast God's testimony that thou art lost and undone, a child of wrath, an heir of hell. Do not thine own secret, it may be, thy strong convictions, agree with that testimony? Be assured, O my soul, that thou art in the most urgent need of salvation. May the Lord bless to thee thy meditation on this scripture, that sets forth the way in which that faith cometh, without which there is no salvation.

'Faith cometh by hearing.' Those unconverted persons who think at all about the matter, have a kind of impression that faith is some strange, difficult thing, and that it must require some laborious work, or some vigorous effort, or some subtle investigation, to attain to it. 'But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or who shall descend into the deep; (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach.'—Neither is faith bestowed as a reward on those who labour and exercise themselves unto righteousness, for before faith there can be no righteousness at all.—Neither is faith obtained by any secret work of the Holy Spirit, apart from the revelation of the divine will.—Neither can I attain to the possession of faith by any work, or effort, of my reasoning powers, as I can to the knowledge of a mathematical truth, or of a piece of machinery. I cannot work up my mind to the possession of it.

'But faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' God makes known his will to the children of men in a variety of ways. By

voices, dreams, visions, he has communicated with some. The truths thus received, he commanded to be written down; and these writings composing the scriptures, he hath, in his providence, preserved, and sent forth among the nations, a faithful and full record of the way by which man may be recovered to holiness and happiness. Then there is the voice of the living teacher reading these scriptures, or drawing his statements of divine truth from their pages. Now, hearing refers to all these. It is a hearing God, whether speaking to men, as he did of old to the prophets and apostles; or speaking to us by his word, when we are reading that word, and pondering its contents; or speaking to us the things contained in the word, by the mouth of his living servants.

Faith cometh by this hearing. The sinner simply hears the communication from God—the doctrines, precepts, facts, warnings, promises, recorded in the word, and from this hearing follows faith. To this statement agree all those places of scripture where we have an account of men coming into the possession of saving faith. It was from hearing the word of God, in the preaching of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, that faith came unto the three thousand. The faith of the Ethiopian eunuch came from hearing the word of God, recorded by Isaiah, and explained by Philip. The faith of Cornelius came from hearing the word of God, in the preaching of Peter. The faith of Mary came from hearing Christ. The faith of Lydia came from hearing the word of God, in the preaching of Paul. The faith of the men of Antioch came from hearing the word of God, in the preaching of Paul and Barnabas.

But some will say, you make faith a very simple thing indeed, if it comes merely by hearing the word of God. True, it is simple in one sense, so simple that its simplicity becomes a stumbling-block to many. But in another sense it is not so simple and easy. For the hearing by which it comes must be the hearing of the word of God. Now, how many do not hear the statements of scripture as statements that are made by God, very seldom think distinctly of the Bible as God's word, and never own the truths of the Bible as truths invested with God's authority? Such persons cannot attain to faith, because, whilst in respect of the matter they do hear the word of God, they do not in fact hear it as his word; it is before their mind only as the word of man; regarded as true, perhaps, but wanting the weight of divine authority to give a perfect assurance of its truth, and to invest it with importance.

Besides whilst faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, faith is a grace

wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. While men listen to the communications made to them by the word of God, the Holy Spirit, having communicated spiritual life to the soul originally dead, enables it, in the exercise of its renewed powers, to apprehend and receive the truths presented to it—to apprehend, receive, and rely on Christ, who is the sum and substance of these truths.

Since, then, salvation cometh through faith, and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, with what faithfulness, affection, and fulness, should the word be preached! Lord, make all ministers feel that theirs is an important work. Holy Spirit, furnish them, quicken them, direct them, bless their preaching.

With what care, desire, and diligence should we read and hear the word! By it cometh that which is our life. Apart from it, we can have no salvation. Refusing or neglecting the word of God, we must soon sink down into eternal ruin.

With what humility should we receive its statements! Cavilling and opposition—how unbecoming in creatures receiving a communication from the Creator! O my soul, sit thou at the feet of Jesus, and with humble gratitude receive and obey his word.

And finally, since it is only the Holy Spirit who makes hearing issue in faith, let me constantly and earnestly pray for the Spirit to be with me, in his quickening, illuminating power, whenever I read, or hear the word.

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#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.'* 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

WHEN the amiable Melancthon was converted, gospel truth seemed to him so plain and persuasive, that he thought he only needed to present it to the minds of his fellow-men, to secure its immediate and cordial reception. But to his surprise and grief, he found his statements of it treated with indifference and neglect, and he was compelled to confess that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon. Perhaps the feeling that at first possessed Melancthon, is more or less that of every new convert to genuine religion; and probably it glows warmly in the breast of every pious young minister. But the experience of Melancthon will be their experience, and they will arrive at a conclusion similar to his. Man's

corrupt nature cannot be overcome by any merely human efforts. The sweetest, or the most solemn, or the most awful views of divine truth, do not change the sinner's heart. And what has been the instrument in impressing and converting one, is tried on another, and utterly fails. A text of scripture which has been the seed of spiritual life to one soul, is presented to another soul, and never touches it at all. And thus the experience of every warm-hearted, zealous minister, is brought into accordance with the word of God, which teaches, that whilst human instruments are employed, the success is entirely God's work. 'Paul planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.'

Ministers are nothing but instruments. God appoints them their work, and that work it is their duty to perform with all heartiness and fidelity, and with such desires, and expectations of success, as the word of God warrants. But that success is to be the work of another—the result of a secret active energy, giving spiritual life and vigour to the soul of man. One man puts a plant into the ground, another goes and waters that plant, but it needs the power of God to make the plant germinate, spring up, and yield increase. They who plant and water do something towards an end, but that end itself they effect not; another and higher, even God, accomplishes it. So one minister may instruct us, and another may refresh our memories by a frequent and affectionate statement of truths previously learned. But a divine power is needed, before the heart on which these truths fall, possesses and manifests spiritual life, or brings forth the fruits of holiness.

This doctrine of the Spirit of God alone giving the increase, should have a practical effect on both ministers and people. Ministers should plant and water—instruct, exhort, plead diligently, perseveringly, affectionately, but praying earnestly for, and wholly depending on the divine influences for success. Preaching to a congregation of sinful men, they are like Ezekiel prophesying over the dry bones. Strange, hopeless work, that of the prophet, in the estimation of carnal men! As hopeless that of a gospel minister, in his own estimation, if only he himself is to be looked to. But as the prophet bidden, behoved to obey, though having no power to effect the result to which his words pointed, so must every minister have a regard to his appointed work, though knowing that not a single soul has he the power savingly to benefit. Not that he is to be

indifferent to the result of his ministrations. But he is to look to a work of the Holy Spirit for success, he is to desire that work, he is to pray for it. Planting and watering with all the diligence and devotedness of one who has received the command of God to do so, he is ever to bear in mind that the increase must be caused by the great power of God. Thus God's command will keep him to duty, and the feeling that God alone giveth success when and where he pleaseth, will produce an entire dependence on God, and secure for him all the glory.

And what should the people have in view in going to the house of God? The benefit of the precious soul. And how may we obtain that? Solely through the grace of God, and by the work of his Holy Spirit. It matters not what be said, or how it be said, or who say it, except the Spirit of God quicken the seed of the word. Good seed, indeed, there must be; the word of truth must be set forth; but except a divine power operates on the heart, no fruit follows. In the use of all means of grace, then, it should ever be distinctly borne in mind, that God alone giveth the increase. Whenever I open my Bible, my heart should be lifted up to God in earnest prayer for his Spirit to quicken and teach me. And when I go to hear the word preached, my supplication should be for the preacher, that he may stand in God's strength, and feed in God's counsel; but my thoughts, and desire, and prayer should pass beyond him. I should have a deep conviction of the inability of all human, yea, of all created agency, to give life to the spiritually dead, or growth in grace to the living. Thoroughly persuaded that the Spirit of God alone giveth life and refreshing to the soul through the word, my prayer should be for the Spirit to come graciously to my soul, and I should have a felt deep dependence on his divine influences. Thus sensible that I need the Holy Spirit, and desiring and expecting him, let me go and hear what God the Lord will say to me by his ministering servant.—Were it always thus with me, my soul would benefit more than it does from the means of grace; for I would be honouring God's free method of salvation, and especially, I would be giving due honour to the Holy Spirit, who, even by Christians, is too little regarded and honoured.

May the necessity of divine influences be fully recognised, and deeply felt in the church of Christ. And whilst there are earnest prayers that God would raise up able and faithful ministers, like Paul and Apollos, may there be a genuine and thorough conviction present to the minds of God's people, that the most able and

faithful ministers are only instruments by whom God worketh, and that the energy and power by which the work is done, is the direct and immediate energy of the Holy Spirit on the soul. Lord, make thy ministering servants willing to be nothing, that all the glory may be thine. And spread, in thy church, an anxious longing, and an earnest prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit, and along with that let there be an opening of men's hearts to receive his quickening, renewing, and refreshing influences.

#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me,'* John v. 39.

WERE the last will and testament of some individual disposing of a large property put into your hands, your conduct regarding it would be regulated by the interest which you supposed yourself to have in such a deed. If you were merely a public officer to whose keeping it was to be entrusted for preservation, you would probably, without opening it, lay it aside in the usual depository. If you were a lawyer appointed to defend or impugn its validity, you would read it carefully, with a reference to its legal construction, and the signatures attached to it. If it was a very ancient deed, and you had a taste for antiquarian researches, you would examine the forms of expression made use of, and note the information regarding old places and customs which it contained. But if it was a last will and testament in your own favour, you would read it carefully and with much interest, to ascertain the amount of the property, and the value of the possessions bequeathed to you.

The scriptures of the Old and New Testaments have been put into your hands. These two Testaments relate to the same things. They record a free gift by God to the children of men, of Jesus Christ and all his unsearchable riches. They reveal things which you never could have discovered—things which are essential to your salvation—the offer of blessings surpassing in value all else besides. They are put into your hands invested with all the interest of a testament bequeathing to you a rich and desirable inheritance. They testify of Jesus Christ, God's great gift to the children of men, and of eternal life by him. Therefore search the scriptures.

And reading the scriptures seldom or carelessly is not what is meant by searching them. They

must be perused frequently and diligently. It bears absurdity in the very face of it to say, that a man searches the scriptures, who only spends, in a whole week, an hour or half an hour, or perhaps not so much, on the sabbath day, in reading the bible. You need your daily bread to nourish your body; but you also need daily nourishment to your soul. Perhaps you have no relish for the daily reading of the scriptures—no appetite for the spiritual food which they afford. But be persuaded to take a little of that food daily; its tendency is to produce an appetite for more; it will make you hunger and thirst after righteousness. The word of God is both medicine and food to the sin-diseased soul. It purges away corruption, it heals the disease of sin, and it nourishes and strengthens the renewed nature, the spiritual man.

I believe that there are professing Christians who make a conscience of daily reading a portion of the scriptures, but who do so merely for the purpose of fulfilling what they consider to be a duty, and not with any earnest desire to obtain a saving knowledge of divine truth. Conscience would reprove them if they neglected their morning or evening chapter, but they feel no uneasiness at learning little or nothing from that chapter. They read for the purpose of reading, not of being instructed by reading. Now though such persons read, yea, daily read, they cannot be said to search the scriptures. They do not seek for any thing in the scriptures; yet this must surely be implied in searching.

And most necessary of all, whenever you read or meditate on the word of God, breathe the devout earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit may give you an understanding heart and an obedient will, for this essentially pertains to a right searching of the scriptures.

Is it thus that I read my bible? Do I read it very seldom, or read it without searching it? If I do, may the Lord pardon my sin, and cause me to cease from it. Whenever I open my bible, let me have in my mind a desire to be made wiser and better by it. Let me remember that what I am going to read is of divine authority—the word of God, and not the word of man's wisdom—and that it testifies of Jesus Christ in whom alone we have everlasting life. Taking up the bible with these solemn reverential feelings and thoughts occupying my mind, let me search it for the purpose of becoming wise in the things of Christ—of obtaining more knowledge of his person, his works, his doctrine, his precepts.

Let no one begin to make excuse. Some allege that *they have no time* to read the bible

every day—to search into its meaning—to ponder what it breathes. But you regularly attend to the nourishment of the body; is it absolutely impossible for you to do so with regard to the soul? Nay, the busier that you are with worldly occupations, you need so much the more frequently to apply to the word of God. For the more business you have to do, the more need you have of guidance and direction; and the more you are occupied with worldly labours and pursuits, the more you need to come in contact with the scriptures, to prevent you from becoming altogether worldly minded, and utterly forgetting your immortal interests. But then the time,—where is the time to be found by the labouring man, or by him who is exceedingly occupied with an extensive business? Find thou the will, my friend, and I shall have little difficulty in finding thee the time. If you are to have time for any thing, you should have time for taking counsel of God in his word.

Say not that the scriptures are *full of mysteries*, and that *you cannot understand them*. To almost all those who allege this as an excuse for neglecting it, the bible is a mystery just because they do not search it. There are indeed in it mysteries which none of the people of God have ever fathomed, and the opening up of which is perhaps intended to minister to the enjoyments of the saints along the ages of eternity. But much that you deem mysterious would become clear as noon-day, and beautiful as the truth of God, if you were daily, and diligently, and humbly to search the scriptures.

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#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors,'* Prov. viii. 34.

THE WISDOM who speaks throughout this chapter, and in various other parts of the book of Proverbs, has generally, and beyond question rightly been understood to be the Messiah. WISDOM is one of the Messiah's names. And there is plainly good reason for that name being given to him. For the scriptures tell us that 'in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom;' he reveals to us the character and the will of God, and thus makes us wise unto salvation; and he is expressly called 'the WISDOM of God.' It is Jesus Christ who speaks to us in all the scriptures, whatever the instrument be which is more immediately employed, whether it be priest, or prophet, or evangelist, or apostle.

How then ought we to hear the instruction which WISDOM hath revealed and teaches in the word? Let the Messiah himself answer; 'watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.' The gates of the Messiah, and the posts of his doors, are any means which he has appointed for obtaining a knowledge of his will; but chiefly they are the places of public worship, and the ordinances in which men unite to praise the Lord, and receive instructions from his word. And how is attendance to be given there? 'Blessed is the man that heareth me,' saith Jesus Christ, '*watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.*' Can the systematic half-day hearer lay any claim to the blessedness of which the Messiah here speaks? It is quite enough, he says, to go to church once a-day. He goes because he thinks it decent to go. He goes not to be made wiser or better, to enter into communion with God, to delight himself in Jesus and his salvation. Is there anything like watching at WISDOM's gates in such an attendance on ordinances?—anything like waiting at the posts of WISDOM's doors? Verily of waiting and watching there is none. And consequently of the blessedness which WISDOM mentions, there can be none.

But a man may go a step farther in hearing, and yet come short of the blessing which Messiah connects with hearing. All the sabbath instructions may be attended, and still in that attendance there may be neither watching nor waiting. The sabbath comes weekly round, and as a matter of course men dress themselves in their sabbath attire, and go forth and occupy, with due regularity, their accustomed pew in the house of God. But with that they rest satisfied. Some popular preacher may sometimes draw them out on a week day. But as for going to receive instruction, or to worship God in Spirit and in truth, on a week day, that is a thing for which they have no inclination, and which they deem altogether unnecessary. So they think. Can they claim the Messiah's blessing?—the blessing of those who hear him, watching daily at his gates, waiting at the posts of his doors? Let themselves give the answer. Watching daily and waiting imply earnest desire and diligent endeavour. Where there is earnest desire, it will not be pent up within the limits of one day. It will often be going forth in search of its object, and be watchful to discover and embrace every opportunity of obtaining its gratification. And whilst the Lord's day is chiefly honoured by the believer, he will seek, as he has opportunity, his daily spiritual bread; he will certainly prefer an hour in the Lord's house,

before one spent in worldly vanity; and he will strive to redeem from his business a small portion of time for his soul's refreshment. When you look at the thin attendance at most of our week-day sermons, and see the multitudes of idle saunterers who meanwhile throng our streets, and the similar multitudes who, though occupied with business, might oftentimes redeem an hour for their soul's good, think ye that Messiah speaketh of any of them when he says, 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.'

But then, there are numbers who think that their acquaintance with bible truth is great, and that there remains little farther for them to learn. When the things that Messiah, in the word, teaches, are stated to them fully and plainly, they reply that they know all that. But hast thou peace of conscience? Is thy soul at rest? Hast thou found a satisfying portion? If not, then there is something in the scriptures which thou hast not yet learned. There is a knowledge to be drawn from them to which thou hast not yet attained. There is an acquaintance with the bible to which thou art yet a stranger.

How much carelessness and indifference is there in the ordinary hearers of the word, through an opinion that there is little more for them to learn in regard to divine truth! And yet such an opinion is utterly groundless. Who of the most learned has exhausted human knowledge, or any branch of it. Strange folly, then, to think of having learned all divine truth! In the bible there is food for babes, and strong meat for strong men. There are truths which those who have only just been born of the Spirit can easily comprehend, and there are things into which the angels desire to look. Diligent waiting on ordinances, careful study, prayerful meditation, and honest obedience, lead to continued progress in divine knowledge, grateful to the understanding, and exercising a sanctifying influence on the affections and the life. Hence the blessedness of which the Messiah speaks, and which consists in the life, the light, the vigour, the holiness, the happiness of the soul.

What is my character? Am I a half-day hearer, and think that I do very well indeed in being so. Or am I one who confines my waiting on religious instruction to the sabbath day, and has no relish or desire for spiritual refreshment at other times? Or do I think that I already know enough, or all that is to be known of these matters, and am therefore indolent or indifferent about farther knowledge? If such be my character, then let me understand and reflect that the

Messiah speaks not of me when he says, 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.'

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent,' Acts xiii. 26.*

THESE words of Paul, addressed, through the Spirit, to the people of Antioch, embrace also us, and persons of every age and country. Abraham's spiritual seed, and whosoever feareth God, — to them is the word of this salvation sent. The salvation spoken of is that of which Paul had been discoursing, and of which Jesus Christ is the author. It includes all the benefits which flow from Christ's death—all the blessings which by him, and through him, are bestowed on the children of men—all the precious and glorious things promised in the scriptures. The way to get clear, powerful, practical, comforting views of this great salvation, is to take up its promises, its declarations, and its blessings separately; and to remember that God writes beneath each promise or declaration this text, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent.' Let us select a few of the glorious truths of the gospel, and add to them the faithful declaration of God, kindly encouraging us to appropriate an interest in them to ourselves.

Jesus Christ saith, 'ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' And it is written, 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.' 'He hath chosen you in Christ, before the foundation of the world.' Are not these glad tidings to such as see in themselves no merit before God? 'God hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.' Now, whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of *this* salvation sent.

Our sins are more numerous than the hairs of our head, they are various, and in some instances they are very aggravated. To give real peace, pardon must extend to all our sins: it must be full and complete, applying to every thing which we have done, and reaching to every place in which we can be found. It must be free, for we have nothing to merit it. It must be irreversible, else we will always be in the dread that it may be recalled, and the awful punishment of our sins

at last overtake us. Now, such a pardon as this, God bestows on sinners, through faith in his Son Jesus Christ. How delightful to think of it! How inspiring to go forth, lightened of the load of divine wrath—to pass on one's way through the things of this world, and at last enter into the world of spirits, possessed of the well-grounded belief that, at no period, and in no place, shall any of our sins find us out—that go where we may, through the universe of God, or enter how far soever into the depths of eternity, immunity from suffering on account of the sins that we have committed shall attach to us still? Yet such is actually the precious, the glorious pardon purchased for us by the death of Christ. It extends to all sins, of all kinds, for ever. For thus saith the Lord, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin.' 'I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more! Whatsoever reader of this feareth God, to him is the word of *this* salvation sent.'

The Holy Spirit takes away the hard and stony heart, which the most affecting manifestations of redeeming love could not touch or move, and he gives a heart of flesh, which feels every word of God, and receives an impression from it. He cleanses the fountain whence the affections arise, and then they flow forth pure and spiritual. He enters into the most secret chambers of the soul, and detects and mortifies the corruption which attempts to hide itself there. He presents to the mind clear and delightful views of the divine character as revealed in the scriptures, and awakens into lively exercise the sweet sentiments of love and gratitude. This great work of the Spirit, in creating man anew, and renewing him in the spirit of his mind, appears to the Christian to be exceedingly marvellous. He can scarcely believe that God will condescend to dwell in such a polluted abode as the soul of man—that he will condescend to take so much notice of a polluted worm—that he will indeed give his Spirit, his own Spirit, to dwell in the sinner, and to work in him a new spirit and a new nature. Nevertheless, it is found so written in the word of God. Read, believe, wonder, and adore. '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 an 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.' This is the precious, the glorious truth. Our God saith to those who fear him, 'to you is the word of *this* salvation sent.'

The Christian may go over each and all of the blessings of the gospel in the same way—the adoption of sons, the resurrection from the dead, the happiness and glory of heaven, with all the promises given in the scriptures, and respecting each one of them God says to him, 'to you is the word of *this* salvation sent.'

And what is the conclusion to be drawn from all this? Is it not that the gospel salvation is to be estimated by what God has revealed of it in the scriptures, and not by what we have embraced of it? It is too commonly the case with believers that they count on what they have in hand, and not on what they have in the promise and in the word. When the believer accepts of Christ, can he stumble at any blessing of salvation on account of its greatness, or of his own unworthiness? When Christ is given to the believer, what good thing will God withhold? 'He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' The whole of the gospel salvation is offered to the saints. Judge not, then, O friend, of God and the gospel salvation by what thou sensibly feelest, but by what is revealed and recorded in the bible. The salvation that is by Jesus Christ is not the narrow stinted thing that thy unbelieving heart would contract it into. It is the broad, free, glorious thing that the declarations and promises of scripture set it forth to be. Exercise, then, a vigorous and comprehensive faith. Take the word of God in its divine simplicity, and as it presents to thee another and another feature of the grand scheme of thy redemption, remember that God hath said, 'to thee is the word of *this* salvation sent.'

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#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'*Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live,*' Isa. lv. 3.

THUS saith the Lord, 'Incline your ear, and come unto me.' God speaks; let us attend. He does not say, 'depart, ye accursed:' not yet. But he says, 'come unto me.' And wherefore are we to come? Is it to be informed that there is no hope, no place for repentance, no pardon for us, no love for us even in the breast of Infinite Love? Is it to hear God telling us of the future miseries appointed for us? Were it for such a purpose that we are called to come to God, well might we be unwilling to obey the summons. When Adam and Eve had committed their first sin, soon as they heard the voice of the Lord God

walking in the garden, they hid themselves. And when the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? a consciousness of his transgression doubtless made Adam tremble, and linger among the trees of the garden.

But it is not as an offended being that God here addresses us. It is not as a king speaking to rebels against his authority. It is not from a judgment-seat that the voice comes. It is from God sitting on a throne of mercy. It is from our Father in heaven, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our covenant God, and gracious Father, who has just been saying, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat: yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' Therefore let us draw near to him, not as crouching slaves, not as trembling criminals, against our will; but with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father. The character of God as revealed by Jesus Christ, inspires confidence. 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth'—when he says, 'come unto me,' why should we be afraid or unwilling to go?

But how are we to come to God? What is it to come to him? When we have come to a person we are near him, we have some knowledge of him, and more or less intercourse with him. To come to God means that we have a true knowledge of him, which is to be obtained only from the bible; that our minds realize his existence and presence; that we believe what he reveals to us regarding himself; and that we have such intercourse with him as it becomes creatures to have with their Creator, and as it becomes sinners to have with their Saviour. Naturally our soul is alienated from God—far off by wicked works. It has him not in its thoughts. It gives him none of its love. It has no intercourse with him. But in obeying his invitation, and coming to God, the soul, in the exercise of its renewed powers, thinks about God, knows him, loves him, trusts in him, communes with him, listens to him.—O my soul, hast thou so come to God? He saith, 'Incline thine ear, and come.' Hath thine ear been open to that word? and are all thy motions now toward the gracious and ever blessed God? Hast thou already, to thy great comfort, approached him? and art thou drawing closer and closer? thy knowledge, thy reliance, thy desires, thine affections becoming more and more exercised about God?

For after God invites the sinner to come to him, he has something farther to say to him:

'hear, and thy soul shall live.' Those who come unto him, God will in no wise cast out. He does not speak to them as their offences deserve. He instructs them in the way of life and peace. One comes under an almost overwhelming sense of sin: to him the Lord says, Hear my word, and let thy soul live; 'though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Another comes in almost despairing weakness, and to him the Lord says, Hear thou my word, 'my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Another comes fainting, and sorely tempted to murmur by reason of severe trials and afflictions; and to him the Lord says, Hear my word; 'there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.' 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain it.'

O when there is the hearing ear, there is life to the soul in the word of the Lord. That word is quick and powerful. It is full of love to every one who having come to the Lord, opens his ear to receive it. It gives liberty, it enlightens, it enlivens, it comforts, it guides, it sanctifies. The Lord says to us, 'Hear, and your soul shall live.' Faithful is that promise. No one ever heard as the Lord here invites us to hear, and failed of life.

But have I inclined my ear to the gracious invitations of God calling me to come to him? Have I rightly heard what he saith to the children of men? Have I seriously considered the duty which the invitation imposes on me, or have I rejoiced in the promise which is joined to that invitation? Life, how sweet! Eternal life, how desirable, amazing, glorious? If I come not to God, if I receive not, believe not, obey not his word, that life never can be mine. Eternal death, and all the misery included in these awful words, must be my portion. And let me remember that it is only over this earth, and to earth's inhabitants, that this invitation goes forth, and this promise is addressed. It reaches not to hell. Between those who have once gone to that place of torment, and the blessed God, there can be no intercourse. Between them and life there is a great impassable gulph fixed. My soul, what art thou doing? Is there spiritual life in thee, spiritual affections, spiritual desires? Art thou rendering to God spiritual homage, and spiritual services? Art thou receiving from him spiritual comfort? O Holy Spirit, enable me to be deeply sensible of my God's condescension and kindness, when he says to me, 'Incline thine ear, and come to me; hear, and thy soul shall live.'

## SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble,'* Jam. ii. 19.

THERE are various truths of religion necessary to be known and believed, in order to salvation, and yet many come short of salvation who know and believe them. Of these truths the existence of a God is one. To be saved, it is absolutely necessary that a man believe that there is a God; but he may have that belief, and yet perish eternally. Nay, rising above the belief in the existence of many gods, which sunk the nations in idolatry, and laid the foundation for so many gross immoralities, he may believe that there is but one God, and still live and die under the wrath of that God. These views will come more fully out in a meditation on this passage of the word, 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble.'

1. 'Thou believest that there is one God.' We do not see God. No man hath seen God at any time. But that is no reason for not believing in his existence. The works of creation and providence conduct the mind to the belief that there is, that there must be, a Worker of these works. The watch which tells me the hour, must have had an intelligent maker; no one, even for a moment, supposes that it made itself. But the world in which I live is a far more complicated machine than my watch; and I am irresistibly led to believe, that the world, too, has had a Maker of Almighty power, of infinite wisdom and intelligence.—The apple does not fall from the tree in consequence of a deliberate determination to do so; the tree does not take counsel of itself how, and when, it shall grow, or with what fruit it shall be covered; nor the flowers how they shall unfold their beauty, and send forth their fragrance. And yet these, and similar things, are evidently directed by an intelligence existing somewhere, with a precision, a regularity, and a power which far surpass human.

I myself am fearfully and wonderfully made. My body—how numerous are the parts of it; how nicely fitted these parts are to one another; the most tender of them how carefully protected, how wonderfully preserved! None of these things come of myself. And I know not to what other conclusion I can arrive, than that a most powerful and wise Being contrived and fashioned my frame, caused and watched over its growth, and preserves and guards it with a constant care. And then my body's mysterious tenant, my soul! the living, thinking, intelligent, reasoning principle—

its combination with the body, willing, directing, governing; yet in some things utterly powerless, unable to ward off disease, or command the departure of pain, or forbid its own separation from the body at last! Did this soul of mine make itself? No! In the most decided manner it refuses to advance any such claim. It adopts the language of the poet, 'I am; and since I am, conclude something eternal;' and the still more full and explicit language of scripture, 'Know ye that the Lord, he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.'

Prophecy and miracles also testify that there is a Being who knows the future; who arranges all things, so that his word and events entirely correspond; and who can interrupt and suspend the ordinary established course of things. This Being must be God.

Indeed the evidence for the existence of God is complete. Wherefore, O my soul, thou believest that there is one God. In believing this—

2. 'Thou doest well.' For such a belief lies at the foundation of all religion. 'He who cometh unto God must believe that He is.' It is absurd to talk of coming unto God, unless we believe in the existence of a God. It is the first step towards saving faith to believe that there is a God, for saving faith has a regard to God's testimony; and there can be no belief of the testimony of a Being of whom we know nothing, or whose existence we deny. This belief is also a step towards true religion, because by it we acknowledge a Being above us who challenges our worship, and has an undoubted title to our adoration. Ignorance of God, or a denial of his existence, thoroughly shuts a man out from all religion. And, therefore, it is said, Thou doest well, when thou believest that there is one God. But—

3. 'The devils also believe, and tremble.' By this I am taught, that a belief in the existence of God is a principle common to true Christians with those who are entirely destitute of religion. Many wicked men have it. The very devils have it. There are no atheists in hell. The inhabitants of that awful place are convinced, by experience, and without doubt, of the existence of God, and they tremble under a dread of his displeasure, and of the punishment which their wickedness merits at his hand.

And hence none are entitled to think well of themselves simply because they believe in God. Even where this belief is followed up by a regard to God, and a delight in sundry of his attributes, it comes far short of saving faith. I may talk about the greatness and goodness of

God—I may give him thanks for the blessings which he is daily dropping on my paths—I may admire his mercy, and wisdom, and power, and be all the while a child of sin, and an heir of wrath. Our blessed Lord said, 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.' Merely believing in God, can in truth only tend to trouble the heart of a sinful being. To calm down that trouble, and give peace to such a heart, there must be super-added to a belief in God, a belief in Jesus Christ. To the man who is out of Christ, God is a very terrible God, a consuming fire. And as the devils have no Saviour, but lie for ever unsheltered under the angry eye of God, they tremble ever in dismay, and in apprehension of coming and increasing sufferings. The difference between them and the sinner who believes in God, but believes not in Christ, is, that they know the position in which they are standing towards God, and the sinner does not. They know, for they feel his anger; but the sinner feels not his anger yet. They have begun their sufferings, which are to increase, and never end; but the sinner is in the deadness of spiritual death, not yet entered on the agonies of death eternal. Hence devils tremble, whilst sinners believing in God, but rejecting Christ, heal their wound slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace, when there is no peace.' May I know God, and may I know him as revealed by Jesus Christ. And may that God be my God, the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

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#### SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love,' Gal. v. 6.*

*To be in Jesus Christ* usually means to be united to him by a living saving faith. But by the expression *in Jesus Christ*, in this passage, is to be understood, 'in the dispensation of grace which Christ established, and of which he is the head.' We have the inspired apostle, then, asserting that in this gospel dispensation, it is of no consequence to a man's salvation whether he be circumcised or uncircumcised, neither of these states having ought in itself which can be of any avail as a meritorious ground of acceptance with God. It is true that the Jewish convert, he of the circumcision, after receiving the faith in Christ, might either continue to observe the law of Moses, or he might not; the Gentile, he of the uncircumcision, on being converted to Christianity, might

either totally disregard the Mosaic law, or he might, from motives of expediency, submit to circumcision, and pay some attention to the requirements of the law. But if either they of the circumcision, or they of the uncircumcision, viewed the rites of the Mosaic law as of any avail, on the ground of merit, for salvation, they erred from the truth of the gospel, they infringed on the free grace of God, and they were under the law and not under grace.

But moral duties are of as little avail for acceptance with God as Mosaic rites. After all that the holiest man ever accomplished, he was an unprofitable servant; he transgressed or he came short, and therefore could not be justified by a law which is perfect, and requires a perfect obedience. O it is difficult to make mankind thoroughly sensible of this—to get them to understand that saying of the inspired apostle, 'In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' But whether men will understand it or not, it is a truth—a most important truth. Under the gospel dispensation neither rites, nor names, nor forms, nor professions, nor duties avail any thing towards justification before God. 'In Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision,

*But faith that worketh by love.* This, and this alone, availeth unto justification and life eternal. Is it mine? Let me see. This faith is a belief regarding Jesus Christ, and a reliance on him which produces love—love to him—to his cause—to his people. It contemplates him as the only deliverer from everlasting wrath, the only procurer of our admittance to the joys of heaven. Hence it leads us to rest on him alone for salvation; and it is founded on a perception of our need of him, of his fitness to be our Saviour, of his great love to our race, of the danger and misery of that state from which he redeems, and of the happiness offered through him. And then it is a working faith: it rouses the believer into activity. And it worketh by love. Like the shoots which spring from a living root, is love springing from faith.

How and whereunto does this love work? God is its first and chief object. If I possess a faith which worketh by love, I will often think of the Father, Christ, and the Spirit; I will delight in the law of the Lord; my meditation of my God and Redeemer will be frequent and sweet. I will take pleasure in speaking of him who loved me and gave himself for me, and I will find it delightful to commune with a fellow-disciple, regarding the loving-kindness of our adorable Redeemer. I will exhibit my gratitude and

affectionate devotion to my Lord and Master, by studying to obey all his commandments; by at once and most willingly abstaining from every thing that may be displeasing to him, or mar my communion with him. I will feel interested in the prosperity of his kingdom, in the welfare of his people, in the happiness of all his creatures; and I will be zealous to promote these by every means in my power. O that such a faith as this were full surely and manifestly mine!

Ah! if faith that availeth to salvation be only such as is described above—a faith which worketh by love—how few are there really possessed of it! A dead faith, like that so strongly condemned in the epistle of James, many possess. But a working faith, manifesting itself in the various exercises of love, is a rare thing. There are numbers who believe in the divine origin of Christianity, who receive its doctrines, and observe its ordinances, but whose faith plainly does not work by love. Nay, how many praying people are there, who, by their words, and their actions, give lamentable evidence that theirs is a dead faith,—that their light is darkness—that they are deceivers of their own souls, and not far from the woes of destruction from the presence of the Lord. Sad state! O Lord, through thy grace, hinder it from being mine.

Ordinances and forms of government in the church are certainly appointed by God, and are therefore of importance to our salvation. But let no man imagine that he is in a state of salvation because he partakes of the one, or adopts the other. Let no man account himself a Christian, merely because he is the member of a church which has a sound creed, and a scriptural form of government, and because he attends ordinances. Let him examine himself whether he has a faith that worketh by love, and from the result of that examination, let him decide on his spiritual state.

Words cannot express the importance of this faith. My friend, thou must have it if thou art to be saved. If thou hast it not, thou perishest eternally. Perishest eternally! what a mysterious, awful thought. Faith in the merits of Jesus Christ—faith that worketh by love—if thou hast it, thou art safe; if thou hast it not, if thou never obtained it, thou art lost—lost for ever.

#### SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done,'* Acts viii. 13.

HAVING little prospect of usefulness at Jerusa-

lem, where a violent persecution against the Christians was raging, Philip, the evangelist, went down to Samaria, and preached the gospel there. Before he came, Simon Magus had attracted much attention in Samaria by the wonderful things, apparently amounting to miracles, which he did. But the miracles which Philip wrought were evidently so superior to any thing pretended to be done by Simon, that the Samaritans, with one accord, turned from following Simon, and gave heed to Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ. And we are told that Simon himself believed Philip's statements. It does not appear that Simon understood Philip's doctrine, or felt its power. He merely believed that the things attested by Philip's miracles must be true, and he gave himself no farther concern about these things than to profess that he believed them. The miracles were to him objects of far more interest than the truths. He coveted the power to work the one, far more than a part in the other. Hence he offered himself for baptism, joined the company of the disciples, waited on Philip in hopes that, by witnessing and watching him in the performance of his miracles, and by receiving instructions from him, he might perhaps be able to do similar wonders. And afterwards, when he saw that by the prayers and laying on of hands of the apostles Peter and John, the Holy Ghost in his miraculous powers was given to numbers of the Samaritans who believed, he offered the apostles money if they would communicate to him the power of bestowing the Holy Ghost on whom he would.—What a remarkable example of profession without principle or practice does this wretched man afford! What a striking instance of a man baptized on a profession of his faith, remaining ignorant of his sinfulness, unacquainted with the riches of the grace of God, and thoroughly worldly in his temper, feelings, and conduct!

*Simon believed.* We have seen what kind of belief his was—how he merely believed that the things which Philip said were true, without taking any thought what these things were, or what concern he had with them. Alas! many of us have no other than a similar faith. We believe that the Bible is the word of God, and that the things contained in it are true. But what these things are many of us know and care little. We perceive not the personal concern that we have in them. It is not to us a solemn and interesting reality that God is willing to bestow on us all Christian graces and spiritual blessings through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ; that

we are by nature perishing sinners in need of these graces and blessings. For ought we know these things may be taught in the Bible, perhaps we believe that they are taught in it, but we have not a knowledge of them, or a belief in them, which gives them a power over our hearts, our affections, and our conduct.

Am I such a one? I believe the scriptures to be true; do I know what I thus believe? Do I know the truths which the scriptures contain? Do I perceive the deep concern which I have in these truths? And are they exercising a power over my heart, and my life? Or am I resting contented with believing little more than the bare fact that the Bible, with all the statements contained in it, is true, be these statements what they may? Then mine is no better than the faith of Simon Magus, and like him I am, despite my faith, yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

*Simon was baptized.* The evangelist did not know the heart of Simon. It is the prerogative of God alone to know the heart. But as Simon professed his faith in Christ, and his belief of the truths which Philip preached, he was received into the visible church by the rite of baptism. But in as much as Simon in that profaned a holy ordinance, and insulted God, by professing to be what he really was not, he added to his sinfulness by pretending to become a Christian, instead of obeying a command of God, or doing that which was well-pleasing in his sight.—I have partaken of holy ordinances. I professed my belief in Christ, I knew some points of Christian doctrine, nothing could be brought against my character, the office-bearers of the church did not and could not know my heart, therefore they admitted me. But a solemn responsibility rests with myself. Many who are destitute of true piety are admitted to those ordinances which are appointed only for Christians. In the present state of things this is unavoidable. But woe to those who profess to be God's children when they are the devil's! Their profession will not shelter them. It will add greatly to their guilt. It will aggravate their condemnation. I have joined myself to Christ under the eye of my fellow-men. Am I resting on him by a living faith? Let me try not to impose on myself: it would do me no good. On God I cannot impose: and O, even were it possible for me to appear to him different from what I really am, I would not wish to do it!

*Simon continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the signs and miracles which were done.* The wretched man abode in his profession some

time. He companied with the disciples. But his attention was more occupied with the miracles done, than with the doctrines taught—with the outward accompaniments of the gospel, than with the gospel itself. And how many are there, alas! who, having joined themselves to the visible church, though destitute of saving faith, continue in their profession, yet have more regard to forms and outward appearances than to the great realities of the gospel salvation. They admire this preacher, or they pride themselves on waiting on the ministry of that preacher, but never do they honestly ask whether they admire Christ, be waiting on his teaching, be desiring his Spirit, and be growing into his likeness.

O what is religion worth unless it be real! Be it mine to be truly joined to Christ, to be united to his church, to adorn his doctrine, to maintain his cause, to hold fast my loyalty to him amidst all difficulties, and at length to be made perfect in holiness, and enter into glory. Amen.

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#### SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith,'*  
2 Cor. xiii. 5.

How numerous, varied, and delightful are the promises given to believers! How terrible the portion appointed to them who believe not! To the class of believers, or to the class of unbelievers, every individual of us belongs. Were it not wise to try to ascertain to which? Is there any thing half so important as saving faith? Possessed of it we are united to Christ, are heirs of the promises, and shall go to heaven. Destitute of it we remain under condemnation, and are ripening for hell. Shall we make no effort, then, to know whether or not we are possessed of this saving faith? By many a precept to examine ourselves, God intimates that he thinks it of the utmost importance that we attain to this knowledge. And the possession of it has furnished consolation, support, and enjoyment to God's people, such as nothing else could have given. David said, 'my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of heart and my portion for ever.' And Paul says, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me.' And again, '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.'

Thorough self-examination, however, is no easy matter. To do it strictly and profitably requires careful and diligent training. To excel in it is one of the nicest parts of Christian discipline. To find out the enemy in his most secret lurking places—to detect him in the various forms and disguises which he assumes, requires the eye of Christian discernment to be both jealous and practised.

But the difficulty which Christians experience in self-examination is, in a great measure, owing to their engaging in it seldom, and without due care and deliberation. When the man in business allows a long time to pass between one examination of his books and another, he finds considerable difficulty in ascertaining the real state of his affairs, and confusion will inevitably creep in. And if believers do not regularly, and at short intervals, examine into their spiritual affairs, they will most certainly find them get into disorder. Every day of their lives they should consider what progress they are making in the spiritual life. Every night they should look back on the occurrences of the day. And besides, there ought to be solemn seasons, at longer intervals, when they take a view of the great features of their character—when looking back on some particular time at which they had made a serious and careful investigation, they compare what they are now with what they were then, and compare all with the standard of God's holy word. Most suitable seasons of this peculiar and solemn kind are those of the dispensation of the Lord's supper, when a public profession having to be made, there is need that we look well to the reality; and when a near approach to God being granted, we need to consider how we are prepared for so awful an intercourse; and when new blessings being to be proposed to us, we ought to bethink us what improvement we have made of those which have already been bestowed.

The manner as well as the times of self-examination should have a share of our attention. Since the work is difficult yet important, it ought not to be slothfully performed. We should set about it deliberately. We should use all care and diligence. We should be faithful to our souls. It is of no use deceiving ourselves. The very object of engaging in self-examination is, to ascertain what our spiritual state really is. What would be the use of persuading ourselves that we are something different from what we are? Better no self-examination at all than a careless and unfaithful one. For we would not only have no knowledge of our state after such an examina-

tion, but we would have an opinion of it wide of the truth.

If any one who reads this, wishes to form himself to a habit of self-examination which he has hitherto neglected, we recommend that every night before he permits sleep to close his eyelids, he should go over the ten commandments of the moral law deliberately in their order, and, with some regard to the spirit of them, try by them his conduct throughout the day. This will furnish him with something tangible and definite wherewith to examine himself, for Jesus Christ said, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.'

But as the heart is deceitful, and the understanding darkened by sin, if we wish to succeed in the important work of self-examination, we should put it into the hand of the Holy Spirit. Presenting ourselves before God, who knoweth all things, we should seek to lay bare our whole life and soul to him, and our prayer should be, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

My friend, knowest thou to whose party thou belongest? to Christ's or to the devil's? Which road art thou travelling? the narrow or the broad? the way to heaven or the way to hell? Sayest thou that in truth thou canst not tell much about the matter. But it is time that thou knewest something certain in regard of it. How far art thou from the end of thy journey? Thou repliest that thou knowest not. But the end may be very near. Art thou prepared for that? Art thou ready to enter into eternity, and begin an unchangeable state of being in the course of a week, or a month, or a year? Certainly either heaven or hell is to be the end of thy journey. Which of them shall it be? is an important question; and a question, remember, that shall soon be answered in eternity, even though no answer be sought to it on this side the grave. My friend, be truly wise: consider what thou art, and whither thou art going, and the good God give thee grace to know thyself, and Jesus Christ the Saviour.

## EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended,'* Matt. xiii. 20. 21.

THESE are summer Christians, who are seen only in the fair day of prosperity. Like the swallows, they disappear in the winter—the chill winter of temptation and trial. That which the mere professor feeds upon abounds in the day of prosperity—like the nourishment of the swallow, the flies of summer. Security, honour, profit—when these can be had along with a Christian profession, Christianity is not a bad thing, even to a worldling. But the flies are all dead in winter. In the day of adversity and persecution, the security, honour, and profit are gone, and therefore those whose Christianity is fed by them disappear.

Akin to these, are the persons who are described in the parable, by 'seed which fell on stony ground.' That seed soon sprung up, because little earth covered it. Professing Christians of this class are instructed in gospel truth. They are told of God's marvellous love, of man's sinfulness and danger, of Christ's death for sinners, of faith in Christ, of holiness of character, and of the happiness of heaven. These truths make an impression on their minds. They take an interest in them. There is something amiable in the general aspect of Christianity. It is desirable to have some kind of religion, and why not the true religion as well as any other, when the world happens to be favourable to it. As for the devil, he would not greatly object, though all men were to make a profession of the gospel, attend on its duties, and have joy in it, provided they came short of becoming real Christians. But as the seed enters only a little way into stony ground, so the word of God enters only a very little way into the spirit of those of whom we are speaking. Their conviction of sin is slight and superficial. There is no thorough humbling of the mind—no brokenness of the spirit. There is no right perception of Christ's beauty and excellency. There is only a perception of something which their own imagination has created, and which they call the beauty and excellency of Christ. They hear of the blessings of the gospel—of God's favour, and of all the enjoyments which he bestows on believers. There arises in them a confidence, that all those blessings of which they hear shall

be theirs. Thus they are filled with rejoicing. And verily rejoicing is the privilege—shall I not say the duty of the true believer? For is not the salvation of Jesus Christ, the gospel—glad tidings, good news? But a rejoicing that has no root is not the rejoicing of God's people. Theirs endureth, but a joy that has no root shall speedily be turned into sorrow. It is like the nosegay gathered from the garden, beautiful and desirable for a while, but soon becoming withered and worthless.

The religion of those whom the seed which fell on stony ground represents, 'has no root in itself, but it dureth for a while.' As long as there are no trials or powerful temptations it remaineth. And thus in times of quietness, it may continue, such as it is, to the end of life. The corn on the stony ground was green and flourishing while the sky was cool. The scanty soil out of which it grew sufficed so long, to minister to its nourishment. But soon as the hot mid-day summer sun shone out, the soil was parched up, and the blade languished, withered, and died. So when persecution because of the truth cometh—when comforts must be surrendered, or advantages foregone, or sacrifices made, or sufferings endured, the joy of the stony ground hearers departs, and the foundation out of which their joy arises is destroyed. Ease, reputation, advantage, are desired, and would gladly be taken in connection with the gospel. But if that may not be, then the gospel is surrendered, and these are clung to. The joy of the stony ground hearers passes away before the persecutor's frown, and before threatened privations and sufferings. What semblance of Christian principle existed, disappears before the hope of advantage, or the fear of loss. Ah! how different the spirit of the apostle of the Gentiles. 'We glory,' he says, 'in tribulations.' 'The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.' 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.'

The principles and joys of the believer are such as can endure persecution, and remain firm when tried by temptation. Nay the hot sun of persecution but nourishes into vigorous maturity the true Christian. If the soil be good and deep, the heat of the sun will invigorate the plant,

instead of causing it to wither. The hot beating sun kills the weeds which tended to choke the corn—to hinder the formation and expansion of Christian character: but the graces of the Christian character, called, by persecution, loss, and suffering, into vigorous exercise, grow and increase.

Knowledge, profession, and joy, therefore, do not, with absolute certainty, mark me out as a true Christian. I have heard the word, and received it with joy. But has it truly humbled my heart? And have I attained to such views of my dependence on Jesus Christ, of his preciousness, and of the world's vanity, as to lead me to live and act in the conviction that the possession of all things would be but loss if wanting Christ; and that with Christ, all-suffering and loss is only a light affliction which is but for a moment? My Saviour shunned not persecution, disgrace, and suffering for me: shall I give him up to avoid some loss or pain, or to secure some worldly good? Blessed Lord, I do not—I dare not rely on myself. Strengthen me in the hour of trial. Let thy grace be sufficient for me, and perfect strength in my weakness.

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#### EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you;'* 1 Pet. v. 10.

How my mind delights to linger on the name, 'God of all grace!' It includes everything that I, a sinner, in quest of salvation need—pardon-ing, sanctifying, supporting, glorifying grace. It finds me entering hell, and it leaves me entering heaven—yea, leaves me a glorified one in the kingdom of my Father: for this God of all grace

1. 'Hath called sinners unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.' By his *word* God calls sinners. But though it be a kind and earnest call to eternal glory, it no more rouses them than the earnest calls of affection rouse the beloved dead, to whom they are addressed. Sometimes to those who are lingering on the borders of hell, God addresses a call by his *providence*. But the call of providence does not communicate life, and however terrible and affecting, it cannot move the dead. But sometimes a call from another voice is heard, a still small voice, the *voice of the Spirit* of life. Soon as it reaches man's dead soul, tokens of spiritual life begin to appear in that soul, which begins to feel, to hear, to understand, to move towards God—yea, towards God's eternal glory.

Eternal glory! What a weighty word that word, 'eternal!' One loses ones self in meditating on it. The earth with its various furniture is a glorious thing, but a period is coming when it shall be no more found. The sun is glorious exceedingly—bathed in glory; and there is another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; yet these shall all pass away, and the eye shall search for them in vain throughout the universe. But the glory of God knows neither decay nor change. It is an eternal glory, the portion of his redeemed, whose existence shall be eternal as the glory unto which they are called.

By Christ Jesus that glory hath been purchased for sinners of mankind; by Christ Jesus an invitation comes from God to sinners of mankind, calling them to partake of that glory; by Christ Jesus a way has been opened by which sinners may approach and possess it; and by Christ Jesus and through him, the Spirit who effectually calls is given, and everything necessary to help men on their way to obtain possession of that glory, is bestowed.—Glorious, and glory-giving Saviour, how much do we owe to thee! O that thy love and thy preciousness had more power over us.

2. But the heir of glory is not exempt from suffering in this world. There are good things promised to you, O children of God, 'after that ye have suffered a while.' Suffering, it is true, is the child of sin. Wherever we meet with suffering, we may be sure that sin hath gone before. Even in the case of our blessed Saviour, his terrible sufferings were connected with sin,—not his own, but the sins of men, for which he undertook to answer.

But suffering is sometimes punitive, and sometimes it is corrective. Sometimes it is inflicted to the extent of producing destruction, in as far as the suffering being can be destroyed; and sometimes its effect is to send the suffering being to that which has been provided for destroying sin, in which the suffering originates. The sufferings of the unbelieving and impenitent children of men are of the former kind; the sufferings of the believing and penitent children of God are of the latter. 'He who being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly cut off, and that without remedy.' 'But whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'

But not only may the suffering be designed to break men off from sin; it also may have for its immediate cause their awakening to a sense of sin, and their beginning to turn away from it. Evil beings, the enemies of God, delight to inflict suffering, and God sometimes permits them to

gratify their malignant passions, whilst, at the same time, he overrules all for his own glory and his people's good. When, therefore, a sinner is awakened to a sense of sin, and is beginning to escape from the power thereof, Satan and his angels begin to rage, and they leave no means untried to distress and damage their slave, as he passes into the liberty of God's children.

The same thing happens in regard to any portion of the church of Christ that may have fallen into sin, and spiritual deadness. With the deadness and unfaithfulness of such a church, the devil has no controversy. He therefore lets it alone. But if God visits it to correct and quicken, then straightway the devil is roused and enraged, and by every means in his power, strives to work woe to the reviving, reforming church, either by misleading its friends, or by dividing them, or by stirring up and encouraging its enemies.

Suffering, then, is not to be overlooked or to be despised. It should always remind us of sin, and lead us anxiously to inquire whether we be suffering as impenitent or as returning sinners. May the good God give us discernment in this matter. May he save us from repining and rebellion. For plainly there are sufferings which are beneficial to beings like man, passing from a state of sin unto a state of holiness, and which, coming either from God's correcting hand, or arising from the enmity of spiritual adversaries, are a token that a desirable and beneficial change is taking place.

And then let believers remember that not only are their sufferings working good to them, but also that they shall be of short duration. In a brief space they shall serve the end designed, and then they shall cease for ever. After that ye have suffered a while, the God of all grace

3. 'Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' The shell-fish, which the hand attempts to force from the rock, clings all the more closely to it, because of the violence employed to detach it. The oak on the mountain's brow strikes its roots all the more deeply and widely into the rocky soil from being shaken by the frequent storm. And the believer clings all the more closely and firmly to Jesus Christ, because of the sufferings to which he is subjected. God gives his child perseverance in grace; he stablishes, strengthens, settles him. He gives his child progress in grace on to complete holiness, and at last receives him into glory; he makes him perfect. A faithful God says to each believer as he said to Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'—Strong by the strength of the mighty God of Jacob! How delightful the thought!

#### NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning,' 2 Pet.ii.20.*

1. THE knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of scripture truth, produces a very considerable effect on many who come short of being converted and saved. They may be alarmed, because of the danger to which sin exposes them: thus, Felix trembled as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. They may confess their sinfulness, as king Saul did, when he said to Samuel, 'I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words.' They may make an extensive outward reformation of life and manners, avoiding gross sins, and those things that are blamed by the world, as did the Pharisee in the parable, who said, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' Each or all of these things may be done—they often are done by persons in whom no real saving change has taken place; and so far they may be said to have 'escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

2. The persons mentioned by the apostle may be 'again entangled in the pollutions of the world, and overcome.' It is not to be supposed that all who have merely a profession of religion are so entangled. Very many of them continue to the end of life externally decent, and enjoying a good reputation among men. They never fall into gross sins, though continuing strangers to the power of divine grace. They die in a false hope, and know not how matters really stand with them till they enter eternity. Hence the 'if' used by the inspired writer.

It may happen, however, and it often does happen, that some of those who have escaped the pollutions of the world, are again entangled therein, and overcome. This was the case with Judas Iscariot, who after being a disciple of Christ for a considerable period, at last betrayed him to death; and with Simon Magus, who after renouncing his sorceries, and receiving Christian baptism, proposed, under the influence of thorough worldly-mindedness, to purchase the Holy Ghost for money; and with Demas, who, after having joined the company of the Christians, deserted them from love to this present evil world.

We find the Spirit of God declaring of such persons that—

3. 'The latter end is worse with them than the beginning.' When a man, by any means, has made his escape from some particular sin, and is again entangled in it, and overcome, he is, by universal consent, in a worse state than before he escaped from it at all. Take for example the case of the drunkard; if by any combination of circumstances, or by the power of some motive, he has escaped from the hideous sin of intemperance, and lived for some time free from it, and if some temptation overcomes him, and entangles him again in the sin, his case is evidently more hopeless than it was before his amendment. The sin has gotten a stronger hold of him, whilst his power of resisting it is diminished. In like manner with regard to dishonesty, impurity, and worldly pleasures; once refrained from, and again returned to, they have a stronger hold than ever, and men give themselves up to a more reckless indulgence in them.

Not that the case of such persons is hopeless. By the power of the Spirit of God through divine grace, a man can be recovered from the very lowest depths of sin, and many so recovered are now bright monuments of redeeming love in the kingdom of glory. Therefore none need despair who will betake themselves to Jesus Christ, and under a deep sense of their utter inability to help themselves, cry to him, saying, 'Lord, save me, or I perish.'

But whilst no plunging into the mire of corruption, how often soever it may be repeated, can pollute the soul beyond the cleansing power of Christ's blood, it is well-known that a soul may, by repeated falls into sin, be rendered insensible to motives which once acted powerful on it, be made altogether incapable of extricating itself, and succeed in resisting the Holy Spirit in his ordinary ministrations.

But then why, it may be asked, attach so much importance to the escaping the pollutions of the world, which is here spoken of, when it still leaves the person a child of the devil, and an heir of wrath? In reply to this question it may be observed, that the being entangled in the pollutions of the world, and overcome by them, often shuts a sinner out from the ordinary means of grace, and, humanly speaking, makes his case very hopeless. Take again, for the sake of illustration, the case of the drunkard. When by dissipation he has reduced himself to rags and want, he does not, he will not, he cannot go to the house of God. He has placed himself beyond the reach of the gospel-message in its ordinary ministrations. Now, though he may escape from such a sunken wretched state, and still not become

a child of God, yet when he has escaped, a mighty obstacle is removed to his coming in contact with divine truth, which is the instrument in the Spirit's hand for converting him to God. And it is in this way, as we think, that the temperance societies of the present day promote men's salvation. A man is not made a Christian by being induced to abstain from intoxicating liquors, and care should be taken not to put temperance societies in the place of the gospel. But they are instrumental in removing one of the most prevalent and powerful obstacles to the word of God reaching a sinner; they tend to put a sinner into a condition to wait on ordinances; they place him in circumstances favourable for receiving the truth.—The same things are true of many other sins. Ceasing from these sins does not constitute a person a child of God, but it places a person in circumstances favourable for becoming a believer, removing hindrances which prevented him from coming within the sound of the gospel-message. It is a step toward the state of a child of God, therefore, to avoid the pollutions of the world; but may thou and I, O reader, go far beyond that; may we be clothed with Christ's righteousness, and be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Thess. v. 8, 9.*

WE have here a description of believers; they are called those 'who are of the day.' Fallen man is wrapped in the darkness of ignorance, of unbelief, of a polluted mind, and of a guilty conscience. This darkness is scattered by Jesus Christ, the true Light, the Sun of righteousness. Where He is possessed, there is the light of knowledge, of God's countenance, and of holiness, all combined making a delightful day. And thus those who have received Jesus Christ are of the day: they walk in the light which cometh from Jesus Christ.

Those who are of the day are exhorted to be *sober*, that is, collected, steady, thoughtful, with all their faculties in good order, without confusion, and ready to be employed as enlightened reason may direct.—Believers are often in scripture represented as soldiers. They have spiritual adversaries. God has appointed

them a Captain, and provided for them armour. Of that armour two parts are here mentioned, *the breastplate* and *the helmet*.

'*Faith and love*' are declared to be the breastplate. The breastplate of the warrior protects the heart from the weapons directed against it. It is at the heart of the believer that the devil, and those who are of his part, direct those temptations, by which they try to seduce into sin the child of God. Sometimes they try to excite doubts of the truth of revelation, or doubts of the truth of God. But faith, as a breastplate, repels these darts, and they fall without ever entering into the heart. Against the assaults of the world also, faith defends the believer, for 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'—The pleasures of this life solicit the child of God; its vanities, its riches, its active bustle, its admiration, its honours, its power,—these would engage or engross the believer's affections; they would occupy his heart to the casting down of the Lord Jesus Christ from the throne thereof. But the breastplate of love to God in Christ, which covers the believer's heart, resists and blunts these poisoned arrows. Love to God makes the heart utterly unimpressible by love to any sin, or to any thing opposed to God. As well shoot an arrow at a rock of adamant, as direct a temptation to love sin against the heart that is covered by love to God.

The helmet is '*the hope of salvation*.' Salvation with its unspeakable blessings and glories—the man who has a distinct perception of these, and a strong lively hope of possessing them, is furnished with a protection against any notions sinful or leading to sin, which, through the agency of spiritual enemies, may attempt to enter his head. What good offered by the soul's enemies can be compared with the good which the hope of salvation presents to the mind? What evils that these enemies can threaten or inflict, but is far more than balanced by the blessings and glories comprehended in the soul's salvation? And the stronger and more lively that the hope of salvation is in the Christian, the stronger will be his helmet, protecting him against the assault of spiritual foes. If the hope be feeble, it will be like a thin weak helmet, which a heavy blow from an enemy may break or cut through. A feeble hope of future good, how great soever that good may be, will have little strength against a powerful temptation to some present sinful enjoyment, or against a dislike to some present evil or suffering.

But to be of any avail this armour must be *put on*. This evidently implies that it must be

so disposed as to meet those things which it is intended to repel. It cannot be said that I have put on the breastplate of faith and love, unless I be opposing faith and love to those things injurious to me as a Christian, which they are fitted to repel, such as unbelief, doubts of God's truth and love, the pleasures, vanities, riches, and honours of this world. It cannot be said that I have on, as a helmet, the hope of salvation, unless that hope be really employed in resisting the thoughts of sinful pleasures, or the fear of afflictions threatened by the soul's enemies. Hence I should have my spirit constantly exercising faith, love, and the hope of salvation. And by a suitable employment of my understanding in reading, hearing, and meditating on the word, and by prayer for the Holy Spirit, I should seek to have those pieces of the Christian's armour strengthened, and well fitted to me. And this I must always be doing, for in the warfare with spiritual enemies there is no discharge: they are constantly watching to do me harm; wherefore my armour needs always to be in order, and if I be a wise and good soldier, I must always be sober, and have that armour on.

And verily the believer has strong encouragement to this. Nothing animates us more to duty, than a belief that we shall prosper. Nothing encourages us more in a difficult or arduous undertaking, than an assurance that we shall be successful. The contest with spiritual enemies is an arduous one. The fight of faith is usually full of trials and afflictions. But the end shall be glorious. God had made an appointment regarding his people, and that appointment shall unquestionably stand. They are not ordained to *wrath*, but to *obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*. Since God has appointed them to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, assured victory awaits them in the fight of faith. This is the strongest of all inducements to put on the armour which God has provided—to seek a full, accurate acquaintance with God's testimony in the word, from which cometh faith; and with all the treasures of revealed truth, whence ariseth love; and with all the great and precious blessings pronounced by God in his word, whence springs the hope of salvation.

Lord, help me to remember that through thy grace I am of the day. Knowing that I am yet in the midst of spiritual enemies, may I be sober. And counting on the opposition and assaults of these enemies, may the armour that thou hast provided for me, be duly prized, diligently sought, carefully put on, and used in the assurance that it will answer the end. Then shall I be a con-

queror through him who loved me, and to the glory of my God, enter, in due time, on the enjoyment of the amazing salvation to which he hath appointed me.

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 TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'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,'* Matt. vii. 21.

NOTHING can be more certain than that true religion is a thoroughly practical matter. The sum of what the gospel salvation designs is to glorify God by making sinful man holy, and then taking him to eternal happiness in heaven. 'The Lord Jesus Christ gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Believers are 'God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' 'Whom God did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified.' It is utterly a mistake, therefore, to place, as some do, the whole of religion in doctrinal knowledge and doctrinal soundness. It is a mistake still more palpably absurd to place it in a mere outward profession. If I read the word of God aright, it teaches that doctrine is the root, profession the stalk, and practice the fruit. Through doctrine the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life and nourishment to the soul, from which there springs a profession of religion, and that is adorned by Christian practice.

'Not every one who says to Jesus Christ, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Some of them may, some of them will, but not all. There are two classes of persons who use that language, and yet shall be excluded; first, those who rest exclusively on their doctrinal knowledge and belief, holding that they are set free from the law even as a rule of duty: and secondly, those who are ignorant of gospel truth, and rest satisfied with an empty profession, being destitute alike of doctrinal knowledge and Christian practice.

Doctrinal knowledge and doctrinal faith standing alone receive no countenance from the word of God. They are no where spoken of with approbation. The description of saving faith is, 'faith

that worketh love.' Whatever gives either permission or countenance to sin is inconsistent with the express declarations of the word of God. The Antinomian, the man who holds that the believer is set altogether free from the law even as a rule of life, says that the believer 'is not under the law but under grace.' And he says true, for so says the scripture. But what then? 'Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? God forbid. Those who are under grace are dead to sin. And how shall they who are dead to sin live any longer therein? It cannot be; they are alive unto righteousness. Shall the new creature be without a law by which to live? Nay, verily. But a perfect and holy law is a thing most suitable to the new creature, who has activity, who stands not still, and who, having tendencies towards what is holy and right, still needs to have pointed out to him the paths of holiness and life, that his soul may turn herself towards them. If there was no law binding on the believer, he would be differently placed from all other creatures of God. So far from being wholly set free from all obligation to obey the law on his becoming a believer, he is then only placed in a state in which he can render to it any acceptable obedience.

In his natural state he may be compared to a blind man travelling along a way of which he has an imperfect knowledge, making many mistakes, and meeting with various falls. In coming into a state of grace he is like that blind man cured of his blindness, placed in the way by which he should travel, and addressed saying, 'this is the way, walk thou in it.' If the man says, I have my sight, and I will go where I please; I will not walk in this way; then it might be said to him, Unless thou walkest in this way, thou wilt not reach the pleasant resting-place, the safe dwelling, the desirable possession; and it had been better for thee that thine eyes had not been opened. Faith without works is dead. It is the faith of a spiritually dead man. And no spiritually dead man shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But again, those who are ignorant of gospel truth, and rest satisfied with an empty profession, shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. By their profession of religion, scanty and empty though it be, they say to Jesus Christ, Lord, Lord: they, in a manner, acknowledge him as their Lord. But, even natural reason being the judge, that cannot give them either fitness or a title to enter the kingdom of heaven. They know not the king of the country, nor its laws, nor the way thither. Place them in the midst of its glories and they would not see them, for things spiritual

are spiritually discerned, and spiritual discernment they have none. Then the scriptures testify strongly against all mere professors. An inspired apostle says, 'In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.' 'Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' And our Lord himself asks the question, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Doctrinal knowledge and belief, and an outward Christian profession, are things that pertain to a believer, but we may see plainly that not every one who possesses them—not every one who says to Jesus Christ, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. But saith Jesus

'He who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven' shall enter into heaven. It is not for a moment to be supposed from this, that admission to heaven is bestowed as the reward for doing the will of our Father in heaven. The thing is quite otherwise. For the doing of the will of God by fallen man is never such a thing as to merit heaven—the obedience is so imperfect, and mingled with so much disobedience. But the statement of our Lord is most certainly true, because the doing the will of his Father in heaven is positive evidence that a man is a converted man, and a believer on Jesus Christ. No man doeth the will of our Father in heaven till he be converted, and become a true believer. And no man who has really been converted by the word and Spirit of God, but does the will of our Father in heaven. Hence a converted person and one who does the will of God are one and the same. The title to heaven is a free gift for Jesus Christ's sake; and the doing the will of God gives evidence that the title so obtained is actually possessed. Wherefore it is plain, that all who do the will of our Father in heaven, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, and enjoy it for ever.

O that I may really possess all the things here mentioned by my Saviour! May I call him Lord, knowing his doctrine, making a profession of discipleship, and out of a renewed heart doing his will. For alas! I am prone to deceive myself, and to rest satisfied with a part of Christianity, not seeking to possess the perfect and glorious whole,—doctrine, profession, and practice.

TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity;'* Matt. vii. 22, 23.

At all times the Lord knows persons and things as they really are. There is—there can be, no concealment from him. But men oftentimes exceedingly mistake the character, and misjudge the deeds of their fellow-men. And frequently, too, men mistake their own character. The eternal condition of every man will correspond with his real character, not with what his fellows have thought of him, nor with what he has thought of himself. And what each one really is the Lord will make manifest. A day is coming—*that day*—the day of general judgment, when the dead having been raised, and those who are then alive having been changed, all, a mighty multitude, shall stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, set down on a throne of judgment, and attended by his holy angels. Yes, reader, thou shalt die, and thy body shall be hidden in the grave; but the voice of the trump of God shall find it out, and to witness and take part in the awful proceedings of the judgment day it shall be raised again. Men form an opinion now concerning thee; they believe thee to be godly or otherwise; they regard thee as possessed of this or of that feature of character: and they may be right, or they may be wrong. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, in comparison of the searching righteous judgment of God. For in that day the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed—all the actions of every individual shall be written as with sun-beams—the true character shall be exhibited, that, to the glory of divine justice, it may be most evident that the eternal condition of being, awarded by Jesus Christ, the Judge, to each individual, exactly accords with that individual's character.

Ah! in that day there will be some wonderful revelations, and many strange reversals of the judgment formed by men concerning others, and about themselves. Some who were followed and flattered, who bulked largely in the public eye, and by men were admired, and held to be of high repute in the church, will be disowned by Jesus Christ, the righteous Judge; will be declared by him to be only workers of iniquity, and will be commanded to depart from him. Terrible change! to have the favourable but false judgment of fellow-

creatures swept utterly away, and the true condemning judgment of God branded deep into the soul, proclaimed in the presence of the universe, and 'just, deserved,' echoed far and wide from the countless myriads,—even from those who are in the same condemnation. Miserable men! ye had your day of praise from your fellows, on whom outward appearances imposed. The reputation of being what you were not, satisfied you. And now the character which belongs to you, is publicly attached to you for ever. Never more shall ye impose on any. Workers of iniquity the Judge hath declared you to be; and workers of iniquity you shall remain, and shall be known to be, throughout all eternity.

But men also form wrong judgments regarding themselves. These shall be reversed on that day. Men do not always obtain correct views of their own character, and of their spiritual state, even on a death-bed. On the contrary, they almost always die just as they have lived. What they have thought of themselves during life, they continue to think in going down to the grave. True, light breaks on the soul, the moment that she enters into the world of spirits. In that moment, the sentence which is to be publicly pronounced at the day of judgment, is sealed upon her. But between the opinion which a man has of himself when shutting his eyes in death, and the judgment of Christ concerning him at the day of judgment, there will be, in many instances, a wide difference. Many will say in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will Jesus profess unto them, I never knew ye: depart from me ye that work iniquity.' These thought themselves great ones, highly honoured, and doing great service in the church of Christ on earth. But mark; it is to their gifts, their services, their profession that they refer: it is what they had done that they plead. And mark again how the unerring Judge characterises what they had done, and the things to which they refer with so much confidence and complacency: he calls it 'working iniquity.' So certain it is that all fallen man's obedience to the law is nothing but iniquity. Prophesying or preaching in Christ's name, casting out devils in his name, and doing many wonderful works in his name, if taken as meritorious grounds of justification before God, are only iniquity. For imperfection and sin mingle with every thing that man does. A great work may have sin mingled with it as well as a little work. The great work dazzles men, and they think that the doer of it is a great man, and deserves well

of God. But the righteous Judge is not dazzled. The imperfection or sin which accompanies the preaching of the gospel, or the casting out devils, or the doing many wonderful works in Christ's name, is as distinctly discerned, as the imperfection or sin which accompanies the most common duties of ordinary life. Preaching, or prophesying, or doing what men think some great work in religion, does not excuse or make up for the accompanying sin. If justification is to be sought from any deeds of law, these deeds must be perfect. Otherwise those who perform them are only workers of iniquity.

Hence the necessity of giving up all dependence on deeds of law. What service of God could be greater than those have pled? Nor is there any intimation that they were pled falsely. But being pled as the ground of justification and acceptance, they behoved to be tried by the perfect law of God. And so tried, they came short. In each and all of them there was something wanting, or something wrong; and therefore those who performed them were declared to be workers of iniquity.

My friend, renounce self-righteousness. Look on the righteousness of Jesus Christ. In all thy intercourse with God, whether on thy knees at a throne of grace, or when standing before a throne of judgment, plead the Saviour's merits. Lose sight of self in thinking of him. Yea, contemplate him, and commune with him till thou come to bear his likeness, being changed into the same image by the Spirit of the Lord.

#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,'* Heb. xi. 1.

THE Bible speaks much about faith, attaches great importance to it, and points out vast effects that flow from it. We are told that 'without faith it is impossible to please God; that whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and that the just by faith shall live;'—'that being justified by faith, we have peace with God,' and that he who believeth, or hath faith, 'shall be saved.' Hence we are naturally led to ask, What is this faith? What is its nature and properties? An inquiry regarding a matter of so much importance is highly reasonable.

One, writing on this subject, says, 'That peculiar act of the understanding by which we avail ourselves of information given us by others, in those things which fall not under our own observa-

tion, and which do not admit of proof in a way of reasoning, is called faith or believing.' And the Spirit of God, by the writer of this epistle, tells us that 'faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'

1. *Faith is the substance of things hoped for.* Substance here means *subsistence*, or something which serves as a foundation for another thing to stand on. Now faith is the subsistence or foundation on which things hoped for rest. God, in his word, testifies certain things to us, and he gives us many great and precious promises. The Holy Spirit enables us rightly and firmly to credit the divine testimony, thus working faith in us; and that faith regards these realities of the future as attainable and desirable. Hence hope of possessing and enjoying them springs up—hope plainly arising out of faith, and resting on it. The things hoped for are thus connected with faith; they are built up on it, they are present to the soul which possesses it. So that when any one asks me, Wherefore dost thou hope for perfect holiness, or for Christ's presence in heaven, or for glory and immortality? my reply is, I hope for these things because I have a faith which gives me certainty that they are realities, and that they are attainable and desirable. Without faith as a foundation, there can be nothing hoped for by the Christian; but wherever there is faith, there will be hope, having reference to those things of which God testifies, and which faith credits and receives with assured belief that they are true, attainable, and exceedingly important.

The things hoped for are the blessings of salvation promised by God to believers, pardon, peace, sanctification, the resurrection of the body, complete redemption, and eternal glory. These things all rest on faith—faith in Jesus Christ, by whom all these blessings are purchased, and through whom they are conveyed—faith in the testimony and promises of God, by which they are revealed and secured to the believer.

Glorious things these which a Christian hopes for! Precious that faith on which these things hoped for rest! Is that faith mine? Do I credit God's testimony in his word? Do I regard as realities the pardon of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the communications of divine grace, the victory over death in the resurrection, the eternal perfect holiness and happiness of heaven? What and how do I believe? And what hopes flow from and rest upon my belief? O my soul, ponder well what answer thou canst give to these questions.

2. *Faith is the evidence of things not seen.*

The word here rendered *evidence* means *demonstration*, the strongest and most convincing proof that we can have of a matter. Faith, then, gives us certainty as strong as demonstration; it satisfies the mind as fully; it leaves no doubt or hesitation. The things to which it relates are unseen, for faith cometh by hearing; it has for its objects not those things which come under our observation, but things which are made known to us by testimony. What demonstration is to its objects, faith is to its objects,—those unseen things to which it relates.

*Things not seen*, as distinguished from *things hoped for*, are such as the creation of the world by God out of nothing, the whole train of providences by which God prepared the way for the incarnation of his Son, the birth, preaching, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, his being head over all things to the church, and many other like matters too numerous to mention. Faith is the evidence of these unseen things. By means of it, the mind has certainty concerning them, just as the understanding attains to certainty by the process of a mathematical demonstration. Both in the one case and in the other, the mind feels that the thing is so certainly true, that it cannot be otherwise. Mathematical certainty we are wont to call the most certain of all. The belief of things not seen, to which a man attains by faith, is just as certain. And to mark that it is so, faith is here called the evidence or demonstration of things not seen.

But nothing can be a sufficient foundation for this certainty but the testimony on which our faith is founded being a divine testimony. If I am sure that God is telling me about things not seen, my mind is at rest. There is no room for doubt. The certainty which flows from the divine testimony is equal to any demonstration. And inasmuch as faith is here called the evidence, that is, the demonstration of things not seen, this description marks it out as resting on the testimony of God. It would not be enough that we had human testimony. For there is a possibility of the witnesses being deceived, or of their wishing to deceive us. God's testimony alone can give certainty equal to demonstration.

How very comforting that in matters of such mighty importance as the doings, the character, and the will of God regarding our fallen world, our faith rests on the word of God, and not on the word of man! Let us carefully see to it, then, that we have a regard to God in reading and hearing scripture truth, and that we remember that all scripture is given by inspiration of

God. Then we shall have a faith which will make the things of God's word realities, as much as the things which we see, or touch, or have demonstrated to our understandings,—a faith which, realizing things future, desirable, and attainable, will furnish a solid foundation for vivid, cheering, Christian hope.

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 TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

'According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith,' Rom. xii. 3.

BELIEVERS are not all alike. Faith is one of the measures by which they are estimated. By faith they are united to Jesus Christ. By faith they receive out of Christ whatever graces and gifts, of a spiritual nature, they possess. According, therefore, as faith is weak or strong, languid or lively, do the divine life and the divine graces flourish in the believer. Faith is the hand by which believers appropriate what God freely offers to them in the gospel; and therefore, if the hand be strong, it will be able to appropriate more; if weak, it will be able to receive less. Faith is the channel of communication between Jesus Christ and the soul of the believer; and, therefore, if the channel be wide and free from obstacles, there will come gushing along a full stream of the water of life, from the ever full fountain—a full portion of spiritual blessings, from Jesus Christ, the repository of all such blessings. But if the channel be narrow and contracted, or if it be obstructed by any thing, there will be a less free and abundant communication of blessings through it.—The faith by which believers are united to Christ, then, being different in different individuals as to its strength and weakness, its languor and liveliness, the enlarged range of its objects and the comparative contractedness of its sphere, Christians are to estimate themselves according to the measure of faith which they possess.

The usefulness of a believer—the degree in which he can promote the glory of God, and the good of men, depends on his occupying the place for which he is best fitted. But he will not do so, if he thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think. Puffed up with a false opinion of his own abilities and excellence, he will aim at occupying a place, and performing duties, for which he is unfit; while the place and duties, for which he is suited, are overlooked and neglected by him.—But there is an error on the opposite extreme. A believer may think of himself less highly than he ought to think. And thus he

may shun the performance of duties which he could well and creditably perform, and refuse offices which he is qualified to fill. In that case the public are defrauded, and God has not all the glory that he might have from the talents which he has bestowed. Wherefore every believer should judge of himself *soberly*; he should, like a person in his right mind, form a sober, sound, yet moderate estimate of his own gifts and graces. And the standard by which he is to judge is the measure of faith bestowed on him by God. The believer who has the most enlarged, lively, vigorous faith, ranks highest among the disciples of Christ, because such a faith brings him nearest to Christ, and by means of it communications are made most abundantly out of Christ's fulness.

Nor does this give any occasion for spiritual pride, nor minister any food to it. For the apostle, as directed by the Spirit, takes care to remind us that every measure of faith is *dealt out to us by God*. Believers are never permitted to forget that 'by the grace of God they are what they are.' And verily the greater measure of faith that God deals out to any man, the deeper will be the man's humility and self-abasement before God. For it is just a man's feeling convinced that he has nothing in himself, which, through the Holy Spirit, leads him to rely on Jesus Christ. And the deeper the feeling of his own unworthiness, the more earnest and decided will be his dependence on the merits of Christ. The more thorough his sense of his own emptiness, the more he is prepared for being filled with all the fulness of Christ. So that a large measure of faith, and consequently high attainments in Christianity, and a high place in God's house, are not only quite consistent with deep Christian humility, but necessarily connected with it. God giveth me whatever I possess, and, therefore, when I receive much, my unworthiness of so great blessings is strongly impressed on my mind.

The result of all this is to place believers in the church, which is Christ's mystical body, as the members are in the human body. Each member has its own place and office, which have been appointed it of God, and in which he has put it. There it is contented, and does its appointed duty; and in that duty, better than in any other, it promotes the good of the whole body. God deals out to every believer the measure of faith which he possesses, thus fitting him for certain duties which are required of him. And it is when the believer, looking at the measure of his faith, cheerfully contents himself with his appropriate station, and performs its duties, that the body of Christ is edified.

Wherefore, O child of God, seek to understand what grace hath made thee, that, on the one hand, thou mayest not affect too high a place, nor envy them above thee; and that, on the other hand, thou mayest not keep back from the service of God any thing which he hath made thee, or given thee. God dealeth out to thee whatever measure of faith thou possessest—faith through which all other spiritual blessings come to thee, and this, when only wrath and wretchedness were thy merited portion. Deep, then, be thy humiliation; great thy gratitude. And far away from thee be wrath, and envy, and contention. Seek to find thy place, and to do thy work in it quietly, diligently, faithfully; for thy God hath appointed it to thee for thine own real interests, and the good of all.

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 TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' Acts xvi. 31.*

SINNER, we have a word of warning and exhortation for thee. Thus saith the Lord, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' Hast thou not sinned ten thousand times? Shalt thou not die, then, as the Lord hath said? Thus saith the Lord, 'The wicked shall be turned into hell.' Hast thou not done wickedness; and thinkest thou that, in opposition to this word of the Lord, thou shalt escape the hell here threatened? The hour of death is at hand; art thou fully prepared to meet it? The great judgment-day will soon be here; canst thou endure the searching scrutiny of Jehovah Jesus, the God and Saviour, whose offered kindness thou hast treated with cold indifference, or contemptuous neglect? They come, they come; death, judgment, eternity. The angel's hand is uplifted, and concerning thee he is about to swear that time shall be no longer. Darest thou die, sinner? Darest thou lay down thy body in the dust, and start forth a disembodied spirit into the immediate presence of God? This thou must assuredly do, ere many days pass by. Thou canst not by any means avoid it. Think of thy body awakening from the deep slumber of the grave amidst the convulsions of dissolving worlds. Think of opening thine eyes, as thou risest from the dust of death, on him whom thou art now despising and piercing, as he cometh then in all the pomp, and glory, and power, of the world's great Judge. Darest thou meet his frown? Canst thou endure to depart, loaded with his curse, into the blackness of darkness, and the everlasting

fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? Sinner, sinner, canst thou endure these things? Darest thou venture on the dangerous experiment of stretching thyself on a death-bed, and looking back on a life devoted to the world, spent in sinning; and forward to the dark gulf which is yawning to receive thee? Or sensible of thy sinfulness and danger, art thou earnestly and anxiously inquiring about a way of salvation? Behold the word of God meets thine inquiry, with this plain declaration, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

'The Lord Jesus Christ.' He is the eternal Son of God. He assumed human nature. He was made under the law. In the room and stead of sinners he perfectly obeyed the law, and he suffered the punishment due to their transgressions. In that finished work of his he both purchased pardon for fallen man, and merited heaven for him. And now he hath ascended up on high, leading captivity captive; and he hath received gifts for men. He hath forgiveness, O sinner, for all thine iniquities, and merit to entitle thee to heaven. He hath the Holy Spirit without measure to deliver thee from the pollution of sin. Thou seest thy heart full of corruption, thy life a mass of transgressions, the curse of a holy God resting upon thee, and his consuming wrath overhanging thy head. But, behold in Jesus Christ a deliverer from all. To which of thy sins can the merit of his atonement not reach? What stain of corruption is so deeply sunk in thy soul, that the precious blood of Christ cannot take it out—that the Holy Spirit cannot cleanse it off? Jesus Christ is indeed an all-sufficient Saviour. It matters not how bad thy case be—how long thou hast continued in rebellion against God, wedded to the world, the servant of ungodliness; it matters not how short time thou hast on this side eternity; it matters not though thou hast been a sinner against light and love; Jesus Christ can, blessed be God for it, save thee from all. In him there is mercy enough to reach the vilest of the vile, and sanctifying grace and power enough to cleanse and make glorious in holiness the foulest of the foul.

I know that convinced sinners and mourning Christians often see, as it were, a great gulf between the Saviour and themselves. They see their own corruption and danger, and they see Jesus Christ to be a great and glorious Saviour; but they can see no connection between him and them, and they ask, 'How are we to be benefited by what the Son of God hath done?'

Is this thy case? Dost thou say, I perceive that I am a ruined sinner deserving hell, and I

believe that Christ is what he is represented to be in the bible; I believe that he has died to atone for sin, that he has obeyed the law of God, that through him the Holy Spirit is given to renew and sanctify. I believe what you tell me out of the word of God, that in Jesus Christ there is laid up every thing that a perishing sinner like me needs for salvation. But how am I to obtain an interest in Christ's salvation? How am I to be benefitted by what he has done? It is evident that all are not saved by him. The many souls already in the place of torment, and the many who are daily going away to that awful place, bear witness of this. How may a saving connection be established between me, a perishing sinner, and Jesus Christ, the Saviour?—My friend, God himself, in his word, gives thee an answer;

'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Faith, or believing, connects the sinner savingly with Jesus Christ. God, in the word, testifies to the sinner certain things concerning Christ. The Holy Spirit enables the sinner to receive the divine testimony, and to rely on Jesus Christ as that testimony sets him forth. That belief and reliance is saving faith. It makes Christ and the believer one; so that whilst Christ bears the believer's sins, the believer is warranted to plead Christ's righteousness, and through his union with Christ, the believer's sanctification is accomplished.

Here is the alarmed perishing sinner; there is the mighty gracious Saviour, most able and willing to save. God in the word tells the sinner plainly and fully about the Saviour, and with affectionate and solemn earnestness invites the sinner to place confidence in that Saviour. O! the dark heart of man that can resist such testimony, and decline such an invitation!—May the Holy Spirit, the giver of all good gifts and graces, bestow the grace of faith on every one who is in anxiety about the salvation of his soul, so that being justified by faith, he may have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,' Rom. x. 10.*

THERE are two things required in religion, a reality and a profession—being truly a Christian, and distinctly appearing to be a Christian. That both these are necessary, is taught by God in the word. Does he not tell us that in the gospel dispensation nothing availeth but a new crea-

ture; and also that whosoever is ashamed of him before men, of them will he be ashamed before his Father and the angels? Now it is the possession of true righteousness which constitutes a man really a Christian, and here we are told how this righteousness is to be obtained.

'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.' Believing, or true saving faith, is by no means the righteousness by which a sinner is justified. It is the medium or instrument by which that righteousness is received. The righteousness needful for the fallen children of men, in order to their salvation, has been wrought out by Jesus Christ; it is in God's hand; in the exercise of infinite love he offers it as a free gift to men, and faith is the hand which man is enabled to stretch out to receive and appropriate Christ's righteousness. This accords with those parts of scripture which speak of 'the righteousness which is by faith,' and 'the righteousness which is of God, by faith.' And founding on these scriptures, and embodying these views, the Westminster Confession says, 'that faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God—not as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but only as it is an instrument by which he receiveth and applieth Christ's righteousness. This expression, *man believeth unto righteousness*, means, *believeth unto the reception of Christ's righteousness.*'

*With the heart man thus believeth.* In order to his possessing true faith, a man's heart must be changed. Before this change of heart, a man may have an intellectual knowledge of many or most gospel truths, just as he has an intellectual knowledge of different branches of art and science. But the heart being a dead carnal heart, incapable of exercising spiritual discernment, does not discern Christ's righteousness at all, and therefore has no belief in its existence, and no reliance on it. A change of heart, is the usual expression for the communication of spiritual life. The heart, in common language, is represented as the seat of the affections and desires. And therefore, besides the change of heart which is necessary to the exercise of true faith, a man is said to believe with the heart unto the receiving of Christ's righteousness, because, in such believing, there is a large exercise of the affections and desires.

Thus, then, we have an unseen but real work of the Spirit and grace of God on the heart; and then of the quickened changed heart, approaching, embracing, and appropriating Christ and his righteousness: and in virtue of these unseen but real operations, we have the man possessed of that which really constitutes him a child of God.

It behoves this inward reality, however, to produce an outward confession of Christ. That one who has believed with the heart to the receiving of Christ's righteousness should be guilty of lying, or dishonesty, or intemperance, or impurity, all will at once reject with abhorrence. But far more is required than avoiding a life of gross sin. There must be a life of holiness—a distinct confession of Christ, and a life of suitable conduct. Believing with the heart unto righteousness is known to God as constituting a man perfectly righteous. But God intends glory to himself by the salvation of sinners. And therefore he connects with the inward thing—the believing with the heart, something that may be known to his creatures,—something arising out of that belief as a fruit and evidence of it, that his creatures may be made acquainted with the salvation of the sinner, which has taken place, and be led to admire and rejoice in the wisdom, mercy, love, truth, and power of God manifested in the scheme of redemption.

When it is said that 'with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,' it is not meant that confessing with the mouth gives a title to salvation, or completes a title to salvation. As we have seen already, it is the possessing Christ's righteousness, through believing on him with the heart, that is a man's title to salvation. Confession of Christ, owning him as our Saviour, acknowledging his authority, and manifesting our love to him by doing his will, are necessary to indicate that we really have believed with the heart unto righteousness; for the faith which does not lead to this confessing and owning Christ, is not the faith necessary to salvation. None of God's creatures could know that a man believeth with the heart unto salvation, on his merely believing; and therefore there could be no joy over such a one, no praise to God, no admiration of the divine excellencies. God knows the change which has taken place as well before it is manifested by confessing Christ, as after it has been so manifested. But then the whole of God's purpose in saving sinners is not accomplished when the sinner believes with the heart unto righteousness, apart from any confession with the mouth or by the life. We can conceive of God saving a great multitude of sinners by giving them grace to believe with the heart unto righteousness, and then placing each saved one in solitary happiness and glory, there to remain unseen and unknown by any others of God's creatures. We can conceive of God's all-seeing eye resting with complacency on myriads of these redeemed, of whose existence no being in the

universe, save God himself, had any knowledge. But that would be a state of things very different from what we are taught to believe really exists. God has created all things for his own glory, not certainly to add to his glory, but to declare to the intelligent beings of his universe the power, the wisdom, the goodness, and the glory which he possesses. And therefore redeemed sinners are not only to be in a state of salvation, but also to manifest to other beings that they are so—not only to believe with the heart unto righteousness, but also to confess with the mouth unto salvation.—May professing Christians extensively possess the believing heart, and the life which acknowledges and adorns Christ's doctrine.

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me,'* Rev. iii. 20.

GLORIOUS Saviour! how marvellous thy condescension! How rich and inexhaustible thy kindness! Never was there love like thy love to the children of men. Thou pleadest for admittance that thou mayest bestow unspeakable blessings, when thou mightest have come in thy power to condemn and destroy.

'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.' At the door of men's hearts Jesus Christ stands, knocking by the *admonitions of conscience*. Its still small voice says, 'flee from the wrath to come;' 'Be sure thy sin will find thee out;' 'Fear God, and keep his commandments;' 'Submit thyself to God, and be at peace.' Long hast thou been addressed in this strain: shall it ever be? Nay, friend. Either the door must be opened, and Christ received; or, ere long, he will withdraw, and conscience will ask admittance for him no more.—Jesus Christ knocks by the *dispensations of his providence*. Thou hast received from him many unmerited bounties. And as one, and another, and another of these is bestowed, his voice is heard as it were saying, Behold the tokens of my love; receive, love, trust in me. Or he sends disease to remind thee that present joys and possessions are fleeting vanities. Or he sweeps away thy relatives, cutting down one by a sudden blow; and removing others, after having long stretched them on a bed of pain and languishing, to show them to thee in all the impressive solemnities of a dying state. Or he disappoints some of thy fairest and fondest worldly hopes,

and darkens thy brightest worldly prospects, and involves thee in worldly misfortunes. But still amidst the warnings of disease, and the heart-rending visits of death to thy dwelling, and the crash of thy fortunes, and the gloominess of thy prospects, and the desolation that hath come round thy spirit, the voice of thy Saviour standing and knocking at the door of thy heart, may be heard saying, 'Come unto me, all ye who labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' In emphatically stamping vanity on the things to which thou art clinging as thy chief happiness, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, he is but loudly knocking at the door of thy heart, to gain thy attention to himself, that he may communicate satisfying happiness to thee. Nor does he rest satisfied with knocking thus by his providences. By his *word* and his *Spirit* he knocks, earnestly pleading to be admitted. The invitations of the gospel have been addressed to thee, its gracious faithful promises stated, its warnings given, its threatenings denounced. The Spirit hath knocked with a hand of persuasion, or a hand of power.

Ah! that heart! How firm and strong the bars of unbelief which shut out Jesus Christ, even when he thus stands and knocks! If the devil comes with his deceits, the heart is opened to him. If the world comes with its pleasures, the heart is opened to them. Sin after sin comes, a long troop, and they all find admission. But when the blessed Jesus comes, the door of the heart is straightway closed. When he stands and knocks, no answer is given. The bolts are not withdrawn, even though he remains pleading till his 'head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night.' We might trust him that it is on some kind errand that he hath come, even did he not tell us. But what excuse can be offered when as he stands and knocks, he says, 'If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me?' The promise of such an honour and happiness, might well make the very stones to find ears. But man's natural heart is more obstinate and hard than the stones. The Son of God, the compassionate Saviour, the Lord of glory—who would not bid him welcome? I will tell thee who: Thou art the man. Many a time thou hast refused to receive him; perhaps thou art doing so still. Other guests thou hadst admitted, and for their sakes Jesus Christ was shut out. And what guests were these? Ah! dost thou need to be told? The world with its pleasures and employments—the little trifles which engage the idle, or the cares of business,

or the vain amusements of life, or the indulgence of sinful passions, these have obtained possession of many hearts, and therefore does the glorious Redeemer solicit entrance in vain. O shame, shame to rational creatures! Shall pleasures which perish in the using be preferred before delights of eternal duration? Shall foul damning lusts find welcome entrance, and the Son of God be excluded? Shall labours and pursuits, bounded, at the best, by the short and uncertain period of our mortal lives, engross our whole attention, whilst the voice of Jesus soliciting us with promises of many and delightful never-ending blessings is disregarded? Is there not cause for deep humiliation on account of the folly, the absurdity, the sinfulness of such conduct?

*If any man hear my voice, and open the door.* Perhaps thou hast kept Jesus Christ long standing without. Perhaps his knocking has been very loud and affecting. But what then? His patience is not yet exhausted; he knocks still; witness what thou art now reading. There is no reason to despair: there is no cause to fear that now he will come in to thee in wrath. For he says, if *any man*,—even though he be one who has evil entreated me, and despised me in times past—'if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him.' The Redeemer will be present with thy soul, will delight thee with the communications of himself, will manifest his love to thee, and will receive with pleasure the tokens of thy affection for him, and of the esteem in which thou holdest him. Thus he will *sup with thee*.

And at last, when all things are fully ready—when thine appointed work on earth is finished, and thy soul, through communion with thy Saviour and by the work of the Holy Spirit, is prepared for heaven, the Lord Jesus will take thee away to *sup with him* in his Father's house. There he will do thee the highest honour, he will minister to thee enjoyments ever new and satisfying, and so thou shalt be for ever with the Lord.

#### TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever,'* Psal. xlv. 2.

BESIDES the condescension of the Son of God in taking our nature, suffering for our sins, and offering himself and his benefits to the children of men, his beauty and excellency furnish a strong induce-

ment to receive him with gratitude and joy. The threatenings of divine justice may rouse us to a sense of our danger, and make us look round for safety. But we never can be brought to love God by having him presented to us only as an offended, angry, threatening God. The love wherewith he has loved us, and the holiness, excellency, and amiableness of the Saviour, must be discerned, ere our affections can be engaged, or our love kindled. And hence the beauty and glory of Christ's character are largely set forth in the scriptures, both by the record of what he has done in the work of redemption, and by express testimony.

The psalm from which the subject of meditation is taken, relates to the Messiah. It is a prophetic description of his person and kingdom—a reviving, encouraging, attractive delineation of his glorious excellencies. May the light of the Spirit's teaching make me see more of my Saviour's beauty and grace, that I may love him with a fresher and a fuller love.

'Thou art fairer than the children of men.' It is written in the scriptures, and the words relate to Christ, 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.' But these words express the estimate which worldly carnal men form of the incarnate Son of God. And they show to what an extent sin has blinded the understanding, and perverted the affections of our fallen race. Far different is the divine testimony, and the estimate of regenerated men: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' 'He is the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely;' 'Thou art fairer than the children of men.' These testimonies are true. The beauty and excellency of Jesus Christ are boundless and incomparable. He is Emmanuel, God with us, and, therefore, has all the glorious attributes of Deity along with all that is amiable and good in the nature of man. Perfect holiness, tenderest compassion, love to the children of men stronger than death, unwearied patience in bearing with neglect and insults, gracious condescension in communicating himself and his benefits to his people, wisdom and tender compassion in dealing with the weak among his saints, power irresistible to protect, provide for, and defend them, dignity and glory unspeakable as the King and Head of his church;—these all meet in Jesus Christ. Where among the children of men will we find such a one as he? Every excellency, every beauty, all power, all amiableness, is to be found in him. Meekness, patience, kindness, pity, love, compassion, abhorrence of sin, rectitude, justice, humility, active be-

nevolence, sympathy, tenderness, godliness, adorned the character of our blessed Lord. Well may it be said of him therefore, 'Thou art fairer than the children of men.' O my soul, what thinkest thou of Christ? Lovest thou him more than these around thee? Dost thou greatly desire his beauty? Is he precious to thee, and is it thine earnest wish that he should be thine all in all? When thou beholdest him, he is fairer than the children of men. But that is not all his excellency. For, blessed Jesus—

'Grace is poured into thy lips.' It was the testimony of enemies that 'never man spake like that man,' the man Christ Jesus. And the testimony thus borne was true. Read Christ's sermon on the mount, and mark its strict, pure, high-toned morality; read his discourse with Nicodemus, rich in the revelation of the great truths of the gospel; read his last conversations with his disciples before his crucifixion, and the beautiful and precious intercessory prayer with which he closed these conversations, and say if you do not feel the meaning of the words, 'grace is poured into thy lips?' His parables wisely timed, and wisely constructed, his speech gentle and kind to the afflicted, plain and faithful to sinners, and at all times, and in all companies, fraught with instruction—how true, O my Saviour, these words of the Holy Spirit concerning thee, 'Grace is poured into thy lips.' May what those lips of thine have uttered be nourishment to my soul, enlightening my understanding, rectifying my will, purifying my affections. I will hear what my Saviour will speak. He speaketh peace to his saints, but let them not return unto folly.

God has great delight in moral beauty and excellency. Jesus Christ said, 'if a man love me he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' In a certain place it is written, 'The Lord hath pleasure in those who fear him, in them who hope in his mercy. And inasmuch as Jesus Christ is adorned with all moral beauty, and possessed of all excellency, God the Father supremely delights in the glorious person, character, and work of the Son. And accordingly, this was his promise before the Son's incarnation, 'I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.—By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.' And this is the testimony of the Spirit after Christ's work of humiliation was finished, 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in

earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' And then the repeated testimony by a voice from heaven, to which we have already referred, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' All this throws light on the words, 'Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.' The divine everlasting complacency, and a full eternal communication of good to the Son, as Mediator, manifest the approbation with which God contemplates him who 'is fairer than the children of men.'

When the Saviour is so amiable and excellent in his person and character, so gracious in his communications to men, and for ever delighted in, and blessed of God, with what gratitude and joy should we open our hearts to receive him and his benefits! Precious Christ! My Lord, and my God. 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.'

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#### TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins,'* Matt. i. 21.

THE first promise of God to a fallen world was, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; and the full discovery and exposition of that promise constitutes the sum and substance of revelation. 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,' Rev. xix. 10. 'This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and that 'this life is in his Son,' 1 John v. 11. But how great is this mystery of godliness! 'The Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel,'—*God with us*, Isa. vii. 14. This glorious Deliverer was to save a people over whom Satan had triumphed, and yet was himself to suffer. He was to be a Lamb without blemish, and yet to be numbered with transgressors. He was to be the Desire of all nations, and yet when men should see him, he was to have no beauty nor comeliness that they should desire him. He was to be a Leader and Commander to the people, and yet to be despised and rejected of men. He was to be the Lord our righteousness, and yet to make his grave with the wicked. He was to be a Prince of whose kingdom and dominion there should be no end, and yet to be 'cut off' out of the land of the living. In this amazing combination of holiness and guilt, of

innocence and suffering, of power and weakness, of dignity and debasement, of sovereignty and subjection, there was a deep unfathomable mystery, a mystery which the great master-key of the gospel dispensation finally unlocked and disclosed, when at length, in fulfilment of the angel's announcement to the virgin, 'God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory,' 1 Tim. iii. 16.

This was he of whom Moses in the law and all the prophets did write; the great antitype of him who conducted Israel into the promised land. That land, that earthly inheritance, was an emblem of the rest that remaineth for God's people in heaven; even as the wilderness had been an impressive figure of man's condition as a sinner, banished by his apostacy into a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. Accordingly, when the time came to lead the people over Jordan, their victorious Captain was called by a new name, that he might, in his office and work, more perfectly shadow forth the Captain of our salvation. 'Moses called Oshea, the son of Nun, Jehoshua,' Num. xiii. 16. It was not enough that the Israelites should know him as Oshea; that is, a Saviour. They must be taught that their victories were not due to an arm of flesh—and by his new name, 'Jehoshua,' that is, 'God the Saviour,' they must learn to give the praise unto the Lord.

These were the shadows of good things, but now the very image of the things has come. We have a race of fallen creatures wandering in the wilderness of sin, and ready to perish. We have the mighty river of divine justice flowing deep and strong, like another Jordan, between us and heaven. And blessed be God, we have another Jehoshua—not in the sense of being the mere representative of a power above and beyond himself, but in the cause of being in his own glorious person at once our Saviour and our God. 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus,' that is, Jehovah the Saviour, 'because he shall save his people from their sins.' He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He hath gone down into Jordan—he hath exposed himself to the full flood of that wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and hath opened up a way by which even the chief of sinners may pass over in safety. 'There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,' Rom. viii. 1. We were sometimes far off, but 'are made nigh by the blood of Christ,' Eph. ii. 13.

But this is not all that is implied in saving his people from their sins. These sins had not only

exposed us to the curse of a broken law; they had also unfitted us for communion with God. And, accordingly, while by his atoning blood he washes away the guilt of sin from his people's souls, he at the same time, by the grace of his Holy Spirit, renews their fallen nature, and restores them to the image of God. He blesses them by 'turning every one of them from his iniquities,' Acts iii. 26. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,' 2 Cor. v. 17.

It is a truth, never to be forgotten, that these two blessings, deliverance from the guilt, and deliverance from the power of sin, are inseparable. Where one is not, the other cannot be. Let no man, therefore, vainly dream that he can escape the curse, if he be not emancipated from the bondage of sin;—that he can be washed and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, if he be not also sanctified by the Spirit of our God. But while Christ will give a half deliverance to no man, he will impart a free and full salvation to all that come unto God by him. He is both able and willing to save to the uttermost. How infinitely precious, then, must be the knowledge of Christ. To know him is life eternal, 'For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,' Acts iv. 12. 'Wherefore, then, do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David,' Isa. lv. 2, 3.

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TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee,' Isa. xxvi. 3.

TRUSTING in the Lord in the scripture sense of the expression, manifestly embraces the two great departments of providence and grace: trusting, that is, in the providence of God as to all that concerns our outward estate; and trusting in the grace of God as to all that concerns our inward and everlasting welfare. These two departments comprehend the whole of man's connection with God, and include all his interests temporal and eternal. And it is only when there is an unhesitating confidence as to both these departments and as to all these interests,

that any one can be said, in the full meaning of the text, to have his mind 'stayed upon God.'

1. In the first of these departments how beautifully do we find this constant reliance on the divine love and faithfulness displayed in the scripture history of the saints of old. 'The Lord is my shepherd,' said the pious king of Israel, 'I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. . . Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over,' Psal. xxiii. Nor was this spirit of entire dependence on the Author and Preserver of his being, this recognition of the divine hand as ordering all his lot, confined to those more pleasing events which might naturally be expected to awaken emotions of gratitude. His *trials* were traced to the same source, and received with the same firm reliance on the Lord's wisdom and mercy. When Shimei the son of Gera, a man of the house of Saul, insolently exulting over the misfortunes which were driving David for a time into exile from his city and his throne, 'came forth, and cast stones at David, and cursed him still as he came:' instead of giving vent to that indignation which so grievous an outrage would have excited in a mere man of the world, not only did he restrain any feeling of this kind in his own mind, but expressly forbade any manifestation of such a feeling on the part of his followers. 'Let him alone,' said the humbled king, reading his sin in his affliction, 'let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him,' 2 Sam. xvi. 10. In the case of Job, too, in circumstances peculiarly distressing, how brightly did the same spirit shine forth! For when the messengers, in swift succession, brought him the tidings of another and another woe, and when by the sum of their desolating intelligence they had swept the venerable patriarch in one moment from the very height of fortune into the lowest depths of outward wretchedness and misery, what is it we hear him exclaim? 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,' Job i. 21. One other touching example of the same habitual reliance on God, as ordering all things in His holy providence with unerring wisdom and watchfulness, let His own word supply. When Joseph made himself known to his brethren in Egypt, it was thus he comforted them under the bitterness of their self-accusations. 'Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to

preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance,' Gen. xlv. 5—7.

It was thus that holy men of old practically acknowledged, what to the Lord's people is ever a most consoling truth, that the very hairs of their head are all numbered, and that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father. But how different is all this from the spirit and conduct of multitudes who bear the name of Christian. If successful in their worldly pursuits, they regard their acquisitions as the fruit of their own might and prudence, forgetting that a man can receive nothing except it be given him of God. If distinguished above their fellows by superior station, gifts, or power, they look down disdainfully on their humbler and poorer brethren, forgetting that it is God alone that maketh them to differ, and that He accepteth no man's person. Or if, on the other hand, they are visited with adversity and bowed down by afflictions, they murmur at what they regard as a fate equally hard and undeserved, forgetting who hath said, 'shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?' 'hath not the potter power over the clay?' Such men cannot know what it is to have 'perfect peace' amid the shifting scenes of time, because they know not what it is to have their minds 'stayed on God.'

2. But 'trusting in the Lord' embraces, not only the domain of providence, but the department of grace. And here it occurs at once to observe, that before any man can be said to have cast his soul's welfare upon the Lord, and to be making the Most High his habitation, he must have acquainted himself with those provisions which divine grace has made. The apostle Paul tells us of the Ephesians, that 'they trusted' in God; but he shows us at the same time, that theirs was an intelligent and scriptural confidence, by adding, that they so trusted 'after that they heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation.' And, moreover, he acquaints us with the fruits of that reliance on the grace of God when he says, that they 'had faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints.' To trust, then, in the grace of God, is not so unmeaning a thing as there is cause to fear too many professing Christians think it to be. If we trust in that grace at all, we must do so on its own terms,—truly, and habitually, and practically relying on the provisions of that covenant, which is well

ordered in all things and sure. If either through wilful ignorance or criminal indifference, we take up with some other ground of confidence different from that foundation sure and steadfast which the Lord hath laid in Zion, we are trusting not in God, but in vanity and lies. We may be saying to ourselves, 'peace, peace,' but there can be no peace.

Let it not, however, be imagined, that it is enough to know what the provisions of the gospel covenant are; to know who the Saviour is, and what he hath done. 'The letter killeth,' it is 'the Spirit that giveth life,' 2 Cor. iii. 6. We must embrace Christ with the arms of a living faith as all our salvation, and all our desire. We must look to him daily as 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' We must confide in his infinite merits as 'the Lord our righteousness.' We must abide in him as the 'true vine;' and seek in faith and prayer to receive daily out of his fulness, and grace for grace; that so we may abound in those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God. Then indeed will the Lord keep us in perfect peace: then shall we know 'the blessedness of that man whose mind is stayed upon God.'

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#### TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul,'* Heb. x. 39.

'No man,' said the Lord Jesus to one who showed some reluctance to follow him, 'no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' To lend point and force to that solemn warning, he added, on another occasion, these pregnant words, 'Remember Lot's wife.' Even to look back is to incur the divine displeasure, because it is to betray the hollowness of the profession which had been assumed; it is to show that the heart's treasure is still among those things which are beneath. Such an one has no relish for the things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God: he is of the earth, earthy, he is not 'fit' for the kingdom of God.

It is, however, with yet greater impressiveness that 'drawing back' is condemned. It is an act of more glaring apostacy, and the language in which it is denounced is proportionably stern and strong. 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,' Heb. x. 38. The words inti-

mate the divine abhorrence which this treachery can never fail to call forth. It is the revolt of one who had sworn allegiance,—it is the unfaithfulness of one who had been treated and trusted as a friend,—it is a dishonour put on Christ by one who had long affected to be devoted to his cause. Of an iniquity so marked and so base it is not enough to say, that it must exclude its perpetrator from the kingdom of heaven. Its character and desert can be adequately depicted only by holding it up as an act which involves and necessitates his consignment to everlasting ruin. It is a drawing back unto perdition. He whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who looketh not on the outward appearance, but who searcheth and trieth the heart,—clearly discerned all the while the hypocrisy which feigned lips and a fair profession were employed to conceal. And though he be indeed slow to wrath, yet is he also of great power, and will by no means acquit the wicked.

But 'we are not of them who draw back.' That we may not be found among that number, nothing is more needful than to consider well beforehand what the service of Christ requires. 'What man sitteth down to build a tower without first counting the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all they that behold begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?' Luke xiv. 28—31. In entering the service of Christ, we are proceeding to build a tower, strong enough to defend our souls from the terrors of death, the sentence of condemnation, and the agonies of hell. In joining his standard we are proceeding to make war on the devil, the flesh, and the world. In a work so great,—in a warfare so severe, we must lay our account with difficulties and trials grievous to be borne. It is indispensable therefore, that we learn to look them in the face—to count their numbers—to measure their force—lest coming on us unawares, we give way before them and be tempted 'to draw back unto perdition.' For this very reason the Saviour so often and so urgently warns us of the perils and perplexities that beset the Christian's course. He will seduce no one into his service under the vain imagination, that in following him the way will be all smoothness and sunshine. Those who engage in it with views so mistaken, will, as he well knows,

be the first to forsake it, and thereby to bring reproach on his name. And accordingly, when on one occasion he saw a great multitude following him, attracted for the hour by the fame of his mighty deeds,—and impressed perhaps with the idea that the cause of a master who had all power at his command, could have no trials for those who embraced it, he turned suddenly upon them, and with this sharp sentence, as with a cutting wind, he separated the chaff from the wheat, saying, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me,' Matt. xvi. 24.

The offence of this 'cross' may come in a great variety of ways. It may come in the form of suffering for righteousness' sake. 'He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and bye he is offended,' Matt. xiii. 20, 21. It is a small thing to bear the name and profession of a Christian, when no sacrifice of personal ease, or substance, or safety is required. But it takes a strong faith to maintain that name, and to hold fast that profession, in the midst of bonds, and stripes, and imprisonments, and death.

Nor let it be thought that there can be no persecution without the sword. 'Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. 12. In the vast majority of cases this persecution is and must be something totally different from open violence. There is a persecution of ridicule; a persecution of calumny and reproach; a persecution of personal unkindness; in many forms as hard to bear, and often as fatal in its influence, as the prison or the stake. Truly is it said that the fear of man bringeth a snare.

But men may be tempted to draw back where no outward attack is made upon their steadfastness at all. Every man has within his own breast ample materials out of which to form a grudge against the cause of Christ. If that cause demand a portion of his worldly goods, his avarice is wounded, and he complains of the burden imposed. If it interfere with the prosecution of his carnal views and schemes, he begins to look upon it with impatience and discontent, as an inconvenient obstacle in his way. And what is perhaps the commonest case of all,—when its claims are found to jar against his accustomed way of life—to condemn his love of pleasure, his selfish spirit, his attachment to the world,—he soon learns to look on it as an irksome restraint

from which he longs to be free. Religious exercises in which before he was wont to join, are gradually discontinued,—religious society which he formerly frequented, is more and more forsaken—religious objects which he had been used to encourage are at length abandoned, and everything too plainly indicates that he is drawing back unto perdition.

'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation,' Jam. i. 12. 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved,' Matt. x. 22. And 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,' 1 John v. 4. We are not of them who draw back, but of them 'who believe;' walking by faith and not by sight,—enduring as seeing him who is invisible. Faith is the secret of the Christian's strength, it lifts him above the world even while he is in it; it enables him to have his conversation in the heavens. It teaches him that 'our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; v. 1. Thus following on to know the Lord, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, the true believer holding on his way steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord—at length receives 'the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul.'

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'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.

WE are here plainly taught that the religion which conducts the soul in safety through the troubles of time, into the glorious rest of a happy eternity, is not a transient emotion, but an abiding principle, practical, permanent, progressive, like the morning light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. It is he who not only begins, but endures to the end, that shall be saved. It is he who not only fights, but overcomes, that shall have the wreath of victory bound about his brow.

And is there any thing hard or unreasonable in these terms? Is it not enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord? It was by a similar course the Saviour himself won his way to that throne whose glory, with infinite condescension, he thus engages to share with his people. '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.' The apostle Paul has given us a noble commentary on this elevating promise of the Saviour in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where he thus writes in ver. 1, 2: 'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus* the Author and Finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' 'For consider,' adds he, (ver. 3.) 'consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.'

1. If we would hope to enter into the fellowship of Christ's glory in heaven, we must be contented to enter into the fellowship of his sufferings on earth. It is as true of the Christian as of his Lord, 'No cross, no crown.' This language may, indeed, appear unmeaning or extravagant to unspiritual professors and mere men of the world. Perhaps to some young or inexperienced disciples it may seem repulsive and severe. But, as in the meditation of this morning, occasion was found to observe, the Saviour will have no one to be allured into his service by false and flattering representations concerning it. His yoke, indeed, in one sense, is easy, and his burden light, for it brings peace and gladness to the soul. But still with a fatal perversity are fallen men prone to break his bands, and to cast his cords from them. If, therefore, any one should ask in what the conflicts of the Christian consist, let him know that the first and sorest of them all is with himself. In subduing pride, in uprooting selfishness, in mortifying those fleshly lusts that war against the soul, he will find ample materials for a painful and protracted struggle. And while the corruption of his own sinful and deceitful heart will furnish fuel for many fiery trials within, the world that lieth in wickedness will not leave him long a stranger to trials from without. 'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,' John xvi. 33.

2. And this should remind us that in pursuing this self-denying career, the believer may reckon, with entire confidence, on the tender sympathy and unfailing support of his gracious Lord. The words of the text, which tell him of the struggle, assure him it is one through which, in an infinitely more aggravated form, his Saviour has gone before him. 'For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' If it be soothing to enjoy the sympathy of an earthly friend, how unspeakably more sustaining, more elevating the sympathy of the Son of God; of him who not only is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities,' but is 'mighty to save.' For 'now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the fire kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour,' Isa. xliii. 1—3.

3. But once more, the Christian's warfare on earth is needful to make him 'meet for the inheritance of the saints;' it is soon to terminate in that fulness of pleasure which is at God's right hand. Does the long absent mariner grudge to encounter the toils and privations of the deep, when home and country are awaiting his return? Does the soldier shrink from the field of conflict, when victory is already within his grasp? And shall the Christian be deterred or daunted in bearing a cross which he is so soon to exchange for a crown that fadeth not away. 'It is a faithful saying, If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him?' 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. True, indeed, the spirit of self-indulgence might prompt the wish to be allowed to reap the harvest without being subjected to the husbandman's toil. Pride may whisper that the probationary process is unneeded. It is, however, for the very purpose of humbling pride, and subduing selfishness, of teaching us to live for, and to glory in Christ, alone, that the cross is laid upon us. He who 'knows what is in man,' sees how greatly this discipline is required; and 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'

Finally, then, 'cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise.' 'For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry,' Heb. x. 36, 37.

And who can ever want an encouragement to 'fight the good fight of faith,' who has the sure prospect of being at length received into the joy of his Lord—welcomed to the mansions Christ is now preparing for them that love him, with these gracious words, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?' Matt. xxv. 24.

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples,'* John xv. 8.

WHEN Christ came into the world as a Redeemer, the design and effect of his mission were not only to bring peace on earth and good-will to men, but also and chiefly to give 'glory to God in the highest.' He was himself, in his own person, the brightness of the Father's glory; and by the work given him to do, he was to make known even to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. The heavens, indeed, declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work. His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen, being understood by the things which he hath made. But the testimony to the divine perfections and government which these works of creation afford is dark as midnight, compared with the effulgence of that revelation which is made in and through Christ. Whosoever 'hath seen him hath seen the Father.'

But while the glory of the Father is thus manifested directly, and supremely in the person of the Son, that glory is reflected and multiplied, in ten thousand forms, in the souls of his ransomed people. They are God's husbandry; they are God's building. Washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God, they bear his image as new creatures, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. They are 'God's witnesses,' exhibiting in the graces of a regenerated nature a most blessed and impressive evidence of the depth and tenderness of divine compassion, of the unsearchable riches of divine love, of the awful majesty of divine justice, of the attractive beauties of divine holiness, of the infinite resources of divine wisdom and power. Nothing, accordingly, is or can be more dishonouring to God, than a Christian profession stained by ungodliness. It is as if the sun, instead of sending forth light and warmth to gladden and vivify the earth, and thereby to illustrate the benignity of its great Creator,—were to

radiate darkness and death. Every disciple of Jesus is a light of the world, whose privilege and whose duty it is so to let that light shine before men, that they seeing his good works, may glorify the Father who is in heaven. If, therefore, instead of showing forth, out of a good conversation, the praises of him 'who hath called him to glory and to virtue,'—he be found in no wise differing from other men, walking according to the course of this world, living in divers lusts and passions, he is doing what in him lies to bring discredit and reproach on the name and the work of Christ. Had he never pretended 'to name the name of Jesus,'—had he been an idolator, an infidel, or an atheist, his unholy life would have been nothing but the natural and appropriate illustration of human depravity. But such a life, associated with a Christian profession, is a constant calumny against the Son of God,—as well as a gross indignity to the Father who sanctified and sent him into the world. It is a libel upon the whole scheme of redemption, which is thus made to appear as if it had been devised and wrought out in vain.

'Herein therefore,' said Christ, 'is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.' The Father is glorified, in and by the godliness of believers, because thereby his wisdom in the great work of salvation is conspicuously vindicated, his faithfulness proclaimed, the perfection of his moral government displayed and confirmed.

And what an elevating motive does this consideration present to all 'who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,' to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. To fail in or forget this, is so far to frustrate the great end for which their Saviour suffered and died. Even if ultimately, through the abundant mercy and long-suffering of God, they should be received into the kingdom of heaven, they are now at least helping to rob the Son of his reward, and to disappoint the Father of his aim. Whereas by growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ,—and being 'filled with the fruits of righteousness,' their whole life becomes a continual service to 'the praise and glory of God.'

'So,' added Jesus, 'shall ye be my disciples.' He is not truly a disciple who brings forth no fruit unto God. 'Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone,' Jam. ii. 17,—it is a pretence, a mockery, a delusion. The faith which is 'the gift of God,'—which unites the soul to Christ,—is necessarily productive, according to its strength, of personal holiness. It works by love,—constraining the believer to live not unto himself, but unto Christ who died for him and who rose again.

It overcomes the world,—because it becomes to him 'the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for,' and thus elevates his desires and thoughts to the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. It is vain therefore for any one to pretend to be a disciple of Jesus, whose character and conduct, like a withered branch, are wholly destitute of the graces of the Spirit. The test is sure and unfailling, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.' And to those, on the other hand, who pay no respect to, and feel no reverence for his authority, he addresses this indignant remonstrance, 'Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Luke vi. 46. And that the former class of men may be encouraged and comforted, and the latter warned and alarmed, he hath put on record in his own word this significant assurance, 'Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like. He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded on a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man, that without a foundation, built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great,' Luke vi. 47—49.

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#### TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'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,' 2 Pet. i. 5—7.*

FAITH is the vital principle by which the soul of man, naturally dead in trespasses and sins, is made and kept alive. The instant the sinner is taught and enabled by the word and Spirit of God to believe in Christ, to look unto and confide in him as the Lord his righteousness, he is quickened into spiritual life—he is joined unto Christ and is made a partaker of the divine nature. But though the renewal of his soul is thenceforth begun, ordinarily it is no more than begun, and it is only by travelling daily between his own emptiness and the fulness treasured up in Christ that he at length attains unto the measure of the stature of a perfect man.

This is a great truth, which Christians are prone to forget. When they have been awak-

ened out of their original unconcern about divine things, and have once fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel, they are too ready to relapse,—not indeed into their former deadness, for while the incorruptible seed of the word remains in them, that is made impossible,—but into much of their former indifference—they languish as it were between life and death,—at intervals making some feeble movement towards God, and again suffering themselves to be overborne by sloth and self-indulgence.

It is to guard us against this sin and danger we are here reminded, that the process and the agency by which the soul is 'renewed after the image of him that created' us, are of a kind to give full scope and exercise to all the capacities of our nature,—to call forth and cultivate the understanding, the conscience, and the whole heart and mind of man, that our own energies and responsibilities are all brought into play. That, in a word, 'God so worketh in us both to will and to do,' in carrying forward the sanctification of the soul, as that we ourselves are both enabled and required 'to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.' We are not to rest contented with the first and fundamental step of the soul's conversion. 'Besides this, giving all diligence,' we must 'add to our 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.' It is thus we are to make our 'calling and election sure.'

1. In this series of graces to be cultivated and exercised by the people of God, next to the faith which is their root and spring, the first place is assigned to *virtue*. 'Add to your faith, virtue.' The proper meaning of the word so translated is courage or fortitude. 'If any man,' said Jesus, 'will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me,' Mat. xvi. 24. To confess Christ before men; to hold fast the profession of faith in him without wavering; to cleave to him through good report and bad report, is a service in which the timid and cowardly are sure to fail. This courage, however, which the Christian is to add to his faith, is not the reckless daring that would rush into conflict with needless difficulties. The courage of the Christian must be regulated by an enlightened mind: he must add to virtue,

2. *Knowledge*. 'I bear them record,' said Paul, speaking of the Jews, 'that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge,' Rom. x. 2. It is not by any such blind and indiscriminate ardour that the cause of Christ is to

be either honoured or advanced. He requires his followers to be not only 'harmless as doves,' pure and upright in their intentions and desires, but 'wise as serpents,' having their whole conduct under the direction of a sound understanding, informed and guided by the word and will of God. And to knowledge,

3. *Temperance*. This is a word full of meaning. It is not to be taken in the limited sense in which, in common language, it is often used, as if it were intended to refer to abstinence from excess of one particular kind. The temperance here spoken of, is a far more comprehensive term. It is 'self-restraint' in general; the subjection of all the appetites and passions, the feelings and impulses of our nature, to the government of Christian principle. To this temperance, this constant exercise of self-command and self-denial, must be added,

4. *Patience*. Christians 'have need of patience.' Anticipating and forewarning his disciples of the trials that awaited them, this was the Saviour's exhortation, 'In your patience possess ye your souls.' And so necessary and so valuable is this grace, that we are exhorted to regard those events which serve to cherish and strengthen it, however painful in themselves, as being truly blessings. 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing,' Jam. i. 2—4. But this patience must be exercised in suffering, not for evil-doing, but for well-doing. Christians must add to patience,

5. *Godliness*. The Christian 'must sanctify the Lord God in his heart,' so that however ready the world may be to speak evil of him, as of an evil-doer, they may be ashamed of their false accusations when they behold his 'good conversation in Christ.' It is this 'good conscience towards God,'—this purity of heart,—this genuine desire 'to do all things' to the divine glory, which constitute the true disciple of him who hath commanded his followers to be holy, as he also is holy. Finally, to godliness must be added,

6. *Brotherly-kindness*. 'And to brotherly-kindness, charity;' twin graces—separate manifestations of one and the same spirit,—that is, love to man, founded on and flowing from the love of God. Christ's 'new commandment' was that his disciples should love one another. It is one of the special marks of the Christian that he 'loves the brotherhood;' loves them with a peculiar affection as being fellow-members of Christ, and reflecting in their regenerated souls the out-

lines of his blessed image. But the Christian's love must not be limited to the household of faith. It must be a love large as humanity—and prompting him to do good unto all men. For this love is the fulfilling of the law—it is the very principle and essence of all true obedience to the commandments of God.

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 TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure,' 1 John iii. 3.*

NOTHING, alas! is more common than for man to deceive himself with hopes which the word of God gives him no warrant to indulge. 'The hope of the righteous shall be gladness, but the hope of the hypocrite shall perish.' 'I will hope continually,' said David of old,—but it was because God had been the teacher whose instructions he had followed from his youth, whose wondrous works he had hitherto declared, and on whose faithfulness he could therefore with unwavering confidence rely. No man can truly abound in hope, save through the power of the Holy Ghost, giving him peace and joy in believing on the name of Jesus. And how inestimably precious is this blessed hope! So deeply does it enter into the comfort of the Christian life, and so powerfully does it contribute to make the believer steadfast in the faith, that we are said, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, 'to be saved by hope.'

It is indeed comparatively but little of the actual enjoyment of eternal life, which in this body of sin and death,—in this vale of tears,—is obtained. Some glimpses of the divine glory the believer, it is true, is privileged to behold, though but darkly as in a glass; and though he knows not as yet what he shall be, this much he is assured of, that in the day of his Lord's coming, he shall be like him, because he shall see him as he is. And it is the hope of so glorious a consummation, of so bright and enduring a reward, that cheers him on amid the perils and perplexities of his pilgrimage. There can be no doubt that a hope of a similar kind mightily upheld the human soul of our Lord himself. When his disciples returned and told him, that even the devils were subject unto them through his name, beholding in this fact the earnest of his final triumph he saw already, as it were, 'Satan fall like lightning from heaven,' and in that hour 'he rejoiced in spirit.'

It is true, this animating and elevating hope is

not given to all Christians in the same degree; but if it be withheld from any it is because they do not, according to Paul's exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 'show diligence to obtain the full assurance of hope to the end.' It is because they are slothful,—not following them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises. When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying 'Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.' And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. Now as Christians are all the heirs of the same promise, God did show not only to Abraham, but to us, the immutability of His counsel, by thus confirming it with an oath. And this he did, just that all in every age might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope of the gospel. And therefore it is the fault, not of God, but of our own weak and wavering faith, if we have not this hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.

'Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.' This is the legitimate, the necessary effect of a well-founded hope of being for ever with the Lord. It impels every soul which it animates to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Think of the mighty and incessant influence which is exerted over men of all professions, and of every condition in life, by the hope of reaching what they have been accustomed to regard as a position of independence. How steadily, for example, the man of business, who is bent on the acquisition of a fortune, keeps his eye on that cherished end. How many journeys will he take,—how many minds will he labour to conciliate,—how much calculation and foresight will be employ. For years he will deny himself every relaxation, every common indulgence of life,—toiling more painfully than does the daily labourer, and all to lay up stores he may never live to enjoy.

If, then, the prospect of those uncertain and unsatisfying rewards which this world can bestow, have power to stimulate their votaries to toils and sacrifices like these,—shall the Christian alone, with all his bright and animating anticipations, remain cold and unmoved? Shall the joys of a blessed immortality call forth no effort—shall the crown of life, seen shining in the distance with a lustre which even eternity shall never dim,—impart no thrilling impulse to the energies of his mind?

All experience proclaims that the objects on which the men of this world fix their regards, even when attained, have infinitely less power to please and satisfy than they vainly believed.

But how different, how opposite are the blessed and eternal rewards which await the children of God? As much as imagination magnifies and exaggerates, in anticipation, the worth of the world's possessions,—so much, yea infinitely more, does it fail in rising to an adequate conception of the treasure which never fails. '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', 1 Cor. ii. 9.

'It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is,' 1 John iii. 2. The perfection of our nature, and the consummation of our happiness, consist in our likeness to Christ.

That resemblance to Christ must be begun now, if it is to be completed then. Let Christ then be our daily study,—his doctrines, his character, his person, his work, his life. Let us set him always before us, looking to the example he hath left us, that we should follow his steps. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may we also be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

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#### TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life,' Rev. xxi. 27.*

We cannot tell what are to be the individual employments of the blessed in a future state, nor can we specify the various means through the intervention of which their ineffable and unceasing happiness is to be maintained. Such information was unnecessary; and, accordingly, it has not been revealed. But though imagination be thus left to speculate on the details of a heavenly existence, we know that its chief end will be the praise and glory of him that sitteth upon the throne, and of the Lamb for ever and ever. We know that all its bliss will be derived from a more intimate knowledge of, and a closer communion with our Saviour and our God. And whatever may be the inferior objects which shall attract the regards of these purified spirits, we are assured they shall be infinitely more elevated, and more holy than even the noblest of those pursuits with which hu-

manity is engaged in this sublunary sphere. For such a state of existence it is required by the very nature of things that preparation be made. For what would be the condition of an unregenerate soul, if when loosed from the miserable body its excesses had perhaps destroyed, it were transported into the regions of heaven, and made the companion of beings radiant with celestial purity and holiness? The sinner would there turn in vain to look for any of those sources from which, on earth, he had derived his guilty pleasure. The pure occupations of the just made perfect would be a weariness, yea, an abhorrence to his carnal mind. The shout of their hallelujahs would come upon him like a knell of condemnation. The presence of that God whose mercies he had so unthankfully received, and so impiously abused, whose overtures of grace he had met with hardened impotence, or contemptuous scorn, would torture him with remorse and terror. Those evil passions and desires which on earth had been freely indulged, would there find no object suited to their exercise; their sting would be turned upon himself, and even amid the glories of heaven, his soul would be the prey of the undying worm, and the unquenchable fire.

But He who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot even look upon sin, will not suffer such an experiment to be made. 'There shall in no wise enter into his holy habitation any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie.' 'Come hither,' said the angel, in the apocalypse, to the apostle John, 'I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God,' Rev. xxi. 9—11.

It is that city in which the redeemed of the Lord, his ransomed church, having now neither spot of sin, nor wrinkle of decay, nor any such thing, shall enjoy everlasting communion with her Lord. It is that city whose gates shall then be for ever closed against all who know not God, neither obey the gospel of his Son. The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it, but 'without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie,' Rev. xxii. 22.

O! what unutterable horror shall, in that day, seize the wretched souls who shall have no part nor lot in that celestial city, who shall be cast into utter darkness! When the sun, in whose light they now rejoice, shall at length have gone down to rise no more, when amid the darkness which shall suddenly surround that earth to which they

cleave, the archangel's trump shall sound, and the graves shall give up their dead; when, through that thicker than Egyptian gloom, he who is the bright and morning Star, shall be seen coming forth from his chamber in the east, to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired of all them that believe; and when, from the countless myriads of the redeemed, this triumphant shout of joy shall instantaneously ascend; 'Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation;' and when these exulting thousands shall be seen going away to share in the blessedness of those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; think of the unutterable dismay, the indescribable anguish of those who having lived without God, and died without hope, shall have their portion assigned them in the place of everlasting woe

If we would escape the condemnation of the wicked, and share in the rewards of the righteous, we must be now daily, diligently, prayerfully waiting and watching for the coming of the Son of man; we must be working while it is called to-day, having our loins girded, and our staves in our hands, by patient continuance in well-doing, seeking for glory, honour, and immortality. It is here, on earth, that change must be wrought upon our fallen nature which is indispensable to fit us for heaven. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' John iii. 3. 'Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation,' 2 Cor. vi. 2. 'There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave,' Eccl. ix. 10. 'In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be,' Eccl. xi. 3.

#### TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price,'* Isa. lv. 1.

IN chap. liii. of this book the Holy Spirit sets forth that remarkable description of Messiah, —of his person and character,—his sufferings and death, which has been so often and so triumphantly adduced as one of the many conclusive proofs, that 'the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. i. 21. Immediately thereafter we find in chap. liv. a glowing picture of the rapid and amazing increase of the church of God. And when the prophet has spoken thus explicitly of the coming of Christ,

and the glory that should follow, he straightway gives utterance to that gracious call, which from the very current of the prophecy, we must of necessity understand as proceeding from the Redeemer, and as referring to that salvation his death was to secure. If any doubt on these points could possibly remain, it must yield at once on turning to the New Testament, and there finding language precisely similar issuing directly from the lips of the Saviour himself: 'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,' John vii. 37. Or, once more in the last chapter of the book of the Revelation, ver. 16, 17, 'I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and the morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.'

1. The invitation is to every one that thirsteth. This surely is no restriction upon the freeness of the gospel call. Were the owner of a fountain by the way-side to summon every passer-by to draw near and partake of its refreshing waters, the invitation would be valued and embraced only by those who were actually athirst. It could not therefore be regarded as setting any limit to the freeness of his invitation, were it made to run in the very terms of the passage of scripture before us: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.' Such a form of expression must be viewed, not in the light of a condition imposed by the Giver, but simply, as descriptive of the state necessary to the acceptance of the blessing on the part of the receiver. No one, therefore, not even the most vile and worthless, is left despondingly to say, 'I would gladly have closed with an offer so gracious, but it is not addressed to me,—it is not intended for such as me.' He who thus speaks, wilfully shuts the door of mercy in his own face, and with his own hand; nay, he ungratefully and impiously impugns the sincerity of Christ. He says, 'Ho! every one that thirsteth; and who shall set up limits which the Lord of salvation himself hath thrown down? 'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?' Ezek. xviii. 23. 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' Matt. xi. 28. 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' 1 Tim. i. 15.

2. But what is it, in the spiritual sense of the words 'to be athirst?' It is to feel the misery and danger of our natural estate, as an estate of sin and estrangement from God. In their unawakened state, men think very little of their sinfulness at all. But no sooner does the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to convince of sin, let in the searching light of Divine truth upon the soul, than the painful and terrifying discovery is made, that the heart is not right with God. And the longer and the more steadily the sinner continues under this divine guidance to look within, the more does he find to disturb his peace, and to fill him with anxiety and fear. The deadness of his heart to all things spiritual and divine, the worldliness of his affections and desires, his habitual neglect of God; these, and many similar marks and fruits of indwelling corruption, of which, previously, he had taken no account at all, stand out every day with more alarming clearness. Until at length, when he has sought up and down every corner of his soul for one spot untainted by sin, when he has examined every action of his life, to find one deed that will bear to be measured by the requirements of God's holy law, and finds the search to be fruitless and vain; it is then the humbling confession is extorted from his lips, that there is no health in him, that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

3. And how richly, how generously are the sinner's wants supplied out of that fulness which is treasured up in Christ. 'He that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat,—yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.' And why without a price? Because a gracious and compassionate God knew the sinner had no price to pay. Had it been so that a price were demanded, what could man have offered? His heart! It is full of enmity to God. His service! It is contempt and rebellion. His life! It is not his own. But though the sinner had 'no money,' nothing whatever wherewith to purchase admission to the fountain of the water of life; think not that without a price that admission was secured. Why was it that he 'who made the worlds,' was found by the shepherds of Bethlehem as a helpless infant cradled in a manger? Why was it that he who was 'the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person,' took upon him the form of a servant? Why was it that he who was 'in the bosom of the Father from all eternity,' was heard exclaiming in the agony of his soul, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Why was it the Lord of life was seen bleeding to death on the cursed tree? His humiliation, his obedi-

ence, his sufferings, his crucifixion, were the ransom price of the sinner's soul. For we were redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. Oh! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. Herein indeed was love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us; sparing not his own Son, but freely giving him unto the death for us all.

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TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,' Rev. iii. 17.*

ALREADY the church of Laodicea, though so recently planted, had suffered a lamentable decline. The sin which is so apt to creep into and over-spread churches of long standing,—the sin of lukewarmness and indifference,—had taken complete possession of this church even in its early youth. The heart-warm fervour of genuine piety had given place to a lifeless form; the humbling conviction of utter unworthiness in the sight of God, to proud notions of self-sufficiency. The love of Christ to the love of this world. And as the necessary consequence of this total decay of religious principle and feeling, a mere show of respect for the outward ordinances of the gospel was all that remained in the room of vital godliness. They had not yet reached that point at which a religious profession is altogether laid aside, and entire apostacy from the faith is openly proclaimed. On the contrary, they still scrupulously retain all the external insignia of a Christian church, but it was a shadow without the substance; a body without the soul. Though Christian in name, spiritually considered it was a Christless church. That such a church must have become utterly distasteful and offensive to him who looketh not on the outward appearance, but who searcheth the heart, it can need no argument to prove. It cannot, therefore, surprise any one to hear the awfully emphatic expression of aversion and abhorrence with which their state and character were regarded by the Lord. But it may well excite feelings of admiration and amazement to find with what tender compassion, notwithstanding of all their defec-tions and provocations, the Saviour still entreated

them to return unto him and live. Full of ignorant, presumptuous, and carnal self-confidence they felt no real need of, or dependence on Christ. And yet, so far from giving them over to their own reprobate mind, he earnestly presses upon them anew all the rich treasures of his grace; I counsel thee 'to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.'

The self-complacency which continues to characterize so many 'lukewarm' disciples, rests, as in the case of the **Laodiceans** of old, on an entire misapprehension of their actual condition and prospects in the sight of God. Vainly confiding in names and forms, they 'know not' that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Were these words intended to be taken in their literal acceptation, the statement they contain would indeed be passing strange. The evils which these various expressions denote are, in that view, all of them too palpable to sense, to be either unnoticed or unfeelt. But it is one of the marks of a fallen nature to be keenly alive to those physical disorders which afflict our bodily and temporal estate, and to be all but utterly insensible to those spiritual maladies which destroy the immortal soul. In this sense the natural man knows not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. 'Wretched,' as being in a state of spiritual death. 'Miserable,' as being devoid of all true peace and happiness in the life that now is, and having nothing awaiting him in the life to come, but that wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. 'Poor,' as being totally destitute of the graces of the Holy Spirit, and without part or lot in the inheritance of heaven. 'Blind,' as having no right or realizing apprehension of the things that belong to the soul's peace, and going on heedless and headlong down the broad way that leadeth to destruction. 'Naked,' as being exposed, in all the vileness of a sinful heart and an unholy life, to the searching scrutiny of him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who cannot look upon sin.

But how long-suffering is the Lord! He whose salvation, bought at the price of his own precious blood, they had treated with neglect or scorn; whose grace they had despised as a gift of no value; whose righteousness they were too proud to put on; whose Spirit of saving light and health they had spurned away; that very Saviour

whose person and work had been thus dishonoured and disowned, is still 'waiting to be gracious.' 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold,' 'white raiment,' 'eye-salve,' all that the soul requires for its 'complete redemption.' Men must not think to mine this gold, to weave this raiment, to compound this eye-salve, by any efforts of their own. They must seek all in Christ. In him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell,—and out of his fulness we all may receive, and grace for grace. None but he can be made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. He offers us the 'gold,' 'gold tried in the fire.' Surely this must be his own everlasting love. Like gold, it is most precious, for it redeems us from death and hell; yea, it is like gold 'tried in the fire,' for it endured the cross. He offers us the 'white raiment,' what is this but the spotless robe of his own perfect righteousness, which is unto all and upon all them that believe? He offers us the 'eye-salve,' wherewith to anoint our eyes that we may see. Is not this that 'unction of the Holy One,' which they who have 'know all things;' that divine illumination, which Paul earnestly sought for the Ephesians, when he prayed 'that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand,' Eph. i. 17—20.

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TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory,'* Matt. xii. 20.

THESE words, spoken originally by the prophet Isaiah, are truly and touchingly descriptive of the gentle and compassionate spirit of Christ; and were graciously designed to re-assure and comfort every lowly and contrite sinner. He who in his own personal ministry was ever so full of meekness and benignity,—who did neither strive nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets,—who endured so patiently a countless multitude of wrongs,—who bore with a long-

suffering so marvellous the manifold indignities to which he was daily exposed,—who laboured with a perseverance so inexhaustible to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,—who loved and cherished with a care so watchful and a tenderness so endearing the little flock of his disciples, neither worn out by their slowness of heart to understand, nor offended by their petulance, nor alienated by their temporary desertion,—shall he, can he turn a deaf ear to any penitent believer? He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.'

Two promises are here given, and both of them full of encouragement. The one has respect to the Saviour's treatment of his people in the time of their greatest depression and weakness. The other to the certainty of the accomplishment of his own gracious purpose in their full and complete salvation.

1. 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.' How beautiful, how expressive, how just is this imagery! What can be a fitter emblem of a soul broken by repeated strokes of some heavy and crushing affliction, or saddened and oppressed by a strong and overwhelming sense of guilt and helplessness,—than a 'bruised reed.' Instead of serving as a support to others, it cannot support itself. The disconsolate language of the psalmist alone can suitably portray its condition. 'I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh; I am feeble and sore broken; my heart panteth, my strength faileth me; as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.' But 'the bruised reed he shall not break,' for 'the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken-heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit,' Psal. xxxiv. 18. 'As their day is, so shall their strength be.' 'He who knows our frame is touched with the feeling of his people's infirmities.' He keepeth all their bones; not one of them is broken.

But while the Saviour is thus tender and compassionate in his dealings with the afflicted, when they feel as if all things were against them, as if all the waves and billows of divine displeasure were going over them, not suffering them to be tempted above that which he enables them to bear,—and with the temptation making for them a way of escape,—so does he manifest the same gracious and benignant spirit in cherishing and feeding the feeblest spark of the 'new life' in the soul. 'He quenches not the smoking flax.' How

appropriately does this figure describe the spiritual state of many a soul. There is not the absolute coldness and stillness of spiritual death. The divine fire of the Spirit has touched the heart though as yet no flame appears,—though little even of warmth, and no light at all, can be yet discerned. At times there may be convictions of sin filling the mind with a sense of the misery and danger of a state of estrangement from God,—a painful feeling of the emptiness of the world's pleasures, of the vanity of its joys,—a longing after the more enduring riches of divine grace and love. The soul is stirred with motions and desires of which till now it had been altogether unconscious,—and occasionally it would seem as if a great change, on its whole frame and spirit, were about to ensue. And yet after all it is but the 'smoking flax.' The damp and chilling influences of a corrupt nature, of the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, have not yet been so far overcome as to suffer the divine light of the quickening Spirit from on high to shine forth. There is a contest going on,—the flesh is lusting against the Spirit,—and nothing but smoke can yet be seen. Even the smoke oftentimes seems to have all but disappeared. The spark, feeble and faint, stifled beneath the load of the heart's corruption, seems ready to be extinguished. How little would suffice to put it out for ever! Let temptation a little longer have its sway,—and let the breath of the divine Spirit be withheld,—and darkness and death would again regain dominion in that soul. But the watchful, the gracious Redeemer, quenches not the smoking flax. The latent fire may be suffered to smoulder for a time unseen, almost unfelt,—but he will not suffer it to be extinguished. And at length in his own time and way, he so orders the events of his providence, and so blesses the ordinances of his grace, as that a fresh impulse is given to the divine life within. That Spirit who cometh like the wind, fans the embers with a stronger impulse,—the fire at length bursts forth,—the deceitful lusts and passions are consumed by the increasing fervour of the heavenly theme,—until at length the soul, full of light and full of purity, is made ready to shine as the stars in the kingdom of heaven. Whom he loves—he loves to the end. He who hath begun a good work will assuredly carry it forward to the day of the Lord. And this brings us to notice briefly the

2. Promise—that in the face of all difficulties and discouragements the Lord will not fail to prosecute his own purpose of mercy in the souls of his people, till he send forth judgment unto victory. 'He shall be justified in his sayings, and

will overcome when he is judged.' 'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and withered like the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day,' Psal. xxxvii. 1—7.

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 TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'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,' Isa. xl. 11*

THE preceding context contains a clear and joyful announcement of the coming of Christ. His people who had long been waiting for the 'consolation of Israel,' were at length to be gladdened and comforted by the voice of his forerunner, crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' Zion and Jerusalem were to lift up their voice and to say unto the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God.' He who had spoken to their fathers at 'sundry times and in divers manners by the prophets' was himself personally to appear. 'Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold his reward is with him and his work before him.' Had his church no cause for disquietude in the prospect of his advent? Had they not been oftentimes provoking him to anger with their 'unthankfulness and evil,'—their ingratitude and disobedience? And was there no reason to fear lest the 'strong hand' with which he was about to come, should be stretched out to visit and chastise them for these things? But his name is 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,' Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. He is to come, indeed, with the resistless authority of omnipotence,—but that omnipotence is to be thrown as a shield and safeguard around his people. '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.' What infinite condescension, what inexpressible tenderness do these words display!

1. To himself he takes not here the name of Lord and Sovereign,—but that of Shepherd,—a name descriptive of all that is faithful and gentle, loving and kind. 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep,' John x. 11. It was he of whom the Father spake these mysterious words, 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd,' Zech. xiii. 7. '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. 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 'Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For 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,' Rom. v. 8, 9, 10. He is the 'great shepherd of the sheep,' Heb. xiii. 20. For when the God of peace brought him again from the dead, he set him at his own right hand, far above all principality and power, and every name that is named,—and there, with a vigilance that never slumbers, and a power which no adversary can withstand, he orders all things so as most effectually to secure the salvation of his people. He is the 'chief shepherd,' 1 Pet. v. 4. Who hath given commission to 'pastors and teachers' to feed his sheep,—to feed his lambs.

2. To his church and people he hath given the appropriate and endearing name of 'his flock.' They are as 'lambs in the midst of wolves,'—continually exposed to peril and persecution from an ungodly and unbelieving world. Of themselves they are feeble and defenceless,—for they have neither numbers nor power to cope with the vast and powerful array of the unconverted and disobedient, who being themselves at enmity with God, hate and oppose his people. But let them not, on this account, be dismayed. 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,' Luke xii. 32.

Of old, he led 'his people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron,' dividing the sea before them and causing them to pass through: in the day-time leading them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire: 'cleaving the rocks in the wilderness, and giving them drink, as out of the great depths.' And still he is their shepherd,—making them to lie down in green pastures, and leading them beside the still waters. He 'feeds his flock' with the provision of Zion. His blessed word, with its exhaustless treasure of 'great and precious promises' He sets open before them,—inviting

them daily to search the scriptures, which testify of him, and in which they have eternal life. The ordinances of his grace,—secret meditation, and prayer,—domestic devotion,—the public services of the sanctuary,—all are means of his appointment, designed and fitted to build up the souls of his people in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation. By these he strengthens the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,—enlightening the ignorant, comforting the mourners in Zion, bringing back the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,—and thus training them for glory, honour, and immortality in heaven.

3. But while his care and kindness extend to all 'the flock,'—while he follows after every wanderer from the fold,—seeking diligently until he find him, laying him on his shoulders and bringing him in safety home, not leaving even so much as one single individual of those whom the Father hath given him 'to stumble on the dark mountains' and perish,—while the Saviour's love and faithfulness thus reach to all who believe in his name,—he feels and manifests a peculiar interest in young disciples. They are 'the lambs of his flock.' He 'gathers them with his arm, and carries them in his bosom.' He knows their tender frame,—how ill able they are to withstand the rude blasts of temptation with which the devil, the flesh, and the world combine to assail them. But as their day is so shall their strength be. 'I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me,' Prov. viii. 17. Even in earliest infancy he desires and commands that the young should be given unto God. 'Suffer,' says he, 'the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,' Luke xviii. 17. What encouragement is there in such language to Christian parents, to travail, as it were, in birth again, till Christ be formed in the hearts of their offspring the hope of glory. If the Saviour himself is so deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of youthful disciples,—if he watches for their souls with so tender a love,—if he has given them assurances of his fostering care and unwearied kindness so strong and comforting,—why should their earthly guardians fail or be discouraged. He knows, and sympathizes in all their anxieties,—he enters with more than paternal solicitude into all their feelings,—he hears their most secret prayers, when in silence and solitude they are wrestling with God in fervent supplications that the objects of their affection may be kept from the evil that is in the world, and saved with an everlasting salvation. The Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, is 'touched' with a

love for these 'little ones,' infinitely deeper and more enduring than the heart of the best of earthly parents ever knew. He will 'gently lead' those who are thus striving to bring their children to God,—and cause their labour to be not in vain in the Lord.

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THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life,' Rom. vi. 22.*

BY nature all men are in bondage to sin, and consequently are, in that wretched and miserable state, the servants, or rather slaves of Satan. 'Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey,' ver. 16. And till we are truly convinced of the guilt and danger of this our fallen condition, we can neither appreciate nor embrace the deliverance which the gospel brings. For this reason, it is that in the opening chapter of the Epistle to which the text belongs, Paul is at so much pains to stop every mouth and bring in the whole world as guilty before God. That humiliating fact must be first understood, believed and felt, before a way can be made for the preaching of Christ crucified. It is the prophet's roll, written within and without with lamentation and mourning and woe, which the sinner must eat, and with the bitterness of which he must be filled, before ever Christ can become, in his mouth, 'as honey for sweetness.' It is the dry and parched land through which he must pass ere he can ever know what it is to pant after the water brooks of a finished and a free salvation. It is the voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, like the noise of a mighty thunder, proclaiming the terrors of avenging justice, that must first rouse him from his death-like slumber,—that his ear may be ready to welcome the gentler sound of the 'harpers harping with their harps,' that he may be moved to listen with gratitude and joy to the messengers of mercy proclaiming 'peace on earth and good-will to men.'

But these 'good news and glad tidings' of great joy which it was Paul's chiefest delight 'to publish unto all people,' the perversity and impiety of man, not content with despising and setting them at nought, strove to cover with reproach and dishonour. The doctrines of free grace,—the glorious and marvellous scheme of redemption through the righteousness of Christ, without works of the law,—was vilified and

calumniated as an encouragement to sin. This monstrous misrepresentation he at once indignantly repels and conclusively confutes, by showing that the sanctification and the justification of the believer, though in their own nature distinct from each other, are yet inseparable; that they rest on the same foundation,—that is, on union with Christ. That the same faith by which Christ becomes the Lord our righteousness,—makes us partakers of his Holy Spirit, causing him to be made of God unto all his people, 'wisdom, and sanctification, and redemption.'

This great truth he illustrates by a reference to baptism. 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,' ver. 3, 4. Baptism thus exhibits the Christian as dying, or buried, and as risen again; dying as a sinner in and with Christ; buried in and with him, that thereby sin might be destroyed,—rising in and with him by the glory of the Father, to walk in newness of life. And all which baptism thus emblematically represents, is realized and accomplished in every true believer. The 'old man is crucified' with Christ. In him, as our surety and substitute, our sinful nature suffered death upon the cross, and this was done on very purpose that 'the body of sin,'—the whole power of corruption in us, 'might be destroyed.' For Christ 'his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness.' Accordingly he addresses Christians as those who had once been the servants or slaves of sin, and who in that condition, living as they had done under the dominion of these fleshly lusts that war against the soul, had yielded their 'members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity.' But that bondage he notices only for the purpose of contrasting it with the freedom which their conversion to Christ had brought to their souls. 'But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life.'

1. Every believer then is made 'free from sin.' He is freed from its curse through that death which he suffered for it, in the person of Christ. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,' Gal. iii. 13. He is freed from its pollution, 'by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost,' Tit. iii. 5. He is freed from its power, being 'quickened together with Christ,' Eph. ii. 5. 'If

any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,' 2 Cor. v. 17.

2. Every believer is 'become a servant unto God.' He has been redeemed not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. He is not his own,—he has been bought with a price. He feels himself 'constrained by love' to live no more unto himself, and no more unto the world, but unto him who died for him and rose again; yea, to present himself, soul, body, and spirit, as one living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, which is his reasonable service.

3. And hence every true believer has 'his fruit unto holiness.' The fruit of his faith in Christ is a holy life. Not indeed that this can be said absolutely, or without qualification, of any, even the most devoted follower and disciple of Jesus. Even Paul, with all his high attainments in the divine life, had it to say of himself with deepest humility, 'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would that I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. O! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 18, 19, 24. But yet this apostle could say truly, 'to me to live is Christ,' Phil. i. 21. The grace of God which had appeared, bringing salvation, taught him more efficaciously every day that, 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 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 us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' Tit. ii. 12—14.

4. And finally, every believer has for the end and issue of his course,—eternal life, as the glorious and blessed result of being made free from sin, and of having become a servant unto God. Not that this eternal life is the reward of his own merit: it is an inheritance purchased for him by the same righteousness of Christ which first secured his deliverance from the curse and power of sin, and made him a partaker of the Spirit of holiness.

## THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life,'* Rom. ii. 6, 7.

THE Lord is slow to wrath,—having no pleasure at all that the sinner should die. How melancholy, how humbling,—that this exercise of the divine compassion should often be taken as a license to continue in sin! 'Because sentence against his evil work is not executed speedily, therefore is the sinner's heart wholly set in him to do evil.' He begins profanely to dream that the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity, is such an one as himself,—not knowing that the goodness of God is designed, as it is surely fitted, to lead him to repentance. And thus, in the hardness of an impenitent heart,—hardening still more every day under those very manifestations of compassion and tenderness that should have melted it into the deepest contrition, the most godly sorrow for sin,—he goes on 'treasuring up for himself,'—as the apostle testifies in the verse immediately preceding the text,—'wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.'

There is surely something very awful in that striking description of the conduct of the impenitent sinner:—'treasuring up wrath.' It is his own doing,—it is his own hand that is piling up the mountain of iniquity, which is destined finally to fall on him, and grind him to powder. He is busy in the acquisition of unsanctified gain: and every addition his selfish toil is making to his riches, is only serving to purchase for him a larger inheritance in the place of torment. He is running greedily in quest of pleasure, and each new sensual indulgence is but preparing a fresh pang of remorse wherewith to embitter the endless misery of a ruined soul. He is surrounding himself with the pomps and vanities of a gay and giddy world, only to form a darker contrast with the dismal horrors of hell. He is climbing laboriously up the slippery steep of ambition and earthly aggrandizement, that like Lucifer he may have a deeper fall into the gulf of perdition. Verily, 'God shall render unto every man according to his deeds.' What a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 'They that sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.'

But not less true it is, that they who 'sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,'—for 'to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality,' God shall render 'eternal life.'

Those to whom this blessed promise is made are here described as following a certain course in this world,—and as having their hearts set on a certain inheritance in the world to come.

1. The course they follow in this world is 'a patient continuance in well-doing.' Their daily business, like that of their divine Master, is 'to be going about doing good.' Their piety and virtue are not the product of mere impulse, or sentimentalism,—spurious and evanescent. They are the offspring of that 'faith in Christ, which purifieth the heart, which worketh by love, and overcometh the world. They are the fruit of a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf neither falls nor fades. They are like the morning light, which, however faint in the early dawn, while yet struggling with the shadows of night, never disappears,—but, on the contrary, 'shines more and more, unto the perfect day. But not only is the course of life in question, 'a continuance in well-doing,'—it is a 'patient' continuance in it. The ways of wisdom, it is true, 'are pleasantness, and her paths are peace,' Prov. iii. 17., but they do not, on that account, the less require from all who follow them much self-denial. Therefore, said the apostle Paul, 'let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not,' Gal. vi. 9.

2. But further, those to whom the promise of the text is made, are described as having their hearts set on an inheritance in the world to come. It is one of the sure marks of the unregenerate, that they 'walk by sight.' The things of sense and time alone have a reality to their carnal minds. These they seek,—and for these they live. It is, on the other hand, an equally distinctive characteristic of the believer, that he 'walks by faith,'—that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for. Being 'risen with Christ,' he seeks 'those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. He is in the world, but he is not of the world. He knows that this is not his rest: that here he has no continuing city, no sure place of abode,—and he looks for one to come. His treasure is in the heavens, and his heart is there also. To be at home in the body,—is to be absent from the Lord. And, therefore, as a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, he feels that nothing here can meet and satisfy the longings and aspirations of a soul which is joined unto Christ. His desire and prayer is, that where Christ is, there he may be also,—and passing the time of his sojourning here in fear,' he looks for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour,—until at

length, being made 'meet for the inheritance of the saints,' he enters finally and eternally into the joy of his Lord—into glory, honour, and immortality, in heaven.

But when it is thus promised that God shall render eternal life to those who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for the rest which remaineth in heaven; we are not for an instant to suppose that this course of well-doing constitutes their meritorious title to that blessed inheritance. It is nothing more than the training and discipline, by which the same gracious God, who, in his sovereign mercy, 'chose them in Christ' and

redeemed them by his precious blood, prepares and fits them for being 'for ever with the Lord.' That course of well-doing is throughout every step of its progress, from its first and feeblest beginnings in conversion, to its termination in perfect holiness, entirely the result and fruit of the grace of God. It was grace that brought the believer into the narrow path,—that upheld him day by day in pursuing it,—and that in the end conducts him into the kingdom of heaven. Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thee, O Lord, be all the praise'

## OCTOBER.

### FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

'If we deny him, he also will deny us,' 2 Tim. ii. 12.

THE Scribes and Pharisees thought themselves most unjustly accused, when they were charged with allowing and sanctioning the persecuting deeds of their fathers. 'They built the tombs of the prophets and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous,' in testimony of respect and reverence; and did not this sufficiently prove that had they lived in the days of their fathers, they would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets? But was this indignant disclaimer borne out by the fact? Did they not go about after the very manner of their fathers, to kill Jesus himself,—that great prophet who had told them the truth which he had heard from God. They knew not what spirit they were of—but Christ, whose judgment in all things is according to truth, solemnly declared that so completely were they at heart consenting to their fathers' sins, that the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world should be required of that generation. And may not professing Christians, possessing as they do, a heart that is still deceitful above all things, as well as desperately wicked, practise upon themselves a similar delusion. Are not we baptized members of Christ's visible church? Have not we, all our life long, borne the Christian name? How harsh then and unreasonable to accuse us of denying the Lord! But if they who would thus complain of the charge, be all the while keeping Christ at a distance from them; suffering not his inter-

ference with any of their ways; refusing to sacrifice for his sake the smallest of their worldly pleasures or to forego the least considerable of their selfish desires; if practically they be subjecting his will to theirs, and his authority to the opinion or the custom of the world, is it not manifest that their love for him is at best an unmeaning pretext, if it be not in truth an impious mockery. And that were that Saviour again on earth, sitting like 'a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap,' to purge their character and deeds; with the same uncompromising fidelity which distinguished his preaching among the Jews, smiting at every one of their corruptions with the sharp two-edged sword that went forth out of his mouth,—at their covetousness, their pride, their hypocrisy, their filthiness and foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient, then might a spirit of hostility have been evoked which had they been numbered with the Jewish multitude at Jerusalem of old, might have led them not simply to deny him, but even to join in that fierce and fearful cry, 'crucify him, crucify him.'

Christ is never so deeply injured as when he is wounded in the house of his friends. The opposition of an avowed adversary is indescribably less hurtful to his cause, than when that cause is denied and repudiated by one who had professed to be on its side. When Judas denied and betrayed his Lord, the natural result of that proceeding was to bring suspicion upon the character of Christ. It gave occasion to adversaries to blaspheme. It enabled them to say, 'now at length the truth concerning this Jesus begins to appear. His own followers who have lived in

closest intimacy with him, begin to turn against him, and to become his accusers. To the eye of the world indeed, he has hitherto maintained a reputation for piety and holiness,—but this Judas has been behind the scenes,—he has seen him in his private hours,—he has been admitted to his confidence,—and he now denies his Messiahship, and denounces him as a deceiver.' And while that single act of treachery must thus have served so grievously to dishonour Christ in the eyes of the unspiritual and unbelieving world,—how disastrous must its effects have been on those who had perhaps been beginning to think favourably of his claims,—who were turning towards him with some disposition to listen and to inquire; but whom this unexpected shock, this public denial of him by one of his own chosen followers, may have sufficed to turn back unto their former scepticism,—and may thus instrumentally have been the occasion of arresting a movement otherwise fitted to have conducted them to heaven. And the same treachery which thus injured and dishonoured the Saviour, was fitted to degrade his faithful disciples. It was calculated to cast the shade of doubt and distrust over the sincerity of their professions of attachment to the cause of Jesus. Suggesting, as it might do to an ungenerous world, that some selfish motive, in their case too, was at the bottom of all their present zeal in his service,—and that when the temptation should become sufficiently strong, they too would cast off their allegiance and forsake him.

Let none then think that because they 'name the name of Jesus,' they cannot be numbered among those who are chargeable with denying him. They may be doing so daily,—and that in the very circumstances most fitted to wrong and offend him. You profess indeed to be a follower of Christ! If men were to form their opinion of him and his religion from what they see in you, what would that opinion be? Would they be led by the exhibition you make of the Christian character to venerate Christ, to love Christ, to consider an interest in Christ to be the one thing needful, the pearl of great price? Would your conduct impress them with a sense of the importance of Christ's gospel,—of the holiness of his religion,—of the blessedness of his service? Or would they, on the contrary, so far as their judgment is founded on the observation of your character and life,—be tempted to think Christianity a thing of very small moment,—to regard it as a matter which deserves not to occupy very much of their time or their thoughts,—which in truth was of no practical value, leaving men very much as it found them. If this be the impres-

sion which the every day life of any professing Christian is fitted to convey,—it is vain for that man to count upon the fact that he has never in words denied Christ. His conduct constitutes a daily denying of him. That man is basely deceiving the world as to Christ's true character and claims,—he is taking, so far as he has the power, everything from Christ's religion which is fitted to challenge the esteem, the love, and the devout veneration of men; and he is putting upon it a character calculated to expose it to shame and scorn. This is by far the most common form of the sin against which the text utters so impressive a warning. In *words* many confess Christ, who in *deeds* deny him. It will avail nothing that such men may come in the great day of accounts claiming a close and intimate relation to Christ,—in virtue of names, and professions, and forms. He will cut short their hypocritical pleadings with the brief but pointed sentence, 'I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.' 'If we deny him, he also will deny us.'

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#### FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'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;'*  
Isa. xli. 10.

THESE words are graciously designed to encourage and comfort the people of God, amid the manifold perplexities, struggles, and trials of this present evil world.

When the traveller is setting forth on a journey through the trackless desert, or the pathless wood,—where, at every step, he may lose his way,—where, overtaken with thirst and hunger, his soul may faint within him,—where beasts of prey may lie in wait to devour him,—where apprehensions of unknown danger must be continually clouding and agitating his mind,—what would he not give for the company of a powerful protector,—'an unerring guide?'

When the unpractised soldier is girding himself for war, and all the untried hazards of the deadly conflict in which he is about to engage, are rising up in fearful array before him, what would he not give for the skill and experience of a leader in whom he might safely confide, one who was familiar with all the stratagems of the enemy—who had already measured and mastered his strength?

When the orphan child is cast out, friendless

and destitute, on a cold and selfish world. What would he not give for the guardianship of a father's care,—for the shelter of a mother's love?

God's people are all travellers,—and through both wood and wilderness must they bend their way towards the land of promise. They are *soldiers*,—and in many 'a good fight of faith' must they draw the spiritual sword, before they can hope to win the unfading crown of life. They are *orphan children* sent forth into a world that persecuted and put to death their elder Brother.

But 'let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' Does the Christian, humbly conscious that it is not in man that walketh to order his own steps aright, need and desire a guide to conduct him in safety through the perils of his pilgrimage? 'Fear not,' says Jesus, 'for I am with thee.' 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things,' John xiv. 26. 'When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you,' John xvi. 13, 14.

Does the Christian require and long for 'a leader and commander,' to strengthen his hands and encourage his heart, that he may acquit himself as a good soldier,—that he may be enabled to 'withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand?' 'Be not dismayed,' says the Lord Jesus, 'for I am thy God.' He has himself spoiled all the principalities and powers by which the Christian can be opposed, and has made a show of them openly:—triumphing over them in his cross: and he will send none to this warfare on their own charges; already he has provided for them the complete armour of God. For a girdle,—sincerity and truth: for shoes,—the preparation of the gospel of peace: for a breastplate,—his perfect righteousness: for an helmet,—the hope of his salvation: for a bulwark of defence,—the shield of faith: for a sharp two-edged sword,—his own most blessed word. Thus armed, his people shall be more than conquerors, through Christ that loveth them.

Does the Christian feel oftentimes, in seasons of despondency and trial, as if deserted and forlorn,—as if all things were against him,—as if no man cared for his soul? Let him remember, that 'to as many as believed Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' Yes, Christians, in the day of your orphanage, when ye were cast out into the open field, he passed by, and saw you, polluted in your own blood, and he said unto you, 'live.' Yea, he swore unto you, and entered into a covenant with you,—saying,

'ye are mine.' He washed you with water, and anointed you with oil: he decked you with ornaments, and put a crown upon your head. And think you that now he will forget or forsake the adopted children of his Father? 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Yea, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hand. I will strengthen thee, I will help thee: I will uphold thee with the right arm of my righteousness.' What an exhaustless store of comfort to the Christian do these exceeding great and precious promises convey!

The devil, as a roaring lion, may go about seeking to devour, but his head shall be bruised under the feet of this glorious Guide, Conqueror, and Friend. The world may spread out its allurements to seduce and betray, but this is the victory that overcometh, even our faith in Christ. The flesh, with its deceitful lusts, may war against the soul,—but the help of his Spirit will enable us to crucify the flesh, and to walk before him in newness of life. Death may throw his terrors across the valley of dissolution,—but Christ hath abolished death,—and therefore, though we walk through the dark valley, we shall fear no evil. A judgment day may reveal the great white throne, before which all kindreds, and tongues, and nations, must appear: but 'who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth,—who is he that condemneth?' 'Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are made more than conquerors, through him that 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, my Lord,' Rom. viii. 33—39.

#### SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'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?' Rom. viii. 32.*

In these words the Holy Spirit is reasoning, most tenderly and conclusively, with the distrustful nature of man. In the immediately preceding verse the apostle had exclaimed, in the language of humble but joyful confidence, 'if God be for

us, who can be against us?' Ah yes,—might some doubting disciple reply, 'if God be for us?' But is he 'for us,' of a truth? is he on the side of one so poor, feeble, worthless as I? will he in the face of all the manifold provocations wherewith I have grieved his Spirit, continue to vouchsafe that grace and strength of which I am every hour, every moment, in need, and without which I must inevitably perish? The answer is ready, and it is as complete as it is gracious. 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all, how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things.'

The argument consists in a pointed reference to what God has already done,—as involving in it of necessity the assurance that he will 'withhold no good thing' from his people,—that he will supply all their need out of his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

1. 'He spared not his own Son.' When the redemption of a lost world was to be achieved, when the souls of fallen men were to be rescued from sin, and death, and hell, he counted no sacrifice too great for such an end. To secure it a price of infinite value must be paid,—his own Son must be the ransom,—and even at such a cost, his purpose of mercy was fulfilled. 'He spared him not.' Though he had been in the bosom of the Father from all eternity,—as one brought up with him, and who was daily his delight rejoicing always before him, He freely surrendered him that he might become the suffering substitute of perishing sinners. Yea, he allowed not 'the cup to pass from him,' even when it was full of the wrath of the Almighty. Not one act of humiliation, not one tear of sorrow, not one groan of agony was diminished from the full weight and measure of what was due to the offended justice of God. 'He delivered him up to the death.' Not until the career which began in the manger at Bethlehem, had been carried forward to the cross of Calvary, and consummated in the anguish of that awful hour which drew from him the mysterious cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Not till then was he permitted to say, 'It is finished.'

And for whom was this sacrifice made? On whose account was it that God thus delivered up his own Son? It was 'for us all.' Even for the very chief of sinners. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. 'In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free.' His righteousness is unto all and upon all them that believe. No one that cometh to God by him will he in any wise cast out. For in Christ he is reconcil-

ing the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses.

2. 'How, then, shall he not with him freely give us all things.' As if the apostle had said, 'The conclusion is inevitable; having given us the greater gift, how can it be imagined he will refuse us the less? Having bestowed upon us that which was inconceivably infinitely the most dear and precious, how is it possible he should deny us whatever else may be needful for our final salvation?'

'With him.' Whatever good gift the believer receives must come to him, not only *through* Christ as the channel of all grace and mercy,—but *with* Christ. In other words, until we receive Christ himself, we can receive no blessing from God. Till then we are and must be without God and without hope in the world. Accordingly, it is *himself* Christ offers to all to whom the message of the gospel comes. 'Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me,' Rev. iii. 20. 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.' Without Christ, we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

But 'with him,' God will 'freely give us all things.' He exacts nothing as an equivalent for the inestimable blessings of pardon, and peace, and purity, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Christ has purchased them for his people with his own blood, and therefore 'with him' they are all 'freely bestowed.' He is the 'heir of all things,' and all his people, even the very humblest and meanest of their number, are 'heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.' 'Therefore let no man glory in men, for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours. And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's,' 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

How marvellous is the love of God!—truly it passeth knowledge. To meditate upon it is both most pleasing, and most profitable to the believer's soul. This love is the prime motive, the grand constraining principle which the gospel employs, to subdue the enmity and to soften the impenitence of man's hard and stony heart; to dislodge the fears and to engage the confidence of his unbelieving mind. And just in proportion as we are enabled to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of God to us,—will that love

to God which is the fulfilling of his law be shed abroad in our hearts. While we remain ignorant or distrustful of the love of God, conscious guilt will fill our minds with fear,—that fear which hath torment. But there is no fear in love; perfect love casteth out fear. And it is only those who are ‘rooted and grounded in love,’ that are ‘filled with the fulness of God.’ ‘Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen,’ Eph. iii. 20, 21.

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SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

‘*And as thy days, so shall thy strength be,*’ Deut. xxxiii. 25.

OFTENTIMES when the Christian turns his eye forward upon the future, and attempts to penetrate the thick shadows that rest upon it, his mind is oppressed with anxieties and fears. Already he has had painful and humbling experience of his utter insufficiency for any good thing; of his proneness to err, his readiness to give way to temptation, his tendency to grow weary in well-doing, his constant danger of becoming a prey to the devil, the flesh, or the world. The knowledge of these infirmities, and the recollection of the many sins and short-comings into which they have already betrayed him, fill him not unfrequently with much disquietude, and make him to tremble for the safety of his soul. And truly, had he nothing better than his own might and prudence with which to meet the dangers that beset his path, well might he be alarmed. But the real secret, both of his peril and his perplexity, is his forgetfulness of the presence and power of him whose grace is sufficient for the severest trials of his people, and whose strength is perfected in their weakness. And accordingly, it is by leading back the believer’s thoughts to the only source of security, that God graciously seeks to dispel his terrors, and to re-assure and comfort his fainting heart. You know not, it is true, what lies before you. You cannot tell what even a day or an hour may bring forth. But let this one word from a faithful covenant-keeping God, be your ground of confidence—‘as thy days, so shall thy strength be.’

1. This promise reminds us, that though the future be hidden, and that in great wisdom and mercy, from us,—it is all naked and open in the eyes of the Lord. He knoweth the end from the begin-

ning. Events may fall out altogether contrary to our anticipations, breaking up our best laid schemes, and disappointing our fondest hopes—our most deeply cherished desires. And were we left to sustain a shock so unexpected and severe in our own strength,—were we abandoned in circumstances so unlooked for and so agitating, entirely to our own resources, how little hope would there be of a way of escape? But the Lord seeth under the whole heaven. The most sudden of those turns of fortune, of those cross incidents which so confound the wisdom of man, and so baffle all his powers of calculation, surprise not him whose understanding is infinite. The ‘end and measure of our days,’ and the whole course and complexion they are destined to take, were present from all eternity to that Omniscience which foresees, with equal certainty, the falling of a leaf, and the dissolution of a world.

2. But the promise implies, not only that he who hath given us this promise, knows with infallible certainty what shall befall us; it implies further, that nothing shall or can befall us without his will. Our ‘days’ shall be such, as in his own infinite wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, He hath himself appointed them to be. He numbereth even the hairs of our head, and without our Father not a sparrow falleth to the ground. ‘The Lord reigneth,’ said the psalmist, ‘let the earth rejoice,’ Psal. xcvi. 1. And what a cause of rejoicing is it to be assured, that all things are under the constant, irresistible control of him, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working! His way, it is true, appears on many occasions, to our view, to be in the sea, and his path on the great waters, so that his footsteps are not known,’ Psal. lxxvii. 19. The designs of his holy providence may be, by us, inscrutable; clouds and darkness may seem to be round about his pavilion; but that the dispensation, whatever it be, has emanated from the counsels of eternity,—this is enough to inspire the child of God with unwavering confidence in its absolute rectitude; for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? are not justice and judgment the habitation of his throne? It is a realizing conviction of this truth, that he and all his concerns are in the hands of God, which enables the believer both ‘to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of God,’ Lam. iii. 26. It is this which strengthens him to say, even under the sorest adversity, ‘Thy will be done.’

3. But once more still, while the promise of the text implies, that the Lord knows of what nature our days shall be, and that all the ‘ordering of our lot’ is from himself; it at the same

time expressly assures the Christian, that grace will be given in proportion to the exigency of his case. 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' What encouragement, what unspeakable consolation is this promise fitted to convey? How closely does it connect the believer with his Lord? How strongly does it assure him of the watchfulness, the sympathy, the care of his gracious Redeemer? 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation,' 2 Pet. ii. 9. 'The trial of their faith is to him much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire,' 1 Pet. i. 7. 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it,' 1 Cor. x. 13.

If it be the duties of our place and station that fill us with solicitude,—if their number seems to surpass the resources of our strength and time,—if their difficulty defies our wisdom,—if the responsibility they involve presses heavily on our conscience,—let us cast our burden on the Lord and he will sustain it. 'Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you,' Luke xi. 9.

If it be trials, in our person, our families, our fortunes, we are called to endure; we have not only an example of patient suffering set for us by him who 'endured the cross, despising the shame,' and to whom therefore we do well to look, 'lest we should be weary, and faint in our minds;' but we have an explicit assurance, that 'he will not leave us comfortless, that he will come to us.' In all his people's afflictions he is himself afflicted. He will be 'a very present help in time of trouble,' Psal. xlvi. 1.

If it be temptations to sin to which we are exposed,—if 'the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things,' be threatening to enter in, and to entice us away from God; he who hath himself suffered being tempted, will not fail to succour his people when they are tempted. He will teach those who make him their refuge to say with Paul: 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ Jesus which strengtheneth me,' Phil. iv. 12, 13.

### THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee,'* Psal. lxxxiv. 11, 12.

THE word 'for' which begins this passage of scripture, shows that here we have the grounds of some previous statement,—the reasons which had chiefly moved the psalmist to utter those expressions which the preceding context contains. At the period when this song of Zion was composed, David was an exile from his city and his throne. And nothing speaks more strongly of the depth and fervour of his piety, than the fact, that of all the losses he had sustained in that season of sore adversity, none pressed so heavily upon his heart as the loss of the public ordinances of the house of God. 'His soul longed, yea, even fainted for the courts of the Lord,' ver. 2. One day in the courts of the sanctuary, was to him better than a thousand. The meanest attendant in the temple, occupied, in his estimation, a place of honour. And in his own state of separation from the tabernacle of the Most High, he envied the very birds that had found nests for themselves beneath the altars of God. And why this delight in the place where God had put his name, and in the services which bring the creature into close communion with the great Creator? '*For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*'

Three things in this passage invite our consideration. I. What God is. 'He is a sun and shield.' II. What he does for his people. 'He gives grace and glory, and withholdeth no good thing from them that walk uprightly.' III. The confidence which, for these reasons, ought to be reposed in him. 'O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.'

I. 'God is a sun and shield.' Both comparisons are strikingly appropriate. To the natural world the sun is the grand source of light and life. And God in Christ is the light and the life of men. This accordingly is the testimony of the Lord Jesus, when he was manifested in the flesh. 'I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' Moreover, it is this very light which gives life to the soul. For every regenerate soul is born 'not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.' As the natural sun vivifies and enlightens

the earth, so the Lord, who is 'the Sun of righteousness,' sends out his living light and health into men's dark and perishing souls.

'But the Lord is also a shield.' Though in the moment of his conversion, the sinner is truly brought from darkness into light,—he is not in the same instant removed from all danger. He is now in the 'right way,' the way to a 'city of habitation.' But his course is through an enemy's country; and at every step of his progress his path is beset by the foe. The devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. The world lieth in wickedness. His own heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. But the Lord God is a 'shield.' 'Behold,' therefore joyfully exclaims the believer, 'God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation,' Isa. xii. 2.

II. What God does for his people. 'He gives them grace and glory, and he withholdeth no good thing from them that walk uprightly.' He gives them 'grace.' This is their provision by the way. It is a provision abundantly adequate to their necessities, however urgent and oppressive these may be. 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness,' 2 Cor. xii. 9. It is a provision which is never exhausted. 'He giveth more grace,' Jam. iv. 6. It is a provision dealt out with unerring exactness, as he knoweth that their several cases require. For 'unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' It is a provision infinitely rich and various. 'For to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit,' 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9. 'My God,' says the apostle Paul, 'shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus,' Phil. iv. 19.

He gives them 'glory.' This is their final and eternal reward; when they shall have fought the good fight and finished their course, they shall 'receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away,' 1 Pet. v. 4. 'The glory,' said Jesus unto his Father, 'which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one,' John xvii. 22, 23. This participation in the glory of Christ shall extend both to the bodies and the souls of his people. The body, which is sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption; sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body: sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory, 1 Cor. xv. The soul, on the other hand, shall undergo a transformation equally

complete and wonderful. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is,' 1 John iii. 2.

But if we would hope to enjoy this grace in time, and this glory in eternity,—we must 'walk in the light, as he is in the light,' and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

III. What confidence should these considerations prompt us to repose in God! 'O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.' 'They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth, even for ever,' Psal. cxxv. 1, 2.

#### THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'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,' Rom. viii. 38, 39.*

In the immediately preceding verses Paul had been expressing, in a strain of holy confidence and joy, the strong and blissful conviction which the gospel had given him, of the present security and final triumph of all the people of God. In themselves, it is true, they are unprofitable servants,—less than the least of all his mercies. 'But who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' Tried, indeed, by their own merits they have all sinned and come short of his glory. 'But it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?' In the world, it is not to be denied, they have much tribulation; for many of them in those times of trial and persecution had been, so to speak, 'killed all the day long,—accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' But could the enmity of ungodly men separate them from the love of Christ,—from the love of that Saviour who laid down for their sakes his life upon the bloody and ignominious cross,—and who was now within the rail at God's right hand, with an all-prevailing voice making continual intercession for them? No! let the violence of the ungodly do its worst,—let all the evils which malice or misfortune could accumulate, be heaped in succession upon their heads,—let tribulation terrify, let distress grieve, let persecution wound, let famine waste, let nakedness expose, let peril endanger, let the sword

destroy, 'in all these things,' exultingly exclaims the apostle, 'we are more than conquerors through Christ that loved us.'

1. Neither 'death nor life' can separate the believer from the love of God. Life has indeed many snares to entangle the followers of Christ, and withdraw them from their allegiance;—its vanities, its pleasures, its cares; and Satan well knows how to use them, so as 'to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.' But an unseen power—the power of Omnipotence, is around them,—a power which says to every adversary, 'hitherto shalt thou come and no farther.' They dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. Death is the king of terrors. He can dissolve all earthly ties,—he can tear asunder the most endearing of human relationships,—he can wrench from our grasp the most loved of our worldly treasures. But he cannot separate us from the love of God. He can crumble into dust the earthly house of our tabernacle;—but only that we may exchange it for a building of God, 'an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' He can close our eyes to all which they here behold, and our ears to all they now hear; but only that we may open them on sights and sounds, such 'as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard;' such as it hath not entered into the mind of man to conceive.

2. Neither 'angels, nor principalities, nor powers,' can separate us from the love of God. The world of spirits has no inhabitant of might sufficient to make a breach in that covenant, which shelters the believer; that covenant well ordered in all things and sure; within which he reposes upon the love of a reconciled God. The principalities and powers, —the thrones and dominions,—whether those that sway the sceptres of this world, or that hold their dark confederacy at 'the gates of hell;' are impotent, however vehemently they may strive to shake what stands established upon the love of God. 'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed; saying, Let us break his bands, and cast his cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. . . . Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. . . . Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,' Psal. ii. 1—4, 9, 10.

3. Neither 'things present, nor things to come, neither height, nor depth,' can separate us from the love of God. *Time* has nothing in all its ample store of resources, that can undo the purposes of eternity. The thing which hath been, is

that which shall be. The round of time's agencies, and circumstances, continues to revolve. Now they are the past,—now the present,—now the future. But however various they be, the people of God have ever withstood them all. Time may shake and remove things *temporal*; but the love of God to his people is one of those things *eternal*, which cannot be shaken, and which shall remain. And *space* is as powerless in this attempt as time. 'Neither height nor depth;' nothing above, though the universe be searched to the highest summit of heaven; nothing *beneath*, though hell be challenged to its lowest abyss;—nothing throughout all immensity can be discovered of efficacy to check, even for one passing moment, the full and flowing tide of God's unfathomable love.

4. 'Nor any other creature,' can separate us from the love of God. The apostle has now, as it were, reached the limit of all imaginable things, by which the soul might be threatened with separation from the love of God. He has sent his soaring mind, guided and elevated by the Spirit of God, abroad over earth, and hell, and heaven; with the calm eye of faith, touched into penetrating clearness by an unction from the Holy One, he has ranged over the whole visible and invisible world; all nature, animate, and inanimate, has passed in review before him; and from this far reaching survey, he has gathered back one united testimony to the glorious truth, that creation has not within it any power to divide the believer from that love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

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#### FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,' Acts xi. 18.*

THESE words indicate the arrival of a period which had long before been expressly foretold. The sacred volume is introduced by an account of the great work of creation, and of the covenant by which, under God, man was set over it. But scarcely is this covenant announced, together with the blessings by which the keeping of it was to be attended, when we arrive at the detail of its impious violation, and of the consequent influx of that tide of sin and misery which from that fatal hour has continued to overflow and defile this whole world in all its succeeding generations. It is, however, precisely at this early stage in the inspired history we meet with the first faint and obscure intimations of what it

was the object of the Saviour's mission, to make fully and distinctly known to all the nations of the world. And the whole of what intervenes between these two points,—between the promise made in regard to the seed of the woman, while the guilty progenitors of mankind were still lingering in the garden of Eden, and the fulfilment of that promise in the fulness of time, was but the progressive unfolding of the great mystery of godliness,—of that glorious plan of redemption by which unto the Gentiles was at length to be granted repentance unto life.

When God said that by the seed of the woman the serpent's head should be bruised, he was manifestly bestowing a blessing that was not to be confined to one tribe or nation of Adam's posterity. Accordingly, in the ages subsequent to the flood, when men had for the second time increased, and multiplied, and replenished the earth; and when it pleased the Almighty to choose out an individual, with whose personal posterity the bringing of the promise to its final accomplishment was to be immediately connected, there is the clearest intimation given, that the blessing to be thus gradually revealed was not to be limited to one corner of the world; for to Abraham it was said, both in the plains of Mamre and at Jehovah-jireh, 'in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' And further, when the descendants of Abraham had indeed, according to the prophecy, become as the sand of the sea-shore for multitude, and when amid the peculiar privileges they enjoyed as the immediate depositories of the revelation of God, they began to wax wanton, perverting the promise for which they had been appointed to prepare the way, and arrogating to themselves, as exclusively their own, what was designed for the seed of the woman without any such limitation, prophets were from time to time raised up to expose an error originating in national pride, and to proclaim the original and more universal object which the promise had in view. 'It is a light thing,' said the Lord, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, speaking of Messiah 700 years before his coming,—'it is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light of the Gentiles, and that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth,' Isa. xlix. 6. Indeed, this calling of the Gentiles is a prevailing theme throughout all the prophetic books of Old Testament scripture,—and in the very latest of their number it is thus expressly foretold: 'From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among

the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts,' Mal. i. 11.

There was hardly anything which the Jews, and even the apostles themselves, were more slow to understand, than the great truth which these prophetic scriptures had foretold. It was in consequence with all the force of a discovery,—a discovery made by a special revelation to his reluctant mind,—that by the conversion of Cornelius, in all the remarkable circumstances detailed in the preceding context, the fact was at length suddenly made to flash upon Peter, that 'to the Gentiles also God had granted repentance unto life.' Up to this time there had been a wall of separation between the Gentiles and the Jews,—but now it was done away in Christ. It had been set up to keep the idolatry of the heathen, from coming in to corrupt Judea; it was taken down to give free course to the gospel, that from Judea salvation might flow out to purify and bless all the nations of the earth. And while the former state of exclusiveness may teach the Christian that, as one of God's chosen people, he is called to be separated from every unclean thing; the latter state of free intercourse and communion may equally teach him that the privileges he has received, it is his bounden duty to do what in him lies to extend to all his fellow-men.

But above all, while the text declares that there is now no covenant of peculiarity,—that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, that salvation is equally accessible to all,—it proclaims this momentous fact, that the way to life lies through a vale of tears,—that without repentance there is no salvation for the sinner. This repentance, like every other grace connected with the redemption of the soul, is the free gift of God. From him it must be sought with earnest desire,—for till we see and sorrow over our sins, the offer of a Saviour will be made to us in vain. And what is repentance unto life? It is that 'saving grace, whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension of the mercy of God, in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience.' If we confess our sin in this lowly and contrite spirit, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

## FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death;'* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

In our fallen estate the days of the life of man are both few and evil, and sorrow accordingly is but the common lot of mortality. No doubt the cup of suffering is very variously administered; the measure may be less or more, and the ingredients may differ in the degree of bitterness, but still it is a cup of which none are exempted from drinking. The man, it is true, who is entirely absorbed in his own peculiar grief—and grief, when unsanctified, is ever a most selfish passion—is ready to conclude that no sorrow can be equal to his sorrow. Instead of reviewing the history of his past life and dwelling on the many mercies which have been made to pass before him, contrasting the extent of God's goodness with the measure of his own ill desert,—instead of looking abroad to contemplate the condition of others, and allowing himself to perceive how little his trial appears when laid side by side with the misfortunes of many others, at least as worthy as he can pretend to be, of his fellow creatures; or instead of turning to his bible, and learning from its instructive page that affliction is the just inheritance of a race by nature out of covenant with God while every blessing is an unmerited gift, instead of allowing his meditations to take such salutary directions as these, he centres his thoughts upon himself; and brooding in unsanctified bitterness of soul over the loss he has sustained, or the suffering he has been called to endure, the secret murmur of his heart is, 'what have I done that this should have been sent?' The purpose of God is either unthought of altogether, or is remembered only that its wisdom may be questioned and its justice denied. His conviction virtually amounts to this, that the selfish desire which providence has crossed, ought to have been gratified and therefore that he has been wronged. His grief accordingly is the complaining of a rebellious spirit—a spirit that sees merit in himself on whom the suffering has been inflicted, and wrong in that order of things under which it has been permitted to befall him; a spirit, in a word, which justifies himself and accuses God. Such a sorrow can only harden the heart into a more obstinate impenitence; it is that 'sorrow of the world which worketh death.'

There is another kind of sorrow which though quite distinct and different from that now described, is not nevertheless the necessary precursor of 'repentance to salvation.' As man was in-

tended by his Maker to live in society, so his nature has been endowed with all those sympathies and affections which serve to bind the human family together. The endearments of social and domestic life which contribute so largely to our earthly comfort and happiness could have had no existence, had not social and domestic affections been wisely and graciously implanted in the heart. But while these affections find from their very nature a lively enjoyment in the objects on whom they rest, an enjoyment which cheers and animates the parent in every effort or sacrifice which is necessary for his children's good, which makes him forgiving of their faults and patient of their waywardness, it at the same time belongs to these affections to be deeply wounded and grieved by every affliction with which the objects of affection are visited, and more especially by that mournful event which ever and anon is taking them away. And is there anything sinful in this natural sorrow? Assuredly no. Not to grieve in such circumstances were to manifest an insensibility which the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, and in his second Epistle to Timothy, expressly specifies as one of the most decided indications of moral depravity. To be 'without natural affection,' is in both these passages distinctly recorded as the most indisputable mark of a reprobate mind. But though there be nothing sinful in this natural sorrow, so neither is there necessarily anything gracious. It may be but the quiet and passive yielding to a power they cannot control, but not the meek resignation of a heart confiding immovably in the wisdom, and rectitude, and faithfulness of God; a tame submission to the event, but not a cheerful acquiescence in the will of its great Disposer; a disposition to bear the stroke, but not to kiss the rod.

But though sorrow of this kind is not therefore invariably followed by gracious effects,—its tendency is of a salutary kind. 'Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.' Man seldom rests in the present, but is ever reaching forward into the future; and accordingly the sorrows which assail him here, lead him often to bethink himself in time of the darker and more enduring sorrows of a state of eternal condemnation. It is thus the sorrow which may have begun in a temporal calamity, is often blessed to terminate in sorrow for sin, that common source of all the ills to which flesh is heir. It is in this way that though no affliction seemeth for the present to be joyous but grievous, yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness in them that are exercised thereby. 'The sorrows of death compassed me,

and the pains of hell took hold on me; I found grief and trouble.' Such was the experience of the psalmist under the fear of divine wrath. Then called he upon the name of the Lord, saying, 'I beseech thee, deliver my soul!' And straightway he finds that 'godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation,' a salvation in the conscious possession of which he can now say, 'return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.' Being justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus, he can now say, to that reconciled God of whose anger he was once so terribly afraid: 'Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing, thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness.'

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FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.'* Isa. xxxviii. 15.

THERE is nothing which the wisdom of this world is more completely at a loss to explain than the presence or the use of affliction. Nor ought this by any means to excite our surprise, for certain it is that according to any other view of our condition and history than that which is unfolded in the word of God, affliction can be regarded only in the light of a most perplexing and unaccountable anomaly. And therefore until men consent to receive as infallible truth that mournful and humbling representation of their own state and character which the holy scriptures exhibit, it will remain a mystery to mere human philosophy, why it is that man is 'of few days and full of trouble.' But nevertheless as the fact itself stands out clear and indubitable that we are 'born to trouble,' it surely is our wisdom to learn, if it be possible at all, whence it arises and what is the end it is designed to serve. 'Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.' Its existence is not an accident,—its presence must be consistent with the righteousness of the great moral Governor of the universe, and its application in every individual case must be regulated by a wisdom that cannot err.

Turn we then away from the vain philosophy of man to that divine word which is 'sure, making wise the simple,' and all these 'rough places' in the path of providence shall be made plain,—all these seemingly 'crooked things' shall at once become straight. By that blessed light of revela-

tion we are taught to trace up every sorrow which has clouded this world to man's original apostacy from God; that sin has been the fruitful cause of all our woe. And from the same source let us rejoice that we are taught to know how those very afflictions which proclaim that it 'is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the living God,' are yet designed and fitted under the administration of his grace, to work out for us 'a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.' For even as in the natural world, the noxious vapours exhaled from the surface of the earth are dispelled by the storms they engender; so in the moral world, corrupted as it is by sin, the polluted atmosphere that surrounds the believer's soul is purified by the same tempest of sorrow which prostrates, it may be, even the fondest of his earthly hopes in the dust.

If indeed our hearts were right with God,—if by nature we were living in that state of felt and acknowledged dependence on his goodness and of entire acquiescence in his holy will, which is the only true position of the creature in reference to his Creator, then indeed prosperity, however great its amount, would serve only to draw us nearer to our divine Benefactor. Each new gift would be recognized as presenting a fresh claim on our gratitude, each new blessing as furnishing another incentive to love and praise the Giver of all good. Such is now and ever has been the fruit of prosperity among the glorious hosts of heaven; and such throughout all eternity shall be its effects among the redeemed—whose rejoicing it will ever be to give all the praise unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.

But seeing that fallen man likes not to 'retain God in his knowledge,' temporal prosperity ministers to the very pride and selfishness, in the indulgence of which his separation from God began. The spontaneous utterance of the unregenerate mind in regard to all outward prosperity is, 'by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent.' Therefore is this word written, 'I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear.' Men are not naturally alive to the evils of their spiritual condition, and do not naturally desire or care for spiritual blessings. 'What they shall eat and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed,' these are the things which the nations of the earth seek after; and so long as the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eye and the pride of life are gratified; so long as they can say, 'Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;' so long are they prone to answer any man who may reason with

them of righteousness and judgment to come in the language of Felix: 'When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.' It is not meant indeed, to affirm—far otherwise—that no man has ever been converted unto God in a state of outward prosperity, or that the rod of affliction is the only instrument which the Spirit can employ to break down his indifference or enmity to Christ. It is merely in reference to the native tendency of such a condition these observations are made, and all experience too well vindicates their truth. When was it Manasseh repented him that he had made Judah to err, and to do worse than the heathen? It was when he had been removed from his throne, taken away among the thorns, bound with fetters, and carried away unto Babylon. When was it David was made to see how grievously he had offended God? It was in the time of his deep distress, it was then the confession was made: 'Surely it was good for me to have been afflicted, for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy law,' Psal. cxix. And so deeply sensible was Hezekiah of the salutary nature of that trial to which he had been subjected in the form of a painful and dangerous bodily disease, that he expressed his determination to bear the remembrance of it constantly upon his mind. 'I shall go softly,' said he, 'all my years in the bitterness of my soul.' The recollection of his sufferings, while on the one hand it would be a constant stimulus to gratitude for the deliverance by which God had graciously removed them, so on the other hand it would be a continual warning not to return again to folly. It would teach him to maintain a chastened and sober spirit; weeping as though he wept not, rejoicing as though he rejoiced not, because the end of all things was at hand.

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FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,'* Matt. v. 3.

If this be a disposition essential to every one who is to inherit the kingdom of God, it is surely a matter of unspeakable moment to understand its true nature, that so we may be in a condition to determine whether it have a place in ourselves.

I. It is not to be 'poor in spirit,' merely to be poor in point of temporal possessions. The blessings of Christ's kingdom are not confined to any particular class or condition of men. Men may be differently straitened in themselves, but none are, or can be, straitened in Christ. The riches

which caused the young man to turn away sorrowfully from Christ, was doubtless a hindrance to his embracing the Saviour's cause, but that riches did not render Christ less able nor less willing to save him. The poverty, on the other hand, of the fishermen of Galilee, who were his first disciples, left them free from many worldly entanglements and seductions, which otherwise might have interfered with that readiness they discovered to obey the command to forsake all and follow Jesus; but that poverty did not make them heirs of his heavenly kingdom. Alas! a man may be poor as Lazarus, and yet proud as Lucifer. Destitute of almost every earthly comfort, and yet unconscious of any spiritual want: wretched in his temporal estate, and more wretched still in the condition of his soul, and in his eternal prospects.

II. Again, 'poorness of spirit' does not consist in that meanness, or moral cowardice, that shrinks before every difficulty or danger, and falls in with whatever practices or principles may be prevailing around. To have 'no mind of our own' on religion and its duties, or to be ashamed to avow it, is as remote from the disposition to which the text refers, as is the dastard and craven spirit of the coward from the quiet and modest but dauntless courage of the hero. To be spiritual with the pious, and worldly with the carnal; to be fair and candid with the upright and honourable, and a backbiter with the malevolent; to be generous with the benevolent, and niggardly with the selfish; to be all things to all men, in this perverted sense of the expression, is basely to accommodate religion to the varying sins and follies of the world; instead of seeking to bring the world in all its ways to the pure and unvarying standard of religion.

III. But having said something of what 'poorness of spirit' is not, it is now time to observe, that it *is* a disposition which is ever prompting the Christian to contrast what he is, with what he ought to be; which induces him not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but rather to esteem others better than himself. It is a disposition which undoubtedly will repress every tendency to vaunt of his own gifts and graces; but which will not diminish his zeal to maintain the honour of his Lord, whether it be through good report or through evil report. For exactly in proportion as it calls him to abase himself, under the realizing conviction of his being so vile and worthless, will it animate him to exalt that Redeemer who is so high and so holy.

The influence which this disposition exerts on the Christian's own mind and character is both great and valuable. Originating, as it does, in a deep-felt sense

of the alarming contrast between God's glorious holiness, and his own guilt and moral perversity; between the large demands of his duty, and the scanty measure of his performance; it impels him by the very self-dissatisfaction it creates, to forget the things which are behind, and to reach forward to those things which are before, and to press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. His course is like that of the traveller climbing some giant mountain, where every step he makes serves only to show him more clearly the extent and difficulty of the task he has begun. Looking down, it seems after all his efforts as if he were scarce elevated above the plain; but looking up, the towering summit on which his eye is fixed, seems as if it had lifted itself higher into the heavens. His condition is similar to his who has been brought from the full blaze of the noon-day sun into a dimly lighted chamber, where his unaccustomed eye at first can discern nothing clearly: for dark, indeed, is the inner chamber of the heart, and ill qualified is the carnal eye to penetrate the gloom which shrouds, in its secret recesses, the sinful passions, the impure desires, the grovelling thoughts that make it their unholy habitation. But if that eye has once been touched with the eye-salve of the Spirit, and turned to look within; the longer and the more steadfast its gaze, the more fully will the soul's depraved and polluted condition be seen. Sins at first totally overlooked, will come one after another into light; and the poor in spirit becomes poorer still, in proportion as he becomes better acquainted with God on the one hand, and with himself on the other. To slacken, therefore, in the onward course to which this disposition impels him, is impossible, so long as the disposition itself remains. It urges him with increasing force to supply the emptiness every day is rendering more obvious in himself, by drinking more deeply of the fulness that is in Christ. Teaching him all his own weakness, it excites him to cherish a more humble and habitual dependence on the arm of his Almighty King. Revealing to him his own nakedness, it stirs him up to covet the more earnestly the white raiment of the finished righteousness of Christ. In a word, it is a disposition, which the more holy he becomes, moves him the more humbly to exclaim with the apostle, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Blessed, then, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. It is theirs in its present grace; it is theirs in the hope, and the earnest of its future and everlasting glory.

## SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,' Luke xiii. 5.*

WHO these Galileans were to whose death the text refers, and what were the circumstances that led to the tragical event related concerning them, are points as to which scripture supplies no exact information. It would seem they had been suspected of some treasonable design against the Roman power; and that to punish their supposed crime, and to strike terror into the minds of others, Pilate, the governor, had sent his soldiers into the court of the temple, at the very instant when the unhappy Galileans were slaying the victims they had brought up to offer at the feast, cutting them down without trial and without warning, presenting the appalling spectacle to the bystanders, of the worshippers' own blood mingling in one ruddy stream with the blood of the slain beasts they were presenting in sacrifice.

But while such a sight may have been fitted to awe the people into submission to the Roman yoke, it was also fitted to make a strong impression on those superstitious feelings, which in all countries, and in all ages, are found to have so deep a seat in the popular mind. When the ship of Tarshish, in which Jonah was vainly attempting to flee from the presence of the Lord, was overtaken by the tempest, these feelings led the sailors at once to adopt the conclusion, that some one on board had incurred the divine displeasure, and that it was on this account they were placed in such imminent peril. In like manner, when the viper was seen fastening on Paul's hand, in the island of Melita, the same feelings prompted the natives to say, 'No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.' And when the Jews, in the case to which the text alludes, 'told our Saviour of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices,' it is plain from his reply, that they had been disposed to regard the event in the same point of view; as if it were a proof, that their death was to be regarded in the light of a special judgment upon their sins. When individuals are seen to be visited by some very marked and severe affliction or adversity, the instinctive suggestion of natural conscience is, that there must be a reason for the trial, and that the reason must be sought in the character and life of the immediate sufferers. And if there were no hereafter,—if the whole course of God's moral administration were completed in the present world, there would be good ground for adopting the suggestion of conscience,

as leading to a sound and legitimate conclusion. But scripture teaches us to take a far larger and juster view of the divine government,—a view which forbids us to measure the exact merit or demerit of men in the sight of God, by the amount of outward prosperity or misfortune that may befall them in the present world. In accordance with this view, while Jesus abstained from pronouncing any judgment concerning the Galileans who had been slain in the temple, he was evidently at pains to disabuse the minds of those who called his attention to the case, of the mistaken ideas they had formed upon the subject. In the system of divine providence, no man stands isolated and alone; and the events, accordingly, that happen to one individual, are often designed to have their chief bearing upon others. In order, therefore, to correct the erroneous opinions of those who told him of the Galileans, Jesus directed them to another case, in which they were likely to feel that the rule they had been disposed to apply would not hold. ‘Think ye,’ said he, ‘that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?’ They were probably well enough inclined to apply that method of judging to the Galileans, against whom they had a prejudice; but would they decide in the same way as to these, their own townsmen, some of whom perhaps they had known and esteemed? The tower of Siloam stood, as is generally believed, near the pool of Bethesda; and some think it was built over the porches in which the victims of disease, who were waiting for the troubling of the waters, were wont to seek shelter. The falling of the tower on these poor sufferers, could hardly be supposed to have been intended to mark them as in a peculiar manner the objects of the divine displeasure. By that event, God may have been designing only to release them from their sufferings, and generally to warn men of the uncertainty of life. But while the Saviour thus sought to correct the views of those he was addressing, on the important subject of God’s providential dealings with men in the present world, he reminded them at the same time, that though they might hitherto have been exempted from any such extraordinary visitations as these, though no such signal trials should ever befall them, they must not on that account conclude, that God had no cause of offence against them, that they were in no danger of his displeasure. God has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness; and in that great and terrible day, he will render unto every man according to his deeds. And as all men have, without exception, sinned,

and come short of the glory of God, so, except they should now repent, they must all likewise perish. There is not one individual to whom this call to repentance—this solemn warning, as to the infinite importance, and absolute necessity of repentance, does not apply. And now is the accepted time. Have I then, seen my sins, and confessed them unto God, sorrowing over them after a godly sort? This is a matter that brooks no delay. Death is continually at hand. None know what a day or an hour may bring forth: and there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave.

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SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*‘Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?’ Ezek. xviii. 31.*

THERE are three things very clearly taught by these words, and all of them are deserving of the most serious consideration. I. That there can be no turning unto God without forsaking sin. II. That there can be no living near to God without a regenerated nature. And, III. That those who die in their sins are responsible for their doom, that their blood is on their own heads.

I. There can be no real turning unto God without forsaking sin. ‘Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherewith ye have transgressed.’ This is the first and fundamental step in every case of true conversion. Every expression here used is full of significance and force. What is it we are to abandon? It is our transgressions. This directly accuses us of being breakers of the law of God. It does not tell us that if we have any sins we must renounce them. It assumes the fact. It addresses us at once as notorious offenders. It pronounces us to be in a state of rebellion against the divine commandments, and therefore, in imminent danger of the curse that cometh upon the children of disobedience. Moreover, that we may understand the odious nature of sin—how hateful it is in itself—how essentially evil and abominable, the text calls on us to fling it, like something deadly and loathsome, out of our presence. We are not to dally with it for a moment, we are not even to lay it gently aside, as if it were an indulgence, to which we might venture on some other occasion to return. We must ‘cast away’ our transgressions, as being alike dishonouring and destructive to our immortal souls. Nay more, this renunciation of sin, must be not only energetic and instantaneous, but complete. ‘All’ our transgressions where-

with we have transgressed, must be cast away. It is not a matter that admits of compromise. The evil is not of a kind which half measures will cure. The law of God cannot condemn one sin and wink at another. Whosoever offendeth it in one point, offendeth it in all. So long as the disposition remains to do any single act which it forbids, or to neglect any single duty which it enjoins, there is *there* the spirit of rebellion; and though the Lord be indeed 'slow to wrath,' yet is he of great power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. If then, we would truly turn unto God, we must begin by departing from all iniquity.

II. But conversion implies, not only the putting off the old man, which is corrupt, with all his deceitful lusts, but the putting on the new man, which after God, is renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. 'Make you a new heart, and a new spirit.' 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' John iii. 3. True, indeed, this change of heart no man is either able or willing of himself to produce. To be born again, in this spiritual sense of the term, is to be born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God: not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever. But when the Lord addresses to us the call, 'make you a new heart, and a new spirit,' he at the same time provides the grace which is needful to enable the penitent believer to obey. When Jesus commanded the man that had the withered hand to stretch it forth, he at the same instant supplied to him, as one having faith to be healed, the vital energy that gave him strength to do as he was required. And while, therefore, the man was personally active in complying with the command, it was in such a sense, and in such a way, as gave all the glory to Christ. So is it with the cure of that spiritual disease which preys upon our souls. While the Lord requires us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, he at the same time himself works effectually in the believer, both to will and to do. Our concern, then, when we receive this call, 'make you a new heart, and a new spirit,' is to meet that call with the humble and earnest prayer, 'Lord, create thou a clean heart, renew a right spirit within us.'

III. If we perish in our sins, our blood is upon our own heads. 'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should turn from his ways and live?' Ezek. xviii. 23. 'Why then will ye die, O house of Israel?' is the solemn and affecting appeal which the Lord is, in his word, continually making to

the sinner. There is here, no doubt, an irreconcilable hatred expressed against sin. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity. Sin is the abominable thing which his holy soul hateth. But this unchanging and unchangeable abhorrence of sin, is conjoined with the tenderest compassion for the sinner. 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,' Rom. v. 8. God is, 'in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,' 2 Cor. v. 19.

Why then, O sinner, will ye die? God is waiting to be gracious. What excuse can you offer for persisting in your infatuated career? Think what it is 'to die,'—to die spiritually and eternally,—to become an outcast from God and heaven,—to become the prey of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not quenched;—the companion of devils,—the tenant of that dark and dismal abode, where there shall be nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and where all hope shall be clean gone for ever. O Lord, do thou turn us, and we shall be turned. Do thou draw us, and we shall be constrained to run after thee!

#### SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil,'* Joel ii. 12, 13.

I. WHETHER it be in the decisive moment of the sinner's first awakening to a sense of his guilt and danger, or in his subsequent recall from some temporary defection, there is nothing that ever did, or that ever can suffice to turn him from the evil and the error of his way, but a saving view of God in Christ;—a view of him as waiting to be gracious,—willing not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. As seen through the medium of the law, God is, and must be to the sinner, a consuming fire; a sight that causes him exceedingly to fear and quake: a sight from which he shrinks and recoils in terror and dismay; and to escape the recollection of which, he likes not even to retain God in his knowledge. But when that glorious God speaks to him, not from amidst the thunders and the devouring flame that crowned the dark and tempestuous summits of Sinai, but from the persuasive cross of Calvary: speaks to him as so loving the world

as to have spared not even his only begotten and well-beloved Son;—speaks to him in the strong crying and tears, in the humiliation, the agony, the death of Immanuel: when that bruised and bleeding Saviour, crowned with thorns, nailed to the accursed tree, is heard from that affecting, that soul-subduing position, exclaiming in accents of unutterable tenderness, 'look unto me and be ye saved,' 'come unto me and I will give you rest;' and when that voice is made to come home, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, then it is that the victory is won, that Satan is despoiled of another soul. The sinner looks on him whom he has pierced; and amazed and confounded by the contemplation of the love of God, his rebellious spirit is broken. In the light of the cross he sees that he has been wilfully and wickedly kicking against the pricks; and the very same evidence that serves to assure him, that the God whom he has so long and grievously offended, is still feeling towards him as a Father, serves equally and intensely to make him feel that he is no more worthy to be called a son. And, therefore, it is 'with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;' in other words, with a deep and godly sorrow for the sins which he hath done, that he comes, rending his heart, and not his garment, and 'turns now unto the Lord.'

II. While, therefore, this lowly and contrite frame of spirit, is the natural and appropriate accompaniment of a realizing view of God's mercy to the sinner, let me further observe in illustration of the text, that wherever such a saving view of the divine mercy is obtained, the immediate and irresistible effect is, to 'turn' the sinner 'even to the Lord,'—to that very being whom he has so grievously offended.

To 'turn even unto the Lord,' is to make a decided movement towards heaven. It is to forsake the broad way that leadeth to destruction, and to enter on the narrow path that conducts unto life everlasting. The resolution to begin such a course, forms, and will continue to form throughout all eternity, the grand crisis in the believer's spiritual history. Whether, therefore, that resolution has yet been truly taken, is manifestly a question of momentous importance to all; a question that bears directly on the safety of the soul. There are, it is believed, comparatively few living under the ordinances of the gospel, who have not experienced, in the course of their lives, feelings of concern about their souls. An alarming illness dissipating the day-dreams of a worldly mind, and presenting death, and judgment, and eternity, as already close at hand; the loss of beloved relations or friends, tearing up deep and tender affec-

tions by the root, and writing vanity on all the pleasures and possessions of time; a heavy and unexpected reverse of fortune; the disappointment of some fondly cherished hope; events like these, subduing and softening the mind, will oftentimes render it accessible, by a merely natural influence, to impressions of religious truth, such as for the time may be too readily mistaken for a saving spiritual change. The wound which has been inflicted, time may very soon heal; either the cloud that has shaded the path of life may disperse, or the eye may get used to look on a less sunny scene; and though not perhaps with the same keen relish as heretofore, still the world may become as much as ever all that is loved or sought. But when the truly awakened sinner, 'with fasting, and weeping, and mourning,' 'turns even to the Lord,' that which inspires *him* to make this movement, is not so much that he has taken a different view of the world, as that he has obtained a different view of God. It is not any temporary distaste for, or disgust with the world, that will draw men in earnest unto him. That alone which will surely and necessarily attract them towards him, is a believing apprehension of his grace and mercy in Christ. The unregenerate man of the world, meeting with disappointment after disappointment in quest of happiness among the things of time, may be compelled to exclaim, almost in despair, 'who will show me any good?' but still he persists in his infatuated course. But once let the light of the glory of God, beaming from the countenance of a compassionate Redeemer, shine into his heart, and he feels that *here* is the one thing needful, the pearl of great price; that here at length he has found out a treasure which the world cannot give, and which it cannot take away.

#### SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him,'* Luke xv. 20.

How touching, how gracious, how encouraging is this representation of the love of God! The lost prodigal is welcomed as a son. Let us consider what this implies.

1. To be taken back into the family of God, implies a full deliverance from the curse of sin. And who can estimate the blessedness of being delivered from a state of wrath and restored to the favour of God. While the sentence of divine condemnation hung suspended over us, peace must have been banished from our breasts. For whither could 'we go from his Spirit or flee from

his presence?' Not in all the wide universe could the sinner find a shelter from the omniscient, the omnipresent God. When David was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains by his relentless persecutor Saul, assured of the divine favour and protection he could make even the rugged rocks of the wilderness re-echo as he swept his harp strings to the joyful strain, 'The Lord is my life and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid,' Psal. xxvii. 1. But who can give peace to a mind at war with God? Men may forget all this amid the bustle of the world's business, or the intoxication of its pleasures. But when the approach of death, and the prospect of the judgment to come, force upon them the appalling conviction that living as they have done 'without God in the world,' they are no better than hopeless outcasts, for whom the whole world has no shield, no refuge from the wrath that is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men—what would they not then give, durst they only venture to think and to say, 'Lord, though thou wast angry with me, but thine anger is turned away,' Isa. xii. 1.

When the poor prodigal of the parable to which our text belongs, came to his right mind, came to see the wretchedness and ruin to which his own evil courses had brought him,—he felt as if it would be enough to ensure his happiness if only his father would forgive him. To be restored to the privileges of a son was a distinction he durst not then hope to have. But if only his ingratitude and disobedience were pardoned, the place of the meanest servant in his father's household would be enough for him.

2. But to be taken back into the family of God, implies not only deliverance from the curse of sin:—it implies the being reinstated in all the privileges which it belongs to God's children to enjoy. When the prodigal received that tender embrace of a free forgiveness which the text describes, his father did not then turn away and leave him in the squalid poverty and abject distress in which he had returned to his paternal abode. The prodigal had returned naked,—and therefore the father gave instant command to bring forth, not simply a robe, but the *best* robe, and to put it on him, and a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. The prodigal had returned faint with hunger and ready to die; and therefore the father gave instant command to kill the fatted calf, that his son might not simply be fed, but fed with the best his house contained. The prodigal had returned sad and disconsolate, and therefore to make him glad according to the days

wherein he had seen evil, his father commanded to receive him with the joys of a festival. 'Let us eat and be merry,' said he, 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found,' Luke xv. 23, 24. This it is to be taken back into the family of God! It is not such a measure of favour as David conferred on his rebellious son Absalom, when in compliance with the urgent intercession of Joab, he said, 'Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again. . . . and the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face,' 2 Sam. xiv. 21, 24. Far different is it when the penitent sinner returns to the Lord. To as many as God hath predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself—to one and all of them is this declaration made, 'I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,' 2 Cor. vi. 18.

How unspeakable is the love of God! The prodigal who had wasted his father's goods in riotous living; who had forsaken his father's house; who had dishonoured his father's name; who had reduced himself to want and misery, is welcomed back again to his father's arms. He exchanges his 'filthy rags,' the memorials of a life of sin and shame, for the more than royal vestment of the righteousness of Christ. He exchanges the unsheltered field, where he lay exposed to every storm, to the tempest of the wrath of Almighty God,—for the refuge of the covenant of peace, for the protection of him who is a 'sun and shield.' He exchanges 'the husks which the swine did eat,' the deceitful pleasures of sin, the empty, unsatisfying enjoyments of sense and time, for the rich and exhaustless, 'provision of Zion.' For 'in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine upon the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined,' Isa. xxv. 6. The repentant sinner, restored to the favour of God through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, is fed with food convenient for him. Out of the fullness that is in Christ he daily receives, and grace for grace. He lives on Christ; for he is made of God unto the believer, 'wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,' 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. And being thus on earth nourished up unto eternal life, he is at length invited to sit down at the 'table which shall never be drawn, to eat of the hidden manna,' and 'to drink of the river of pleasure which flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb.'

## EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.'* Rev. iii. 19.

THAT 'man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,' is a sad, though familiar truth, gathered from the accumulating experience of ages, and confirmed by the word of God. It is a saying more ancient than we can tell, that we come wailing into the world, and, if left to the course of nature, go groaning out of it. The way between is in strict keeping with its beginning and its end; and whether long or short, is darkened throughout by the meeting shadows of the cradle and the grave.

It is some advantage to make ourselves acquainted, at the very outset of life, with this necessary condition of human existence; that we may be armed, at least, with expectation: and, as we cannot avoid sorrow, may nevertheless escape the needless shock of its great surprises: for surely they who, in the primrose season of their life, clothe the entire field of the future with flowers and sunshine; and start on their fond career with the fancy that they are to be exceptions from the common lot of humanity, are far more likely to be crushed in their first encounter with woe, than he who, in firm and habitual contemplation of all its forms, has, in some measure, assimilated himself to its nature, and meets it, when it comes, as a kinsman.

It is a much greater advantage, however, to know that 'affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;' but that every sorrow incident to human life is dispensed by the same Universal Father, 'unto whom all eyes look up, and who giveth unto every one his meat in due season.' Once in possession of this simple knowledge, we are saved at least from the despair of those who attribute their calamities to the choice and the guidance of chance, and regard the ills to which 'flesh is heir' as so many arrows flying at random in the dark. For surely we cannot 'mourn without hope' in the midst of our afflictions, while we believe that every sorrow of our few and evil days, so far from springing promiscuously out of the ground, cometh forth in reality from the counsels of heaven; and consequently must have at once a motive and a commission, worthy of infinite wisdom; though hidden, like its great Dispenser, in impenetrable darkness, from the understanding of the sufferer.

If it be an alleviation of our sorrows, however, to know that they come from the benevolent Giver of every good and every perfect gift, it is

an incomparably sweeter solace, or rather it changes their nature almost to its very essence, and converts them into positive blessings, to know that they are tokens of divine love, expressly contrived and commissioned to work, together with the many other measures of grace, in perfecting our spiritual education, and qualifying us for the unmingled enjoyment of God in the regions of his pure and perfect manifestations. And this happy knowledge do we imbibe from the very same oracles that teach us to look upon trouble as a necessary condition of our existence; and explain the instinctive tears that water our entrance upon life, with the revelation 'that we are born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.' 'For as many,' says the affectionate scripture before us, 'as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.'

In the very first sound of these stirring words we recognise the voice of a Father; and hear the Judge of all the earth addressing us as children. For neither in the promise nor in the down-pouring of the most abundant blessings, is this endearing relation made half so evident as in the paternal care, concern, and steadfastness of purpose manifested in these rebukes and chastenings of children. Bounty is an easy grace for God: his riches, like his own being, are infinite; and no giving ever makes them less. But rebukes are the striving of his Spirit with man; and judgments are his 'strange work.' And O! can there be a son who has lived to bless the hoary head—or, if not so fortunate—the memory of a father, because he was wise in his tenderness, and shunned not the tear and the wear of his heart in the exercise of a painful but wholesome discipline; and yet feels not, understands not the meaning of a crushing calamity, or a sobering affliction, dispensed by the Father who is in heaven? Yet slow we are to comprehend the chastenings of God; because even in the full maturity of years and judgments we remain towards our heavenly Father, what, in the waywardness of childhood, we were to our mortal parents; when we rebelled, at heart, against every infliction of the rod, and falsely believed that we should have loved them more had they punished us less. So much the more have we reason to pray for grace to receive the rebukes of love in the spirit of docility and meekness, that we may the sooner be enabled to say with the Psalmist, 'it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes: the law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.'

What more can we require to reconcile all of us who are called by the name of the Lord, to the

divine system of discipline under which we live, than to know that it is administered in love, and is at once a necessary and efficacious means of grace. O! let that assurance be unto us the rainbow of all our tears; and, rising as upon eagles' wings, to the contemplation of that living bow which encompasseth the throne of God; let us gather strength from the thought that 'our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' And with this thought lying warm and strong at our hearts, let us render even now to the Lord the justice, which, in the ripening of our judgment, we refuse not to our fathers and mothers, and bless the hand that corrects us. And, while we acknowledge the love that deals the blow, may we mourn with a godly sorrow over the sin that provoked it: for surely if we love him who first loved us, and have known what it is through the working of the Spirit within us to cry unto God, 'Abba, Father!' the whole bitterness of affliction will be gathered together in the thought, that we have provoked our heavenly Father *to strike us*.

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EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance,' Rom. ii. 4.*

MOURNING, as we all profess to do, the fall of man, and the woes in which the first transgression of the holy commandment has involved the entire posterity of Adam, it might naturally be expected, that the whole energy of our intellect would be concentrated in a great and continuous effort to regain our lost paradise, and raise ourselves to the lofty rank from which we have been degraded. Alas! to the shame and confusion of our fallen race, we learn from the oracles of God, and our own experience, that this reasonable order of things is all inverted; and that instead of mankind pressing in a continuous succession of generations against the walls of heaven, like waves on the rocks of the sea-shore, it is God who all the while is *'bowing his heaven and coming down,'* and searching all around the hearts of man, to discover its soft side, that he may enter in—make of it a temple, and fill its enormous void with love, with heaven, and with—himself.

We may exhaust figures of speech; but just as little as by searching we can find out God to

perfection, can we tell the diversity of ways in which he seeks to regain his possession of our lost souls, and restore them to the paradise from which sin and misery has so estranged their imaginations as well as their desires. In the morning, we were contemplating the longings of divine love manifested in the chastenings of his wayward children; and now in the evening we are called to meditate the tenderness of his affection, exhibited in the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. In the eloquent scripture before us, the Lord is represented as leading us to repentance, and to his own open arms, by a long continuance of goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering; and consequently by a permanent display of his love in that very form and aspect which we think most congenial with our nature, as well as most efficacious in winning our affections. The light in which the paternal tenderness of God is thus represented is inexpressibly affecting; as we see him varying his mode of working on our hearts, so as to suit himself to our varying sensibilities; and seeking at one time to accomplish, by a persevering gentleness of manner, what he attempts, at another, by apparent severity. And yet the motive in both cases is the same; for the end is our ultimate glory; and the immediate effect our repentance. And surely when we consider that the subject of the repentance required of us, is simply sinning against God, and vexing his Holy Spirit, by leading a life of resistance to his will, we cannot imagine even the infinite wisdom and the untiring tenderness of our Father in heaven adopting a mode more likely to subdue our enmity, soften our hearts, and heap coals of fire upon our heads; or, in a single word, melt us into a repentance never to be repented of, than thus rendering good for our evil, friendship for our enmity, and love for our hatred. And all the more efficacious should we feel the power of this kindness to be, when we consider that it has an object in view beyond itself, and contemplates, not only our present gratification, but the working out of our salvation, and the raising of our fallen nature to a life of honour, glory, and immortality beyond the grave. The joys of the present life, however lavishly God may dispense them, are soon exhausted, because our lot in time is short; but there is an infinity of love and of riches in every token of the divine favour, and in every gift of God, which has for its ultimate object the well-doing of our souls throughout the endless ages of eternity.

What then shall we say to the scarlet sin of despising the riches of God's goodness? Can we conceive what God thinks of it? Surely 'if

he that despised Moses' law died without mercy at the mouth of two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath *done despite unto the Spirit* of grace! Yet unto that Spirit of grace is every soul of man doing most manifest spite, and openly despising the riches of divine goodness, who is still living in a state of sin; and deferring—be it from day to day, or from year to year—the simple but momentous step of turning to the Lord.

For where are they on whom the Lord has not lavished his goodness, times and ways without number; and who among us is not a living monument of his forbearance and long-suffering? Our own mouth condemns us if we plead an exception of our own case from the general rule, 'that the tender mercies of God are over all his works. For is it not a most eloquent testimony to the patience of God that we are this day alive? Why were we not slain in the moment of our first sin? Why did not the lightning of divine vengeance start from its slumber as we stretched out our hand, for the first time, to a forbidden fruit? or slay us, while the meat was in our mouth?' Why did our second transgression escape the penalty due to every sin, and not overwhelm us at once in the curses of time, and of eternity? And now when we have sinned so often, that we cannot recollect the day when we gave up all thought of counting our wilful transgressions, can we pretend that with all our impenitence we are at least guiltless of sinning against the mercy of God, and despising the riches of his goodness! O! let us rather think, and feel, that, while the long-suffering of God affords time for repentance, while his goodness and mercy supply us with a motive; and the longer the time thus allowed, and the more copious the mercies vouchsafed, just so much the more scarlet-coloured is the sin of 'stopping our ear, like the deaf adder, that will not listen to the voice of the charmer, charming ever so wisely.'

It were wise, moreover, to consider that while the riches of God are indeed inexhaustible, his patience and long-suffering are limited; and sooner or later must run themselves out. At the most they can last, as far as our individual cases are concerned, but the threescore and ten years that make up the span of human life; while, for any thing that we can tell, they may set for ever with the next setting of the sun; and leave the impenitent despiser of divine mercy to the 'stumb-

ling of the feet on the dark mountains, when the light of God, sought too late, is turned into the shadow of death.'

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NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I have surely 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,'* Jer. xxxi. 18.

WHILE the scriptures denounce hypocrisy, and condemn every ostentatious display of sanctity as a homage rendered to man, and not to his Maker, they are full, to overflowing, with encouragement to the secret mourners in Zion, who bewail their wickedness with the deepest sorrow where they are least observed. The wounds which God has declared himself most willing to bind up, are those that bleed in the dark; and the groans that reach no human ear, are soonest heard in heaven. In the passage before us, we see the heart of a penitent laid open in the moment of turning to God, and have an opportunity of contemplating the anguish with which he reflects on the folly and wickedness of his past life. And just at this point of his repentance we are struck with a most interesting and remarkable truth, which unquestionably makes itself manifest in the personal experience of every one who can tell, from his own practical knowledge, what repentance unto life in reality means. In this first moment of awakening, from the long slumber of the soul, to a sense of sin and its heinousness, the penitent of our text feels that God has all the while been at work upon his conscience, and knocking loud and often at the door of his heart without obtaining an entrance, or so much as exciting a consciousness of the divine presence. Just as a person awakened by repeated cries out of a deep sleep, hears in the end, not only the successful call, but a series of preceding voices that grow the louder and the plainer, the more he thinks back upon them; so does it seem invariably to happen that every effectual calling of the Spirit, in the very moment of making itself effectual, impresses upon the awakened sinner the conviction that it is not the first, nor the second, nor the third call that he has heard; but that in reality the Spirit of grace has been *daily* 'reproving him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;'—aye, and from the first burning of his fingers on forbidden things, daily calling unto him, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' O! for every prayer that

riseth up to heaven, to be treasured 'in the vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints,' there come down from on high a thousand incomparably more earnest warnings, admonitions, and entreaties, urging us to turn from the evil of our ways, and seek the Lord while he is 'waiting to be gracious.' The generality of us, however, go on resisting and vexing the Spirit of grace, and stopping our ears, like the Jews, when St. Stephen was declaring his vision of the glorified Redeemer; till either death puts an end to this waste of warnings for ever, and drops the curtain of eternity between the soul and its God; or till the Almighty Saviour, by a series of gracious afflictions, and a continuous pressure of sanctified calamities, crushes the heart into a sense of its own depravity, and subdues its resistance like a worm beneath the rolling of his chariot wheels.

In this state of enlightened humiliation, Ephraim compares himself with a beast of the stall, a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, that stubbornly refuses to serve the master who feeds and protects it; or to answer the purpose for which it is kept. The more it is chastened, the more does it rebel; and only submits, in the end, when exhausted with the unequal struggle, and incapable of further resistance. And we would do well to regard ourselves frequently in those faithful mirrors, which the providence of God is continually presenting to our view, in some department or other of his creation; and judge ourselves by the feelings excited in our bosoms, when it is our turn to meet with resistance where we have a right to exact submission, and to harden a will by all our endeavours to subdue it. When we are wishing, like Balaam, that we had a sword in our hand to slay the creature that resists our will, it is time to remember that God has his sword always within reach; and to bow the head in submission, lest we perish in his anger.

The prayer of the penitent, in the eventful moment of spiritual life is, very remarkable; and may cast some useful light over the understanding of those who think they can turn at any time to God; and who therefore, defer their repentance till the day when 'desire fails,' with the prospect of turning their face to the wall, and to the Judge of all the earth, at the same time. Experience, however, is a faithful teacher; and from it do we soon learn, that of all bodies the heart is the most unwieldy and difficult to turn upon its course; and that of all points, moreover, in the compass it is slowest in turning to God. O! in our hours of ease, when we think little about the spiritual world, and far less about its greatest Inhabitant, we are apt enough to suppose that

our hearts are right with the Author of our being. But just as the magnetic needle, while far away on the quiet waters of the Pacific, points regularly towards its pole; yet, from the moment the prow of the vessel is stedfastly turned to the north, begins to vary the more, the farther it advances, and will settle on any point of the heavens, except the right one; till, at last, the navigator throws it aside as useless; so does the human heart, when urged beyond the cold, quiet, and distant adoration, which it easily learns from natural piety, to a close communion with God, face to face—spirit to spirit—eye to eye—suddenly waver, recoil upon itself, and search, as it were, all around the horizon, for a refuge from the very thought of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

We find all this strikingly verified in the prayer of the penitent Ephraim. We might readily think within ourselves, that he is already turned to God, because he is praying. Alas! do we not know that it is mainly in prayer we gather our experience of the truth we have just been stating; and feel the tendency of the heart to turn away from God in every attempt to approach him. Hence is it just this aversion of the soul from its Maker that forms the subject of the penitent Ephraim's prayer, and just in the attempt at turning unto God in it, that he prays, 'Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.'

And happy is the heart which the Lord has turned to himself, for never again does it turn back to the ways of the world, or its own; but, once more, like the magnet, when brought close up to its pole, ceases from all its waverings; and rests secure on the rock of ages.

#### NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'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,'*  
Jer. xxxi. 19.

In repentance 'unto life' there are two parts, equally essential to each other; the first of which is turning from sin, and the second turning to God. Without this second movement of the mind, the former is not only fruitless in regard to its results, but imperfect, and even false in its own nature. We may hate and abhor our most besetting sins, because of their bitter consequences; and by a violent effort tear ourselves loose from them, one after another; and then that tear-

ing of our hearts on the thorns in which they are entangled, may we dignify with the name of repentance; but if we go no further—if our eye still continue in the direction of our relinquished vices—we are not in reality hating sin, but merely its punishment; and our repentance is only remorse. If, on the contrary, we turn from it to God, there is not only a new feeling super-added to our previous emotions, but a new spirit infused into our abhorrence of sin: for we see it from that eventful moment in a totally different light, and regard it not only as injurious to ourselves, but as a grief to the Spirit of grace.

It is just after this turning to God, and contemplating the august, the majestic, and righteous Sovereign, whose authority he has so long despised, that the soul of the penitent Ephraim is stricken with the real enormity of his guilt. What was shame and self-condemnation, before the Lord, in answer to his prayer, had turned him round to himself, is now the most poignant anguish that perhaps the flesh of the human heart can bear on this side of the grave. 'Surely after I was turned,' he exclaims, 'I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh. What is the instruction he has received in so short a space? He has seen as it were the face of his offended Father in heaven, and contemplated the sin of his long rebellion by the light of that pure eye that cannot behold evil; and it is just in this view of the divine countenance—in beholding for the first time, though but as through a glass, the beauty and majesty of his God, so long a stranger to his thoughts, and so different from all his previous imaginations, that he shrinks within himself, overwhelmed with shame and confusion; and yields up his soul to a sorrow which the world knows nothing of.

This anguish of the penitent Ephraim is undoubtedly a wonder and derision to the world, and to the great masses of mankind, who measure the iniquity of sin by the standards of the earth, or the judgments of a criminal court; and most unquestionably would they attribute such an extraordinary distress about sin, either to a morbid state of intellect, or a conscience troubled with the secret guilt of some enormous crime. Yet no one all the while ever wonders at the frenzy and despair of a gamester who has played away the last acre of his ample domains, in a den of thieves, or thinks it out of nature if he follow up the ruin of his heritage, not by 'smiting on his thigh' or his forehead alone, but in the uttermost excess of remorse, doing violence to nature itself, and plunging a dagger to the hilt in his own bosom. Yet verily if there be cause of wonder

in either case, it is all in the sorrow that so seldom excites it. For what is the loss of an estate to him who has health and hands to earn, in common with the mass of mankind, his daily bread in the sweat of his face? But to gambol with the pearl of the soul; to frolic with the favour of God; to squander the infinite riches of redeeming grace, and throw away an eternity of glory, is a source of sorrow which no figure of speech can ever adequately express; and which can be a subject of wonder only to those in whose minds the whole spiritual world, with all its forms and features, is a mist. And yet this is not the main source of the sorrow manifested in the words of our text. It is the simple contemplation of God that is cutting the soul of Ephraim; and sharpening his sorrow for sin. We hear him saying, like David, in a moment of similar anguish, 'against thee, thee only, have I sinned; and done this evil in thy sight.'

In all this anguish of soul, however, poignant as it manifestly is, there is no misery. For just as repentance in its very beginning implies 'an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus,' without which there might be a horror of sin, and of conscience, but no turning to God, so is there hope in the sorrow of Ephraim, which essentially distinguishes it from the misery characteristic of the sinful state. It is just in reality the very goodness of God that goes so sharp and deep into the heart which he has turned from sin to himself; and from that goodness does every returning sinner derive, even in the moments when it is most poignantly wounding him with the reproach of his youth, the highest encouragement to advance nearer and nearer to a throne of grace. O! most abundant authority have we for declaring that God is all the while watching our sorrow with an anxious eye; and will not suffer it to exceed, by an atom of dust in the balance, the measure necessary for its removal. For in the very front and forehead of our text, do we read, that God in the midst of anger remembers mercy, and that the very first manifestation of a godly sorrow for sin, on the part of the stricken sinner, is the signal for the return of divine favour, and the down-pouring of healing waters on the broken heart. Not a sigh of the penitent soul is lost. Not a moan of the mourner in Zion escapes the ever-waking ear of the Father, who has afflicted only to soften, and wounded only to bind up. It is the Lord himself, let us observe to our inexpressible comfort, that speaks throughout the whole of this remarkable passage. The very words of the penitent come to us at second hand; for they reach us—and there is not

in scripture a more touching circumstance than this—not as they passed from the lips of Ephraim, but from the mouth of God. We know then, that God has all the while been listening to Ephraim; has not only heard him, but heard because he was listening; and that he has been listening, moreover, with the tender anxiety of a Father, on purpose to convince himself that he has heard aright. 'Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus.' And then because he has heard aright, 'I will surely,' he declares, 'have mercy on him.'

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TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near,'* Isa. lv. 6.

WE know that the time of our probation is limited at the utmost by the sum of 'the few and evil days' that make up our lot in the land of the living; for in the grave, unto which we are all hastening, there is 'no work nor device,' and 'as the tree falls, so it lies.' We are hence in full possession of the very awful truth, that when the silver cord is loosed, and the wheel is broken at the cistern, our disembodied soul is destined to find God seated,—not on a throne of grace,—but of judgment, dispensing no longer mercy, but equal-handed justice, according to the fruit of our doings, whether they have been good or evil. We know therefore at the same time, that with life ends the season of prayer; for there can be no praying at the judgment-seat, where they who are clothed with the wedding-garment have no more need of mercy; while unto those who appear in the filthy rags of their own righteousness, all the mercies of God are for ever clean gone. Warned and wilful do we therefore rush upon the sword of Divine justice, if deferring, from day to day, and from year to year, the duty of securing, by the prayer of faith, an interest in the all-sufficiency of Christ, till death, coming as a thief in the night, strip our souls of the knees that were made for kneeling on the footstool of grace, and the hands, and the eyes, and the voice that were given to be lifted towards heaven in prayer and devotion.

We are not so familiar, however, with the fact that, short as our portion of time is, the reign of divine mercy is sometimes still shorter; and that unto some the sun of Righteousness sets before their day is done. What casts a hue, moreover, of special fear and solemnity over this fact, is the circumstance, that not only is it true

in cases of judicial blindness, or hardness of heart, in which the sinner is suffered to glide smoothly down the stream without a thought of the future, till he be swallowed up of eternity; but extends even unto instances of indescribable alarm and anxiety concerning the life which is to come, when 'sinners in Zion are afraid, and fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites;' and they begin to cry, 'who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' For then there is rending of garments, and tearing of hair, and wringing of hands, and crying unto the Lord; but he will not hear them, for their season of grace is past; their sentence is already pronounced, its execution begun, and the mercies of God for ever clean gone. This awful truth, however little we may have familiarised it with our own meditations, is nevertheless abundantly revealed to us in scripture; but never without a most sufficient vindication of its equity, and ample directions for averting its infliction. Thus, in the book of Proverbs do we read, that prayers extorted by calamity, after a long contempt of divine counsel and mercy, shall be in their turn treated with scorn and derision. 'Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. . . . Then shall they 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.'

We have the same principle just as clearly laid down in the passage immediately under consideration; for in exhorting us to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near, we have a most significant intimation of a time when he is not found, and a place where he is no longer near; while over both are cast all the terrors of uncertainty and darkness; for not in more palpable obscurity is muffled the year and the moment of our death, than the instant when the cup of divine indignation shall overflow, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ cease for ever to be gracious.

But just as significantly, all the while, are we cheered in every scripture that intimates the approaching sunset of divine mercy, with the assurance that, so long as the day of salvation endures, and the accepted time of the Lord is passing by, in the Father of our Saviour there is grace sufficient for our need, and mercy ready to flow in the most blessed abundance at every up-

turning of our eyes in prayer. The graciousness of every promise indeed has its most ample proof and manifestation in the threatening with which it is accompanied; and the yearnings of divine love after the straying sheep of Israel, are most visibly revealed in the fierceness of the vengeance suspended over the neglect of divine mercy. We are thus taught to think that in avoiding the mercy-seat of God while he is waiting to be gracious, we are in reality defrauding his benignant Spirit of its banquet; shutting him out from the exercise of his favourite attribute, and putting a seal on a fountain of mercy, so pleasant to himself in its flowing, that, to give it unhindered issue, he gave his only-begotten Son to the death; and averting the vials of his wrath from our guilty race, poured their concentrated torrent on the head of our innocent Redeemer.

O may God then perfect upon us his own gracious gift, and through the mighty power of the Saviour's blood, save us from the scarlet sin of stopping our ears to the invitations of his grace, and despising the mercy in which he delights. Let us 'seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.' And let us seek him now just with all the greater assurance of faith, because we know that his Spirit will not always strive with man; and that the sun of his mercy is not far from its setting. We know that he is merciful now—that he is at this moment waiting to be gracious; yea, that he is bowing his heavens and coming down to meet us more than half-way, and stretching out his hand, and calling unto us 'to seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.' Why else are these words at this moment under our eye? How do they happen to form the theme of our present meditation? O this is just the way in which God speaks to us—the way of his word and his Spirit!

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#### TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'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', Isa. lv. 7.*

It is a remarkable circumstance, that the two passions which exercise the greatest influence on our conduct, in regard to the life which now is, namely, hope and fear, are likewise most prominently called into action by the cares of the spiritual world. They seem, indeed, to have

their proper field, and full range, for the expansion of their capabilities in the contemplation of eternity alone; and just inasmuch as they fall short of heaven on the one side, and hell on the other, or the uttermost that either the mercy or the wrath of God can do to an immortal soul, are they defrauded of their natural food, and curtailed of the aim for which they were contrived. Hence are the scriptures chiefly made up of promises and threatenings, that, merely grazing as it were the present world, in their course, have their aim and fulfilment in the infinite beyond the grave.

It is a besetting sin of our nature, however, that we are slow in gathering fear from the darkest forms of futurity, or hope from its brightest visions; and still more remarkable perhaps is that perverseness of disposition that hurries, at one time, our trust in the mercy of God, and at another, the alarms of an awakened conscience, to a dangerous excess. It is the will of God that we shall use all diligence in working out our salvation with fear and trembling, rejoicing in 'the lively hope to which we have been begotten through the resurrection of Christ from the dead;' and in the assurance that, all the while, it is the Spirit of God who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. But just as, at one time, the Father of lies lulls us into the belief that we can be saved without Christ, so do we allow him, in our moments of fear, to persuade us that we cannot be saved, even with him. For at no moment of life is the arch-enemy of God and mankind more busy with our ears, than just when he sees us, for the first time, turning round to the mercy of the Father manifested in the Son; and with the very same hope that in the fulness of time kept him continually hovering about the Redeemer's steps; will ten thousand spirits of darkness and evil, in a moment at once so critical and perilous, flap their bat-like wings between the trembling soul and the countenance of God, in the full assurance that if they suffer us but once to behold the face of the Father, as it is seen in Christ, we are for ever lost to Satan and to hell. And no sooner is one of them driven away, than another fills up his place, with a change of form and aspect suited to the sinner's changing case; and hovering right before his eye, in whatever direction he seeks to lay hold on the mercy of the Lord. The self-same spirit of lies which, in his days of ease and carelessness, represented his sins as harmless, trivial, and far beneath the notice of the divine eye, will now dash them with such a depth of crimson that no hyssop can wash them out; and the same foul fiend who before spake of no attribute in the divine nature but mercy—who for all the

hesitations and compunctions of his human dupe had always the same drivelling answer ready in his mouth—*God is merciful*—will now talk of no attribute but his inviolable holiness, justice, and truth; and of no passion but his anger, with its treasures of tribulation and anguish for every soul of man that doeth evil. All the while, moreover, is the inborn spirit of unbelief just as busy in the sinner's own bosom, persuading him that he is not in all God's thoughts—and that, weary with the long waste of words, discipline, and tenderness, the Lord hath given him over to waste, in turn, his tears upon the desert, and sow the wind with his vain complaints.

The frequency and fervour indeed with which the assurances of divine mercy are repeated and pressed upon our notice in scripture, are at once a proof of its own abundance, and of our slowness to believe in its sufficiency. No devil surely can make us believe that God does not know his own mind; and just from his own word, and from his own Spirit, do we derive the most solemn assurances, confirmed even, in many instances, with oaths that he has grace sufficient for our uttermost need, and mercy in store for the chief of sinners. Need we go farther than the precious passage which is at this moment under our eye? Its words are addressed to the wicked and the unrighteous of all grades, and of all generations, without distinction, and to them goeth forth the assurance that God has mercy and abundant pardon, ready to meet the uplifting of their eyes to his throne of grace.

Lift up thine eyes, then, thou downcast mourner in Zion, to the holy habitation of God, and behold, to thine amazement, that over his countenance there spreads, at the meeting of his eyes with thine, the joy and the tenderness of a father who has long been watching for the return of his prodigal son, and waiting to be gracious. To know if 'any good thing can come out of Nazareth, thou must 'come and see;' and so must thou taste and see that the Lord is gracious, 'Come unto him, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and he will give you rest.' 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock,' at the door of grace, and it will fly open. Blessed opening! It is the gate of heaven, with its green pastures—its living waters, spreading to infinity behind it.

But O let us beware of mistaking the mercy of God, or twisting it round to the bent of our own sinful inclination. Hah! we are apt to confine our views of mercy to these gates of heaven; and in our very prayers to think only of mercy dispensed from the throne of judgment on our naked souls. O! it is not there—it is on this

side of heaven and the grave that all the mercy of God is dispensed and applied: and verily just because God is infinitely more merciful than we are inclined to have him. For he will not only bestow upon us that rich inheritance of honour, glory, and immortality, which Christ has purchased for us with his blood, but qualify us for the enjoyment of them, by a sanctification of our nature, a refinement of our taste, and an elevation of our desires, without which heaven would be unto us a poorer inheritance than even the earth itself with all its sorrows. We, in a word, would seek only to be saved from the penalty of sin, but God wants to save us likewise from its power.

Let us begin then the work of salvation, like every other, at the right end, and commence with saying unto every besetting sin, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance,*  
Matt. iii. 8.

OF all spiritual vices the most loathesome in the sight of God is indifference. And just as odious should it be in our own eyes, if we viewed the concerns of the soul, and the vast interests of religion, in the same light as the cares of the body, or the business of the present life. In temporal affairs the incitements to activity are so numerous and powerful, that we regard a sluggard folding his hands, in the midst of his most urgent necessities, for yet a little sleep and a little slumber, with equal surprise and abhorrence; and turn away, sick at heart, from the 'broken fences' of a 'field overgrown with thorns, and a vineyard covered with nettles.' Just inasmuch, however, as the vast idea of eternity overshadows the thought of time, should our contempt of that spiritual indifference, which is the sloth of the soul, surpass our scorn of a sluggishness, limited, at the worst, in its consequences, by the slumber, and corruption of the grave.

The repentance to which we are called, let us never forget, is positive, as well as negative; comprehending, in its wide and woful survey, the guilt of our omissions, as well as our actual sins; and, however bitterly we may bewail the heinousness of our actual transgressions, yet, ever to the sad array of our neglected duties will the Spirit of truth direct the main flowing of our tears. The renouncing of sin is indeed but a small part of repentance, and if not followed up by a fruit-

fulness of faith, and abundance of good works, is moreover but a mere delusion. For there is in reality a moral impossibility lying directly in the way of every endeavour to 'put off the old man with his deeds,' without putting on the new with his works of righteousness. Of all the muscles in the human frame, the heart is the most active: by night and by day, asleep and awake, it is incessantly at work, like a clock, wound up at our creation, to tick and beat, and keep pace with time, till it runs down at death. So is it with the mind. We cannot cease thinking if we would, any more than, by stamping on the earth, we can stop its motion. It is an awful consideration too, that this mind, this heart of the spiritual man, is wound up, once for all, at its beginning, to beat, and go, and hope and love, or hate and fear, and suffer or enjoy, to all eternity. Sleep does not suspend its action, and death, or the long slumber of the grave itself, is no interruption to its activity. Energy is its nature, and working is its mode of existing. Mere cessation therefore from sin is a logical contradiction. We are always either sinning on, though it may be in a different way, or perfecting holiness in the fear and the service of the Lord. Our blessed Lord tells us that we cannot serve both God and Mammon; but gives us, at the same time, to understand, that just as little can we serve neither, for he immediately adds that, 'if we hate the one we will love the other.' How familiar do we find this principle in the mouth of the apostle. 'But God be thanked,' says St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, 'that ye were once the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine which we delivered unto you; being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.' We have therefore every sort of authority for assuring ourselves, that so long as we have not entered with full earnestness of purpose, and perseverance of endeavour, on a career of practical godliness, and the diligent discharge of active duties, we are not yet delivered from the yoke of sin, but drudging on as before—under new names and altered appearances, perhaps, in the bondage of Satan.

It is a most remarkable fact, moreover, and may be stated as the crowning illustration of the principle in question, as well as the strongest incitement to the practice of all good works, that our blessed Lord in his description of his own judgment-seat, has confined his condemnations entirely to sins of omission or unfruitfulness in the service of the cross. Not a single *count* in the whole *indictment*, with which he has already been pleased to serve us, consists of crimes, or positive iniquities, or

of any actual sin whatever, either small or great; for the whole judgment turns upon the things that have *not been done*: to the confusion of those who think it enough to lead a harmless life, and go down to the grave unstained with the guilt of positive iniquities.

With this indictment already before us, let us be wise in time to consider our latter end; and prepare our pleadings for that hour of awful trial. And O! if we would rejoice in having an advocate in our Judge himself, let us seek to secure an interest in his pleading before we go hence. To this end, the like mind must be in us, as was likewise in Christ Jesus: for if we 'have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his.' Let us look to his life of labour and love, while he sojourned among our fallen race, in the form of sinful man: and though 'he thought it no robbery to make himself equal with the Father, yet, stooped to be a servant,' and to go about from door to door 'continually doing good.' There was no indolence in his love; no rest in the energies of his Spirit; no pauses in the working of his mind. Even when he slept his heart was awake, and when his disciples awoke him in the storm, he reproved them for their want of faith, but not for disturbing their Saviour's repose. Let us look to him as he sits in glory on the throne of heaven. Is there any pause in the workings of his mind? O one long serious look of the soul at its God, should cure it for ever of sloth, and consume every thought of ease or indolence in a fire of shame. If God cease for a moment from working, our hearts must cease to beat; if he take his rest in heaven, we must die of hunger. If our exalted Redeemer relax his efforts to work out our redemption; if he cease from working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, then begins our backslidings on the way to Zion, to end in tumbling over the precipice, it may be with our face to heaven. There is nothing above us, or around us, or beneath us, in a state of repose—all heaven, and earth, and hell, and every atom of dust, is continually at work—and shall we be idle? Idle we cannot be, but shall we be idle in serving? O let our working be all on the right side. Of all sloth may we most abhor that of the soul; and of all services be most ashamed as well as afraid of sloth in the service of Him, 'who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'

## ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*‘Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well,’* Isa. i. 16, 17.

THE nature of God is essentially pure, and consequently abhorrent of all pollution. In the metaphors of scripture, he represents himself as ‘of purer eyes than to behold evil, or to look upon iniquity,’ and upon the flesh of our hearts has he impressed the same picture of his nature in strokes of inextinguishable fire. It is from this inherent sense of the divine purity that arises the uneasiness of all moral defilement; the vain, the persevering endeavour of guilt to shun the eye of God. No sooner had the first taint of sin settled upon the hands and the hearts of our first parents, than this repugnance between the two principles of purity and pollution, began to manifest itself in action; and at the first sound of their Creator’s step in the garden, they fled in shame and fear to hide their guilt in a bush. The same uneasiness of sin and shrinking of the unclean soul from the light of the divine eye, has ever since familiarized itself in the experience of all transgressors; even to the fearful excess of banishing the very memory of their Maker from their thoughts, and saying in their hearts, ‘there is no God.’

Unto this God, however, all flesh must come; and however intolerable we may feel, or imagine, the purity of his holy eye, it is even now, in the midst of our sins, continually upon us, observing not only our doings, but the innermost secrets of our souls; for ‘I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them, saith the Lord.’ We are, therefore, only saying ‘peace, peace, when there is no peace,’ and muffling ourselves up in a night, which the Lord is all the while making round about us like unto the day, when we strive to shun the brightness of his eye, and seek in sin an ease incompatible with a sense of the divine presence.

And yet, if left to our own resources, this is in sad reality the only course left open to us; for just as little as ‘the leopard can change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin; can they that are accustomed to do evil learn of themselves to do good.’

What inexpressible reason then have we for thankfulness in learning that, while we are flying from the God, unto whom nevertheless all flesh must come, and seeking a most treacherous peace by shutting him out of our thoughts, he is just as diligent pursuing us with kindness, and seeking to reconcile us to himself, by ‘a way that we

have not known.’ But O! let us read his mercy aright, and tremble at the thought of perverting it to our double condemnation. It is the sinner, let us never forget, and not sin, with which God is willing to be reconciled; and in the seeking to raise us from our low estate, to his own habitation, he begins with assimilating our nature to his own. Let this renewal of our nature then be our immediate aim; and while our thoughts travel to the rest that awaiteth the people of God, let us beware of overlooking the way that leads to its blessed repose. O! there is a heaven upon earth sufficiently worthy of our first ambition; and that is the growing likeness to God and participation of the divine nature; which is the brightest promise of the life that now is, as well as the surest earnest and foretaste of the glory that is yet to be revealed.

It is surely, moreover, a most abundant source of gratitude that God has himself opened up this way of return, and brought the renovation of his own image in our souls within the bounds of possibility. Hopelessly polluted as we are, even beyond the power of imagining a remedy for the pain of our own defilement, is there not a surprise of joy in learning that, in the fulness of grace, there is a fountain prepared for the washing of the heart, which is continually sending forth its purifying streams to our habitations, with an abundance and a power equal to the need of all? Do we not hear as it were the sound of many waters, even of the river that flows around the throne of the Lamb, in the voice of our God commanding us to ‘wash and make ourselves clean?’

The very peremptoriness of the command implies the abundance and sufficiency of the means. It is issued with the tone and the authority of an absolute king; and just so much the more joyous in its sound, because we know it is the King invisible, immortal, and eternal, who is here issuing the imperial edicts; and know therefore, likewise, that from the inexhaustible resources of his grace have issued the means of obedience before the command was uttered. ‘Wash you, and make you clean,’ saith the Lord. Are we asking where is the water? O there is a sound not only as of flowing water, but of blood too, in the words; for the speaker is the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Is it then the pollution of guilt, the blot of our many transgressions, that dismays us? There is one short and simple sentence in holy writ sufficient to cure us of this fear, ‘The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.’ But O! when our guilt is washed clean away, and, through the expiation of the

cross, we are blest with the free pardon of all our transgressions; do we shudder at the review of our own unaltered hearts; and from the bitter experience of the past, omen for the future nothing but a running up of new debts; with a long succession of broken resolutions going away one after another, 'like the early cloud and the morning dew?' 'Wash you, and make you clean,' saith the Lord; 'cease,' he continues, 'to do evil, learn to do well.' Once more, there is strength and not weakness, comfort and not fear in the command, for it is the edict of the same God who hath said, 'I will create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you.' To despair of our own strength then, is to charge God with weakness; and to omen nothing but a register of broken resolutions, is to doubt the faithfulness of an Almighty Saviour; for 'his grace is sufficient for our need; and his strength is made perfect in our weakness.' Let us look unto God with the earnestness and importunity of prayer in our faces and our hearts, and the holy eye that is continually upon us, will strengthen us for the fulfilment of his will. 'Put away,' says our King, 'the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;' and if in our humble but sincere endeavours to do his bidding, we seek unto his sufficiency of grace for the needful strength; then shall the consciousness that all our doings are before his eyes, be unto us a source of strength; and ours in the end be the blessedness promised to the pure in heart, 'for they shall see God.'

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TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord,' Lam. iii. 40.*

'To know one's self' was regarded by an ancient sage as the beginning and the end of wisdom. In selecting this maxim as the motto of his philosophy, he signifies at once the importance and the difficulty of the lesson it conveyed. But when we take eternity into the account, and the simple, but vast, consideration that the present life is but a school for the next, the importance of the lesson in question is immeasurably dilated; and it consequently stands out before us, in the pages of scripture, in a greatness of size, and interest, which it never could assume in the writings of a heathen, whose wisdom aimed no farther than the grave. In the scripture before us, it is very remarkable too, that the result of the inquiry is here taken for granted; and we are given to understand, before we commence it, that it must

end in self-condemnation; for in the very sentence that enjoins the duty of a self-searching inquiry, does the prophet, without any alternative condition, exhort us to immediate repentance. And such a verdict, alas! may we always, without the gift of inspiration, foretell as the issue of every inquiry into the state of our hearts. Hence arises our natural repugnance to enter upon this duty at all, as well as our tendency to deal dishonestly with ourselves in carrying it through; for just as the heart is 'desperately wicked,' so is it 'deceitful above all things.'

If we would estimate the importance and necessity of such an inquiry, however, we can have no surer or safer measure than just this reluctance of our nature to engage with it; and we can hardly have a more sufficient proof that our ways are wrong, than the tendency to deceive ourselves in comparing them with the will and the ways of God. Let us come close up then to the light of the searching scripture before us; and learn, as the preface to its revelation, that even in a state of grace, and in the very act of coming up from the wilderness, under the holy banner of our faith, we have a continual tendency to back-sliding; and that even after the call of the Spirit has made itself effectual, in turning our hearts round to the bright and morning star; times without number must we hear and obey the self-same voice crying, 'turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' The sinner's road to heaven is not a straight one; nor is there much exaggeration of figure in calling it from beginning to end a continual turning. O! if in the moment of its first and decisive conversion, the heart were truly turned right round to God, like the sunflower to the rising sun; were all its sensibilities brought immediately under the benignity of the divine countenance, and into close and clear contemplation of the divine glory; then might we suppose that direct as the path of the turtle-dove in the air, or of the fiery chariot that bore Elias to heaven, would be the course of that heart through all the thorny perplexities of life to its home in the 'habitation of holiness.' Such in the course of time and the history of ages has been the path of one single soul, unto whose first prayer our Lord answered, 'to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'

But O! let those who defer their first repentance till the day or the night of turning their face to the wall, bethink themselves, that many times must their repentance be repented of, and their tears washed away with tears ever purer and purer, before they shall hear a voice from the cross crying unto them, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'

On a large and conspicuous scale do we see this tendency to backsliding, even in the right way of Zion, illustrated in the wanderings of the Israelites between the Red sea and the promised land. By a direct route, such as the way of the caravans, they had a journey to perform of about fourteen days. The Ishmaelites, in their way to Egypt with Joseph and their spices, were probably not so long upon the road. But 'the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light; and it is one thing to go down to Egypt, and another to go up to the Holy Land. Instead of a fortnight, the Israelites, and among them Joshua and Caleb, were forty years on the road to Canaan. So far from proceeding in a straight line, their route was a series of circles. Like a chain, their course indeed, as a whole, was straight, but the parts of which it was made up were round links. A great portion of their travelling was in the backward direction of the very land from which they were flying; and hardly a single day did they proceed in the right line for the heritage of Abraham.

And where, and who is the saint amongst us, who with his hand at the plough has never looked back, nor from his own painful experience been taught to remember Lot's wife.

How many, and alas! how varied, are the delusions with which we have to contend! In the spiritual world it happens to us, as in the physical, that we often lose our latitude, without knowing it; and travel far and fast in a wrong direction, with the full persuasion that we are steadily advancing towards our journey's end. Strange too, that, when we are once on a wrong road, and especially when we begin to suspect it, we generally quicken our pace, 'as a bird hasteth to the snare and knoweth it not.' And O! stranger still, we are then afraid to ask the road of any one we meet; and rather proceed right on, under the cover of a fond delusion, to the mouth of the grave, than brave the truth, and retrace our steps to the chamber of the rising sun.

We have thus a thousand motives to continual circumspection, watchfulness, and trying of our ways. O! the moment our perplexities begin about the great highway of holiness, it is time to suspect we are straying; and the moment we begin to suspect, we may be sure we are wrong. It is a plain and free though not a beaten road; and indicates at every step the place to which it leads—even the palace of our great King. It is marked, moreover, all the way with drops of blood, as of a lamb slain for the remission of sins. Can we mistake our road to Zion, as long as we

bear about with us the dying of our Lord Jesus Christ; or forget that it is and must be a way of holiness? When we sin then we know that we are swerving either to the right hand or to the left. And O! just as in the physical world, so in the spiritual, whenever we find ourselves entangled with briars, or tearing our flesh among thorns, we may be sure we are off the road. Such thorns running themselves into the flesh, are in reality the voice of God crying, 'turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die; this is the right way, walk ye in it; or search and try your ways and turn again to the Lord.' Thus instead of a living man complaining for the punishment of his sins, let us obey the voice that speaks in all such punishments; and, searching and trying our ways, let us turn again to the Lord. And just as it is the Lord who thus intimates our deviation, unto the Lord let us address the prayer, 'Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.'

#### TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' 2 Cor. vii. 1.*

It is surprising to find, among professing Christians, how very few there are who so much as aim at the perfection implied in their own profession. The ambition, that, even in childhood, works its daily wonders on the little theatre of temporal life, seems to forsake us the moment we enter upon the great career of the soul, and add the incitements of eternity to those of time. Thus do we find holiness generally regarded as an attainment beyond our reach; and the title of saint as a dignity at which none but fanatics would think of aspiring. It is no uncommon thing to hear the Christian delinquent pleading in defence of his infirmities that he is *no saint*, and this with a tone of complacency, rather than of sorrow, implying plainly enough that he has no desire to be one. So low indeed does the breath of our spiritual aspirations move, that in our religious vocabulary saint and hypocrite have become almost synonymous terms; and it is the ambition of many rather to shun than to seek the reputation of sanctity.

All the while, however, the word of God abideth sure and steadfast, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord,' and hence do we know that just in as much as we suffer our aim to fall short of a pure and perfect sanctity in the inner

man, as in the outward life, does it at the same time fall short of heaven. It is remarkable too that no sooner do we fix our thoughts on the mansions of heaven, and contemplate with earnest eye, that holy of holies into which our great High Priest has entered, to prepare the way for our admission, than we feel this truth in all its force, and most clearly comprehend that unto saints alone can the gates of that blessed abode and the fellowship of its righteous inhabitants ever be laid open—that 'there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth,' and that they who stand before the throne of the Lamb with palms in their hand, are they 'who have washed their robes and made them *white* in the blood of the Lamb.'

If such then be the actual experience of our own hearts, are we, in taking our aim beneath the requirements of scripture, conscience, and reason, actually renouncing the promises of the life which is to come, and giving up heaven as a prize too high for our ambition? 'O, no!' is the ready reply of every nominal Christian, and readiest is it ever in the mouth of those who are loudest in denouncing the very reputation of sanctity; refusing for themselves, and denying to their neighbours, the appellation of 'holy brethren;' and crying down the name of saints from the face of our spiritual world. There is here then some deadly delusion and 'contradiction of sinners,' at work about our hearts; and by the manifest inconsistency of its fruits with our profession, warning us to keep closer to the light of divine truth, that in so doing we may learn, in the very beginning of our Christian course, to take our aim aright, with the clear understanding, that just as God never promises more than he is both able and willing to give, so will he never take less than he asks.

In the promises before us we find a source of incitements sufficient, not only to raise our aim to the highest, but to keep us in the right course, for following it up in our life and conversation to the end. These promises are, in substance, no less than the restoration of our fallen nature to the rank of divinity. In this blessing is manifestly comprehended every gift and blessing in the power of God to bestow; for it is making us heirs of his own infinite riches, and joint heirs with his Son Jesus Christ.

We have here then a promise of the highest order, and consequently implying on our part obligations to a corresponding extent. For so is it with all the promises of God. Unto every one of them is annexed a duty, and the duty is always in harmonious proportion with the bless-

ing. Hence are we taught, in the very same breath that conveys this gracious promise, to aim at the perfection of holiness as the condition of its fulfilment. It is immediately preceded by a peremptory summons to tear ourselves loose from our unequal yoking with unbelievers, break off all fellowship with unrighteousness, come out from among sinners, and be separate from them, and never more to touch the unclean thing; and then it is immediately followed up with the strong exhortation of our text, 'let us therefore cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God!' We are required in a tone of authority, softened and sweetened by affection, not to content ourselves with aiming at the remission of sins alone through the blood of Christ, but at the extirpation of every bitter root and sinful inclination from our hearts, to take up the cross, and deny ourselves to all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and dying daily unto sin, live daily more and more unto righteousness. The fear of God is the beginning, and likewise the end of wisdom. But in its own end it is the holy fear of offending a righteous and living Father, and the holy awe that hangs over the soul at the thought of approaching the habitation of divine holiness and glory, with a stain upon its raiment. Let us aim then at the highest in all things—in character, as in privileges; and at perfection in holiness as well as in bliss. God may pardon us for coming short of our aim; but to *aim short* of his requirements, to *purpose less* than implicit obedience, and perfect purity of heart and holiness, even as God himself is pure, is in reality making up our minds to fall short of heaven in the end, and sink, it may be, in the very act of laying our hands on its gates, for there 'shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth.' Soon do we learn from experience in the ways of the life which now is, to aim even beyond our purpose, that we may be more certain of coming up to it; and though the children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light, let us beware at least of reversing in spiritual things our own natural wisdom, and, while actually meditating an entrance into the habitation of God's holiness and glory, aiming short of it, by satisfying ourselves with a standard beneath the requirements of gospel-purity. 'Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should *seem* to come short of it.'

## THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,'*  
2 Pet. iii. 9.

THE mind of man, especially in early life, lives much more habitually in the future, than either in the past or the present. We are almost continually looking forward on the days or the years that lie before us; and leaning in thought on 'the shadows of coming events.' There is hence in the constitution and bias of our minds a natural preparation for the power of promises; nor have any of us, moreover, passed through the susceptible season of childhood without an abundant experience of their dominion. By the spell of a promise we can fasten the imagination of a child to a future hour—annihilate, in his estimation, all the interests of the time that lies between, and bind his eye or his ear to the clock that tells over, one by one, the moments devoted to expectation.

The power of this influence, however, depends entirely upon faith; which, in its turn again, derives its surest maintenance from faithfulness. Of all promises, therefore, we should expect those of the Almighty, in whom 'there is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning,' to take the strongest hold of our hearts, and fasten our imagination most stedfastly on their day of fulfilment. In the vast concerns of the soul, however, and of the world that is yet to come, we misapply the lesson bequeathed to us by our blessed Lord, when, setting a little child in the midst of his disciples, he said unto them, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven:' for just as to them a year, a month, or sometimes a week placed between them and a promise, is an impassable gulph, in which their imagination, like birds in the Dead sea, droop and drown by the way; so do we suffer our faith in the word of God, and with it all the interest and the influence of a great expectation, to wear themselves out on the apparent delay of fulfilment.

In the words upon which our meditations are at present feeding, we find the apostle mildly reproving this spirit of unbelief, or rather reasoning it out of our way; as he seeks to turn our expectation in the direction of his own; and fasten them on the great fulfilment of all divine promises in the conflagration of the world. For in that final 'melting of the elements with fervent heat,'

'we look,' he says, 'for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.'

The brightness of this promise, moreover, is amazingly relieved and enhanced by the terrors with which it is associated: for the period of its fulfilment is not only the *great*, but likewise the *terrible day* of the Lord. It is that awful day of final retribution when the Son of man, coming in his glory with all his holy angels, shall gather the dead and the living of all generations to judgment before his throne, and 'shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd separateth his sheep from the goats. And the King shall say unto them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.' Into such a great and eventful scene may we not safely say that God has concentrated all the interests both of time and eternity; and that whether we regard it in the light of a promise or a threatening, it beckons us forward to its coming with all the power that the Almighty perhaps ever brings to bear upon the sensibilities of our nature? It is the strongest appeal to the most susceptible passions of our souls, our hope, our fear, and our love,—for the King who sits on that throne of judgment is Jesus Christ. How therefore, let us ask ourselves, has it hitherto affected us? or how is it affecting us even now? Are we 'looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God?' We who live so much in the future; who in the very act of sitting down to the banquets of to-day, are saying, 'what shall we eat to-morrow;' and while reaping the harvest of the present year are ploughing the ground for the next; are we thinking within ourselves, on which side of the throne the Judge of that day shall place us; or where, and what manner of persons we shall be, when its solemnities shall all be over, and the day of judgment added to the records of the past? Alas! thousands, and tens of thousands, yea, the vast majority of mankind, are eating, and drinking, and sleeping in the very same manner, as we might safely suppose, if the coming of such a day had never been revealed. The apostle ascribes this forgetfulness or unbelief to the apparent slackness of God in bringing his own promises to pass. But did God ever tell us when the end of the world was to come? Let it be sufficient for us to know that it lies before us on a road that we must all travel, and that a time is coming when

we shall look back upon it as we now do on the creation of the world, the deluge, or the death of Christ.

And O! above all things, let us read aright this apparent slackness of God in bringing his own judgments to pass; and may his grace save us from the crimson sin of turning his own mercy into a weapon of offence against the honour of his name. Why is God so slow in the accomplishment of his threatenings, or the fulfilment of his promises? Why is the day of judgment so long delayed? O! just because the heart of man is hard, and God is gracious. In the plans of his grace he has a great work to accomplish before the coming of the great day; a work no less than the total reformation of the human race, and putting all things under Christ. If God then be slow it is because the hearts of men are slow in ceasing from evil, and learning to do well.

And so is it in regard to individuals, and the judgment that awaits us all at death. Why, we may ask ourselves, are we still alive? O! it is because God is willing that we, as indeed all men, should be saved. And therefore does he give us time to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. There is a time allowed, in sufficient measure, for all men; for God 'hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desireth rather that all should come to him by repentance and live.' Why then should a single soul be lost? And why, O God, should that soul be mine?

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#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,'* Luke xv. 10.

As the resources of redeeming love are, like itself, infinite, so is there an endless variety in its ways of winning souls to God. Of the many strings in the human heart, there is not one which the author and finisher of our faith has left untouched and untried, or rather upon which he has not brought every imaginable influence to bear, in his persevering endeavours to awaken within them a response of love, and wring out of them a tear of repentance. When he has tried us with the power of terror, and the fearful looking for of judgments, he addresses himself to the tenderest chord of our nature, and seeks to allure us over to himself and to heaven by voices of love and visions of delight. To change, after his own example, the figure, he is at one time checking us on the road to ruin by an exhibition of its

unutterable woes; and when he has terrified but not turned us, or turned us in the outward man, but not the inner, he opens as it were the gates of heaven, and directs upon our softest sensibilities the power of all its allurements.

In the passage before us, we find the untiring Saviour bringing into action the power of sympathy, and endeavouring to soften us into repentance by an impression of the joy, excited by this greatest of all revolutions in the life of man, among the sinless inhabitants of heaven.

Of our fallen state, and our natural alienation from God, it is one of the many symptoms that we ourselves have no fellow-feeling with the holy angels, and are consequently slow to comprehend that they can have any sympathy with us. Our wrong feeling upon this subject is fed by wrong thinking, and the heart defrauded of a pleasing and powerful sympathy by an error of the head. For in attempting to conceive the happiness of heaven, and its holy angels, we are apt to suppose that just because it is perfect and equable in its own nature, it can derive no accession from the events of human life; which, being in themselves fluctuating and uncertain, would seem to imply similar fluctuations in any order of felicity that can be affected by their changes.

We suppose, in short, that just as happens to ourselves, if joy be diffused over the family of heaven by the repentance of a sinner, or any tidings of great gladness from the earth, their joy must have been incomplete before; or, what amounts to the same thing, would have been less had such a repentance not taken place. And thus do we think ourselves forced, as long as we admit the perfection of their blessedness, to doubt the participation of angels in our welfare. We should observe, however, that as they are said to rejoice in the arrival of glad tidings from the earth, it is never said that the amount of their joys is thereby enlarged, and then we have only to conceive that the joyous events of our globe, such as the accession of a human soul to the kingdom of grace, may be one of the many sources that feed the ever-full and equable river of their bliss. Now this is just what Christ tells us; and there is therefore no other barrier between our hearts and the influence of such a beautiful truth but the want of all fellow-feeling, on our part, with the holy inhabitants of heaven, occasioned by sin, and perpetuated by impotence.

Are we inclined, moreover, to marvel at such an insignificant event as the repentance of a single sinner, extending its effects all the way to heaven, and contributing to the bliss of all the holy angels? Can such a ripple in the stream of time communi-

cate an impulse to the ocean of eternity? Oh! at the sound of that word *eternity* all the marvel ceases. It is a word that explains every marvel of redeeming love, and confounds into foolishness the wisdom that would charge God with extravagance in purchasing a portion of the earth, with the blood of his Son. When we weigh a single human soul against the sympathies of heaven, let us remember that we are weighing eternity along with it; and then, O! then shall all our stupid wonder be changed into astonishment at the folly of sin. Ah! the angels know what heaven is, (as some of their ancient compeers know what it *was*,) and therefore is there joy in their presence over one sinner that repenteth. Is there not incitement then to repentance in the contemplation of such a joy? What an important, what a happy revolution must that be in the life of a single sinner, that makes itself felt in heaven, and runs, as along an electric chain, to the heart of all its angels. And shall it have no charm for us, who are mainly interested, and whose whole eternity is wrapped up in it? Or shall we, who are so much alive to the influence of sympathy, be dead to the fellow-feeling of the best and purest beings that God has made? and, while we know that they are crowding to the windows of heaven, in daily expectation of the day—of the moment, when, through their thick and bright array, shall spread the joyous cry, 'Behold he prayeth;' and are longing, it may be, for a commission from the God of love, to wipe away our tears, as fast as they flow; have we no longings for a closer fellowship, in becoming, like themselves, sons of God? O! when we do repent, we shall understand the joy of angels over the great change, by our own.

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FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen,'* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

THE world, of which we are a part, is manifestly a ruin; but just so much the more evidently is it the scene of divine mercy. As it seems, moreover, so far as our information reaches, to be the only spot in the universe on which God is pleased to exercise and display his gracious attribute, so is its whole circumference comprehended

within his scheme of redeeming love. When God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him should not perish, but have everlasting life; it was not because he loved a peculiar people, or tribe, or generation, but because he loved the world: and in that beautiful scripture where Christ describes himself as 'the daily delight' of his Father, before the foundations of the earth were appointed, he represents himself, at the same time, as rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and delighting in the children of men. We thus see the mercy and redeeming love of God at work, in the very act of laying the foundations of the world, as if expressly erecting a platform for its own display; and we see it, moreover, diffusing itself prospectively over the growing population of the globe, unhindered, in its course, by any distinctions of country or age.

In like manner do we find the incarnate Son—the great mystery of divine love, manifest in the flesh, extending, in the day of fulfilment, his anxious regard over the whole face of the earth, and along the entire vista of future ages, till its termination in the day of judgment; and in whatever direction he looks, expressing his earnest desire that every soul of man within the compass of his care should be saved. Most affecting is it, at the same time, to observe this affectionate solicitude, all the while, giving itself utterance in actions, as well as in words, by our blessed Lord laying plans, appointing ordinances, issuing commands, and communicating instructions, with untiring patience and exertion, for giving effect to the large and benevolent desires of his soul. For the reward and the joy set before him was to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. And thanks to the power of his blood, and the faithfulness of the everlasting covenant, he shall be satisfied. On goes the chariot of his everlasting gospel, conquering and to conquer till all things be subdued to the banner of his love, and the uttermost ends of the earth given unto Him for a possession. Shall we take upon us the yoke of Christ, and join in drawing his chariot—or stand still—be it in an idle, or an active resistance, to be driven down by its burning wheels. There is no other choice. The will of Christ, in the world of mind as well as of matter is accomplished by means, and unto men has he committed the task of evangelising the world. And what child of man does it not touch to see him, on the eve of returning to the Father, consigning his post to human disciples; just as a parent, when going on a journey, leaves one child to the care of another. In the passage before us, the disciples are

expressly commanded to go forth, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teaching them, moreover, to observe all things, whatsoever I, the Lord, hath commanded them. With such a view of divine grace before us, can we be blind, or dead to the obligations thus lying upon all who have been made partakers of its blessings, to make themselves willing and unwearied instruments in working out the Redeemer's will, and promoting the regeneration of mankind. It is at once the duty, and the manifest interest of every Christian church, to labour continually in the great work of self-extension; for in no other way can its own security be maintained; and still more evidently can the injunctions of our text in no other way be fulfilled.

It is not only as churches or communities, however, that we are bound to serve the Lord in this field of duty, but likewise as individuals. O! if we have but a right sense of the privileges conferred upon us in baptism, and still more if we have tasted the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the power of baptism in the inner man, then shall we not be slow to comprehend the obligation imposed upon all who are called by the name of Christ, to wage incessant war with iniquity; set their faces as flint against the reign of unbelief, and, within the little sphere of their personal influence, go on conquering and to conquer, till they make it as a green spot in the wilderness, fresh and sweet with the dews of Israel.

While teaching others, however, may we ourselves be wise to learn. We are taught in the passage before us, in aiming at salvation, to apply, with diligence, all the means appointed by the grace of God for working it out. The word *all* is here exceedingly emphatic, and manifestly implies that the neglect of any divine ordinance involves a nullification of all the rest. The express injunction of our text is to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded; and it is impossible, with such an explicit word as this *all* before us, strengthened, moreover, by the intensive term *whatsoever*, to overlook the manifest conclusion, that no commandment of Christ can we be keeping, while living in wilful disregard of any; for all his ordinances are wrapped up in this one commandment to observe them *all*; and therefore, as a system, they must stand or fall together. Just as obvious, at the same time, is the inference, that to neglect even the smallest ordinance of the gospel, is to renounce all its blessings; for we may be sure that Christ has given us no needless directions, or useless means of grace, but that, on

the contrary, they are just sufficient for our need. And verily, when we contemplate, on the one hand, the end in view—the total renewal of our own nature after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, together with an inheritance of honour, glory, and immortality in the purest dwellings of eternity; and on the other, the simplicity of the means appointed for working out such immeasurable results, we shall rather be inclined to wish that these means were enlarged than contracted; and, while working out our great salvation with fear and trembling, shall be careful to apply every direction that Christ has given in small things just as well as in great. For he that in this, his season of merciful visitation, is despising the day of small things, is in sad reality despising the great day of the Lord. O! let us be up then and doing while it is yet called to-day, for the night is fast approaching wherein no man can work.

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#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, . . . so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: . . . it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it,'* Isa. lv. 10, 11.

WE never doubt the power of God to do what he pleases. But it is one thing to admit, or not deny, and another to believe a truth, with an ease and familiarity of faith corresponding to its importance. There are many great truths, which, although no one ever thinks of denying them, remain so strange to our thoughts, that believing them is an effort and a process of the reason requiring to be repeated just as often as they force themselves on our notice. Of such a kind is, in the minds of perhaps most men, the motion of the earth, or the omnipresence of God; so that, when reminded of either, they have to think, and remember, and reason within themselves, in order to clear away the habitual illusion that the world is at rest, or that God is as far from their steps as he is from their thoughts. There are other truths, again, with which we are so familiar, that they affect us like instincts, and pour their influences direct upon the heart without passing through the filter of reason by the way. Of this sort is our belief in the regular return of the seasons, or in the divine promise that 'while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.'

These observations lead us to remark further, that we find these two sorts of truth generally presented side by side in the bible; and the things which are slowest in mounting to the surface of the mind, so interlinked in the metaphors and comparisons of scripture, with the themes of our quickest and easiest belief, that they must either sink or float together. Such is the association of ideas in the short saying of our Saviour, 'I am the bread of life,' a metaphor connecting the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, with a subject of familiar and universal experience in natural life, and teaching us to connect them as closely with each other in our faith and our desires.

The comparison employed in the passage before us, is a beautiful instance of the same kind; and by the careful kindness of him who is not only the author of the simile, but also the contriver of the likeness, is admirably suited to interlink an important topic of religious faith and meditation with our most familiar modes of thought, feeling, and action.

Of all appearances in the natural world there are none that more manifestly lie within the kingdom of providence, or depend more unquestionably on the will of God, than snow and rain; nor are there any that make us more sensible of our own helplessness and dependence in the midst of our most strenuous exertions and most anxious expectations. Hence says the proverb, with emphatic simplicity, It is God who 'saith unto the snow, Be thou upon the earth;' and, with a sublimity of conception surpassing all human poetry, hath the psalmist called the rain 'the river of God.' All rivers, indeed, might with abundant propriety be so called, but pre-eminently is the rain entitled to such a distinctive name, by its marvellous manner of flowing, in a perpetual alternation, from the heavens to the earth and from the earth to the heavens, performing the one portion of its endless circuit in the form of light vapour, and the other in that of rain. All the while, moreover, is its aerial channel, if we may so express ourselves, continually shifting with the blowing of the wind, of which 'we hear the sound, but cannot tell whence it cometh;' so as to pour out the 'small or the great rain' upon whatever spot of the earth God pleases, with the precision of a vine-dresser watering the plants of his vineyard. For the Lord 'by watering wearieth the thick cloud; he scattereth his bright cloud, and it is turned round about by his counsels, that they may do whatever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth.'

Never, moreover, does this rain return to the

heavens without accomplishing the purpose for which it is sent; for most manifestly does it always produce an effect either for good or for evil; and it is but a short and sure stage in reasoning, to ascribe that effect to the counsels by which the clouds are 'scattered and turned round about.'

Why then should we be slow in believing that just in like manner shall the word of God water the spiritual world, and prosper in the thing whereto he sends it? O! we never doubt; 'for who hath resisted his will?' But alas! do we believe it in the same manner as we believe in the fertilizing properties of rain? And do all eyes look up unto God for the reviving showers of his wind, as in the day when their corn is in the tender blade, and the heavens are like brass, they look up to him for the early rain? O! let us associate in our minds just as closely as we find them connected in the metaphors of scripture, the necessities of the soul with the wants of the body, and the promises of the life which is to come with that which now is; let us connect the spiritual vineyard in our thoughts with the natural; and the word of the one with the rain of the other, till they blend together, and become, as it were, the same idea. Let us remember that the God of providence, and the God of grace, is one and the same Jehovah! And that a man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God! And O! if it be sweet, pleasant, and refreshing to our own hearts, to see the tender blades of a corn-field wet, and fresh, and green with the watering of God; can we be dull and dead to the reviving power of his word on the drooping graces of the soul! In the days when all eyes look up to heaven for rain as they do 'for meat in due season,' and when they see the passing clouds bearing to other hill-sides the quickening waters so much wanted on their own; and when, in the impatience of 'the hope deferred that maketh the heart sad,' they wish they had the winds in leading-strings, or the hills on wheels, are they not reminded that they themselves have feet to bear them to the spot where God is blessing the preaching of his word; and pouring down the spirit of revival, and satisfying the soul of the people in drought like a well-watered garden?

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' saith the Lord of hosts,' Zech. iv. 6.*

In the natural world, which is a picture of the spiritual, great and permanent effects are most

frequently produced by gentle means and silent operations. Physical force, associated in our minds with ideas of violence and hurry, has a very different significancy in the kingdom of nature, where light, air, heat, water, and similar substances, all soft and gentle in themselves, are continually effecting revolutions by their softest modes of action. It is remarkable too that when the hard and the soft, or the violent and gentle of the natural world, meet in conflict, whatever may be the immediate result of the first collision, the victory in the end always rests with the gentle and soft. Thus is it the flesh of the human frame that gives shape to the bones—the brain that fashions the skull. So does water polish rocks, and woman—man.

We find this law very beautifully represented in the manner of the divine manifestation vouchsafed to Elijah, as he waited and watched on the mountain for the passing by of the Lord. 'And behold,' says the record of this significant interview, 'the Lord passed by, and a great strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.' It was in this still small voice therefore that the Lord passed by, or in other words, favoured the prophet with a passing manifestation of his presence.

We are thus assisted in our transition from the kingdom of nature to that of grace; for in the vision of the prophet are blended together the worlds of matter and of mind. And we have now to observe, that the same law which in physics assigns the ultimate superiority to powers soft and gentle in their operations, has likewise awarded, in the moral and spiritual departments of the world, the final victory to the meek, the humble, and the patient. It is the will and the promise of God, that in the end the meek-spirited shall inherit the earth; and to the achievements of this conquest hath he appointed, as the efficient instruments, the power of meekness and of the 'soft answer that turneth away wrath.'

This power of meekness in the moral world, most conspicuously exhibited in the character and the conquest of Christ, is equally observable to an attentive eye in all the subordinate instruments of his grace. The conflict between the hard and the soft, or the violent and the meek, in the spiritual world, was brought to its first issue in the murder of Abel. The victory was no doubt to all appearance on the side of the

fierce and sullen Cain, for he rose up against his brother in the field, and slew him. But the voice of that brother's blood rose up to heaven from the ground; and was from that moment consecrated by the grace of God, to the exercise of an influence and dominion in the world, which like the slow working of water, has undermined the thrones of tyrants, and sapped the foundations of mighty empires. Abel was the first martyr; and all the kingdoms of the earth have been revolutionized, or shaken by the power of the martyr's blood.

It is the sin of mankind, at war, in the ignorant impatience of passion with time, space, and circumstances, to employ physical force in its violent sense, where moral power alone is equal to the vastness of the results in view; and hence, if we would call down the power of God at all, it is in the form of tempest, and earthquake, and lightning, that the most of us invoke it. When pining over our unheard prayers, our recourse is to 'an arm of flesh;' our trust 'in the horse and his rider.'

Such means the Lord no doubt occasionally employs, for with a high hand and an outstretched arm were the Israelites brought out of Egypt. But in turning the affections of man, as he turneth the rivers of water, or fashioning his heart, as the potter fashioneth his clay; and in the great process of spiritualizing the world, the means that he employs are like the end, imbued with the spirit of meekness and peace.

All these remarks are abundantly confirmed by the scripture at present before us. The holy men who were engaged in rebuilding the temple, and being stricken with dismay by the multitude of powers and principalities opposed to the enterprise, and despairing of their own resources, are here comforted with the divine assurance, that not by 'might nor by power' should the work be accomplished; but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. The human instruments, employed in the undertaking, were not to be invested with extraordinary authority, supported by armies and royal edicts; but imbued with the enlightening and persuasive influences of the Holy Spirit. Before the strong, the gentle Spirit of faith, and love, and holiness, and wisdom, and zeal, were they assured, that the 'great mountain' of their difficulties would be levelled with the plain, and the work proceed, calm, but irresistible in its progress, to a sure completion. But all the while was the spirit of the prophet's vision undoubtedly pointing to Christ, and the sanctification of the human race. Christ was then, and is now making to himself a temple of the whole

earth; and will go on building amidst the united opposition of hell and the world, till 'incense and a pure offering be offered unto God, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same;' and the instruments he employs are, not the hard and the violent, not might and power, as we understand them—not armies, with 'their confused noise, and garments rolled in blood;' but the meek, the soft, and the gentle,—the regenerating and sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit; and so shall he bring the day to pass, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid, and the meek-spirited inherit the earth.

Let us remember all the while, however, that we are as individuals a part of this great undertaking—a small part we may think, but, nevertheless, just as great as the whole, in our own esteem, if we remember that every one carries his own eternity within him. Let us rejoice then in the promise of the text; and by keeping ever near to the means of its fulfilment, by walking much with the meek and lowly Jesus, and seeking much unto God in prayer, let us labour diligently in the great work of spiritualizing our own hearts, and becoming living temples of the Holy Ghost.

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#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint,'* Isa. xl. 31.

THERE is manifestly an arm at work in the universe that never tires, and a power incessantly giving itself out without ever growing less. The scoffers of the later ages, described by St Peter, as inferring that the world will never come to an end, because 'since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning,' do homage to the unwearying might of the Eternal with the very words that deny his faithfulness. For just in this sameness of procedure pervading every department of creation, and directing all its modes of action in the same course, and towards the same end, do we see the vigilance of an eye that never sleeps nor slumbers, and the working of an energy that needs no intervals of repose.

In our own nature do we find embodied, on the contrary, the principles of weakness, decay, and dependence on a Fountain of strength, or 'of living waters,' foreign to ourselves. Our natural life is

in reality a continual conflict between the principles of decay and renovation; which, in process of time, always ends in the breaking of the wheel at the cistern, and the long repose of the grave. We are thus directed, by the experience of our own wants and weakness to the fulness of that Fountain from which all life and vigour flows. And hardly can we turn our eyes towards the throne of the Omnipotent, and contemplate the great Inhabitant of eternity, without feeling that he must be Lord over both life and death; able to supply us with such a sufficiency of the living principle as may for ever arrest the progress of decay; and make us partakers of his own eternity.

Now this is just what his word teaches us to hope; and, in the passage before us, moreover, teaches in such a spirit-stirring manner, as almost in the instant to realize itself, by raising us far above this valley of sin and death, and bathing our soul in the light of heaven. But O! it is our besetting sin, to mistake the soarings of an excited imagination, for the mounting up of the heart; and momentary sallies of enthusiasm for a turning of the soul to God; and though we mount and soar upon wings as eagles, even to the very windows of heaven, it is alas! too frequently only to be dashed with a farther fall, and a greater force on the rocks from which we rose.

We are directed in the text 'to wait upon the Lord.' O! but this is a hard saying, thinks the fainting soul within itself; and 'who can hear it? God, we are apt to think, is far away—seated upon a glorious, but distant and lonely throne beyond the stars, and beyond the reach of human prayers. Or, if it be true that he fills heaven and earth with his presence; that he encompasses all our steps, and besets us behind and before, yet he is an invisible Spirit; everywhere eluding the most diligent search of our senses, just as effectually as if he were no where present on our side of the starry firmament. For 'behold,' says the ancient patriarch of Uz, 'I go forward, but he is not there; and backwards, 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.' Soon after, however, do we find the same patriarch declaring of the same invisible Spirit; 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye hath seen thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' It is remarkable that we thus find the man who has most movingly bewailed the invisibility of God, just most emphatically, also, declaring his experience of the divine manifestation; and the more we feel inclined to complain of the apparent distance, or absence of

the Lord, whom we profess to seek, the more reason have we to be thankful for all the means with which he has favoured us, of waiting upon him, and bringing our hearts within the influences of his manifested presence. These means are extremely simple in their own nature; and so continually, moreover, within the reach of our capacities, that we have it in our power to realize literally the privilege of Enoch, and walk with God. For they are the reading of his word, which the most of us have always at hand; the holy ordinances of his gospel, which are at once easy, and of frequent recurrence; and the privilege of close communion with his Spirit in the exercise of meditation and prayer. It is this last privilege that we may regard as specially pointed at in the expression, 'waiting upon the Lord;' because it is not only the most literal application of the words, but the most effectual means of realizing the full import of the promise contained in them. Let us remember, then, that we are directed to wait upon the Lord in the public prayers of the sanctuary, the devotion of the family altar, and the private communion of the closet, where alone the 'Spirit helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.'

But O! are any of us strangers to the wandering of our thoughts in prayer; and the devotion of the bowing head, and the bending knee, in which there is no waiting upon the Lord? Have we never seen the congregations of the sanctuary, not only turning away from God in the inner, but even in the outward man; sinking down upon their seats before the prayer is ended; and thus, in reality, though knocking at the door of heaven, turning their back in the very moment when they should expect it to open at the name of Christ. Thus even in the act of prayer do the youths faint and grow weary, and the young men utterly fail—but all this, because they are not 'waiting upon the Lord.'

Let the preface, therefore, to all our prayers be, 'Lord, teach us how to pray.' And so addressing ourselves to the Fountain of living waters, the Source of life and strength, with the prayer of faith that wavereth not, shall we, in all our prayers realize the promise of our text; and 'renew our strength, and mount up on wings as eagles;' and having our affections, our treasures, and our conversation in heaven;—waiting constantly upon the Lord, and walking in all his ordinances blameless; we shall run, and not be weary; we shall walk and not faint. Thus in the end shall death have no power over our souls; and shall be unto our bodies a long renovating sleep in Jesus, from which we shall rise clothed with

the bloom and strength of immortal youth, to mount on wings as eagles to the mansions of unfading glory.

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SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;'* Acts ii. 42.

It is a saying worthy of all acceptance, as rich in comforts for every desponding pilgrim of Zion, that 'with the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift, there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' His goodness flows from a fountain that can never run itself out; but, on the contrary, though continually filling the cisterns of innumerable human hearts, continues itself, for ever full. Just as little can the divine power wear itself away by exertion, for 'hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.' Though incessantly 'giving power to the faint, and increasing strength to them that have no might,' he remains, amid his own inexhaustible resources, from everlasting to everlasting the same.'

We see in the text the simple, but majestic power of the gospel in full operation; and the theory of religion reduced to practice. Those early Christians, it tells us, continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. In these words we have, indeed, a most beautiful picture of the primitive church, when Christianity was still almost in its infancy,—and verily an infancy, moreover, which, like our own, when compared with our riper years, that makes us look back upon it with a sigh of regret, and wish we could live it over again. The interesting members of that early church had not only been *hearers* but *doers* of the word; receiving the new doctrines from the apostles of Christ, not merely as an interesting discovery in the kingdom of thought and the soul, but as a living substantial rule of life and manners; and pointing out the way to honour, glory, and immortality. Their conversion had been recent and sudden; but it was steadfast and durable; for they adhered with unwavering constancy to the doctrines of their new religion, notwithstanding all the efforts of a world lying in wickedness around them, to reason, to laugh, or to frighten them out of their faith. They also kept up a

close companionship with each other, and with the apostles, in spiritual conferences, prayer-meetings, and frequent commemorations of the Redeemer's death. Such, moreover, was the intimacy of their fellowship, that they seemed but as one in heart, in counsel, and in interests; held together by a common and unailing subject of conversation in the wonders of redeeming love. And such, in fine, was the power of this fellowship, this melting of all hearts into one, under the influence of the Sun of Righteousness; that the laughter of the ungodly was soon changed into fear; and the infant church for a season experienced the peace proper to the religion of the cross; while numbers were daily flowing from all sides to the goodness of the Lord.

What now were the means by which these marvellous and beautiful effects were wrought? Shall we ascribe them to the eloquence of Peter, and the other apostles? They would, all of them, even in their day of flesh and vain-glory, have repudiated the idolatrous homage of such a supposition, as at once an offence to themselves, and an insult to the majesty of the cross. What would Peter have said to the praise of converting more souls, by a single discourse, than Christ, perhaps, in the whole course of his ministry; though of that same Christ it was said that he spake 'as never man spake?' O! it is just from Peter that we have the explanation of the whole mystery: for 'hearken,' he says in the context; 'ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, hearken to my words. This is that that was spoken by the prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God) that I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' This prophecy had just been brought to pass in the marvellous down-pourings of the Holy Ghost, at the feast of Pentecost, and while Peter is calling upon the men of Judea to hearken unto his words, he is telling them, at the same time, that he is only speaking as the Spirit gives him utterance. We are thus directed to a fountain of life and strength, altogether different in its properties from the well that was opened up for the washing away of guilt in the broken body and shed blood of the Messiah; and to a power which must be brought into full action before the system of the gospel can be so much as put in motion, or a single drop of redeeming blood applied to the conscience of a single believer. That power is the third person of the blessed Trinity, who, by an influence as mysterious, but just as palpable in its effects, as the agency which regulates the movements of the

solar system, is urging forward to its last perfection the great scheme of spiritualizing the world, through the blood of the everlasting covenant; and who, by the infinity of his own strength equalizing all means and instruments, maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation. For Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but the Spirit of God alone giveth the increase thereof.

What advantages then had the primitive church which lie not equally within the reach of our prayers? Let us remember that in God there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; and that his Spirit, whom no working can weary, is the all-pervading promise of the gospel, freely offered unto every one that calleth upon his name. The Old Testament is not more thickly bespangled with promises of the Messiah's coming, than is the New with those of the Holy Spirit; and if, in the early days of Christianity, the meetings of the saints were blessed by such a down-pouring of his influences, as changed the wilderness, around and within them, into a blooming field, why shall not our souls be quickened and revived, and righteousness flow among us as a river, if we seek unto the fountain of strength and life, in humble acknowledgment of our own insufficiency, and sincere reliance on the faithfulness of God? And if, in our prayers themselves, 'we know not what we should pray for as we ought,' O! even then are we told that 'likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities—making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.'

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#### SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,' Rom. i. 16.*

THE apostle, speaking from observation, and, perhaps, alas! from experience likewise, is here manifestly charging human nature with an inherent tendency to despise its crucified Redeemer, and to be ashamed of the gospel. He knew that 'to the Greeks it was foolishness,' and to 'the Jews a stumbling-block.' In commencing his epistle to the Romans too, he might take it for granted, that many among them would be ashamed of a king, who had been hanged like a thief on a tree, under the jurisdiction of a Roman

governor; and despise a salvation, the author and finisher of which had been unable to save himself from the pain and the shame of the cross.

And have we never been ashamed of the gospel? O! how often do we hear the honourable youths of our own day and generation, when their word is doubted, or their faithfulness called in question, appealing to their rank, their profession, or their country; one, with his hand upon his heart, saying, I am a nobleman, another I am a soldier, and a third, I am a Briton; but who ever thinks of gaining credit for his averments by saying, 'I am a Christian?' How soon, moreover, are our young men, when they enter the gay or the busy scenes of life, ashamed to meet their many tempters with a text from the New Testament; or to plead the lessons of their mothers, their ministers, and the gospel of the meek and lowly Jesus, against the elegant sophisms of the voluptuary, the sparkling wit of the infidel, the laughter of the fool, or the calculating wisdom of the worldling.

The real reason of all this shame will make itself manifest in a single glance at the reason Paul gives for not being ashamed of the gospel, and that is, because 'it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' We all respect power. When it is exhibited on a large and conspicuous scale, it strikes us with a pleasing awe, in whatever field of observation we see it displayed, whether in the world of matter or of mind; and is in reality the source of that mental emotion called the sublime. The great fountain of all such emotions is God; and who has not felt the sublimity of that remarkable scripture which describes the creation of light? 'And God,' says the word of his own inspiration, 'said, Let there be light; and there was light.'

Great, however, beyond all possibility of description, as is the power of God displayed in the creation, incomparably greater is the power put forth in saving a single sinner. The subject is so vast that it requires to be broken down into parts. Let us first look at the power apart from the view of its effects. In the work of creation there is presented to our mind the simple and single idea of God. But from the moment we turn to the work of redemption we have to deal with the awful mystery of the Trinity. The great and simple idea of Deity is thus divided; and each of our new conceptions remains as great, as infinite as the first. Now it is an awful thought that to effect the salvation of a single soul, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are all acting in distinct offices, and exer-

cising divine power in ways all differing from each other, yet all equally essential to the intended effects.

The work of creation, moreover, is associated with ideas of ease, and of pure unmingled joy. It is the very ease represented in the word, 'And God said, Let there be light; and there was light,' that constitutes its sublimity. But far different are the ideas associated with the power of God unto salvation. There is an effort—a conflict of contending emotions, grief, pain, enormous suffering, in this power. It is the Father giving his only-begotten Son to the death; it is the Son descending from the throne of eternity, clothing himself in all the suffering sensibilities of human nature, submitting to the pain and the ignominy of the scourge in a criminal court, and in the agonies of the cross complaining that his Father had forsaken him. It is, moreover, the incessant striving of the Holy Spirit with the *grieving*—*weaving* soul of man in the work of applying the blood of Christ, to the end for which it was freely poured out, and giving efficacy to the love of God manifested in the gift of his Son. Let us now glance at the greatness of the work. The very sight of such a power brought into action argues the greatness of the work in view. It is the salvation, as we have just supposed, of a single sinner. And verily it may seem at first sight that there is here an expenditure of power far beyond the need. Alas! we shall soon be in as much danger of thinking it all too little; and this is in reality the besetting sin that casts perpetually its cold and benighting shadow between the soul and its Sun of righteousness. For no sooner has the power of truth forced its way to the conscience, and 'the pangs of hell have taken hold upon us,' and we set in solemn earnest to the labour of repentance, than we begin to doubt the power of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to deliver us from the torment of our guilt, and wash the blackness of our sins away. O! in our days of carelessness, and ease, and folly, and mocking at sin, it may seem an easy thing for the Almighty to pardon us, and blot out all our transgressions like a thick cloud, with the light of one forgiving smile. It seems but the speaking of a word, as easy, as saying in the magnificent days of creation, 'Let there be light.' But, O! how different a thing it seems, when brought to the test of trial and experience, to pour over the troubled waters of the soul the assurance that its sins are in reality forgiven, and that it has no more to fear from the righteous judgments of God. Pardon may still seem an easy word, but not the peace, which is its only proof. O!

in awakening us to a right sense of sin and guilt, we feel that God has raised up a spirit to torment us, which God alone can lay: and how many are tempted in such an awful moment to doubt his power! Yet this power does God put forth in the gospel, and through the sprinkling of the Redeemer's blood, does he hush the winds and the waves of the forgiven soul into 'a peace that passeth understanding.'

But all the while lies before us the great work of sanctification, which, in reality, is no less than a renewal of our whole nature after the image of God in righteousness and in true holiness. O let a sinner meditate well the import of the word saint; and think within himself whether it be an easy work to change the sepulchre of his bosom into a temple of the Holy Ghost, and make the title of saint sit easy as an accustomed diadem of honour upon his soul! O does it seem a small thing, so much as to make us believe, that when a few more years and days shall have passed away, we shall be, as one of the cherubim, enjoying the fellowship of Christ, in the habitation of his holiness and glory, with as much ease and comfort, as did the beloved disciple, when he reclined on his bosom at supper? Yet all this belief does the power of the gospel give; and in the end, moreover, causes it to be swallowed up in vision.

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SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,*' Psal. cxix. 105.

THE light of reason, whatever may be its boasted discoveries, is just enough to make the *darkness* around us *visible*. In the sultry atmosphere of the passions, which it cannot control, it must always burn but dimly; and when brought to bear upon the wants of the immortal soul, is but as the mournful light that is sometimes seen hovering at night over a recent grave. It is a lantern, moreover, so frail in its materials that a gust of wind can blow it out, when it is most needed. A fall, or a stroke against a tree, as we walk by its guidance, may shiver the glass, spill the oil, and leave us enveloped in the palpable darkness of drivelling idiocy, or raving madness.

The word of God, however, is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path, worthy of that power, wisdom, and goodness which created the sun. It is in reality the sun of the moral world; and is the word of God, saying, 'Let there be light.'

It tells us, what we cannot learn from reason,

the thoughts of God; and makes us acquainted, to the uttermost extent of our capacities, with the perfections of his character. For it is, in reality, a transcript of the divine mind. It is from God's own word alone that we derive our conception of that amazing purity which cannot look upon iniquity; and upon which, iniquity, on the other hand, cannot look and live. From it do we learn, in direct opposition to the information of reason, that his thoughts are not like our thoughts—nor his ways like the ways of man; but, on the contrary, are of such an opposite nature, as to make the foolishness of the world to confound its wisdom, and the least to change places with the greatest.

In making known to us the thoughts of God, however, it is not a subject foreign to our interests, and natural sympathies, over which it thus casts the light of its revelations; but one in which we ourselves have each of us the deepest and most personal stake. For it tells us the intentions of God concerning us, and our souls, and all that he thinks of doing for us, and with us, whether for weal or for woe, both in the life which now is, and in that which is to come.

It tells, moreover, what we can just as little learn from reason, our own thoughts. For, however strange it may seem, we needed a revelation, from on high, to make known unto us, not only the mysteries of the spiritual world, and its great eternity, but the secrets of the little world within ourselves. Into that inner Africa of our mental geography,—the human heart,—it guides and leads us, as the Spirit of the Lord conveyed the prophet to the valley of dry bones, and makes us to see ourselves, as God sees us; a dismal scene of spiritual death, in which the only symptom of animation is the busy working of the worms that prey upon the dead.

It is in this faithful reflection of the human heart indeed, with all its sins, its frailties, its delusions, and its wants, that we have the most convincing and homefelt proof of the divine source from which the light of the Bible is derived.

It is from the Bible, in short, that we learn the primitive state of our race; the origin, nature, and extent of our fall; and the means provided in the counsels of divine wisdom, and mercy, and grace for our restoration. While it points out, on the one hand, the road to ruin, and the enormous woes in which it issues; it reveals, at the same time, the way of salvation, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, and the out-pourings of the Holy Spirit. It contains all the information we possess, and all that we can reasonably require, concerning the beginning or the end of time, and

the ultimate design of our existence. It is but a small book, yet it answers, at large, and in detail, the question which every one must occasionally have asked himself: What am I? whence came I? and whither am I going? It would take the three-score and ten years of our lot, in time, to read the other books which have been written by men in answer to the same; yet, if their collective light could be gathered into the compass of a single lamp, all it could do for us would be to guide us just to the mouth of the grave, and there go out, when the anxiety and the fear of our inquiry begin.

But the psalmist finds in the word of God a light to a path which passes through—or over the grave; and has its issues in the realms of bliss, the Zion of the soul. At the same time, it is a lamp to his feet, guiding his steps amid the uncertainties, fears, and dangers, that beset every soul of man in the great way of holiness and heaven. For it contains a complete code of all our duties toward God, and man, and ourselves; giving us 'line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little;' so clearly, moreover, laid down, and so adapted to every order of intellect, that he who runs may read. So sure and safe does it make the road to heaven, so far as the difficulty of finding, or the danger of losing it, is concerned, that we cannot so much as step off it without being told of our error, or return to it without being assured that we are right. There are voices crying, in the one case, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die; and in the other, 'This is the right way, walk ye in it.' To return to the figure of the text, it is a lamp to our feet; directing us at every step, and enlightening us in the manner and the meaning of every duty.

Walking at every step by the light of this inextinguishable lamp, we have the sure promise that it will conduct us safe through all the perplexities of the life which now is; till the angels of light take its place, and guide our souls to the realms of glory.

O! when that hour of death and darkness comes, may the word of God, with his Spirit in it, be around us a shining light, casting its radiance over the grave; and beckoning us onward to honour, glory, and immortality. Ah! if the Bible be the sun of the moral world; what must the world, and what must a death-bed be without its light. All darkness is terrible, but most of all the darkness of the soul. What a dreadful thing to feel itself falling in the dark into the hand of a God whom it does not know. 'O! for light, light, light, one ray of light, is the cry of many a dying sinner, 'to direct me in this last

step of life; to show me where to set my foot, in stepping off this world.' And O! is it on a death-bed that we are to begin to study the rule of life and manners? Is it at the end of our journey that we are to consult the road-book?

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SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,'* Eph. v. 14.

IN the figurative style, usually employed in scripture to shadow forth the dim forms of the spiritual world, the natural state of man, in relation to his God, and to the cares of a coming eternity, is here compared to sleep. In this comparison we have, on the one side, the image of a man lying at his ease, with all his senses and faculties wrapped up in sleep; and, consequently, representing at once the most perfect inaction and sense of security; while, on the other hand, the human soul is represented as wrapping itself up in a similar indifference, carelessness, and feeling of security, in regard to its own most urgent wants, and the dangers with which it is enveloped. Now if we look to the ways, the walk, and the conversation of men, do we find any reason to charge the metaphor of our text with exaggeration? O! at the first glance there is little appearance of sleep. The whole face of the habitable globe is in continual movement with the activity of man. The principle of fore-thought, and concern about the future, is every where putting forth energies worthy of the highest aim. There is ploughing and sowing in one place for the wants of the following year; and building of mansions in another, as if their owners were to live for ever; and eating and drinking as if each meal were the last. O! and there is counting of gains, and weighing of gold, with a fervour, and even a fierceness of eye, as if the men were on the eve of judgment, balancing their books, and weighing their souls.

But where, amid all this wonderful activity and solicitude about the future, is the fear, and the forethought, and labour of men for the one thing needful, for the meat that perisheth not, for the wants of the never-dying soul, and for the great eternity that, in a little while, must swallow them up. Alas! the whole bustle and activity of human life is but a troubled sleep, a continuous flying or fighting amid the ever-changing forms of a distempered dream.

O! let any child of the world ask himself whether he have ever yet turned one serious

thought towards death, or judgment, or God, or heaven, or hell—or is he not rather passing day after day, and year after year, in a state of as total indifference to the great end of his existence, and the luminous truth written in letters of living fire upon his own conscience, that he is accountable to God for the use he makes of his time and his talents, as the bird upon the bough, or the beasts of the field.

Surely, then, as far as the soul is concerned, there is here all the indifference, the carelessness, and sense of security in the midst of danger, peculiar to sleep. So lies the soul muffled up in its slumber, like Jonah, in the midst of the storm; or like a benighted traveller on the brink of a precipice. Awful spectacle! If he stir in his sleep he may tumble over, and fall like Lucifer, never to rise again. If he sleep a minute longer, the waves of the sea—of eternity, may sweep him away. Have Christ, and the soul of man changed places? O surely! if we were awake to the dangers of our situation—to the perils of the great ocean on which our ship, our puny ark of bulrushes, is drifting at the mercy of winds and waves, our great concern would be the fear that God is sleeping; and our cry, like that of the psalmist, 'Awake, why sleepest thou? O Lord, arise!' Ay! if all nature were not steeped in more than the insensibility of sleep, then should we, in the perils of the storm that is continually howling around us, be all hurrying, like the disciples, to awaken the sleeping Redeemer, crying, 'Lord, save us, or we perish!' O! in the midst of such a puny storm, made up of mere wind and water, it is man who wakens the Redeemer. But in the hour of that Redeemer's agony, when he is expiating the sins of the world, the disciples lay themselves down under the olive trees to sleep, and it is Christ who wakens them. And so is it Christ who, in the words of our text, is crying to the sleeping souls of men, 'awake, thou that sleepest!' yes, it is he, who was bruised for our iniquities, and wounded for our transgressions, that calls upon thee, O slumbering sinner, by his own bloody sweat and agony, to awaken out of thy sleep. And is not one such call enough? Is it not sufficient to hear one call from the mouth of the incarnate God? And yet it stirs thee not. O! there is something more than sleep here. For how often hast thou heard such a call; how often read and heard that the Son of God was scourged, and spit upon, and crucified, to teach thee how God abhors sin, and to wash, moreover, thy guilt clean away, that thou mayest enter, light of heart, on a course of new obedience; yet thou sinnest on, as if no such thing had ever happened; or as if thou hadst never

heard of it, and that string in thy heart, which is so tender, and so susceptible, to the love and kindness of thy fellow-worms, gives no response, has never once vibrated to the love manifested in the gift and the death of Christ. Hah! 'the maid is not dead,' said the Lord of life, 'but sleepeth.' Of thee he reverses the saying, 'The man is not asleep, but dead.' And O! thank God, that with all that deadness in trespasses and sins, thou art still in the land of life and hope, and still in possession of a heart endowed with many soft and amiable sensibilities; with judgment, understanding, and reason, impaired, indeed, and benighted by the long dominion of sin, but not destroyed. Listen, then, to the voice of redeeming love, come forth from the chambers of death, and Christ will give thee light. Christ is the great light of the spiritual world. Where he is there is no need of sun or moon. He will fill the living sepulchre in which thy soul is entombed with a brighter light than the day, and make it to rejoice and blossom like the rose. He will pour over thine understanding more knowledge in the first moment of thy looking up in his face, than can be gathered in a long life from all the written or spoken wisdom of man. He will throw a light over thy path of life, which casts no shadow; making all things clear, behind, around, before, and above thee; for he is the alpha and the omega; the same who in the beginning said, 'Let there be light.'

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EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him,'* John vi. 55 56.

'THE great mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh,' or in other words, the incarnation of the eternal Son, was such a letting down of the divine nature to the lowness of our estate, as to imply every other sort of condescension consistent with the purity of the Godhead. It was heaven descending in bodily manifestation upon the earth, and the Supreme Deity lowering himself to the condition of fallen humanity.

The object contemplated in the incarnation of the Word, was to raise earth to heaven, and man to the rank of divinity. To effect this marvellous exaltation of our apostate race, however, the incarnation was not, in itself, sufficient; nor the vicarious sufferings and expiatory death of the Redeemer: otherwise there would have been no

reason for transmitting to us the record of these wonderful events; and the whole bible, in short, would be a superfluous book, or at best but a lamp to guide our feet in regard to the dangers and doubts of the life which now is. Through the blood of Christ we obtain the free pardon of sin, and through his perfect obedience a title to the inheritance of the saints in light; but this is far from implying the exaltation of the human soul contemplated as the ultimate object of the Saviour's sojourn among men; for 'the word of the Lord that abideth for ever,' hath declared that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord:' and that 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

We know, therefore, that our moral nature must undergo an essential change, and, amid all the impurities of a world lying in wickedness, must be itself made pure 'as snow,' and white 'as wool,' to fit it for the enjoyment of God in the abodes of his brightest manifestation. Wonderful and apparently hopeless as this reformation of our fallen and corrupted nature is, it is nevertheless just what Christ promises to effect. And so large, moreover, is the bounty of God that he will never give less than he promises; but always refuses a part to those who will not take the whole; so that unless we include the renewal and sanctification of our nature in the wishes of our hearts, as well as in the prayers of our lips, we can obtain neither the pardon purchased by the blood of Christ, nor the title to heaven involved in the free imputation of his righteousness.

To represent the renewal of our moral nature, and the means by which it is accomplished, in the most striking light, and interweave them, at the same time, with our most ordinary habits of thought and feeling, our blessed Lord avails himself of the analogies subsisting between the world of matter and mind, and which indeed are his own contrivance; and supposing the soul of man to be endowed, like the body, with a mouth, capable of eating and drinking, he describes it in its new state as eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

To impress the deep lesson of these analogies and instructions still more permanently upon our hearts, and connect them still more intimately with our natural sensibilities, the Author of our faith has contrived an ordinance, of such a double nature, that both sides of the analogy are represented in one and the same act, or experience; and while with the bodily mouth we are partaking of a bodily meat and drink, both of a kind admirably fitted to infuse newness of life into the outward man, our inner is renewing its drooping

strength, by feeding itself with thoughts of the body that was bruised for our iniquities, and wounded for our transgressions, and of the blood that was 'shed for many for the remission of sins.'

The believer is said in the text to dwell in Christ and Christ in him. It is from these remarkable and most affecting words that we learn the full extent of that wonderful condescension displayed in the incarnation of eternal love; and at the same time the lamentable waste of riches exhibited in the lives of those who seem to think it enough that the Saviour died for the remission of sins, and therefore neglect all the means, however simple in their nature, appointed in the wisdom and grace of God for working out the benefits of his death. Whatever we may infer concerning the blessed realities of paradise, from the little that the bible has told us, certain is it that from no scriptural expression can we gather such an intimacy of intercourse between the soul and God, as is plainly indicated in the gracious metaphor before us. For there is here not intercourse alone but union, in the closest sense of the term, even to the literal idea of two persons becoming one. Thus we cannot think of the Redeemer without including the believer in the thought, nor, when we think of the believer, can we exclude the idea of the Redeemer. Wherever we conceive Christ to be, there are we taught to think is the believer likewise; for the Saviour has him in his heart; and if we look to the believer, then do we know that we are likewise looking to Christ, for the believer 'bears about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in his mortal flesh.'

And O! what an endless succession of bright, beautiful and happy thoughts are of necessity connected with this mutual indwelling of Christ and the believer. What consolation for the troubles of the life which now is, that every sigh of our souls is touching the sympathies of the glorified Redeemer; and that every movement of the divine mind running along 'the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound,' communicates its quickening impulse to our souls, and furthers us on the way to the glory that is yet to be revealed! How changed, moreover, is the prospect of death, by the power of such a thought. Where is the victory of the grave, for those 'who die in the Lord,' with the bright destination to rest, as a part of his mystical body, till called by the trump of his archangel, to partake in the resurrection of the just. O let us feed much upon the thought of this mutual indwelling, and daily will it more and more realize itself. Let us

feed by faith on the Word that was made flesh and dwelt with us, till we be blessed with the feeling that we are indeed one with Christ and Christ one with us.'

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EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,'* John vi. 53.

LIFE and death are very different terms in the mouth of the living God, from what they are in our own, and the language of a fallen world. We have but one sense in death, and one sting; the word of God has three, of which ours is the least awful. These three are death temporal, spiritual, and eternal. The first—our own—is simply the separation of the soul from the body; the second the separation of the soul from God; and the last the separation of both soul and body from God for ever and ever. O let us now, with all the life that is in us, bethink ourselves which of these three separations is best described by the little, yet awful word death; or, leaving the last out of view for the present, and confining ourselves to the two that fall within the range of our own experience and observation—which may God in his mercy likewise confine—let us think, and ponder, and judge, which of them is most exactly represented by the term death, or agrees best with the dismal and dreary imaginations attached to it. Is it a more ghastly thing for a soul to part with its body than with its God? O if we see a man upon whose soul the name of God has no power; who, it may be, sabbath after sabbath, and sacrament after sacrament, can sit in the sanctuary itself, amid the visions of the Almighty, with the oracles of the eternal, and the awful denunciations of the sacred volume sounding, like the ocean of eternity in his ears; yet no more bestirring himself, no more considering his latter end, than the dead in their graves; is it not, to the full as proper, as natural, and as just, for any one, living the life of faith in Christ, to say of such a man, 'there is no life in him,' as if we saw him lying like Lazarus, 'bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin.'

O true it is that in this 'body of death,' all deaf as it is to the voice of God, and blind to the visions of the Almighty; there is abundance of animation and stir:—so is there in all corruption; there are longings that gnaw like cankers, and

passions that rage like tigers; there is guile, and envy, and malice and hatred, and evil-speaking, and avarice; there is movement, as in a drop of water, seen through a magnifying glass, and presenting to the eye a perpetual battle-field, where enormous dragons, and snakes, and monsters without name are continually devouring each other; but at the spectacle of all this motion and tumult, so long as there is no response to the voice of divine love, we have far more reason to shudder, and to fly in fear, than if we saw a dead body bestirring itself on its bed. O! and there have been instances, marvellous instances of the dead bestirring themselves, not only on their bed, but their bier, and not only on their bier, but in the grave itself, and opening their eyes, and looking around, first at the spectators, and then at themselves, and rising up, and walking about among the living, to the terror of all who doubted, and the delight of as many as believed. In the seventh chapter of Luke we read that 'when Christ came nigh to the gate of a city called Nain, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and much people of the city was with her, and when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not; and he came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still: and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise; and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak; and he delivered him unto his mother.' In the gospel of John do we likewise read, that at the mouth of the cave, wherein, all unconscious of his own corruption, lay the lamented brother of Martha and Mary, 'Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth; and he that had been dead four days, came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes.'

Now in all this do we not see the unseen things of God, made manifest in the things that are seen, and the whole truth of our text—the implied as well as the expressed—all high, heavenly, spiritual, and beyond the reach of our senses as it is—actually embodied, and doing its marvellous work under our bodily eyes. Till the day of judgment, had these dead bodies mouldered in the grave, senseless, soulless, and as unconscience of their own condition, as of an approaching resurrection, had Christ not said unto them 'arise,' with as great an effort of power, as when in the days of creation, he said, 'let there be light.'

How clear, moreover, becomes all the darkness of these great truths, when we simply remember that the death of which Christ is thinking, is the separation of the soul from God. We know

that the cause of this separation is sin; and from the involved testimony of scripture, and experience, do we likewise know, that not only is it the nature of guilt to shun God; but that the more we offend him, the farther do we seek to fly even from the very thought of his presence. And thus is it quite manifest, moreover, that this separation of the soul from its offended Maker, beginning with the first transgression, and widening with every aggravation of the cause, must of necessity, if left to the course of nature, go on progressing in estrangement to all eternity.

Such then is the forlorn and dreary course in which all are now travelling, who make not their peace with God through the mediation of Christ, and the blood of the everlasting covenant. But the spiritual life, moreover, when once begun must be sustained, for it has its hunger and its thirst as well as the natural; and the richest, the holiest, and the most refreshing of all its banquets are the consecrated memorials of the Redeemer's death. Where the relish for these sacred and affecting memorials is wanting, there is strong reason to suspect that the life is wanting too. This suspicion is rather confirmed than shaken, by the common excuse of being afraid to eat and drink judgment, by an unworthy participation of the Lord's supper. Deep indeed is the guilt of such a participation, and heavy are the judgments that all unworthy partakers eat and drink to themselves. But is it not a strange thing to be afraid of the Lord's table, and yet not afraid of the sins that make it a place of fear? Or, if there be no such sins in the way, is it not a strange choice to break a commandment of Christ for fear of keeping it amiss. O if there be life in thee—the life of faith in the Son of God, though but as of a new-born babe, be not afraid of thine own fear, but go to the table of thy gracious Lord, in the blessed assurance that 'he will not quench the smoking flax.'

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NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation,'* Psal. lxi. 13.

PRAYER, though not the beginning of spiritual life in the soul, is the first and surest sign that it has begun. It is the incense of the long-benighted heart rising up to heaven, and showing that its Sun of righteousness is risen. One of the first things we read of Paul, after his marvellous

conversion, is the intimation from the Lord, 'behold, he prayeth!' It is indeed the only mode in which a returning sinner can break the long silence of the soul, and speak for the first time to God. When the call of the Spirit has gone to the conscience, crying, 'turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' the only answer that man can give is a prayer.

If prayer be the first manifestation of life, so is it just as certainly the most effectual means of maintaining it. We are not more dependent on the grace of God for the beginning of life, than for the meat and drink by which it is nourished; yet that meat and drink of the soul, and all spiritual blessings, has God promised only to those who pray for them. His promises are all conditional. 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened.'

The importance of this duty indeed seems sufficiently indicated by the difficulties with which it is beset; and from our own reluctance to pray might we infer the necessity of prayer. All the powers of darkness seem to combine with the evil spirit within us, in frustrating every endeavour of the heart to pour itself out in prayer or praise; and appear, moreover, perfectly willing to allow us the undisturbed use of all other privileges, and means of grace, so long as we let prayer alone. Just as Satan, in the fulness of time, aimed all his arrows at the life or the honour of the Saviour, in the conviction that if Christ fell, the world fell with him; so of all Christian graces, is he the most eager to put down or pervert the spirit of supplication, in the full assurance that in its extinction he gains the same end as if he had accomplished the destruction of Christ.

But we have a more decisive testimony than inferences, in the care, and the manifest earnestness of love with which God has provided for our instruction in the manner of this duty. When we desire to approach the crowned kings of the earth with petitions, neither care, nor pains, nor even expence do we spare in gathering information regarding the avenues of approach, the 'acceptable time,' the wording of the prayer, and the mode of presentation. Ignorant, however, as by nature we must all be, of the divine character, and consequently of 'the acceptable time,' and the suitable manner of presenting our petitions at the gate of grace, we find in the bible a minuteness of information on these points, sufficient to deliver us from all the embarrassments of ignorance; for there do we find, besides manifold examples of prayers, along with their answers, directions both general and particular, down to the smallest details, such as 'shutting

behind us the door of the closet,' when we retire to our secret devotions. Of the mercy unto which we are directed we are told, times and ways without number, that it is like God himself, infinite in its resources, and that of all his attributes it is, if we may so express ourselves, the dearest to his own heart; for he hath repeatedly told us in his own words that he delighteth in mercy; whereas judgment, on the other hand, he calls his 'strange work.'

'The acceptable times,' with the kings of the world are 'short and far between.' With God it is—*to-day*—it is *to-night*—it is *now*. 'Behold *now* is the accepted time, behold *now* is the day of salvation!'

Of all these blessed and blessing truths, we find abundant confirmation in casting but a glance of the eye at the avenue of approach to the throne of grace, and the channel of communication with the august and awful Hearer of prayer. That avenue is the broken body—that channel is the shed blood, of our great intercessor, Jesus Christ. 'I,' say his own beautiful words,—'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me.' O! in that great Intercessor we have the whole 'truth of God's salvation,' and every encouragement which the most fearful can desire, gathered together into a single point of view. 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?'

Having thus every encouragement to come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, let us come *to-day*, let us come *now*.

Oh! if there seem to be boldness in going to a throne of grace;—if thou, O! unhappy procrastinator, thinkest thou art not fit, in thy present frame of mind, with all thy sins hanging thick, like so many worms of the sepulchre, about thee, to approach the throne of a pure and holy God, or to stretch out thy hand to the hem of the Redeemer's robe; knowest thou not that there is incomparably more boldness in deferring thy prayer till another day; or in putting it off a single hour? Thy soul may be required of thee this very night. The numbered hour that is commissioned to lay thee with the dead, has been on the wing ever since thou wert born; and for any thing that thou canst tell, may be now within an hour's length of thy life. And then to the throne of God must thou go, all unfit as thou art; but not to a throne of grace. Art thou bold enough, with such a dark and awful thought staring thee in the face, to lay thyself this night down to sleep, or to go forth this morning to the

temptations, the tumults, and the perils of the day, without bowing the knee to thy God, and securing to thyself, by the prayer of faith in Christ, a portion of grace sufficient for the day; and, lest that day be thy last, for eternity. O! rather bethink thee in time; of the two dangers choose the least, and all sinful as are thy thoughts, go boldly in the name of Christ to the throne of God, and kneel and pray, and wrestle in prayer, be it with groanings that cannot be uttered, till God make thee feel that thy prayers are 'going into his ear.' And if God spare thy life; O! never more while thou livest, lay thy head down upon thy pillow at night; or go forth from the place of thy rest to the business of the day, without the appeal of prayer to the multitude of God's mercies, and to the 'truth of his salvation.'

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#### NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,'* John xv. 7.

ALL the promises of the bible, in their practical sense, are conditional. It hence happens that the little particle *if*, which is always either expressed, or manifestly implied, and which, in both cases, we are too ready to overlook, has just as strong a claim to our regard and meditation, as the blessing with which it is connected. The importance of the one is of necessity proportioned to the importance of the other; so that if the promise comprehend eternity, then is eternity likewise wrapped up in the monosyllable *if*.

We have, in the passage before us, a promise so bright and beautiful, that of itself it has the strongest claim to our attention; but just so much the more is it our interest to look first at the condition; and see whether the promise be addressed to us.

The very first feature that engages our attention in the nature of the condition is, that although, as in all other instances of the kind, it is the fulfilment of duty upon which the inheritance of the promise is made to turn; yet here the duty, namely, 'abiding in Christ,' is in itself of such an inviting and agreeable sort, as to seem rather a part of the promise; and much liker a privilege than an obligation. With such a duty has our blessed Lord been graciously pleased to connect a promise, so remarkable and extraordinary, that, on first thoughts, we might feel afraid of interpreting it too literally; and think ourselves bound to explain a portion of its sweetness away, as it

seems too much, and too good, to be true. The language, however, is so plain and simple, that we have no choice but that of adopting the most literal interpretation, and taking our Lord's meaning just as he has expressed it. And the truth is, that the explanation of the promise lies in the duty,—‘If ye abide in me, and my words in you.’ To abide in Christ is an expression frequently used by our Saviour; and especially in the farewell address to his disciples from which our text is taken. When our blessed Lord was leaving the world, it is affecting to observe how anxious he was to secure the continuance of his union with the disciples; so that the apparent breaking up of their happy intercourse, occasioned by his return to the Father, should be no interruption to their spiritual communion. Hence does he speak much with them, on the eve of his departure, about the duty of abiding in him. To impress them in the most lively manner with his own sense of this union, he compares himself to a vine, and his disciples to the branches, and thus inculcates at the same time the duty of bearing fruits worthy of the tree. We have thus a simple, but exceedingly eloquent image, at once enjoining and explaining the duty of abiding in Christ, and leaving us no room to doubt that the most perfect unity of nature,—of will, of counsel, of affections, is implied in the expression, just as a branch is of the same nature as the tree on which it grows. The condition under consideration therefore is just the same as we find elsewhere in the words of Paul, ‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.’ The second part of the sentence, moreover, explains the first; as the simple expression, ‘my words abide in you,’ is only a repetition in plain terms of what was expressed in a figure before. The words of Christ in the largest sense mean Himself; but here they may be more simply understood as denoting his doctrine; the reception of which always implies a renunciation of the world, which is enmity to God, and a subjection of the heart with all its affections to the mind and the will of Christ.

We have thus an important and exceedingly interesting principle submitted to our consideration, that the heart of the believer vibrates in unison with the mind of its Saviour, and that just in proportion to our abiding in Christ, is the attuning of our wishes to his mind and will. The prayers therefore of all who are in a state of happy harmony or union with the Saviour must naturally, or by the working of their new nature, be directed to those blessings and benefits which the Father is always willing to grant, as at once contributive to his own glory, and the good of the

enlightened petitioner; and thus answer to our definition of prayer in the Catechism—an offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ.

There is hence not the slightest encouragement in our text to the prayers of the unrenewed; and the offering up of lawless desires, inconsistent alike with the glory of God, and the welfare of mankind, and the ultimate good of the petitioner himself. Between their prayers, and the throne of grace, is here spread, as an impervious obstacle, the little word *if*; and so long as its obstruction is not removed out of their way, it is mercy that their petitions are never heard in heaven; or in other words, are refused.

But every encouragement that the heart of the believer, in its most desponding moments, can desire, is here vouchsafed, in the simplest, but most forcible terms, for laying his whole bosom open before God; counting out all his wants; and, at the uttermost stretch of his wishes, praying for the fulfilment of all the promises wrapped up in the gift of Christ. Let his heart, at its lowest ebb, enlarge and dilate as it may, in prayer, he is here assured that, large and empty as it is, God will fill it, just as he filled the emptiness of space in making ‘the heavens and the earth.’ Yea, so liberal is the great hearer and answerer of prayer, that he actually enjoins enlargement of the heart as a duty, and declares that he gives most willingly as well as most largely to those who ask most and with the fullest assurance of faith.

Let us, however, be careful never to separate, even in the feelings of a moment, the condition of our text from the promise; for that is in reality severing the branch from its vine, and renouncing at once every claim to every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. But so long as we abide in the Lord, let us rely on the faithfulness of Him that hath promised; and ask whatever we wish with the prayer of faith that wavereth not. For just as God, on the one hand, requires of us a literal interpretation of all his commandments, and an obedience to the very letter of a law, expressed for this reason in plain and absolute terms; so on the other, is he pleased to see us interpreting his promises just as literally, and with the assurance of faith in our prayers reminding him of Christ's plain, simple, but most emphatic words, ‘ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’ This is a promise that no doubt puts our faith to the test; but it is sealed with ‘the blood of the everlasting covenant.’

## TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes,'* Dan. ix. 3.

To repair the havoc wrought in our moral nature by the excesses of pride, or appetite, it cannot be enough to bring ourselves back to the starting point in the boundaries of legitimate enjoyment, and merely abstain from the use of forbidden things; as this remedy, at the uttermost, could go no farther than to check, or perhaps only retard the progress of ruin, but could never bring the mind, with its habits of thinking and feeling, back to the line at which its transgressions began. Thus, in the physical world, it is not a sufficient remedy for the disorders contracted in a damp habitation, to remove into a dry one; and in seeking to restore the tone of a frame debilitated by distemper, it is a common principle of medical science to begin with a farther reduction of strength. It was thus, in the mercy of God, that the first transgression of his holy commandment was immediately visited by a total expulsion from the garden of Eden; and the divine interdict, with the flaming sword of the cherubims, ready to enforce it, extended even to the fruits that were all lawful and safe in a state of innocence. From that moment, the life of these first transgressors was a continuous fast and abstinence, bound down to 'the herb of the field,' and to a bread eaten in the 'sweat of the face;' and darkened all the while by the approaching shadows of death and the grave: but it was at the same time the way of return to the favour of God, and the tree of life, through Jesus Christ. We are thus prepared at once to understand the reason, and to *feel* the importance of those frequent fastings, and self-abasements, appointed in the church by the grace and the wisdom of God; and common, in their spirit, to both dispensations, the Christian as well as the Jewish. In the example at present under our eye, there are two very remarkable features, and all the more remarkable, because of their appearing side by side. The first of these is the extraordinary intensity of soul, with which the prophet enters on the work of supplication and self-abasement. He seems depressing himself to the uttermost depth which the springs of the mind can bear without breaking, in order to send up his prayer with so much more force and fervour to the throne of grace. He begins with putting on sackcloth, and laying himself down in ashes, and mortifying his flesh with severe fasting, that he may affect himself the more deeply with his subject, and the extraordi-

nary work he has on hand, in 'setting his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications' the desire of his soul. What a crushing rebuke is such an earnestness of purpose and preparation is unto all, who in the devotions, whether of the sanctuary or the closet, trifle with the mercy of God, and with the precious pearl of their own immortality! The prayer of the prophet, moreover, is in striking unison with the intensity of purpose and feeling manifested in such a preparation; for it is the most powerful and eloquent outpouring of the soul in supplication which the Old Testament contains; and sounds in every line and word, as if the petitioner really felt himself striving with a resisting ear, or seeking to melt a rock—the Rock of Ages. O! in all our prayers there is a resistance to overcome, and a rock to melt, that make vain the uttermost eloquence of the soul, and its granted sorrow, without the Spirit, that 'also helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' But that resistance, and that rock, are in the heart of the suppliant himself.

The other remarkable feature in this example of such extraordinary fasting and prayer is in its subject, or the circumstances of the case. It is in the midst of the storm, and in the hour of despair, that our supplications become loud, crying, and fervent; but it is just in the moment when Daniel is expecting immediate deliverance for Israel and himself, from the long desolation of the Babylonish captivity, that he betakes himself with such surpassing intensity of soul to prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes; to seek that same deliverance, of which, as he tells us in the verse preceding our text, he knew from consulting the word of the Lord to Jeremiah, that being now in the sixty-ninth year of the appointed 'desolation,' the accomplishment was close at hand. The brightness, the certainty, and the nearness of the prospects, instead of uplifting had made him humble; and thus prepared his heart for the right and full enjoyment of the blessing. And what is an equally important principle, as we see it working in this memorable example, is, that the promises of God, instead of inducing a relaxation, either of our labours, our zeal, or our prayers, are, on the contrary, intended to encourage our supplications for their fulfilment—by strengthening our faith.

Let us henceforth, therefore, never forget, that however wofully neglected amongst us, fasting is a means of grace appointed in the wisdom and the mercy of God, for working together with the word, and with sacraments, and with prayer, in

carrying out, to their last fulfilment, the sum and the substance of all divine promises, in the salvation of the soul through Christ Jesus. Can we ever, with such a work on hand, so vast in itself, and so immeasurable in its consequences, think the grace so great, or the means so many, that we can dispense with even the weakest or the smallest instruments that God has placed at our command? We know moreover that throughout all the ages of spiritual history, fasting has been the precursor or attendant of every great revival in religion, and that every new impulse given in advance to the chariot of the everlasting gospel, has been preceded by severe humiliation and fasting. And what, on a large scale, has been manifested in the history of nations, churches, or flocks, is just as true, though less openly revealed, in the life of every individual believer. Let no disciple of Jesus, therefore, however far he may be advanced in spiritual attainments, however strengthened in the assurance of faith, and however near the fulfilment of all his hopes in Christ, excuse himself from joining, like the aged prophet, in those self-denying and humiliating duties of the soul. O! the nearer the goal, the harder in all races is the pressing forward; and most of all, for the prize of the high calling in God through Christ Jesus. In these moments too, when the soul is near its departure, has God prepared the way for the observance of his own ordinance, and the accompaniments of prayer with fasting, and abstinence from all the desires of the flesh; for it is then that the grasshopper is a burden, that *desire fails*, and that the soul hath no pleasure in any thing under the sun.

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TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water; but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from*

*his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not,'* Jon. iii. 5—10.

AFTER reproving the unbelief of his disciples, as the cause of their failure in the case of the young man who was 'lunatic and sore vexed; falling oftentimes into the fire, and oft into the water;' our Lord adds, 'Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.' We have thus the very important principle laid down, that fasting is, some way or other, efficacious in cases where prayer without it must always fail; while at the same time we are clearly given to understand that, just like prayer, its efficacy is made to depend upon the faith with which it is exercised. To fast, without believing in the good that God hath intended it to do us, is just the same thing as doubting, in the act of prayer, that God is attending to us.

These principles are all seen working in the passage of scripture history at present under consideration. For we have here the trouble, the faith, the fasting, the prayer, and the deliverance, following each other according to the word of God, in as regular order as the succession of the seasons, or the movements of the solar system.

In the context we are told that Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey, and unto its dense population had come the word of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet Jonah, crying, 'yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' It is remarkable that all the while there were no outward indications of such a judgment, and that the only shadow which the coming calamity cast before it was the intimation of Jonah; yet the people received the word of the prophet as the voice of God; and looked upon their city, and themselves, as doomed to destruction.

But their faith in the word of God gave rise to a hope that his anger might be appeased, and the impending judgment averted by fasting and prayer. Their humiliation before the Lord was in good keeping with the greatness of their distress; for it was severe, earnest, and universal. From the greatest to the least; from the king upon the throne, to the meanest of his subjects, they clothed themselves with sackcloth, and abstained from all manner of food and drink; while in order to dispense the solemnities of such an awful occasion and give a colour of mourning to the entire city, their horses, and mules, and oxen, and sheep, were subjected to the sufferings imposed upon themselves, and made to mingle their cries with the wailings of man. Their humiliation,

moreover, was sincere, for 'God saw their works that they turned from their evil.' We have thus such a description of a fast as leaves us in no doubt regarding the scriptural sense of the term. And in the joyous result we find just as clear a demonstration of its efficacy; for to use the words of the sacred narrative, 'God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.' There is a bold simplicity and plainness in these words, that seems to set all human philosophy at defiance; for though we might write volumes in explanation of the event, never should we make it clearer or plainer than we find it in the text. It resolves itself all into this simple sentence, that God had at first said, that he would destroy Nineveh at the end of forty days; but because the Ninevites repented of their wickedness, with fasting and sackcloth, he was moved with compassion and spared them.

The main importance of the words, however, lies in the lesson they convey regarding the nature and the efficacy of fasting. They deliver us from all doubt on the subject. They tell us what fasting is, and they give us a practical proof, on a large scale, of its efficacy. Is it not deplorable then, with such a resource always within our reach, to see whole churches giving themselves up to despair, and awaiting in black dismay the coming ruin, without so much as trying a means of grace that saved the idolatrous city of Nineveh? We lay ourselves down like Hagar in the wilderness, and turn our faces away from our great sorrow, while close at hand is a well opened up in the grace of God, with abundance of healing for all our woes.

But alas! neglect is not our only sin. For how many are there amongst us, even within the pale of our Christian church, who scoff at fasting; just as fools make a mock at sin, and who are ever ready to laugh down all our endeavours to appease the anger of God, by a self-inflicted pain. Such in this respect is the spirit of our day and generation, that whatever flock, or family, or individual, may be willing to appropriate the great lesson taught us in the story of Nineveh, must bear the stings of ridicule, along with the pains of fasting. The character of all such scoffers, however, is dashed off with a single stroke by the royal psalmist, 'When I wept,' says David, in the sixty-seventh psalm, 'and chastened my soul with fasting, and made sackcloth also my garment, I was the song of the drunkards.' A life spent without fasting is in reality a life of excess. We read in the New Testament of a man who wore purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. In the next notice we have of him is there any encouragement to scoff at the lowing

of the beasts in Nineveh for want of water? Is it not better to fast in this life than the next?

Let fools, moreover, scoff as they may, there is a pleasure in self denial. It is the pleasure of power, authority, and command; and all the sweeter and purer that the ruler and the ruled is one and the same person. Still purer and sweeter are the privations endured for righteousness' sake; and in the severest fastings enjoined by the many lessons and examples of scripture, there is a reward which the world knows not of, in comparison with which the men who wear purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, are all their lives but 'cutting up mallows by the bushes, and juniper-roots for their meat.'

#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?'*  
Isa. lviii. 5—7.

As there are few coins in the world without their counterfeits, so are there false imitations of every human virtue, and of all Christian graces. They chequer the path of true religion, as shadows the shining of the sun. It is a saying as old as the days of Seneca, that the seeds of all vices are in all men; and only fail to spring up into full luxuriance, when the circumstances suitable to their nature are wanting. There is a sin, implying the presence of many, if not of all others, that seems to find its most congenial soil within the pale of the visible church; and its most fostering influence in great days of the Lord. For ever since the days of Cain has hypocrisy sprung up, and flourished side by side with the graces of pure religion. Over, and over again, to be sure, come the evil days, when 'sinners in Zion are afraid; and fearfulness surpriseth the hypocrites.' But their detection, their exposure, and their punishment, serve, alas! with too many, only as an incitement to greater circumspection, caution, and cunning, in the art of 'making lies their refuge, and hiding themselves in falsehood.'

In our text there is a burning rebuke poured out from the full vials of divine indignation on the heads of all hypocrites; and with concentrated force upon that worst species, who make a show of abasement, in bowing the neck or the knee to Almighty God. Before the throne of the Eternal, the glorified spirits of the just cast their golden crowns, saying, 'Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' Before the throne of the Most High, cherubim and seraphim veil their faces with their wings; saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! who art, and wast, and art to come.' But all the while, on this nether world, this footstool of his throne, are hypocrites in solemn assembly, making it a merit to 'bow the head as a bulrush before him;' and exacting applause from men for their great humility. O! if Satan, and his fallen compeers, be suffering 'in everlasting chains the vengeance of eternal fire,' because in heaven they could not brook the superiority of God, and make an open show of pride; what shall be done to the children of the dust, the brothers and sisters of the worm, who upon days set apart for humiliation, fasting, and confession of iniquities, add to the self-same sin the insult of affecting a humility which they never felt, and of buying homage from men, with a feigned submission to God!

Yet such, alas! is the besetting sin of our Christian communities. The head bows in prayer, but the spirit bows not with it; the 'garments' are rent, but not 'the heart:' and the very confession of sin becomes an aggravation of guilt. And hence do many go away from the house of prayer without one token of divine favour; leave the table of the Lord unfed and unrefreshed with 'the bread that giveth life to the world' and the 'love that is better than wine;' and see their sacrifice left untouched by the fire from heaven, to be devoured by the fowls of the air. Then come murmurings—discontent with the ministers of religion, revilings of holy men; and the sullen dejection of Cain, charging the Judge of all the earth with partiality, in despising his sacrifice, while the offering of Abel is respected.

O! if ever we rise from our private devotion, or return from the house of prayer 'on the acceptable days' of the Lord, unwarmed at heart with a ray from the Sun of righteousness; and tempted to arraign the faithfulness of God, crying out before him, 'wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?' wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?' let us examine our fasting and affliction, try our ways, and search our hearts; and most infallibly shall

we find the faithfulness of our Father in heaven just as decidedly manifested in the rejection of our offering, as it ever yet was in the most gracious tokens of acceptance. For what is the condition of acceptance, for our sacrifices of fasting and affliction, in days set apart as acceptable to the Lord. O! it is not merely to 'bow down the head as a bulrush and spreading sackcloth and ashes under us,' that, according to the spirit, as well as the letter of the everlasting covenant, constitutes a fast; but the godly sorrowing of the soul for sin, which has its dearest evidence in the mortification of worldly lusts, and avarice, and pride, and all manner of fruits meet for repentance. They who would lay claim to the benefits and blessings of such a fast, must begin with undoing all their deeds of injustice, restoring the gains of oppression or fraud; releasing the prisoner, whom they have unfairly or cruelly committed to bonds; and distributing largely of their substance to the needy.

Such are the plain and express directions of the Lord, for making our fasts acceptable days in his sight; and so long as we fail in the conditions, on our part, so long as we come before him with the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, muffled all over, like embers with ashes, or purple and fine linen with sackcloth; so long as we come begging the forgiveness and the grace which we refuse to others; O! let us, instead of murmuring, rather honour and bless the faithfulness of God, if *seeing not* our fasting, and taking no knowledge of our affliction, he send us away more empty than we came. Yea, and even if the arrows of his rebuke stick deep and thick in our bosoms, O! may they be the means of making us feel just so much the more sensibly and savingly, that they come from the same Father, who hath promised, that 'the bruised reed he shall not break, nor quench the smoking flax;' and hath taught the mourner to say in the depth of his sorrow, 'a broken heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.'

#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly,'* Matt. vi. 16—18.

FASTING, in the most literal sense of the word, as we find it used in scripture, is a voluntary abstin-

ence from food, with the purpose of employing ourselves in penitential mourning for sin, and deprecation of divine wrath. In its wider meanings it includes the mortification of every animal appetite, and the suspension of all worldly occupations, whether of business or pleasure, in order to engage every power of the mind, and the heart, and the body, in the single work of humiliation before God, with the hope of averting his anger.

Fasting, in these senses, is an ordinance of our most holy religion, and has been inculcated as a duty, moreover, in a greater variety of ways, than almost any other, as it is pointed out to us by the light of nature, illustrated by many eminent examples in the history of the bible, expressly ordained in the scriptures of the Old Testament, and just as pointedly transferred by our blessed Lord to the code of Christian obligation.

It is written as a law on the nature of things, as sorrow and mourning muffle the edge of hunger, and 'the soul that is chastened with pain, abhorreth dainty meat.'

Many must know, from experience, the tender regrets that come over the soul, when brooding over the tidings of a lamented death, we think back to the day and the hour of the sad event, and find that we were taking our fill of pleasure at the festive board, when our friend was dying.

Were it not wise to turn such instinctive movements of the heart to the advantage of our souls, and reverence an ordinance of Christ so much the more, that it is but the renewal of a law, written by his own finger in the volume of nature. But alas! how often does it happen, that in turning ourselves to the duties of spiritual life, we put off nature without putting on Christianity, and learn to look upon him whom our sins have pierced; yea, and even to make a profession of 'always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus;' not only without any natural 'failing of desire,' but without so much as a thought of doing the slightest violence to a single appetite either of the mind or the body.

While a life of self-denial, however, is enjoined by the general tone and spirit of Christianity, so are seasons of absolute fasting, and abstinence, as far as is consistent with the preservation of life and health, positively ordained by the Author and Finisher of our faith. It is impossible to put this truth in a clearer light than we see encompassing it in the words of our text; where we find our blessed Lord, not indeed instituting any particular fast; but, what is to the full as forcible, taking the ordinance for granted, and giving directions as to the manner of observing it. We find him speaking of it on other occasions precisely with the

same understanding, for when the Pharisees asked him how it came that the disciples of John fasted often, while his own eat and drank, he replied, 'can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.' This answer is in beautiful keeping with the genuine spirit and character of fasting, and is indeed an indirect description of its true nature and design; for our Lord thereby intimates, that in seasons of great joy, such as are occasioned by his own visible presence, fasting is not only improper, but impossible; while on the other hand it is at once a suitable and spontaneous expression of grief in times of mourning and affliction, represented by his bodily disappearance from the earth. The whole character of the ordinance is eloquently described in the simple, but most significant words, that he could not 'make his disciples fast,' as long as he was with them. O! how easily could he have taught them to 'bow down the head as a bulrush, spread sackcloth and ashes under them, and put on a sad countenance,' but he 'could not make them' mourn. Christ does no violence to the laws of nature, for they likewise are his own ordinance. And therefore he only commands us to fast, when he knows we have more reason for mourning than the greatest of those griefs, that silence so easily the crying wants of nature, and deaden so suddenly our relish for 'dainty meats.'

It is in this same spirit that our blessed Lord condemns the fast of the hypocrite, with the sadness of countenance, and the disfiguring of faces, practised in his day in order to make an appearance unto men of a self-denial, humiliation, and hunger of which there was no experience. So obnoxious in the sight of Christ, is such a false ostentation of sorrow, and so manifestly tending to bring his holy ordinances into contempt, that he commands his disciples, rather to draw a veil over the real sadness of the heart, by anointing the head and washing the face that their fasting may not appear unto men. But all the while does he both commend and enjoin the sadness of the inner countenance, the rending of the heart, and the secret mortification of the flesh with abstinence from food, so as to make themselves manifest in their cause and in their effects to the eye of the Father, who, he assures them, will openly reward, what he alone hath seen done in the dark.

It is a task of great pain and grief to turn from these beautiful and affecting instructions of our Saviour, to the practices of the age in which we live, and the total neglect that we have suffered to

gather over an ordinance which he not only hath appointed, but eminently exemplified in his own life, and illustrated with such exact and special directions. It would seem as if we concluded that because he hath forbidden us to fast like the hypocrites, he has forbidden us in the same words to fast at all; or because he hath commanded us 'to anoint the head and wash the face;' we are to make no difference between our fast-days and our ordinary sabbaths. O let us rather pray for such an infusion of the spirit of grace, that like the children of the bride-chamber, when the bridegroom is taken away, it shall be just as impossible to 'make us eat and drink,' as when he is among us, to make us fast.

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading,'* Neh. viii. 8.

Those of the Jews who had, at various times, returned from the captivity, and settled in Jerusalem, were in a very helpless condition when Nehemiah first came among them. Indeed, the very reason why he left his station of power and influence at the court of the Persian king, was the intelligence which reached him regarding 'the remnant left in the province—that they were in great affliction and reproach.' With the power of a governor deputed by the king, and the zeal of one who had cast in his lot with the people of God, he soon succeeded in restoring the city, and throwing an effectual shield of protection round its inhabitants. The fortifications were re-built; the neighbouring chiefs were overawed; a regular government was established in the commonwealth; each had his own position assigned, and his own duty prescribed.

So far, it was well: but much yet remained to be done. The governor had not yet accomplished his object. Nehemiah was not a man to be contented with a superficial reformation. The people were rescued from the tyranny of the Samaritan chiefs, but their own lusts still held dominion over them. They submitted willingly to the authority of the governor, but they neither knew nor obeyed the law of God. Observing the wickedness of their lives, Nehemiah, taught of God, looked to the source of the evil in the blindness of their understandings and the hardness of their hearts. During their long captivity and the hardships under which they had laboured since their return, the people had lost

sight of those oracles which God in sovereign mercy had committed to their care. They were not only ignorant of the law in point of fact, but unable to learn it. The language in which it was written, was no longer understood by the common people. They were perishing *for lack of knowledge*. Nehemiah contemplated a practical reformation; and he set himself in the first place to impart the knowledge of the truth. He would have the people to *do* the will of God; and accordingly he takes care that they should have the means of *knowing* it. The method adopted is that which divine wisdom has prescribed, and human reason approved: the people assembled—'bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.' Then they 'stood in their place,' while the appointed ministers of religion 'read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.'

It is not difficult to perceive the lesson which this scripture reads to us. The complaint against Ephraim, uttered of old through Hosea's lips, will apply in all its force to us; 'I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing,' chap. viii. 12. The *great* things of the law are those which immediately concern the way of pardon and acceptance with God; the eternal purpose of the Father, the mediatorial work of the Son, the mission and influence of the Holy Spirit. These things are great; but their magnitude cannot be estimated by the carnal mind: it is spiritually discerned. Of these things a corrupt nature 'willingly is ignorant.' Unconverted men do not *like* the knowledge of God, and therefore are slow in acquiring it. The face of God is to them a consuming fire, and of their own accord they will not seek it. If let alone, they will seek peace by remaining in ignorance. They will lie at ease a while, and perish for ever. Hence the importance, the necessity of public ordinances. In mercy has God appointed them, that thereby he might press upon the regard of unwilling men the knowledge of the truth and the offer of mercy. His goodness and mercy *follow* them all the days of their life. He will not let them alone. He gives them line upon line, and precept upon precept. Besides the living word which is able to save our souls, the means are appointed whereby that quickening word may be applied to souls that are dead in sin. Among the gifts which the exalted Saviour bestows upon his church, the ordinary 'pastors and teachers,' are enumerated. Let not the people receive this grace of God in vain. Let them not forsake the assembling of

themselves together as the manner of many is. Great was the eagerness of the returned captives to hear the law of the Lord read and expounded by Ezra. 'All the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street.' There they stood, 'the men and the women, and those that could understand, from the morning until mid-day; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.' This worshipping assembly who met then in the streets of Jerusalem to seek the Lord, will rise up against us in the day of judgment and condemn us. It is a sure word unto which we are invited to take heed: it is a most perfect law that is revealed to us: it is a *finished* salvation that is set before us: how shall we escape if we neglect it?

It is a great work to which a Christian minister is called when the congregation has assembled on the Sabbath—or a Christian parent, when his family is gathered round him. We have the law of God in our hands; a law according to which sinners are pardoned, and sanctified, and saved. There are many deep things in that law. Each word is a deep. It is the duty of a minister or a parent to *give the sense*. 'God so loved the world,' &c. 'Come unto me, ye that labour.'—'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' These are parts of this law, and it is no light matter for a minister either to comprehend the meaning himself, or cause the people to understand it. Who is sufficient for these things? The Spirit, who searcheth all things—he only can search these deep things of God. Holy Spirit, enlighten and quicken ministers and parents, that taught of Thee themselves, they may manifest to others the secrets of the covenant. The people are by nature ignorant of that heavenly language which declares the mysteries of redeeming love. Thou who hast given the word, open their understandings to know, their hearts to receive it. Shine into their hearts with the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus.

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TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth,'* 1 Cor. xiv. 25

It is no light matter for a man to enter the house of God with the voice of praise, and join himself to the multitude who assemble to sanctify the sabbath there. It is a solemn thing for sinning

men to turn abruptly aside from the busy path of life, and look direct at the great sight which is held up before them in a preached gospel. It is a solemn thing for sinning men to leave their pleasure or their toil, and shut themselves up within the sanctuary for the very purpose of *meeting with God*. Many venture to court this meeting neither drawn by love, nor deterred by fear. They go, they know not why. If they knew that the word spoken must be the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, they would not go in so lightly, and sit so listlessly, and depart so much at ease.

The thing of which the apostle is speaking in this and the preceding verse, is what was called 'prophesying,' as distinguished from certain other extraordinary gifts imparted by the Spirit to the first preachers of the gospel: To 'prophesy,' in the phraseology of the apostles, is just to expound and apply the revealed will of God, in a language which the people understand. The exercise here spoken of, by itself and apart from others with which it is connected, is *the preaching of the word*. It is specially to this agency that the apostle ascribes these great effects. *Thus* are the secrets of the worshipper's heart made manifest: *so* falling down on his face he will worship God: *thereby* convinced that the preacher speaketh not of himself, he will report that God hath indeed spoken to men by his Son.

Men come to church, bent on hearing a particular minister, that they may judge of his gifts, and thereafter tell whether they liked or disliked him. They know not what they do. They are cheating themselves. Besides the solemn acts of praise and prayer, wherein sinners seek direct communion with God through Christ their Saviour, they place themselves in immediate contact with that word which is quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Sinners often, without knowing it, expose their naked breasts to the very arrows of the Lord. Oft these arrows, shot at a venture by one who knows not the character of the hearers, but guided in their flight by the Spirit unseen, stick fast in these sinners' souls. When the word is plainly spoken, rightly divided, and faithfully applied, it is mighty to lay hold of the conscience, and break down into penitence the hardened heart. The plain preaching of the word, especially the preaching of Christ crucified, is the very power of God to convince of sin. It was thus that the wondrous work was done, when first the Saviour, according to his promise, poured out the Spirit from on

gh. The subject of Peter's address was, 'God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.' Under this 'prophesying' of the apostle, the hard hearts of these unbelieving Jews melted and became as water. When they heard this they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? The word made its way through every barrier—quickened the conscience—laid open the secrets of many hearts. Conviction ripened into conversion; and souls saved were added in thousands to the church.

The best testimony to the truth of the word that ever can reach our understandings, is the experience of its convincing power. The revelation which it makes of sins in our inmost souls, hitherto hidden even from ourselves, manifests both the power and the wisdom of God its Author. It is a glass this word, and many an object is faithfully reflected from its surface. At one time we may behold revealed in it, the glory of the Lord; at another, the shame of men. This faithful mirror detects and exposes to our own view, the most secret spots of guilt that lie upon the inner man. The spots that stain a sinner's soul, a sinner, with his own unaided eye, cannot see. The spots are there. They are on himself. They are marks of shame; but he sees them not, and no blush suffuses his face. They are seeds of death, but he feels them not, and no thrill of terror beats in his heart. He cannot see—he cannot feel them. He knows not that they are there. He thinks all is well, and says, Peace, peace. But when this truthful mirror is held up before him, it reveals an image of loathsomeness and deformity. Stung by a begun conviction, he shrinks instinctive back; but there is no peace now in shutting the eyes against the unwelcome sight. He is constrained to look again. Looking more narrowly, he not only sees that there is such an image, but feels that it is an image of himself. Conscience not only recognises the truth of the delineated character, 'altogether vile,' but appropriates the subjoined inscription, 'thou art the man.' This application of the word by the power of the Holy Ghost, effectually subdues the self-righteousness of nature. The heart is broken, and the affections of the broken heart flow out in the appropriate language of penitence, 'Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee?' 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

This effect of the word preached is the most convincing evidence that it is not the word of man. Many who have stoutly resisted other evidences of divine revelation have yielded at last to this.

Many despisers have in this way been constrained to fall down on their faces and worship God. The conviction of sinners, by the preaching of the word, is a direct mean of showing forth the glory of Christ. He is king, and one of the first acts of his kingly office is to subdue his enemies. The child Jesus 'is set for the fall, and the rising again of many in Israel.' There is first the bowing down of the proud into penitence, and then the raising up of the bowed down. By this subduing of his enemies, Christ the Redeemer is glorified; the special office of the Spirit now administering the covenant, is to glorify him; and the word is the sword which the Spirit wields. 'What a word is this!' exclaimed the wondering Jews, when they saw the elements of nature, the dead bodies of men, and the spirits of darkness obeying the command of Jesus. This emphatic testimony to the power of divine truth, has often since that time been extorted from a gainsayer's lips. When the dead soul has been quickened, at length there is a ready acknowledgment of the 'arm revealed.' Though the word has reached his heart through the medium of an 'earthen vessel,' the convicted sees and gladly confesses, that 'the excellency of the power is of God.'

'What a word is this.' It is worth preaching, and worth hearing. Let ministers beware of trusting to their own skill and strength, when the very 'sword of the Spirit' is put into their hands. Let the people beware of going to church for the purpose of hearing the minister, and judging of him. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope,' Rom. xv. 4.*

MANY things were written of Christ before his coming. To Him gave all the prophets witness. The prophets themselves did not fully understand the meaning of their own words. The truth was revealed with sufficient distinctness to keep the eyes of the faithful looking steadily forward to the Messiah coming—to sustain the hopes of those who looked for salvation in Israel; but still, even those among them from whose eyes the veil had been taken away, could only see through a glass darkly. When the fulness of time had come, a new light was shed on the types and prophecies of the Jewish dispensation. 'Whatsoever things

were written afore time,' though immediately addressed to the generation then living, were recorded in the scriptures especially for the 'learning' of the generations following. 'He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God,' Psal. lxxvii. 5—7.

Under the guidance of the same Spirit who spake by the prophets before, evangelists and apostles, at and after the time of the Saviour's incarnation, wrote for our learning the works and the words of the Lord Jesus—wrote for our learning the *whole* counsel of God.

Behold how gracious is our God! Consider this mark of his mercy—his *writing* to us the great things of his law. Many of his laws we are left to find out, as best we may, from the traces of them left in nature and in providence. He has laws whereby he regulates the material universe; but he only works by them, and allows us to exercise our own ingenuity in searching them out. He has also a code of laws whereby he regulates his spiritual kingdom—he has a covenant in all things well ordered and sure—these he has not left us to discover; he has revealed them. By searching, we could never find them out, and in great mercy he has written them for our learning. Turning to the record we find no axioms laid down, no problems solved in any department of human science. It tells nothing of other worlds, save the simple fact that God created them; and nothing of the mysterious influences that are at work upon our own. These, though part of God's law, were not to us *the great things*. The great things are the things *written*, and the things written may be resolved all into this—a law eternal, sure, unchangeable—a fixed institute of heaven—a law whereby God most holy and man most sinful may meet in peace. All the revelations of the bible when concentrated into a point, just exhibit a plan whereby the justice and the mercy of God may meet in the salvation of man. How man may be just with God! this is a problem which reason could never solve. Nor is this all. There is not only inability to discover the truth, there is aversion to the truth when known. There is an inherent dislike of the truth preventing the thoughts from going out in search of it; and also an inherent incapacity for discovering it though the search were made. This was our helpless condition—able to read in creation, and collect

from providence some things in God's law, that are comparatively of lesser import, connected as they are with the present world; but in regard to the great things of that law,—all that concern the forgiveness of sin, acceptance with God, escape from wrath, and the eternal life of the soul—in regard to all these, alike unable to find them out, and unwilling to try. Such was our helpless condition, when God looked from heaven in love, and sent a remedy suited to our wants—sent a revelation of those parts of his will which sinners could not discover for themselves, and without which sinners could not be saved. Here, as in other cases, man's extremity was God's opportunity. When we were ready to perish, light arose in the darkness. The Light himself came into the world, and the Light was the life of men; the Word, after being shadowed forth 'aforetime' in type and prophecy, was at length made flesh and dwelt among us. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits! Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

These precious things were written *for our learning*. It is ours to *search* the scriptures. And what shall we find there? Hear the judgment of him who gave them. 'These are they which testify of me.' Paul speaks of having 'learned Christ,' and it was the great aim of all the apostles to preach Christ. The Spirit dictated the word, and the aim of the Spirit in the word is to glorify Him. This then is what we are to learn from the things written aforetime. We will not 'learn' wisdom from the Bible, unless we see all its lines converging to Jesus, and forming a circle of glory round his head. The many rays of light scattered over its pages will appear a confused unintelligible mass, if we look to them each apart and with mere nature's curiosity; but when seen by faith's single eye, and with faith's undivided affection, each separate ray shines distinct in its own brightness, and all converge into one point, and that one point thus intensely illuminated, is 'Christ our passover, sacrificed for us,'—the Lord our righteousness, and the Lord our strength. The point to which the collective radiance of holy writ is directed, is Christ crucified the power of God. All the things written aforetime—whether law, or prophecy, or history—all 'look unto Jesus.' All these things were written either to prepare the way before him, or declare his salvation after he had come; and we never learn what the scriptures were intended to teach, till we see there for ourselves the light of the glorious gospel in the face of Jesus Christ.

The design of this learning is 'that we through

patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' 'Patience?' we get it here. 'Seeing him who is invisible,' we shall be able to 'endure.' Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed. 'Comfort?' yes, look to the things written aforetime, and *comfort* ye one another with these words, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son!' If God be for us, who can be against us? From the scriptures we may get 'patience and comfort,' in the scriptures there is a sure foundation whereon we may rest our hope. Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? *Hope in God.*

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified,' Acts xx. 32.*

'CURSED is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.' There is no help in man. None can save his brother. It is vain for a dying man to lean on a fellow-mortal. It is vain to look to the hills for aid. Out of our depths we will cry unto thee, O Lord. It is good when we are enabled to feel how frail we are, and when this sense of weakness leads us, in the Spirit of adoption, to lean on the Father's outstretched arm.

Paul had great courage, and much experience. He had done much to comfort the mourner,—he had often been eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. But Paul knew well his own weakness. He knew that though he had often poured out consolation to others, it was only as a little cistern getting out of the living fountain. There were before him the elders of the Ephesian church—men whom he loved as his own soul. He had broken to them the bread of life. They knew no other Father in Christ. He looked on them as his children. He was about to leave them, not expecting to see them again in the body. Their hearts melted and became as water. The teacher, himself overcome with sorrow, had no power to impart consolation to his weeping disciples. What then? He knows his never-failing resource. When he is weak, then he is strong. He is accustomed to this. It is now a habit of his mind. He glides into it easily—out of himself to Him who is 'in straits a present aid.' 'Brethren, I commend you to God.'

Doubtless, Paul thought of the protection they

needed among the dangers of this life, and committed them to a faithful Creator; doubtless he prayed that the everlasting arm might be around them, to defend them from all ill. But, while he would not fail to remember then the *work* of Him who rules in the kingdom of providence, his special aim is to commend his sorrowing disciples to the *word* of God. The word of God! But is it quite certain that this will console the mourner? Does it follow as a matter of course, that the beam which shines from the word, dries the tears of every upturned eye? Nay, for in that word there are many terrors. The light from the word may be just the consuming fire from the face of God, beneath which no sinner can stand.

Paul knew this, and it is specially to "the word of his *grace*" that he commends these mourners. The expression is very common, but, perhaps on that very account, little understood. It means favour, something given, not because it was deserved, but contrary to deserving, and wholly from the free will of the giver. That is the character of all we get from God. But when we hear of the "*word* of his grace," it is the gift of pardon and justification through the redemption of Christ. The apostle would have peace communicated to the distracted hearts of these Ephesian disciples, and he knows well how that can be attained. When he frames his desires into a prayer, he orders the words aright. It is 'grace and peace' be multiplied unto you. So here, when he would have them to arrive at that peace with God, which would keep their hearts and minds in the troubles following, he directs them to seek it, and expect it through *grace*. Look to the word and accept the 'grace' offered there, pardon through the blood of Christ, and thus ye will reach a peace which the world cannot take away.

This God to whom he commends them, is able by his word to *build them up*. This is the edification of the saints—their growth in grace. It is assumed that they are admitted into the family, and have a right to the inheritance, but this is not all; they need to be built up in their holy faith. Believers are said to be living stones coming to Christ and being built up in him. Elsewhere it is said that in him all the body fitly joined together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord. That house is being built. Each living stone growing, and all growing into one temple. The operation is going on by the world unseen. This spiritual house is rising. Of the increase of it there shall be no end, until all the elect be gathered into one; and when the top stone is

brought forward the shout will be the same as when the foundation was laid, 'Grace, grace, unto it!'

Farther, this God to whom the apostle commends the Ephesian elders, is able by his word to give them an inheritance. The thought of an inheritance after death might make us tremble. We are accustomed to think of an inheritance as something to which we were born. And what have we been born to? Children of wrath. Our birthright is eternal woe. Death is the messenger who leads the heir away to his gloomy inheritance. The heir, unless disinherited, must take possession whether he will or no; and to take possession of what we are born to, is to lie down in everlasting burning. There is only one way of shaking off that horrid birthright—and that is by being *born again*—born again not of corruptible seed, but by this 'word of God,' which liveth and abideth for ever.

But of that inheritance, to which a title is given even now, it is farther said, that it is 'among all them which are sanctified.' This is the will of God, even your sanctification. The inspired apostle seeks the same thing. How like is this parting scene to that of the separation between Christ and his chosen apostles! 'Sanctify them through thy truth.' This is the very end of the covenant as regards us. The very design of God in his electing decree is, 'that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.' Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever. The rule at last will be, 'nothing shall enter that defileth,' and now therefore, we must be made meet for the inheritance. The streets of the city are pure gold, and how shall we appear—what have we to do to tread these courts? O for the 'washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost!' Who are these that stand around the throne in white clothing? They are the 'sanctified.' How shall I be made meet for taking my position among them? By being washed, as they were, in the blood of the Lamb, and renewed, as they were, in the Spirit of their minds. Unto the word of thy grace, O God, I commend my soul. Sanctify me through thy truth; thy word is truth.

#### TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them,' Deut. xvii. 19.*

GIVE ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken. The creatures all are bound by the Creator's law.

They are all dependent on his power; they are all the subjects of his government. He is 'King of kings.' Those who rule on earth, are themselves ruled by an Almighty arm. Those to whom power is entrusted on earth, may succeed for a time in keeping God out of their thoughts, but they cannot set themselves free from his control. He makes the wrath of man to praise him, and restrains the remainder thereof. He turneth the hearts of princes as the rivers of waters. 'The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king;' let judges, and lawgivers, and kings, bow the head and worship; let them confess that he is Lord; let them fear his judgments; learn his will; obey his law. Before addressing themselves to the actual performance of their duties, magistrates of every degree should, on their knees, adopt and appropriate the question, extorted once from the lips of a convicted sinner: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

The duty of knowing and doing the will of God, is evidently of universal obligation. If it is binding on one, it is binding on all. Rulers as well as subjects must learn from the scriptures, what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. For this purpose they must search the scriptures. Their prayer must be, 'send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me.' He was a king who said, 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord; teach me thy statutes,' Psal. cxix. 11, 12. The command in the text is imperative. It is specially the duty of a king that is laid down, and the law of the Lord is prescribed to him as the rule of his life. He must have that law in his hands. He must acknowledge it as the standard of faith and practice. He must learn to delight in it, because it is holy; he must study it every day, and all his days. This seems a hard task for any man, and especially for one who is encumbered with the cares of royalty, and exposed to the temptations that surround a throne. True, if it be accounted a task, it will turn out a hard one. Those who look on it as a task, will feel that it is impossible to perform it. The pleasures of a court, and the business of a cabinet, will hide or banish the word of God. Though the record on which that word is written, be deposited in a ruler's library, or held in his hand, it is nothing; though the matter of the word be imprinted on a ruler's memory, and its meaning plain to his understanding, still it is nothing. The word so deposited, so remembered, so understood, will lie a dead letter; it will have no effect in regulating his conduct. But let the love of the word take pos-

session of a ruler's heart, and its controlling power will immediately be manifest. The law of the Lord hid in his heart will influence every step of his path. In forming his plans he will seek that wisdom which is from above; in executing them he will have respect to all God's commandments. He will rule in the fear of the Lord. Having many talents entrusted to his charge, he will feel the obligation lying heavier upon himself than upon other men, to occupy till his Lord come. Having in the wise providence of God been set upon a hill, he will strive to let his light shine for the good of others. Having been raised to a position in which he must do much, he knows that he is not thereby released from the command to do all to the glory of God.

The express reason why rulers are enjoined to search the scriptures, is, that they may learn to fear the Lord, and to keep all the words of his law, to do them. They must read every day that they may learn; and learn, that they may keep the law habitually in their hearts; and keep it in their hearts, that they *do* it in their lives.

It is a great blessing to a people when the law of the Lord is written in the hearts of the rulers. Believers should specially pray for this as a gift from their Father's hand. Those are best fitted to rule on earth, who have themselves become subjects of the king set up in Zion. Christ is greatly glorified when kings and princes acknowledge him Lord, and rule in his name. It should be the desire and the prayer of all Christ's people, that he on whose shoulders the government is laid, would reveal himself to earthly potentates, and make them willing in the day of his power. In so far as Christ's people, in their capacity of subjects in a free state, have a voice in the election of their rulers, it is clearly their duty to see that those whom they raise to power are men who fear God and hate covetousness.

We know that earthly rank and power are injurious to the spiritual interests of men; that riches and honour bring a snare; and that thousands fall into it. The higher we rise in this world's grandeur, the greater is the danger, and the more terrible the consequence of a fall. It is difficult to keep balance on the giddy height where monarchs stand; but we must beware of thinking that they must necessarily fall. The great of this world are not all unmindful of one who is greater than they. God can give grace according to the day, and the place of need. He can shield his people from all the fiery darts of the wicked one. These darts fly thick around the thrones of princes, and the attendants on royalty fall in thousands an easy prey; but if any

one of them is protected by the shield of faith, these weapons will pass him harmless by. Not only may he escape himself, but armed with the sword of the Spirit, he may attack from a vantage ground the spiritual wickedness in high places. He may not only save his own soul alive in the midst of danger, he may do much to enlarge the Redeemer's kingdom. The path of a ruler who would walk in the fear of God may be peculiarly difficult; but let the word dwell in him richly, and it will be a light to his feet and a lamp to his path. The Lord is near to *all* that call upon him. One calls out of the lowest depths of human misery; another calls from the loftiest heights of human power. One is bowed down under a greater weight of trouble; the other is beset with stronger temptations. Both need a great deliverance. A great Deliverer is near. Let the 'low' call on God, that he may be raised up; let the 'high' call on God, that he may be delivered from the dangers of his exaltation.

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#### TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand,' Rev. i. 3.*

God hath spoken to men: if they hear, their souls shall live; if they 'forbear,' they perish. The blessing and the curse are clearly set before us. The word cannot return void to Him who gave it. It will for ever manifest his glory. It will be the savour of life in them that are saved; the savour of death in them that perish. Carefully read, accurately understood, faithfully received, it is the means of quickening the soul with spiritual life—a life that will never die; rejected, despised, forgotten, reviled, it is the evidence whereby the unbelieving shall be judged and condemned in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

This prophecy closes the record of God's revealed will. In this book God says yet once more to men, 'come and let us reason together.' The reasoning is set down here for our use. We shall get no more. We will indeed, all hear the voice of God, but when we hear it next, it will not be a 'reasoning together.' The reasoning is past; the judging will follow. Throughout a long day of grace, God has stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people; a day of judgment is coming, in which he will crush his enemies with the rod of his power. This prophecy accords with all that has gone before. Although the last portion of God's

revealed will, and written too after his command had long been despised by men, it is still revealed for their salvation. It is still an inviting, a pleading, a forgiving word.

It not only keeps up the spirit of more ancient scriptures, it excels them. The offers seem to grow more free; the pleadings more importunate. The sun of revelation seems to grow more bright when near its setting. When its disc is ready to touch the horizon, it expands into greater breadth, and sheds down on earth rays of more attractive loveliness. No portion of the word tells more clearly the worth of the Lamb slain, and the glory of the saints' reward. No where else in the word do we see more clearly the value of the sacrifice by our High Priest offered, and the power now wielded by our exalted King.

We may consider this prophecy as a component part of the written word, and ascribe the blessing to those who know and obey the whole counsel of God; or we may take this prophecy by itself, and so full is the view which it gives of the great salvation, that he is blessed indeed, who 'reads,' and 'hears,' and 'keeps' it.

Blessed are those who *read* and *hear* the words of this prophecy. Blessed are they who enjoy the privilege of a written word, and a preached gospel. It is a blessing which we in this land largely enjoy. By the good hand of God upon us, the word has been put into our hands, and we have been enabled to read the word. Much has been given us; of us much will be required. It is a rich talent this which our Lord has left in our keeping; are we hiding it in the earth? It is a blessing offered, but has it been joyfully received? The good seed has been sown, and that too with unsparing hand; where are the fruits of righteousness? When it does not spring up, and grow, and bear fruit, it wastes in the soil and spreads infection round. When the word—the precious seed deposited, does not ripen into a blessing, it rots into a curse. Woe to those who handle the word deceitfully, woe to those who have received this grace of God in vain!

We might learn even from this text who are, and who are not really blessed in possessing the word, —not those who read and hear merely, but they who 'keep those things which are written therein.' The things written therein are the laws of the kingdom of heaven. We learn what sinners were by nature and by practice, and what the Saviour did to redeem them. We learn what salvation is, and how a sinner may be saved. We learn the fulness of Christ's work, and the freeness of Christ's offer. We learn what will make saints meet for the enjoyment of heaven, and what will

constitute their title to enter on that enjoyment. We have all read and heard these words; this is the blessing *offered*. Some have 'kept' these words; this is the blessing *possessed*. These doctrines taught are the germ deposited; in some it has sprung into life, and is bearing fruit to the glory of God; in others it has corrupted where it lay, and is hastening their destruction—aggravating their doom. Blessed are they who *keep* these words — who believe the truth declared here, and hold by Him who is the Truth revealed here. Blessed they who receive this Saviour—who keep this salvation.

Keep the words of this prophecy, ye who have read and heard them, '*for the time is at hand.*' What time? The time when the blessings promised shall be all bestowed; when the wrath threatened shall be all poured out. The time when the judgment shall be set, and the books opened. The words of this prophecy shall yet once more meet the eyes of every reader. It is a fearful thing to shut our eyes against that word now, for we must all look upon it yet. The time is at hand. A few days more, and our eyes grow dim that they cannot see it. A few days, and our eyes grow dim with disease—a few more, and they are shut in death. The next time we meet that word, it will be before the great white throne. It will lie open while the judgment goes on. The very light of God's countenance will shine down upon it, and all its meaning will be clearly seen. O blessed then will all those be, who keep the words of this book now! I will keep that word in my heart, and fix my heart on Him who hath spoken it. I shall not be afraid of evil tidings. 'The time is at hand;' that is no evil tidings to me; for I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep what I have committed unto him against that day. 'The time is at hand;' let it come, Lord Jesus; the time when thy saints shall be saved in thee, and thou shalt be glorified in thy saints!

#### TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it,' Deut. xxxi. 12, 13.*

At the time when this charge was delivered, Moses was an hundred and twenty years old. He

could no more go out and come in before the people. Also, the Lord had said unto him, 'Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.' It was the will of God, that he who had led the people through the wilderness, should not enter the promised land. Moses submitted. He was willing—ready to depart. Though not permitted himself, to 'go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon,' he rejoiced in the confident hope, that the promises of God would be fulfilled to his people. In the confidence of faith he declared to Joshua, 'The Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.'

But though he trusted without wavering in the faithfulness of God, it was not without anxiety that Moses looked forward to the condition of Israel, when he should be taken away from their head. He knew that they were a stiff-necked and backsliding people. He knew their propensity to forget God and serve idols. His desire in behalf of Israel was, that the law of the Lord might be written on their hearts, and obeyed in their lives. He knew that this would be their only safety. Accordingly, in his farewell charge to Joshua, the prevailing theme is, how the people from generation to generation might 'learn to fear the Lord, and observe to do all the words of this law.' The aged prophet, when no longer permitted to march at their head, would cast them without fear on the world, if he were assured that the word of God would be hid in their hearts. Among other means of spreading and perpetuating in Israel a knowledge of the divine law, provision is made for reading it once in seven years, with peculiar solemnity, in an assembly of the whole nation. There is wisdom in this institution. It was well fitted as a mean to secure the desired end. Similar means are enjoined and employed under the Christian dispensation. On the very same principle proceeds the gospel command, 'Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.'

This gathering together must ever be an important mean of preserving and disseminating the truth. The sympathy of numbers is a powerful stimulus to energetic action. In the scriptures, this law of nature is taken up, and employed to advance the purposes of the covenant of grace. It is difficult to swim against the stream. Most men are content to glide along with it. If it can be turned in a right direction, it will be a powerful instrument of good. There is a natural power in a multitude to draw the individual, whether to good or evil. That agency which is so often perverted, may be, and is employed on the side of

righteousness. Gather the people together to hear the word, and the sound, floating over the worshipping assembly, will fall with deeper solemnity on every ear. Gather the people together, that they may unite their voices in one loud song of praise: by this outward act of adoration, many a heart may be stirred up; on the ascending incense of this offered sacrifice, many a devout emotion may rise to heaven. This ordinance continues in the Christian church. The call still is, 'Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.' Saints in every age willingly respond to this call. They acknowledge the public assembly as the appointment of God; and they find out in their own experience, that the appointment is wise and gracious. They that fear the Lord like to separate themselves often from the world, that they may speak one to another, about their common hopes and fears,—about their work on earth, and their home in heaven.

Let them all come; let 'men, women, and children' meet together, whether it be the daily worship of the family, or the more public concourse in the house of prayer. Before God, all stand on an equal footing, and all have the same need. For this gathering, let all business be suspended; while it lasts, let all distinctions cease. While we bow before the Lord our Maker, we will learn to love one another with a pure heart fervently. Let rich and poor, old and young, meet at the altar. Parents should bring their children with them when they come to appear before God. The habits of children are formed by training. It will not do to tell children that when they grow up they must attend church like their fathers. They may never grow up; bring them to Christ now. Suffer *little* children to come unto him, and forbid them not. For this there is great encouragement in the experience of the church. Many very young children have learned to know and love their Saviour. It is the Lord's way still to bring to nought the wisdom of the wise, and reveal himself unto babes. Parents, let your children kneel beside you in the family to pray; and bring them with you to worship in the church. Do not content yourselves with telling them that they should attend religious ordinances; *train* them up to it. Let the parents bring the children to church, and the ministers will thereby be reminded of their duty. If a minister has been in the habit of speaking only to the old, the very presence of the children will suggest the propriety—the necessity, of a word to them. When he sees them thickly sprinkled through the congregation, looking up

as if they would like to understand, he will be constrained to pause now and then, and try to reach their understanding and their hearts.

The command includes also 'thy stranger that is within thy gates.' God makes the stranger his peculiar care. There are many kind commands regarding them in the laws of Moses. Israel were bound by the law to bring the stranger with them to the solemn religious assembly, that he might learn the law of the Lord, and hear the offer of mercy. Surely the same obligation lies on us. When we were strangers, the Son of God came to seek and save us. If the Spirit of Christ be in us, we will be always ready to take a stranger by the hand, and lead him to the place where prayer is wont to be made. When one who is a stranger to God sojourns for a night in your house, take him with you when the 'church in the house' assembles; while he kneels beside your children, and hears you pray for his soul, the Spirit of all grace may descend, and overcome his unbelief;—he may be born in your house to the Lord.

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,' 2 Cor. vi. 18.*

'AFTER this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father'—So then, we have a right to address the King Eternal by this endearing name. The Saviour has purchased for his people this privilege, and taught them to use it. When he would give his disciples a pattern of prayer, he selects from among the appellatives of Deity that one which is best fitted to dissipate their fears, to strengthen their confidence, and to enflame their love. Thanks to a compassionate Redeemer for this kind condescension to our weakness and our wants.

This aspect of Jehovah's countenance is in the word presented to men, to turn them away from their sins. The testimony of God to his chosen is, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee,' Jer. xxxi. 3. This is one of the means employed in the process of 'drawing' sinners to himself: 'I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.'

This is a kind invitation—an encouraging promise. How strong the inducement to come out from among the unclean! Those whom God has chosen, and redeemed, and adopted—who and where were they? The miserable, and blind, and

naked, lying helpless in their pollution. When first he set his love upon them, there was nothing in them to attract his regard. He looked upon them in their lost estate. The first feeble motion of the dead was not a spontaneous impulse; the first doubtful quiver of a soul hitherto at ease in sin, was the effect of a drawing by the loving-kindness of the Lord. 'Come out!' O, when this invitation falls on our ear, we should eagerly yield obedience to the call. The call is to come out from sinners that we may not share their doom.

But the grand inducement set before us here, is the hope of admission into the family—the hope of being received into the number and having a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. 'The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'—this, in the New Testament, is the title commonly applied to the hearer of prayer. Of all the names of God, when the penitent is praying, this is the one that rises most readily to his lips. As the Almighty, I dread his power. As the Omniscient, I shrink from the searching of his eye. As the Judge, his unchanging righteousness makes me afraid. As the Eternal, it appears terrible indeed to fall into the hands of the living God. But as the Father of our Lord Jesus, he looks in pity on the lost, and the lost in confidence draw near. In nature, God is involved in impenetrable mystery; in the law, he is revealed in flaming fire; but in the gospel, sinners may see him and live. In nature you weary yourself in vain, and cannot find his face; in the law his face, when found, is a consuming fire; in Christ the face of God is seen well pleased, and we may look upon it. When he sitteth on the circle of the heavens as the God of nature, clouds and darkness encompass his throne; when he descends on Sinai, all the emblems of terrible majesty are gathered round him. In the one aspect you cannot find; in the other aspect you dare not meet him: but in Christ, there is not the darkness to elude your search; nor the fury to repel your advances. In Christ he is revealed, and therefore you may know: he is revealed a Father and therefore you may love him. Of all the names whereby the Infinite is known, this sounds the sweetest in a sinner's ear. Our Father, we will hear thy voice: Our Father, we will come to thee.

'Ye shall be my sons and daughters.' 1. Of one lineage all. Born of the Spirit. Created again in Christ Jesus. 2. Equal in rank, and in privilege—kings and priests unto God. 3. Alike in the grand lineaments of their spiritual character—All delivered into the same mould of the word, and all bearing upon them the image of him who created them. 4. One in their final

destiny—mansions are provided for all in the Father's house. They shall go no more out. They shall enter as heirs upon a birthright—an inheritance that fadeth not away.

Those who lay claim to this title, and hold by this hope, should surely love one another with a pure heart fervently. 'Sirs, ye are brethren.' This one argument should settle most of our controversies.

The scripture speaks of the multitude of the redeemed, adopted, sanctified children, as 'the whole family in heaven and earth,' Eph. iii. 15. There is much consolation here—consolation to those members of the family who are still in the body. Though in a strange land, they are not accounted strangers. They rank as children. They are not distinguished by a different name, from the already blessed inhabitants of heaven. There is a distinction, not in the title of the children, but in the place of their sojourn. 'What think ye of Christ?' It is through him ye have this new name. He it is who hath made both one of Jews and Gentiles, two alienated families on earth; and it is in him that things in heaven and things on earth are gathered into one, so that those are made perfect around the throne, and those who are suffering in the body rank equal even now—all children of God, as safe as Omnipotence can make them; as highly honoured as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty can be.

It is a *whole* family. 'O that will be joyful, when they meet to part no more.' When a family are scattered on earth, they sometimes try to meet—to meet by appointment once a year, under a father's roof. By and bye, one is taken; and the remnant meet next time a mutilated family; in mourning weeds they meet, and the meeting just reminds them all the more strongly of the missing one. When the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty come at last into their Father's presence, they come a *whole* family—not one of them shall be lost, when they get out of great tribulation, and into the presence of the Lord, their joy will be full—they go no more out.

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#### TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night,'*  
Psal. i. 2.

It is a uniform law of Christ's kingdom, that those who have the title acquire also the character of children. Those who are admitted to the privilege, are also disposed to perform the

duties of sons and daughters. When God confers on any one the right of an heir, he imparts also the spirit of adoption. The children of the kingdom are distinguished by many marks from the men of the world among whom they dwell. While they are in this far country, they account themselves strangers, and hasten onward to their home. Their appearance, and manner, and pursuits, indicate that they are pilgrims passing over a stage in their journey. Though in tribulation now, they know that their rest remaineth. Though their bodies are bowed down in weakness, they lift up their souls unto God. Though weak in themselves, they are strong in the Lord. They appear to be poor, yet they have all, and abound; they appear to be sorrowful, yet they are always rejoicing. These are the children of a king; and soon they will enter on their high inheritance.

'Set your affections on things above.' This seems a reasonable command. Surely no one can say it is grievous. It does not lay a heavy burden on men's shoulders. It seems as if it were easy to yield obedience to this command; and yet with man it is impossible. A dead man cannot lift up the members of his body; neither can the spiritually dead lift up to God the affections of his soul. The heart must be made new, ere its emotions will rise habitually to heaven. The carnal mind is enmity against God. 'My soul cleaves to the dust, quicken thou me.'

But it is not the only characteristic of the children of God, that in secret they set their hope in him: they keep his word in their memory, and regulate their lives by his law. They do 'not forget the words of God, but keep his commandments.' They keep the Lord always before them, and strive to do those things that are pleasing in his sight. Among other duties, the reading of the word holds a prominent place. The word dwells in a believer richly; day and night doth he meditate on it. Now, this is a thing with which a stranger cannot intermeddle. He cannot understand it. He has read commands to that effect, and has heard ministers say, that it is a duty daily to read and meditate on the word of God. He has never said any thing against this; but he has never been able to practise it; and he cannot understand how any man should be able. He may have done it for a day or two after he has been ill; but soon it grew wearisome. At one time he puts it off to another opportunity, at another time he altogether forgets that there was such a thing to be done. Such a person cannot comprehend how any man can be so frequently employed in searching the scriptures; and the reason is,—

this is one of the things of the Spirit of God, and they are spiritually discerned. The secret of it all lies in this: The Lord's redeemed adopted children *love* the Lord's most holy law. No man will read the word profitably, or regularly, who is driven to it for fear he incur the vengeance of God by refusing. Until he learn to delight in the law, the great things that are written therein must necessarily continue to be counted a strange thing. Where there is a living spring in the soil, the streams do not forget to flow. So, where there is a new heart created—a spiritual life imparted to the soul, the affections will not forget to flow out toward him who is altogether lovely. A man who is living, and in health, never forgets to breathe, or take his food; so, when there is life in the soul, and that life in vigorous exercise, there is no such thing as *forgetting* to pray, or to read the word. There is an appetite belonging to the spiritual life. Without it the life cannot be sustained. Where it is weak, the principle of grace will languish; where it does not exist, there is death.

The appetite for food is an instinct of our nature. We take our food, not because we have been told it is a duty, but because we have a *desire* for it, and *pleasure* in it. So with this word—this bread of life. There is an appetite, a part of the renewed nature. There is a thirsting for the living God communicated by the quickening Spirit, which will seek without ceasing for its appropriate gratification. This desire cannot well be explained. The only way of knowing both the appetite and what it feeds on, is to experience it. Let that blessed craving be implanted in the soul, and there will immediately be a seeking for its natural food. There will no longer be a complaint about the word being a weariness, and the ordinances barren. There will be an instinctive seeking to the ordinances, not to feed on them, but on Christ in them. There will be an ever-active desire to search the scriptures, because they testify of him whom the soul loveth.

Alas! how little of this love is in our hearts; how little of this habitual bible-reading in our lives. We lose much by counting the word of God a strange thing. It is a great deep. By our searching we can never find out all the wisdom and love that are treasured up there. It is a fountain ever full—ever flowing. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satis-

fieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness,' Isa. lv. 1, 2.

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding,' Prov. iii. 5.

THIS power of understanding which we possess is a precious talent. The 'inspiration of the Almighty' has given it. It is one of the many good gifts which come from above—which issue from a Father's open hand. It is thus that our Creator has made us to differ from the beasts of the field. It has been bestowed for great purposes, and these purposes it is fitted to serve. By means of it we are enabled to mark the works of God, as seen in the world; and search the revelation of his will, as it is written in the word. By it, as an instrument, we are enabled to know ourselves. By it, when enlightened by the Spirit, we learn to know God. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; and the 'understanding' is the most wonderful part of our complex being.

The text does not make light of this gift. We do not find the word of God depreciating any of his works. The text has been written not to undervalue the human intellect, but to provide against a destructive error in its exercise. His 'own understanding' lies at the foundation of all that is excellent in man. Without it he is nothing. The text does not in the least derogate from the worth of this faculty; it is intended to guard against its abuse. The warning is, '*lean not to thine own understanding.*' It is sufficient for many things, but it will not do to lean on. Many who have leant on it, have found it a broken reed. Those who depend on their own understanding for the knowledge of God, and the way of salvation, spend their strength for nought; they have not yet reached the beginning of wisdom. If they have no other support to lean upon, they fall and perish.

Pride of intellect brings a snare, and many are entangled in it. In the concerns of our eternity, nothing is more fatal than this. This lofty look must be bowed down. While it lasts there can be no spiritual prosperity. They who are wise in their own conceit, cannot advance one step in the wisdom that is from above. Nothing more effectually hinders the entrance of the word; nothing more effectually keeps the light of the glorious gospel from shining in upon the heart. It is easy

to trace the process. He who thinks he can accomplish his object himself, will not seek help from another. God has said, 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' But if a man has no sense of want, he will not ask; and not asking he cannot get. 'Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;' this is a cry out of the depths; it is a prayer from a humble and contrite spirit. It is an effort to lean on the Almighty's arm, made by one who has discovered that he cannot help himself. They were blind men, and knew themselves blind, who cried out, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us.' Those who are puffed up with their own wisdom, never will, and never can pray, for light out of Zion to guide them in their path; and those who do not ask, will not receive. Like the demoniac in the gospel, who cried out, 'what have I to do with thee, thou Jesus,' at the very time when he was the devil's helpless slave, the wise of this world think themselves rich and in need of nothing, while they are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. The wisest of men, while they are ignorant of Christ, have their foolish hearts darkened. However accurately they may scan the works of God in the material universe, in regard to eternity they are blind, and cannot see afar off.

It is a poor thing to lean upon the understanding of a fallen and corrupt creature. It cannot find out how exceeding bitter a thing sin is; it cannot find out how sin may be pardoned; it cannot find out the way of peace; it cannot direct the wanderer back to God. Lord, I am poor and needy, forsake me not. Teach me out of thy law. By the entrance of thy word give light to my darkened understanding. I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant.

But, when our self-confidence is destroyed, is there any other foundation near? When we have been cast down from the heights of our own pride, is there any power that can raise us up again—is there any rock on which our feet may stand, and our goings be established? This same portion of the word which warns us of our own weakness, points to a refuge in which we may be safe—a foundation on which we may rest secure. 'Trust in the Lord.'

Trusting in the Lord, is a form of expression very common in scripture. It would be wrong to say that the word is vague and indefinite; but from the very frequency of its occurrence, there is reason to fear it leaves but a vague and indefinite impression on our minds. Trusting in the Lord, is the very essence of saving faith. It is the most distinguishing characteristic of the children of God. His enemies may believe in

his existence, and venerate his holiness, and dread his power; but his children only—those who are reconciled through the blood of the covenant—can *trust* in him. Some do not know God at all, and sport unthinking beneath the flaming sword of his vengeance. Some know God terrible in righteousness, and knowing him their enemy, believe and tremble. It is only when he is seen in the face of Jesus, a just God and justifying the ungodly, that there can be a 'trust' in him. He invites only through Christ; and it is only at his own winning invitation that sinners can yield themselves unto him; and it is only when they have yielded, and tasted that he is gracious, that they can begin to know the blessedness of the man whose trust Jehovah is. Ere any one can have this trust then, he must be of the family of God,—born from above.

More particularly still, it is 'trust in the Lord *with all thine heart.*' It is only thus that there can be a trust. It is a matter, not of opinion, but of affection. 'His *heart* is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' It is not enough that his judgment is fixed in believing the essential truths of revelation; his heart must be possessed by a love of the things revealed. The judgment convinced, steadily maintains the truth; and the affections captivated are drawn out in love to it. And it must be with the *whole* heart. Alas, who is sufficient for this thing? My heart is unstable as water; its affections are scattered on a thousand vanities. My soul cleaves to the dust. Lord, thou knowest we have divided hearts. Lord, bless and pity us. Keep our hearts. Turn upward the flow of their affections. Set them steadily on thyself. Enable me to obey this law of thine: to trust in thee with my *whole* heart. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.'

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TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,' Luke xxiv. 45.

ON 'that same day' in which the Redeemer rose from the dead, two of the disconsolate disciples 'went to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened.' They 'communed together and reasoned' about Christ and his sufferings—about the Master's promises and the servant's hopes—about the restoring of Israel and the setting up

of Messial's reign. Their views of these spiritual things were by no means clear, and their conversation regarding them could not be very intelligent. So ignorant were they, notwithstanding the privilege they had enjoyed, that they had never yet learned from the scriptures that Christ ought to have suffered and so entered into his glory. 'The chief priests and our rulers have crucified him; but we trusted that it should have been he which should have redeemed Israel.' Thus ran their desponding complaint. Their hopes of redemption for Israel seem to have been almost quenched, when Jesus bowed his head and gave up the ghost. The conversation of these two disciples on their way to Emmaus could not be very clear—their reasonings could not be very conclusive, but as they went, they talked together about Jesus. Though they knew but little, they 'loved much.' Though the eye as yet was not very clear, the heart was full. Babes in Christ as yet, they could not do much by their mutual reasonings to explain the mysteries of the kingdom, but still they would be talking about it. They had not much knowledge; but they had a strong desire to know. To him that hath this humble and spiritual affection to Jesus, shall be given in due time the knowledge of his salvation. While these two men were communing together, 'Jesus himself drew near and went with them,' enlightening their eyes and warming their hearts.

Upon their return to Jerusalem, they found the rest of the apostles and certain other believers gathered together. At this meeting the same thought possessed their souls—the same theme prevailed in their conversation. 'The Lord is risen indeed.' The two began to tell what had been done in the way, and as they thus spake Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith, Peace be unto you. Again, while the sorrowing disciples are eagerly communing about him and his salvation, Jesus himself comes to teach them what they did not know. 'Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.'

We know from the history of the Acts that this was their occupation during the forty days of the Saviour's sojourn among them after his resurrection. The time was employed in 'speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.' In the example of the apostles, then, we may read a rebuke, and from their experience we may draw encouragement.

When 'two or three' of them meet, whether sitting in the house, or walking by the way, we find they are engaged in communing about Jesus—about their own hope in him, and his salvation

wrought for them. Is this the way in which we occupy our leisure? When friends meet, do they hold free converse about things seen, and never pour out their hearts to each other about the things unseen—about their hope in Christ? Will two walk by the way, both named after Christ, and commune together about the vanities of a day, without naming him on whom their salvation depends? We have surely much need to appropriate the apostle's prayer, that Christ may *dwell in our hearts*. If we allowed Christ to dwell in our hearts, his name and his salvation would oftener rise to our lips, and be heard in our conversation.

There is great encouragement to the humble disciples to commune together about the things that belong to their peace. When they that fear the Lord speak often one to another, the Lord will hearken and hear, and a book of remembrance will be written before him, and they shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels. When the heart is full of love to Christ, and his name is felt to be like ointment poured forth, there will in due time be an increase of knowledge. To them that fear him thus, he will certainly show his salvation. Jesus himself will draw near to humble earnest inquirers; he will not leave them to seek his face in vain. Ascended now to the Mediator's throne, and no longer personally present with his people, he sends his Spirit down to administer the covenant; to enlighten the ignorant, to comfort the mourner, to stablish, strengthen, settle the saints in their most holy faith. 'Ask, and ye shall receive.'

Our understandings need to be opened. There is wisdom written in the word, but a barrier is set up to prevent its entrance into a sinner's heart. There is light enough in the scriptures, but there is an obscuring veil upon the understanding of men. God hath shined out of Zion—out of Zion our God hath shined gloriously, and the bright light circles free through all the tents of Jacob; but the sons of Jacob do not let it in upon their own souls. God hath shined out of Zion—that we can all say; but have our hearts really been illumined by the light of the glorious gospel? These are two different things. Those who know both, are well aware that there may be the one without the other. They know in their own experience, that the light shone around, at a time when it did not shine in. The one—the shining out of Zion—was the work of Emmanuel, finished by himself and perfect for ever; the other—the shining in upon the heart—is a special work of the Holy Spirit, taking away the veil and admitting the diffused light into a dark place.

It is a blessed thing to have the understanding so opened. The salvation is near, and it is sad to think that many who hear of it, shall perish for ever. It is sad—it is heart-rending, to think that nothing stands in the way of sinners' salvation but the hardness of their own unbelieving heart. O that it were opened! Nothing more is needed. All things are now ready. No obstacle impedes the beam from Zion, until it reaches us, and the veil keeps it out. From the impenetrable depths of a past eternity—from the covenant of the everlasting Father, ordered ere time began, the light issues forth; and no length of ages dims its brilliancy, or turns it from its course. From the high heavens it comes, and no distance wearies its flight. This good news from a far country holds on its way to the needy object; it seeks the sons of men. Barriers there were, but they are removed now. Justice stood in the way—interposed to keep the blessed ray from coming at all from the throne of God in the direction of this world accursed. But in the fulness of time, justice turned aside—justice satisfied was borne out of the way by the mighty God our Saviour, and the glorious light from the covenant began unopposed to flow. Again, the curse lay on the lost, to intercept the blessing. Messiah became a curse for us, to take the condemnation away. He who is now the way unto the Father, first became the way from the Father to us—the way whereby compassion from God might flow free to men. And now the light of the gospel after clearing all these obstacles, and reaching its object, is kept out of our hearts. Sinners perish, after salvation has come nigh. The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, *lest the gospel should shine into them.* Great God our Saviour, by thine own Spirit promised and sent, open our understandings, *that the word may enter to quicken, to enlighten, to save.*

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. 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 surname himself by the name of Israel,' Isa. xlv. 3—5.*

WE have here two different kinds of thirst. Two distinct forms of evil are depicted, that the remedy

may be prescribed for both. There is the thirst of a living creature, feeling the want and crying for help; and there is the dryness of the ground, needy, but not knowing its need. There is a panting, and a parching. We hear of the hart panting for the water-brooks; and we hear of a dry and parched land, where no water is. In the one case we have a living thing, knowing its want—feeling the pain, and longing to be satisfied. In the other, we have the dead unfeeling dust, dry, hard, and riven, in need of the water-brook, but with no sense of want, or desire for supply. The same blessing will remedy both these forms of ill. Water poured out will satisfy the thirst of the panting hart, and soften as it flows the parched soil.

When God from heaven on high looks down on this fallen world, he sees it a waste howling wilderness; but the sad scene is not altogether uniform. Death does not reign over all. There are marks of spiritual life. There is drought over all; but some have been quickened into life, and are panting for a refreshing stream. The general aspect of the fallen race is that of a parched land. The heavens above are as brass, and the earth as iron. All seems ready for the burning, and yet no sense of want, no sigh for relief. But on the surface of this dreary waste, there are here and there marks of life. God sees there his own children. He marks their vehement longing for the refreshing from his presence. He hears their cry. He has recorded for them his promise. 'I will pour my Spirit on him that is thirsty.' Though the living who are thirsty—the living alone can lay hold of the promise and urge the prayer, yet the blessing, when it comes, will be upon all. It will fall upon the living who asked, and on the dead who knew not their need. In answer to the cry of his own redeemed people, God will not only satisfy their own souls out of the fountain of living water, but also pour floods upon the dry ground. Open your mouth wide, ye that wait upon the Lord, open your mouth wide, and your Father in heaven will open wide his hand. He will give his Spirit to invigorate the life of your souls, and beget new life in the dead around you. 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' According to his promise, he will bless you and make you a blessing.

To be 'thirsty' is in itself not joyous but grievous; yet it often turns out a 'salutary pain.' It is part of Jehovah's purpose still to lead his people into the wilderness. As of old, so now, he has many lessons to teach them there, which they would not learn by the flesh pots of Egypt. He would teach his people to depend only upon

himself—to draw all their consolation from the treasures of his grace. For this purpose they are led into a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. Had Moses, when first he came with his divine commission to deliver the captive Hebrews, begun by smiting a rock on the plains of Egypt, and summoning the people thither, to drink from the issuing stream, few would have heeded his call. Having enough in their own houses, they would have treated his invitation with indifference and neglect. In the desert they needed no invitation. Their suffering whetted their appetite. The thirst which they were enduring made them crowd closely round the appointed rock, and eagerly receive the first outflowing of the refreshing stream.

The God of Israel is our God; to his children the same 'love he beareth still.' Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? If he leads us into a wilderness, why should we complain? If in the course of his holy providence, he leads us into a land where no water is—a land where the streams of Egypt cannot follow us; if he bring us into a land where no springs rise from earth, and no rains distil from the clouds, it is not that we may be left to perish there. No, our God is gracious; his plans are wise—his purpose love. If he allows us to be thirsty, it is that, feeling the pain, we may come to the fountain of living water. It is a blessed thing to be made to feel that all created things are broken cisterns that hold no water. It is a blessed thing, though painful, to experience the psalmist's vehement longing for the living God. This pain draws or drives the needy near to the fountain of all grace. 'Thirsty!' that is a painful thing; but out of its very darkness, the light of hope arises. This is the very description of the man for whom the blessing is laid up—to whom the promise is given. This man has a strong argument to plead. God himself has filled that man's mouth with arguments. Let 'him that is thirsty' plead in hope, for to him expressly the promise is given. Remember thy holy covenant, O God! 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' I am thirsty, pour thy Spirit upon me.

The promise is very rich, and very full. It is not only refreshing to individual believers, but an encouragement to them in their desire and prayer for the world; for the church; for their relatives; for their offspring. Godly parents long for the salvation of their children. A brother, already in Christ, longs vehemently for a brother according to the flesh, who is still in the bond of iniquity. The promise of the text throws open a channel

through which these strong desires may freely vent themselves. One who yearns for the salvation of a brother or sister, or wife or child, or father or mother, would soon grow weary with holding in. You are not able to save from death the soul of your beloved, and the pent up grief would consume your spirit. Here is an opening for your struggling emotions. God from heaven has opened it up, and brought it down to you. He hath said, I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring. The promise has been sent down from heaven to earth, just to open up a way for your prayer to rise from earth to heaven. Take hold of it—for that very purpose it has been given—and on the strength of it plead, O that my father, or brother, or child, 'might live before thee.'

It is a blessed thirst that leads our souls to the open fountain. Welcome those troubles that drive us to Christ. Welcome those bereavements that leave in our bosoms a void to be filled only with the love of Christ. Welcome the scorching, and the parching, and the fainting, in a dry and thirsty land, if our weary souls are thereby induced to cry what have we any more to do with idols, and to wait on him who hath promised to be 'as the dew unto Israel.'

#### TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,' Eph. iv. 11, 12.*

WE have much need to get our conceptions of the ministerial office raised and purified. In this matter the tone of the church is low. These verses are well fitted to instruct and reprove us. The former tells who is the Author of the office of the ministry; the latter tells what is its design. The former raises our eye to the Mediator's throne as the source whence this gift emanates; the latter turns our eye abroad upon the world to contemplate the end which the gift is fitted to serve.

*He gave.* The Lord our Redeemer gave; and not till he had ascended up on high did he thus fully equip the church for her combat with the powers of darkness. The gift is the purchase of his pain; one result of his victory; one fruit of his finished work. It was when he ascended up on high that he gave these gifts to men; nay, it was for this very purpose that he did ascend—

that he might fill, or fulfil, 'all things'—that he might finish the work he had undertaken, and fulfil the promises he had made. It should shame us out of our low carnal conceptions of the ministerial office, to remember whose gift it is, and the travail to which his soul was subjected ere it could be obtained for us.

All these enumerated offices are given by Christ, and all for the same great purpose; but the pastors and teachers are the ordinary office-bearers of the church, and with them we are more immediately concerned. The two offices, whether vested in one person, or separated, are, the private care of the pastor, and the public preaching of the word.

The specific design of this ordinance—the object for which this gift has been procured and bestowed, is first of all, 'for the perfecting of the saints.' It is literally, 'fitting in'—uniting each member to Christ the living head, and binding them all into one. There is enough in Christ to satisfy the wants of all his people. In him all fulness dwells: yet many of his redeemed are wandering on in weariness and want. They have a title to the inheritance; and yet they are not like the children of a king; they are lean from day to day. There is enough in Christ their Saviour, and his grace is offered free; they are invited to take freely; they come and try, but go away mourning. Believers do not get what their Saviour has to bestow. They err through ignorance in making their application; their faith fails, and they cannot lay hold on the promise. They need help, and reproof, and instruction. They need one to point out to them the particular provision in the covenant which contains the cure for their pains. One is needed, standing by the ark of the covenant, to tell this mourning inquirer that he is searching too much into his own heart and looking too little to Jesus; or to warn that too confident professor that he is putting his own repentance and faith into the foundation of his hopes. Ministers are needed to direct inquirers as they come, and point out to them the appropriate remedy for every disease, lest they pine and die beside the fountain of all grace, for want of skill to appropriate the blessing which they need. There is also a fitting of believers into each other; so that they shall be one in the bonds of love, thus helping each other, and glorifying their Saviour. Whether it be fitting an individual believer into the covenant with Christ, so that he shall have peace and joy; or fitting together the different members of the church, so that their unity shall be a blessing to them that are without—the work is great and

difficult. It needs a hand skilful, delicate, pure, to meddle with this matter at all—to interfere in any way between Christ the Saviour and sinners seeking him. Who is sufficient for these things? God only, by his Spirit, can apply the benefits of the redemption wrought by Christ; yet it has pleased him to appoint some from among their brethren to be pastors and teachers of his people. He has committed this trust to earthen vessels, just that the excellency of the power, when the work is accomplished, may appear to be of God.

It is farther said that pastors and teachers are given 'for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' They are labourers sent into the vineyard. They must work while it is day. They must labour in season and out of season, that they may not be ashamed when their Lord calls them to give an account of their stewardship. The special design of this work is the edifying of Christ's body; each believer is a living stone, and all together grow into an holy temple in the Lord. The work of a minister is, to confirm each and unite all. It is his duty to watch over the flock; to repress the outbreaking of sin, and stimulate the exercise of every Christian grace—to watch for the souls of his brethren as one that must give an account.

The members of the church have much to learn about the origin and uses of the ministry. It cannot be their duty to look with superstitious reverence on the office, or the person who holds it. Every several believer must try the Spirit of his teacher by the word. But those who avoid the error on this extreme, are apt to fall into another equally dangerous. The human spirit, when freed from the trammels of superstition, is ready to bound over into the opposite region of religious liberalism, which is equally fatal to the life of the soul. Let not the members of the church rudely judge him who is over them in the Lord. Let them not rashly measure his worth, by the estimate they may form of his talent or his learning. If he has been enabled to enter upon his office in the fear of God and in dependence on his Spirit, the members of the flock should learn to look on the pastoral office as the gift of their risen Lord, and the means by himself appointed to keep them unto the end. If in this way they receive it, they will be blessed in their deed.

Has Christ, for these great purposes, given his church pastors and teachers? Woe to them who are called to the ministry, if by their unfaithfulness they frustrate his grace. Woe to the pastors if the flock are allowed to turn aside un-

warned and fall into the snare of the devil! Woe to the teachers, if they leave the people to perish for lack of knowledge—if they do not teach them to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Who is sufficient for these things? 'Brethren, pray for us.'

Those who hear the word must give in their account. Hearers must meet their ministers before the great white throne. Woe to those who hear for the purpose of praising or blaming the speaker. The sermon was good, or it was bad; I liked, or I disliked it? Is this all? was it for this that Christ gave his church stated pastors? Nay, verily. Those who make this use of them only, abuse to their own condemnation, one of the merciful ordinances of God. To get you bound up in the covenant with Christ as one of his redeemed; to get you confirmed in the faith; to get you made meet for the inheritance; for this purpose the ministerial office was given; if that work is not proceeding—if these effects are not flowing from it, you have received this grace of God in vain.

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 TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron,'*  
 Heb. v. 4.

THE work of the ministry may be laborious; but it is honourable. There is no higher honour placed within the reach of man. It is indeed a 'high calling,' to stand by the altar and direct the eye of approaching worshippers to the sacrifice offered there—to stand in the sanctuary and guide the steps of a repentant prodigal back to his father's house. The 'pastor and teacher' in the Christian church has even a greater honour than that of the priest who ministered in the temple of old. The least in the kingdom of heaven, as it is now come, is greater than the most highly favoured prophets and priests of the former dispensation. The work of a minister is more spiritual now; it enters farther into that which is within the veil. He is called to serve God in the gospel of his Son. He is an ambassador for Christ. By him God beseeches sinners to be reconciled to himself. He is allowed to be the channel of communication between the living life-giving Spirit, and the spiritually dead around him. When his work prospers, it is glory to God in the highest. When the judgment is set, he shall inherit the blessing of those who have turned many to righteousness, and shall shine as a star in the kingdom of the Father.

It is a great honour this; but from its very greatness one might gather that it is not at the disposal of man. No man taketh it to himself. In the former dispensation, it pleased God to visit with the most terrible judgments those who usurped the office of the priesthood. Aaron and his family were 'called of God' to minister at the altar, and the appointment was sanctioned by the summary vengeance that fell on usurpers as they rose. No one who considers the nature of the two dispensations will think intrusion into the sacred office now is less displeasing to God, or less dangerous to the guilty offender. Already that sovereign Lord has manifested the principles of his government, and they who in these the most sacred matters, contravene his law, must abide his righteous indignation. Judgment against this evil work is not executed speedily, but though hand join in hand it shall not go unpunished.

It is certain that the 'call' to the ministerial office in the Christian church, is conducted upon the same principle as the call to the priesthood of old. Ministers yet are called of God, as certainly, and sometimes as evidently, as was Aaron. The appointment of this high office is retained in the Sovereign's hands. It is he who reigns in the palaces of Zion, that sets a watchman on each of her towers. He who gave himself for the church, continues to be head over all things for the church which he bought with his blood. He who died and rose again, and ascended up on high, gave to his church pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul, while he magnified his office, and rejoiced in the high station to which he had been raised, was ever ready to acknowledge the free grace of God in the choice and appointment of his instrument. 'Whereof (of the gospel) I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power,' Eph. iii. 7. This is the way in which ministers are made. The first requisite is, that they have experienced the effectual working of his power renewing their own souls. It is not till they are themselves reconciled, that the word of reconciliation is committed to them. When, bought with a price, they feel a necessity lying upon them to glorify God in the ministry of the gospel; and when that impulse is seconded by the arrangement of providence and the invitation of the church, there is a call to the office which no man is entitled to disregard. Those who yield to these concurrent motives, and consecrate themselves to the preach-

ing of the word, do not take this honour unto themselves; they are called of God as was Aaron.

The world affords no more melancholy sight than that of a man invested with the authority and reaping the emoluments of the ministerial office, while he knows not the truth he professes to preach. There is not a more loathsome blot lying on the face of the visible church, than a man ministering at the altar whom God has neither called by his providence, nor quickened by his Spirit. Miserable and dangerous is the position of that man, who, neither sent by Christ, nor welcomed by his people, has literally been put into the priest's office for a bit of bread.

No man taketh this honour unto himself; neither has any man a right, from his own personal fancy, to confer it on another. Men who believe that there is a God, and stand in awe of his judgment, should beware how they put forth their hands to touch the ark of the covenant—how they intermeddle between Christ and his people. There has been much sin somewhere in connection with the exercise of patronage. If there is no leading in providence, and no call from the members of the church, woe to him who takes, and to him who gives it! To their Master they must stand or fall. The Lord is judge himself. It behoves them to have their answer ready. Rather let my right hand forget its cunning, than that it should be impiously stretched out to block up, or turn aside the channel through which the grace of the Saviour exalted flows down to his suffering church.

O that the time to favour Zion were come—a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Let us pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers, and fit them for their work; 'that he would purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord as in the days of old, and as in former years,' Mal. iii. 3, 4. Lord, 'let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy,' Psal. cxxxii. 9.

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TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine,' 2 Tim. iv. 2*

CHRIST did all this. His proceedings as an instructor were in exact conformity with the rule which his apostle here lays down. 'I have

preached righteousness,' says he, 'in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord; thou knowest I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.' He preached the word. He taught that doctrine of righteousness, whereof he was himself the great theme; he published that good news of salvation which related to and sprang out of his own Messiahship; he declared the fact of that divine loving-kindness, which appeared in his own descent from the heights of glory to the depths of abasement for the sake of sinners, in his mission to seek and to save the lost, and to give eternal life to the perishing. Christ preached the true, but unwelcome word respecting the spiritual condition of man. He preached the word relating to the gracious power and operations of the Holy Ghost.

Christ was 'instant in season, and out of season.' To the Father he could profess and declare, 'the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;' and to his astonished and bewildered friends his explanation was, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' Both in public, and in private; among friends, and among foes; in the temple, in the synagogues, in the open air; on the land, on the sea; on the feast-days, on the sabbath days, on the days of secular employment; the Lord Jesus was busy, incessant, in his work as a Teacher sent from God, beseeching men to repent and believe the gospel. With all long-suffering and doctrine also did our Lord reason, rebuke, and exhort. Witness Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum. Witness Jerusalem, the highly favoured, guilty city, over which he poured the melting lamentation;—'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' And witness the disciples whom he so patiently instructed, whom he admonished so affectionately—the disciples, whose weakness, folly, and prejudice, never wearied him—the disciples, whom he chid indeed, but never cast off; to whom he would say, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken,' but to whom at the same time, 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets,' he could 'with all long-suffering and doctrine,' go on to 'expound in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.'

The example of our great Prophet, then, speaks the same language to ministers as the apostolic

precept before us. It strongly tells them to preach the word; to be instant in season, out of season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.

1. A view of ministerial *duty* is here given us. There are three things which it is said to be their duty to do. First—They must declare *the truth of God*. 'Preach *the word*;' see that it be the word, the true word, the revealed word, God's word, that you preach. Preach the word, and the word only; let there be no intermixture of that which is man's. Preach the word in its integrity; keep back no part of the counsel of God. Secondly—Ministers must be fervent and assiduous in their preaching. 'Be instant in season, out of season.' Let sinners be plied with the saving message of God at all times. Seize every opportunity for communicating the glad tidings of love and peace. Thirdly—Ministers must preach with special application to the cases of their hearers. They must reason or convince, rebuke, and exhort. And to do this well and successfully, they must do it 'with all long-suffering and doctrine;' that is to say, they must exercise patience, and give line upon line.

2. Consider the *responsibility* of ministers. The apostle is very urgent. 'Be instant in season, out of season.' And he enjoins ministers to be very earnest. 'Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.' Can we not divine the reason? Yea, the reason is that the salvation of men is the aim of ministerial work. The word must be preached, not merely that the human race may be civilised, that social order may be maintained, or that the more complete enjoyment of this life may be secured, but that souls may escape perdition, that sinners may be delivered from going down to that pit, whereof the smoke goeth up for ever and ever! The work of ruining souls is going forward rapidly; Satan and his emissaries are 'instant in season, out of season;' how then shall ministers answer it, if, through their neglect, the work of saving souls stand still?

3. Learn also with what *authority* ministers are clothed. They have their commission from God. They have no inherent right to demand an audience from their fellow-men, or to exercise the functions of public reprovers. But the right has been given them; and to the challenge, 'Who made you our instructors and censors?' they can reply, It was God; we come before you in his name, and in virtue of his commandment: he tells us to speak, and you to listen; of his word we are the bearers; and the warnings we utter, the rebukes we administer, the entreaties and

exhortations which we use, are all by authority of him who made and governs the creation, in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways!

4. Let us not forget the co-relative duty and responsibility of those to whom the Christian message is carried. Preaching is the ordinance of God. Wo to them that set it at nought! Theirs is the sin of despising and mocking God. For the advantage of sinners has the ministry been established. It is the fruit of that pity, which gave rise to the wonderful protestation—'As I live,' saith the Lord, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.' To disregard, then, the doctrine and reproof of God's servants, is in effect to tell God that his mercy has been unnecessarily active, that his love to a dying world has been needlessly strong! Can we wonder that the fearful doom of such despisers should be, 'Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded—I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh!'

#### TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and, being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord,' Acts xviii. 25.*

APOLLOS was a man 'instructed in the way of the Lord.' He had knowledge—knowledge of a special kind—knowledge of religion. He was acquainted with 'the way of the Lord.'

What are we to understand by 'the way of the Lord?' We read, in scripture, of 'the narrow way,' 'the way of holiness,' the way of life,' and 'the way of salvation.' Each of these is the way of the Lord. The expression has, strictly speaking, two interpretations; namely, the way in which he himself walks, and the way in which he commands us to walk. Taking the first view, we say that Apollos was instructed in the way of the divine procedure, in the goings of Jehovah from of old with reference to the sons of men. The starting point of that illustrious way is in the purpose of free, electing love, which was formed by the Lord before the foundation of the world. Onwards we trace it in the setting up of the new covenant dispensation, and in the announcement of an approaching redemption from the curse, and of the pre-determined overthrow of the tyranny and power of the devil. Onward still, it appears in the mediation of Christ—in

the priestly, prophetic, and regal offices, with which the Son is invested—in the raising up of that wonderful man who is ‘as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest—as rivers of water in a dry place—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.’ And we see the way of the Lord’s gracious proceedings in that mighty, effectual call, which brings sinners out of darkness into his marvellous light—we see it in his free justification of the ungodly through the merits of Emmanuel—and in the purifying, enlightening, strengthening, cheering, of the souls of his people through the continual effusions of the Holy Ghost. If we take the second view, the way of the Lord is that which the Lord sets before us, and respecting which proclamation is made in his name, ‘This is the way, walk ye in it!’ It is the way of *believing*. When the jailer of Philippi asked for the way, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,’ was the ready answer of Paul. It is the way of *repenting*. ‘Except ye repent,’ said Christ, ‘ye shall perish.’ ‘Repent, and be converted,’ said Peter, ‘that your sins may be blotted out.’ It is the way of *privilege*. ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money!’ It is the way of *prayer*. ‘Ask, and ye shall receive;—knock, and it shall be opened unto you.’ It is the way of *gospel obedience*. ‘Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; wherefore glorify God in your body, and your spirit, which are God’s.’ It is the way to *Zion*. ‘Come unto me—I will give you rest.’ ‘I go to prepare a place for you.’ ‘The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads.’

To know the Lord’s way is essential for all. For lack of knowing it do the souls of sinners perish. It is not enough that ministers are acquainted with it. Vicarious knowledge conducts none to heaven. Yet it is most necessary that ministers understand it well. This is necessary in order to their own salvation; and also with a view to the salvation of their hearers. If they teach not the way aright, such as trust to their guidance will not find it. And how can they teach the way, if they do not know it?

God must teach ministers, else they cannot know his way. It is not enough that the way of the Lord be described to them by men who have surveyed it; they require the knowledge of observation and experience. It is the province of the Spirit of the Lord to give them that knowledge. By him the way will be revealed to them; he will pour light into their minds so that their own eyes shall behold it; he will lead them in it,

conduct them from stage to stage, and their feet shall not slide. May the Lord save his church from the curse of a ministry that does not spiritually and experimentally know his way.

Apollos was ‘fervent in the Spirit.’ He was a preacher who had zeal along with his knowledge,—who had heat as well as light. Happy conjunction of intelligence and fervour! Without the latter, nothing will be done; without the former, nothing will be done aright. Enlightened fervour on the part of ministers is what the church of God requires.

It is sad to see an apathetic minister. It is surely no time for indolence and slumber on the part of the shepherd, when the wolf is among the sheep. Apathy there is none with the enemy of souls. *He* is neither asleep, nor indifferent, nor idle. He pursues his work of deceit and ruin with unfading zeal, and most malignant fervour. What treachery then is it, if, under these circumstances, the guardians of souls do not bestir themselves, or move, with any earnestness or ardour, for the protection and rescue of their charge!

Apollos ‘spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord.’ For this his knowledge qualified him; and to this his fervour of spirit inclined him.

The devoted minister does *three* things. He *speaks* the things of the Lord. He *teaches* the things of the Lord. He both speaks and teaches the things of the Lord *diligently*.

The careless minister may, at *canonical seasons*, *speak* the things of the Lord; but when he speaks, he does not *teach*; there is neither the ardour, nor the painstaking fulness and illustration that are necessary for conveying the truth to other minds. And he is not *diligent*. He does not watch for opportunities to give the knowledge that saves. He never works with the zeal of a lover of souls.

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### THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

‘Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful,’ 1 Cor. iv. 2.

Who can gainsay this? The rule is indisputable, that fidelity is the foremost qualification of a steward. The steward was one to whom was committed the care of his master’s property, and of his master’s interests; and to whom it fell to look to the welfare and proper nourishment of his master’s family.

Let it be remembered, then, by every one who

is a steward, that 'it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.' Especially let them, whose stewardship is of God, remember it.

But who are they that have a stewardship from God? They are the children of men. They are those who have received the gifts of God. What things God has bestowed on us, he has not given so absolutely, as to set us free from responsibility for the way in which we use them. He has not divested himself of his own lordship over the things which his rational creatures possess. They are *ours*, indeed; but only in a subordinate sense. They are ours for a season;—they are ours for certain ends. We have no right to do with them what we please. God's will must regulate the use of them. God's glory is the cause to which they must be devoted. Have we wealth? In the truest sense it belongs not to us; it is God's. We are stewards of our wealth; the proprietor is God. Woe to the rich man that forgets he is a steward! He will never enter into the kingdom of God. The man, who in the parable, was clothed in fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, while holy Lazarus lay a despised beggar at his gate, thought himself to be the absolute lord of his treasures, and dreamt not of a reckoning that was to come. But he did not cease to be a steward by forgetting that he was one; he neither ceased to be a steward, nor escaped from the responsibility of a steward's obligations: the effect of his criminal forgetfulness merely was to constitute him an unjust steward, and to consign him to that place of darkness and torment, where the unjust steward must expiate his sin. Have we influence? Indeed, who is there, that more or less, has it not? The man who is poor and of lowly station, may have little influence; but there is no man who has none. Such influence as we have must be exercised for God. The relations and circumstances whence our influence arises, are to be attributed to him; and the fruit of them should be employed in his service, and for his glory. In like manner, we are stewards with reference to our respective mental endowments. By many an unhappy child of genius has this truth been overlooked—been scorned; and the noblest qualities, and capabilities of mind, have been traitorously employed in reviling God, and casting doubt and darkness over the economy of his grace, and assailing the foundations of his throne. But these guilty proceedings cannot alter the truth; it remains a fact, that they who abuse and misapply the mental powers that God has conferred on them, *are* in the situation of stewards, and *ought* to be faithful as such. Nothing that we have, or can possess, belongs to us in

absolute or irresponsible right; nor is it possible for us ever to reach a station, or acquire an authority, higher than that of stewards. Ought this to disappoint us? Were we more than stewards, we should be gods!

But besides the general stewardship common to us all, there are particular stewardships. There is that of the head of a family. To him God has committed interests of great importance. God says to every parent: 'Take this child and bring it up for me. Take these children and educate them in my fear. Feed their souls with my word. Carry them to the wells of salvation. Set before them the rich provision of my grace. For this end I give thee all necessary authority and power; and I charge thee to see to their welfare, both for time and eternity.'

And there is the stewardship of the Christian pastor. To him is entrusted the care of many souls. He has to look to the well-being of the household of God. The Head-steward is Christ. As the chosen and much beloved servant of the Father, he presides over 'the whole family in heaven and earth,' goes in and out among them, and distributes to them bountifully out of that fulness which it hath pleased the Father should dwell in him. In token of his authority, he hath the key of the house of David upon his shoulder; and he openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth. But Christ has many stewards under him. The ministers of the gospel have a delegated authority as his deputy-stewards. He has given them, as the symbols of their office, and the means of exercising its duties, the keys of the kingdom of heaven. He has thus made them 'stewards of the mysteries of God.' Those holy secrets, which are hid from the wise and prudent, have been committed to them. By the keys, they are empowered to unlock the repositories of the gospel dispensation, and bring forth those gladsome and glorious truths, which must have been for ever unscrutable to the reason of man. They are appointed to convey to sinners the precious knowledge of Jehovah, of his name, and his way; to give out the reconciling intelligence of his mercy and love, with his holiness, justice, and truth, all happily blended in the cross of the crucified Son. They are 'stewards of the manifold grace of God.' On them it devolves to dispense the great ordinances, through which the supply of God's manifold grace is communicated. Through the channel of their ministrations, the grace, whereby the secure are awakened, and the dead are quickened; whereby the weak are strengthened, and the sorrowful are cheered; whereby the lame man leaps as an hart, and the

tongue of the dumb is taught to sing; through the channel, we say, of their ministrations, the grace, which works these varied wonders, is accustomed to flow!

Alas, for the faithless stewards! Every steward must render his account, and go upon his trial. The faithful and the faithless, intermingled now, will be separated then. To the former it will be said: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' But no such greeting awaits the steward who has neglected his duty: 'Thou wicked and slothful servant,' his injured Lord will say, 'thou traitor to a most sacred trust, thou shalt have thy merited reward. Come hither, ye tormentors, that execute my wrath! Take ye this unprofitable and perfidious steward, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!'

#### THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God,' Acts xx. 26, 27.*

PAUL felt as a servant to whom a great trust had been committed. We find him here speaking under a strong sense of his responsibility. Looking forward to the time of reckoning, when his fidelity will be solemnly judged of, he is led to take an anxious, but, as it proves, a satisfactory view of the past, and he thinks of the issue of his trial without dismay. There was a day approaching which behoved to affect most solemnly both him who had preached the gospel, and them who had heard it from his lips—a day when searching scrutiny would be taken as to the manner in which he had performed his functions, and they had dealt with their privileges and opportunities. Through the grace of God, Paul had a conscience that was void of offence. The witnesses of his upright discharge of his trust were before him. Those among whom he had exercised his office were in a situation for proving, and he now warns them that their testimony will be made use of to prove, that he had done his duty. 'I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.' You, to whom I have preached, are my witnesses; you that have believed, and you that have not believed, the words I have spoken, are my witnesses, that I have done what lay in me for your salvation, and that my hands are not stained with the blood of your souls!

The first shedder of the blood of souls was Satan. It is written of him, 'he was a murderer from the beginning.' How was he a murderer? Mainly by the spiritual ruin and death which he brought upon man. He overthrew the felicity of man, broke up his communion with the Creator, and exposed him to the wrath and curse of the Almighty. Knowing the wages of sin to be death, he enticed man to the commission of it; the temptation prevailed; and the transgressor died. Thus he became a murderer—a destroyer of souls. True, the transgressor's doom was just, and he deserved to die; not less, however, on that account, was the tempter guilty of his blood. The devil was a murderer *from* the beginning: not merely *at*, but *from*, the beginning. He then assumed the vocation of a soul-destroyer, and he has not yet laid it down. He is busy still in his work of perdition, decoying myriads along the broad and easy way of death!

Is the foul spirit alone and unassisted? He is not alone; he is not without allies. Would that he were! He might show his malignity, that implacable adversary! But he could not do more, if all co-operation were refused him on the part of the race he seeks to ruin. It needs the help of man to shed the blood of souls. Who are they of human kind that contribute to this work of death? Unfaithful pastors do it. Souls are their charge. To take means for saving souls from perishing is their duty. If they neglect their charge, if they do not their duty, and if the souls entrusted to them are lost, can we hold them blameless—will not blood be most righteously required at their hands? One great reason of their appointment is, because there is a roaring lion walking about in quest of souls to devour: and if they do not watch, if they sleep at their posts, if they are found secure and heedless in the hour of danger, and suffer the foe to make havoc of the flock without a true and proper effort to withstand him, are they not the slayers of their people, and guilty of their blood? Paul could say, 'I am pure from the blood of all men;' and every faithful minister of Christ can say so too. O that all who have office in the church could say it truly!

The guilt which unfaithful ministers contract, is contracted by unfaithful churches also. They, too, may have to answer for blood—for the blood of souls. Have they received the word of life—that quickening word, which is powerful to break the slumbers of the dead in trespasses and sins? It is their duty then, to convey that word to such as have it not. Woe to them if they selfishly think to appropriate its benefits to them-

selves, and are at no pains to communicate it to others, by whom its benefits are equally needed! Is not every church a candlestick? And ought not a candlestick to serve the purpose of distributing light? Does not the Lord say to every church that has his word, and on which the beams of the Sun of righteousness have descended, 'Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee?' If these things be so, what less than the blood of souls can that church have to answer for, which does not shine, sends forth no rays of spiritual light into the surrounding darkness, and leaves benighted millions to perish for lack of knowledge?

Parents may stain their hands with the blood of souls. They sometimes—often—do it. We think with horror of those savage tribes among whom children are unnaturally massacred by the earthly authors of their being; but are we, after all, entitled to sit in judgment, and pronounce condemnation, upon them that do such things? Are we so free of all sin in that matter, 'as to be warranted in casting the stone of our censure at them? That species of infanticide, which relates to the bodily life, may indeed be unknown among us; but are we clear of a more dreadful wickedness still? Alas, there are, we fear, many whom God has made the guardians of souls—of souls that ought to be most dear to them, because the souls of the children sprung from their loins—there are, we fear, many parents, who betray their trust, and must answer for the blood of their children's souls!

But, with all these aids, the great destroyer would be unsuccessful, if sinners did not put their own hands to the work of their own undoing. This should never be forgotten, Satan, ungodly ministers, and unnatural parents, may be joined in a hideous confederacy to ruin souls, but it will be all in vain, and the evil will not be done, unless souls co-operate to ruin themselves. Only the soul that sinneth shall die. Its own transgression, its own impenitence, its own unbelief in the Son of God, will form the ground of a soul's condemnation, and the cause of its misery and perdition. The soul that perisheth, perisheth by its own act. When the blood of a sinner's soul is shed, it is the sinner himself that sheds it.

#### THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life,' 2 Cor. iii. 6.*

PAUL could not disguise from himself, and he does

not pretend from any false humility to be ignorant, that he and his colleagues were 'able ministers;'—ministers who had the requisite qualifications, moral, intellectual, and spiritual, for the right and efficient discharge of the duties of their office. But then he takes no vain-glorious view. He is not puffed up with pride. He gives the praise to God. He speaks of himself, indeed, as an able minister, but he mentions also how that has come to pass: he is an able minister, because God hath made him one. The self-renouncing sentiments of the great apostle are yet more conspicuous in the preceding verse: 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.' These are not to be reckoned mere professions, of which it is enough to say that they evince a becoming modesty, and are graceful on the part of him from whom they come. Far less are they to be thought of as the thin veil beneath which he endeavours to hide his weakness and vanity. They are words embodying the rooted conviction of a humble Christian, and at the same time authoritatively conveying a momentous doctrinal fact. The same fact was expressed by the apostle on another occasion, when he said: 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' The general enunciation of the fact, thus stated with application to himself by Paul, is, that Christian ministers need a special work of God to qualify them for usefulness as his servants and ambassadors. It is more difficult to be an able minister of the gospel, in the true sense of the term, than to be an able functionary in secular things, be the office what it may. Difficult is not the word; it is impossible to be what a Christian minister ought to be, without an interposition from on high, and a bestowal of grace, such as in any other case is unnecessary.

'Able ministers of the new testament, says the apostle; and then he adds, what may be taken as explanatory, either of the last part of the expression, or of the first, 'not of the letter, but of the spirit.' Taken as explanatory of the words, 'the new testament,' his language signifies, that 'ministers of the new testament' differ from the teachers of the ancient dispensation, in respect of the difference subsisting between the economies, which are to each other as is the spirit to the letter. The Mosaic institutions formed an economy of externals, a carnal system addressing itself to the senses; the Christian dispensation, on the other hand, addresses itself more directly and strongly to our inner man, and holds immediate communion with our understandings and hearts. And the two economies were intimately connected: the former was a sort of material vehicle,

containing within it, until the time of their disembodiment, the principles and vitalities of the latter; and hence they stood related as body and soul, or as letter and spirit.

If, again, we take the language of the apostle as explaining what he means by 'able ministers of the new testament,' it either implies, that the ministers of the new testament constitute two classes; the one embracing those who are ministers of the letter, and the other those who are ministers of the spirit; and sets forth that Paul and his coadjutors, as being *able* ministers of the new testament, were ministers of the spirit: or it implies, that when the Lord makes his servants efficient and successful, they cease to be ministers of the letter merely,—which, without his blessing on their labours, is all that they can be,—and become ministers of the spirit, to those whose conversion and salvation they are instrumental in accomplishing. This view presents the minister of 'the letter' in two aspects; either as a minister that is unfaithful, or as one that is unsuccessful. The minister who preaches legal doctrine, sending his hearers to the old and abrogated covenant of works for peace and safety to their souls, and who unduly magnifies the externals and the ceremonies of religion, as though our heavenly life depended mainly upon them, is, most assuredly, a minister of 'the letter.' In another sense, the minister of 'the letter' is he, whose labours, though assiduous, God sees meet not to bless, whose exhortations and warnings, though affectionate and evangelical, are attended by no saving influences from on high, and whose complaint is like the prophet's: 'Who hath believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' The minister thus unhappily circumstanced, delivers his message, indeed, and faithfully proclaims what is contained in the oracles, in which his directory and instructions are found; but he gives his people all the while nothing beyond the *letter* of holy Writ: to him it is not granted to dispense that secret energy of the word, which makes it sharper than a two-edged sword, and like unto a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

In corresponding aspects may the 'minister of the spirit' be viewed. The enlightened and true-hearted servant of Jesus, cannot himself rest, neither will he be content to see his people resting, in an outward round of formal religion; he will aim at the subjection of every soul to the truth, and at establishing the hidden and silent, but mighty and prevailing power of godliness in the inner man. He will not exalt that nominal, shadowy righteousness, which is of man; nor will he, in his doctrine, abide in the letter, the form;

but he will make for the substance, the heart, the spirit of the gospel. To see a great work of the Spirit of God will be his ardent desire; to promote the commencement of such a work among men, and to further its progress, will ever be his aim. On these various grounds is the faithful pastor a minister of the spirit. And what shall we say of the pastor, who is not only faithful, but who finds that his exertions are attended with success? He is a minister of the spirit indeed. Through his instrumentality, the enduring realities of new covenant privilege and grace are conveyed to sinners; it is not with the barren and unsubstantial letter that the souls *he* has the care of are fed; he is truly a steward to them of God's spiritual bounty; and his services are honoured as the channel by which the Holy Ghost takes his way to their hearts.

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#### THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,' Acts i. 14.*

For what did they pray? For the Spirit of God. Christ had left them a promise that the Spirit should come in a plenteous shower, and now they were looking and longing for its fulfilment. Did they well? Yes, they did well. Christ's promises are worth waiting for and seeking after. His promises are sure, and great, and precious. And what a promise was this! The promise of *the Spirit!* The third Person of the Godhead to be the substitute of the second! Christ's own departure to be compensated for by the advent of the Holy Ghost the Comforter! Or rather, Christ's presence to be restored to his people on a better footing than before, by means of his Spirit's descent among them, and indwelling in their hearts! The apostles and other disciples, both male and female, held frequent meetings after the resurrection of our Lord. They were much in each other's company. And they assembled chiefly to pray. They were of one mind as to the efficacy of prayer. And there was a dominant wish in the hearts of them all. It was that the Spirit might come—that the Lord would fulfil his promise, spoken of old by the mouth of his prophet, saying, 'I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh,' and renewed to themselves from his own mouth, when he said, 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you.' That wish—that ardent desire—formed itself into

words, and went upwards to the throne in prayers and supplications continually. They remembered that Jesus had said, 'Ask, and ye shall receive,' and had taught the doctrine that 'men ought always to pray and not to faint.' They acted accordingly with all their hearts. Not from their closets alone did their supplications ascend. Jesus had said, 'If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' For this reason they frequented their upper room, and, with united voice, and one accord, sent up their petitions. O it is pleasing to the Lord when his people thus sue him, and press him hard! Did he not confer a glorious title on Jacob as the reward of his bold importunity and wrestling? Did he not signify his approval of the unsubdued and indomitable urgency of the woman of Canaan by granting all that she asked, and, over and above, pronouncing a memorable eulogy upon her? And does not the language, in which the command to pray is couched, imply, that he requires and expects us to be importunate, to adopt every plan which a holy ingenuity can suggest, and, if we may say so, to leave no stone unturned, to carry our point? 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

The infant church had a great work before it. It was about to enter on the duty of evangelizing the world, and holding forth the word of life to all nations. The apostles and their associates could not look forward to what they had to do, without a deep sense that their success was entirely dependent upon the power and grace of God. They could not fail to discern and feel the utter disproportion between that which was to be achieved, and the ability of the selected instruments. How were they, that feeble and timid band, to encounter the storm of opposition with which the enterprise, on which they were soon to go out, was sure to be received? And if there was no hope of their being equal to the shock of such opposition, how much less reason was there to cherish hope of bringing the enterprise itself to a prosperous conclusion? They, a few obscure and terror-stricken fishermen, haunting an upper-room for fear of the Jews,—were they to go and attack Satan in his strongholds? Yes, it was their duty. And, under a feeling of their total insufficiency, they were now in the continual exercise of prayer and supplication for the pouring out of the Holy Ghost. If God gave his Spirit, difficulties would disappear,

*impossibilities* would become easy. Their fewness, and their lack of strength, would prove no bar at all to the victorious issue of their labours. When an angel came and fought for Judah, in days of Hezekiah, an hundred and eighty-five thousand men fell in one night before him. If, then, not an angel, however mighty, but the uncreated and Eternal Spirit himself, were on their side, and wrought with them and for them, what enemies had they to dread? What obstacles could stop their progress? What possible combination of hostile powers could hinder them from the triumphant execution of the errand on which they were to go forth? And had they not a promise that the Spirit should be given? Such a promise they had. To that promise they now clung, and for its fulfilment they sued at the throne of grace.

The disciples of old, then, had a promise of the Spirit. Is there no such promise to the church now? Assuredly, the grace, that was formerly required by the church, is necessary to it still. We have a great work to do. We, too, like Christ's followers in primitive days, are called to contend for and to propagate the faith. We must resist the devil, renounce the world, and display our banner for the vindication and advancement of the gospel. To ministers now as of old, the care of souls is committed, and the duty of seeking their salvation. What then? Is there less inherent weakness among Christians than was wont to be? Have we more sufficiency than Peter and John, than Stephen, Apollos, and Paul had? Can we of ourselves perform duties which were too much for them, and by our own strength accomplish objects, which they accomplished only by the power of the Holy Ghost? The need is great as ever. Without Christ—without that grace of Christ, which it is the Spirit's office to impart—we can do nothing. If the church, then, has brought her *need* of grace down the stream of time along with her in all its magnitude, what has become of the *promise* of grace? Has she left it behind? Was a fixed and abiding need provided for merely by a passing and temporary promise? Not so. The way of the Lord with his people lies open to no such objections. The dispensation under which we live is the dispensation of the Spirit. When Jesus said, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,' he put the stamp of perpetuity upon the promise of the Spirit.

## NOVEMBER.

## FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,' 1 Cor. i. 21.*

THE most excellent of all kinds of knowledge is the knowledge of God. The knowledge of nature is good. It is not, however, so good as the knowledge of nature's Author. Man is an important object of knowledge; but the wonderful Being who created man is infinitely more so. The laws and qualities of matter and of mind are most worthy to be explored; but a still more advantageous study is that which relates to the purposes and attributes of him from whom all things proceed, by whose decree all laws are fixed, and by whose hand all qualities are bestowed.

This inestimable knowledge we cannot acquire for ourselves. However sagacious we may be, however powerful the force of our genius, and however great our industry and perseverance, we cannot search it out. Human wit and toil may and do create and enrich other sciences, but here they are baffled. Time was when they were left to try what they could do. God gave opportunity for man's reason to do its utmost. Before Christ came, no gospel was preached among the Gentiles. The nations were not disturbed with any message from heaven. Free scope was allowed them to discover the truth, if they were able. If it was in them by searching to find out God, no hinderance was cast in their way. What, then, was the result? The words before us announce it: 'the world by wisdom knew not God.' All the wisdom that the world possessed was found ineffectual. Egypt, and Greece, and Rome, had brought their talent and philosophy to the task in vain. Their knowledge was extensive on many other matters, but here all was ignorance and darkness. Much as the world by its wisdom unquestionably knew, it did not know God. The facts and circumstances regarding him, which the world had guessed at, were too few, and too limited, and too vague, to serve the end of a manifestation of God. The knowledge of them was not the knowledge of Him.

'In the wisdom of God.' The apostle either refers to the wisdom or science which treats of God, and which is called theology, or to that wise plan according to which God conducts the administration of sublunary things. If the former be his meaning, it is as if he had said—'after that, in its theology, the world by wisdom knew not God.' And, if the latter be his meaning, we may understand him as saying that God, in the exercise of his wisdom, let the world alone for a while, withholding his revelation in order that it might be seen whether men could do without it; and that the issue of the experiment was to show that human wisdom was an erring guide, that could not lead to the knowledge of God. Yes, God 'made foolish the wisdom of this world.' He put it upon its trial, and showed it to be, in spiritual things, but weakness and folly.

In two ways does the apostle subject the wisdom of the world to disparagement. First by showing how unavailing it is in the discovery of the knowledge of God. And, secondly, by exalting above it the foolishness of preaching. What an affront to wisdom, when foolishness succeeds where it has failed!

'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' The wisdom of the world had been tried and found wanting. In that emergency it pleased God to interpose. It was his will that the saving knowledge of himself should be communicated; and when that could not be through the wisdom of the world, he conveyed it by an instrumentality of his own. He appointed the preaching of the cross. He made that his ordinance for saving souls.

The preaching of the cross may be contemned. It was contemned of old. The proud Jews and the conceited Greeks could not suffer it. To the former it was a stumbling-block, and to the latter it was foolishness. It may still be contemned. Doubtless the Jews and Greeks have successors in our day, inheritors of their pride and self-sufficiency, who do contemn it. But what of that? Their contempt does not deprive it of its character as the ordinance of God, not of the might and efficacy with which God has endowed it.

There is a terrible saying in the context. 'The preaching of the cross is to them that perish fool-

ishness.' It is true, then, that the preaching of the cross is an object of ridicule. It is true that the great theme of Christ and him crucified is set at nought; and that they who expatiate upon it as involving the glory of God and the salvation of man are despised. But who are the scorers? They are the children of perdition. One of the marks by which unconverted men may be distinguished is, that they see not the divine excellency of the cross. They can understand when they are told that Jesus was persecuted, and cruelly, and wickedly slain; and they may comprehend the contrary, when we say that law was magnified, that the demands of justice were satisfied, and a righteous debt was paid, by his sufferings and death; but when we tell them that both these views are true, that Jesus died both justly and unjustly; against law, and yet according to it; we announce a mystery which the world reckons foolishness. And the world likes not the connection which the gospel propounds between the blood that was shed on Calvary and the salvation of men's souls. It seems foolish to ascribe it to the virtue and preciousness of that blood, that Abel, and Noah, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Job, and Daniel, and Nehemiah, with the rest of the godly who were before the day of Christ, as well as those that have since fallen asleep, are now reposing in paradise, and awaiting a blissful resurrection. The spiritual glory of the cross is hid from them that perish, and they think it exaggeration and folly to discourse of it as the preachers of the truth are accustomed to do.

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FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls,' James i. 21.*

Two weighty injunctions are embraced in these words. The first is, 'lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.' That is to say, renounce and discard all the lusts of the flesh, the vile propensities of a fallen nature, in all their forms and manifestations. 'Lay apart all filthiness;' cast it aside as a garment that is spotted and loathsome; banish from the mind all impure conceptions; watch against the rise and outbreak of lawless desires. 'Lay apart' also 'the superfluity of naughtiness,' in other words, 'the overflowings of wickedness.' Licentious excesses are altogether scandalous and abominable on the part of persons pretending to be Christians.

It is an imperative and most urgent duty to observe, with anxious care, the rules, to adhere to and maintain the principles, to acquire and cherish the feelings and habits, of an exact and unblemished morality. And it is unscriptural and dangerous for any to busy themselves *exclusively* with points of belief, and to go upon the notion that they are *thereby* sufficiently providing for the uprightness and purity of their conduct. Their error resembles that of him who should content himself with putting the seed into the soil, and deem it unnecessary to do anything thereafter for the tender plant that sprang from it. Faith is the powerful instrument which God has appointed for purifying the heart; but let no man, on that account, heedlessly consign his heart, if we may so speak, to the charge of his faith, as though it did not devolve upon him to *use* the instrument, and to watch, with continual solicitude, over its operation.

The second injunction is, 'receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.' 'Receive the word.' Do not turn a deaf ear to the word. Throw open all the avenues of the mind for its admission. Cordially welcome it into your hearts. Study the word. Mark well its doctrines, its lessons, its warnings, its precepts. Obey the word. Do not question its authority or its truth. Confide in its wisdom, and yield yourselves to its guidance.

Receive *the word*—the word of God. Shall God speak, and shall the creatures he has made, and endowed with the faculties of hearing, understanding, believing, and obeying, pay no regard? Shall God give forth his word, shall he send it out in quest of hearts to dwell in, and rule over; and shall the access to our hearts be obstructed, shall our hearts be closed against it? Shall men tell him that their hearts are pre-occupied, that they have no room, and that therefore they can give his word no entertainment? Yes, this is what many must say, if they told the truth! There are many who do not receive the word of God. And the reason of their not receiving it is, that another word, which they love better, is already in possession of their hearts. What is that other word! It is the word of an arch-deceiver. It is the word of one who was a liar from the beginning. It is, substantially, the very word which, by the arts of him from whom it came, supplanted the living word of Jehovah in the hearts of our progenitors in paradise! There are the two opposing words of the God of heaven, and the god of this world. All men receive, and have in their hearts, either the one or the other. In consequence of our

depravity, we naturally prefer the word of the wicked one—that word which says we shall not surely die, although we sin against the Lord; which speaks peace, peace, when there is no peace, and proclaims peace and safety, when destruction is at the door. God demands a reception for his word: he requires that our sinful and infatuated preference for the word of the father of lies should be abandoned, and that his word be welcomed and obeyed—be allowed to have free course and be glorified!

It is 'the ingrafted word' that we are required to receive. The meaning is that the word must be fixed in our souls, as the graft is fixed in the stock of a tree. The word may be in us theoretically, historically; it may be in us as the doctrine of Mahomet is in the Christian who has acquainted himself with the contents of the Koran, or as the inventions of the Shasters of Hindostan are in the missionary who spends his life in refuting them; but something different is necessary; it must be in us practically and powerfully; it must be ingrafted into us, and bring forth fruit. When we are told to receive the ingrafted word, we are called to agree that the word shall have a fixed ascendancy over us, and that it shall be allowed to have the formation of the character of our lives.

But how is the word to be received? 'With meekness.' There is much in the word of God that is distasteful to perverse man. Views are therein presented for our adoption, which human pride naturally recoils from, and wishes to be concealed. It is painful to hear the truth fully told about one's own misdeeds. Where is he that likes to have the slumbers of a guilty conscience broken, or to have the secrets of his own breast portrayed to him under the light of day? Is there no risk, at such a time, of giving way to the sentiment of anger? No doubt there is; and therefore are we here warned against it. Receive the word *with meekness*, it is said. Beware of taking umbrage at the word. It will arraign you for sin; it will not spare your lusts; it will cause your consciences to quake. See that ye be not offended. The word is as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces: it smites with resistless force the hard and stony heart of impenitence. The word is as a sword; it is sharper than any two-edged sword; and it pierces the heart of enmity and rebellion against God. Receive the stroke of that hammer, receive the thrust of that sword, with meekness.

Why ought the word to be received by us? The reason is stated; it is 'able to save our souls.' It is the power of God unto salvation to every

one that believeth. Herein lies a distinguishing excellency of God's word. The word of man may communicate knowledge—much valuable knowledge; but saving knowledge can be derived only from the word of God. This gives it a surpassing preciousness, and invests it with a peculiar and paramount claim to the cordial and eager consideration of all men. This was the ground of Paul's encomium on Timothy, his son in the faith—'from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

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#### SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?  
By taking heed thereto according to thy word,'  
Psal. cxix. 9.*

DIRECTION is here given how to lead a holy life. A 'young man' is spoken of, because of the strong temptations of youth, and the great obstacles to holiness which are then encountered. It is an infallible rule that the psalmist inquires after—a rule that will meet the most difficult cases, and serve under the most unfavourable circumstances. He therefore asks, 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?'

Into heaven will go nothing that defileth. Neither the corrupt heart, nor the polluted hand, will be there. The feet that tread the paths of folly and sin, cannot enter into it. Yet it is the fact, that mankind are generally in a state of apathy on the subject, and care not to know by what means they may be sanctified. They have lost the divine image; and they do not seek to have that image restored, although without it there can be no admission to the rest above. A sad indifference extensively prevails; and there are few who think it worth their while to propose the psalmist's question: 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?' Miserable error! Men will ask by what means they can increase their worldly goods—they will eagerly inquire how they may gain earthly distinction and fame—they will be on fire to know the lesson, which is to teach them what must be done for securing a brief and uncertain gleam of temporal prosperity and happiness; but they will feel no concern in ascertaining how they may reach that moral condition which is necessary to the life of their souls; or how that great change is to be wrought in them, without which, when this short drama is over, they must become the food of the worm that dieth not—the fuel of the fire that is not quenched!

It is a happy omen when one begins in right earnest to inquire how to become holy. There is much more of favourable promise in it, than in a desire to escape from the wrath to come. The misery that is justly connected with sin, may be, and often is, regarded with apprehension and alarm, when sin itself is clung to. Without renewal of heart there may be a fearful looking for of judgment, and dread of the curse of the Almighty; but there cannot be hatred of sin, and pantings for conformity to the image of God. The reason why it is so difficult to prevail on men to embrace salvation is, that deliverance from sin, spiritual cleansing, makes one of the elements whereof salvation is composed. To submit to this, to accept of it as a boon, eagerly to seek for it, is what the carnal mind never will do. A great step, therefore, has been made, when not only is the punishment of sin thought of with dismay, but sin itself is abhorred, and freedom from its power is desired. Then has conviction passed into conversion, and natural terror into godly fear.

All the instincts and propensities of the new creature are contrary to sin, and towards holiness. There are also rational considerations, which have great force with the believer in inducing him to follow holiness. One of these is the authority of the divine law. He adverts to the fact of his subjection to it, and has a vivid sense of the duty of obedience thence arising. There are in him realizing views of the greatness of God, and of his sovereignty over all, and of the consequent obligation that lies upon all to keep his commandments. Another of these considerations is, the debt of gratitude which the believer owes to God. When Christ urges his people to holiness by the tender appeal, 'if ye love me,—if ye count me worthy of your love—if I have done any thing for you that entitles me to your affection; the believer feels it to be irresistible. A third consideration is, that holiness is necessary to qualify for heaven. Christ said to his disciples, 'In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you.' Why, then, should it be in vain that these mansions exist, and that the glorified Saviour is preparing a place for his people? In vain it must be, if Christians are not sanctified. In vain have bright abodes been fitted up for the children of men, if none of the children of men are holy; in vain is a place prepared for the followers of Jesus, if they are not prepared for it. Without holiness none shall see the Lord. '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.'

What, then, must we do that we may be upright in our walk, and holy in all manner of conversation? 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?' We are not left to guess at the answer. 'By taking heed thereto, according to thy word.'

This rule may be resolved into two parts. One is an injunction to watchfulness. We are required to take heed to our way. The importance of this may be seen from the frequency with which the call occurs in scripture. 'Keep thine heart with all diligence.' 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.' 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' 'Let us watch and be sober.' 'Be sober, be vigilant.' Being prone to sin, strongly prone to it, we need to be ever on the watch, lest our natural bias lead us astray. The circumstance, too, that we are exposed to innumerable seductive influences, renders watchfulness indispensable.

The rule before us, moreover, embraces in it an injunction to have respect to the word of God as the great directory and instrument of sanctification. 'By taking heed thereto, according to thy word.' In the word all that constitutes holiness is fully described. Holiness may be defined to be the walking in Christ's steps. It is in the word that the steps of Christ are exhibited, and his example is displayed. And holiness may be also defined to be the putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to the word that we must go for the discovery of the Lord Jesus; it is in the word that we must find him. Likewise there belongs to the word a sanctifying efficacy. Our Lord spoke of this when he prayed, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth;' and when he said, 'Now are ye clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you.'

#### SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ,'* Eph. iv. 15.

As there is a spiritual birth, so is there a spiritual growth; as there are babes, so are there perfect men in Christ Jesus. The continual endeavour of God's people ought to be to make progress in the divine life; and their steady aim to reach Christian maturity.

We ought ever to be growing. Is it the case that we are growing? We ought to be growing 'in all things.' Are we growing in any thing? We shall do well to examine. We ought to grow

in knowledge, in faith, in humility, in love, in patience, in holiness. In all these things, and in all other things which belong to the constitution of the new creature, there should be advancement and growth.

Conversion is a great matter. Yet we shall err sorely if we stop short at conversion. The beginning of Christianity in the soul must not be confounded with the perfection of it. Much has no doubt been done, when a sinner is converted; so much, indeed, that heaven rejoices over it; but much still remains to be done. The seed has been sown, but the tree of righteousness has yet to arise; the babe has been born, but the period of weakness and experience is not yet passed, and the day of manhood is to come. There is strong ground to suspect the genuineness of conversion when it is rested on as in itself enough, and as sufficiently securing the salvation of the soul. The conversion that is real must be distinguished from a transitory excitement in the mind; it lays the foundation of a great and permanent change that progressively advances to completion, and it includes the implanting of graces in the soul, which in due time must arrive at a blessed maturity.

Let us attend to the description of this growth, which is given in the words before us. It is a growth 'in all things,' as we have seen. It is also a growing 'up into him, which is the head, even Christ.' The believer must grow up into Christ. What kind of growing is this? Looking to the context, it is apparent that it is a growing which springs out of union to Christ. Spiritual life, in its first communication, and in its continued supplies, is from Christ. 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Without me ye cannot live, nor can ye grow. 'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.' Farther, this is a growing into the likeness of Christ. When the likeness of Christ is realized, and Christ's image is completed in the soul, the growing is at an end, and maturity and perfection are reached. What was the great desire of Paul in reference to his spiritual children—for what did he labour, and travail, and pray? Was it not that Christ might be formed in them? In other words, that they might be conformed unto the image of the Son

of God, and that that mind might be in them which was also in Christ Jesus. This growth does, moreover, comprehend increase in the knowledge of Christ, and in the love and the faith of him.

When seeking after growth into the likeness of Christ, let believers remember the headship of Christ. 'Grow up into him which is the head.' Christ is the head of every man; that is to say, every believer is a member of Christ—is one of the members of that mystical body of which Christ is the head. In virtue of this connection, the people of God grow; by this connection their advancement and ultimate maturity are provided for. It is in this way that they have that union with Christ of which we spoke before, and from which their spiritual growth proceeds.

What are the means by which the growth of Christians is promoted? Although the body could not grow separately from the head, yet the necessity for food is not thereby superseded. Food would be useless, if the body were alone, and divided from the head, because then the body would be inanimate; but it is of most important and essential service to the body that has life. The members of Christ must have food; the means of nourishment must be ministered to the new creature. Wherewithal, then, is the child of God to be nourished? With the word—with the truth—with the truth spoken in love.

The truth about God, and about sin; about Christ, and about salvation, is the meat of the believer. The truth, which consists of the sure sayings of Jehovah; of his threatenings, his promises, his declarations, and his commandments; the truth which is couched in words carrying the attestation, 'Thus saith the Lord,' is what the renewed soul hungers after, and what oftentimes fills it as with marrow and with fatness. The truth, in a sense still higher and more wonderful—in that sense in which it must be taken where Christ says, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life'—is the bread with which the citizens of Zion are satisfied and strengthened. 'I am the bread of life.' 'The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.'

It is required that the truth be spoken in love. Mutual affection needs to be assiduously cultivated at the very time when truth is laid hold of, clung to, asserted, and propagated. Love of the brethren ought ever to be conjoined with love of the truth. Alas, how often have they been dissevered. In order to derive full benefit from the truth, a loving spirit requires to be cherished. A harsh, censorious frame, will not

fail to mar its benignant influence, and to arrest the believer's growth. There is a peculiar efficacy connected with love—with an affectionate and charitable consideration for others—whereby it disposes the minds both of those who entertain it, and of those who are the objects of it, for receiving the truth and experiencing the full advantage which the truth is intended to convey. The latent energies of the truth come out more fully at the gentle call of love.

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### THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.'*  
Col. iii. 16.

CHRIST'S sheep love Christ's voice. They listen gladly when he speaks to them. They treasure up in their hearts his gracious sayings. They do so at least when their souls are prospering. It is their interest to do it. It is their duty too. We are told of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, that she sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. This she did while her bustling sister was cumbered with her serving, and doing her best to entertain the Saviour well. Was it that Mary revered Jesus less than Martha revered him? No, she revered him more, and by her conduct she paid him higher honour. Martha's conduct bespoke her regard for him as a guest to be received with hospitality and distinction; Mary's told of strong faith in him as a divine teacher, whose golden sayings were all so precious in her esteem, that, casting every other care aside, she set herself to hear and store up in her mind the whole of them. She sought the word of Christ. She desired it to dwell in her, and that not in stinted degree, but 'richly.' Let us seek to be like Mary. Let us embrace the word of Christ, and give it entertainment in our hearts. What is the word of Christ? The word of God is the word of Christ. Christ is God. The Spirit of Christ was he who inspired the sacred penmen, when they wrote of the things of God, and announced the revelation of his will. For this reason the scriptures are appropriately termed the word of Christ. They are also the word of Christ in virtue of the fact that the manifestation of Christ is the main object for which they are given. 'They are they which testify of me.' 'To him give all the prophets witness.'

The word of Christ is the doctrine of Christ.

It is the doctrine which comes from Christ, and relates to Christ. Let us have this dwelling in us. Let us be filled with it. The idea here expressed is not merely that we should know it, but that we should have it among our thoughts, and that it should be influentially present to our minds. The idea is both knowledge of, and meditation upon, the doctrines exhibiting Christ in the loving-kindness of his mission into our sinful world, in the mystery of his person, in the adaptation of his offices, in the value of his atonement, in the freeness and all-sufficiency of his grace, and in the perfection of that example which he set us that we should walk in his steps.

The word of Christ is the commandments of Christ. The moral law is prescribed to every one of us by our Creator. The Christian has it prescribed to him again by his Redeemer. Christ re-delivers the commandments of God to all his people. He calls them *his* commandments; 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' The law loses its terrors when it comes from the mouth of Christ. By him, no curse is added to it. He enforces it only with the motive of love. Dwelling in his followers, it rejoices their hearts. It is, in their view, more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; it is sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb.

If the word of Christ dwell in us richly, we shall have wisdom. The highest wisdom—all saving knowledge—is embraced in it; and it is able to make us wise unto salvation. We ought therefore, to have it dwelling in us in all wisdom—in all the variety and fulness of its exhibitions of truth, and of its revelations of the counsel of God. It will be to us an ever-flowing fountain of knowledge divine—a source of constant instruction in the ways of the Lord, and in the wonders of the kingdom of grace.

An exercise is prescribed to us. 'Teaching and admonishing one another.' For this we shall be prepared, if Christ's word be in us richly. When we ourselves are taught, we shall be able to teach; and when Christ's gracious word has a fixed and commanding place in our minds, we shall possess, and be in a situation to use, that standard of faith and conduct, without which the duty of mutual admonition cannot possibly be discharged. The mutual teaching, which is enjoined upon us, is a provision for our advancement in knowledge. It is a process of spiritual barter where there cannot be loss on either side, but must be gain and increase of store to all. It makes us no poorer to impart the discoveries which the word and Spirit of the Lord have vouchsafed to us; and our treasure is en-

larged, when the lessons our brethren have learned are communicated to us in return. The admonishing of each other will advance us in holiness. The errors of our conversation, which we ourselves may not observe, do more readily arrest the notice of our fellow-disciples; and sinful habits might grow upon us unperceived, were we liable to no check from our brethren in the gospel. When Peter failed in acting with the straight-forwardness and Christian honesty that became him, he was seasonably admonished by Paul, who withstood him to the face. We owe it to our brethren to tell them of their faults, and they owe a similar service to us. Just because we are friends, and not enemies, we ought to speak to each other plainly and faithfully, and not keep back the truth.

If the word of Christ dwell in us as it ought, we shall be prepared and disposed for the praises of God. We shall be inspired with gratitude. The wonders of love and grace, disclosed by the word, must awaken sentiments which will be expressed in songs of thanksgiving. But, when we celebrate God's praises, let us beware of mere lip adoration. God is not imposed upon. He looks to the heart. And, if he find no love to him, no joy in him, there, our psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, will be an abomination before him. Wherefore, let us have grace in our hearts. Let there be the melody of feeling as well as of sound. Let our music and our praise be the true and honest indications of the presence and working of Christ's word within us, and of the graces of faith, and love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, richly abiding in our souls!

### THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,' 2 Cor. iii. 18.*

THERE were two circumstances in the history of ancient Israel, that were present to the mind of the apostle, when he wrote these words. One was the effect produced upon the face of Moses by his converse with Jehovah in the mount. 'The skin of his face shone;' glory had been communicated to it, and was reflected from it. The other circumstance was the interposing of a vail between the people and the face of Moses, when they and he spake together.

The first of these circumstances is pointed at in the way of analogy or comparison in the second

clause of the verse. It is as if the apostle had said; 'As Moses, when he met with God, was changed by the impartation of a dazzling splendour to his face, so believers, when they view the Lord Jesus, are changed into the same image; they are assimilated to the object of their faith, and they shine like him, and are glorious.' The other circumstance is alluded to in the first clause by the way of contrast. There the apostle substantially says, 'When the Israelites of old held their intercourse with Moses, a vail hid the glory of his face from their eyes; but in our case, when we commune with the glorious Immanuel, we do it with open face, no vail intervening, and thus we behold the glory of the Lord.'

Two topics for our meditation offer themselves in this verse. The first is a discovery made, and the second a change produced.

The apostle intimates that Christians do, 'with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord;' and he thereby tells of a discovery made to them.

Consider the *nature* of the discovery. It is the glory of the Lord that they see. In the case of Israel, the glory was that of Moses; here, it is that of Christ. There, it was the glory of the servant; here, it is the glory of the Son. There, it was outward, natural glory, radiating from the face of a sinful man; here, it is spiritual glory, belonging to him who is the brightness of the glory of God. We have here the glory of *the life* of Jesus. This consists in the holiness by which his life was signalised. Every action he performed, every word he spake, and every thought of his heart, betokened that it was he of whom in the volume of the book it is written, 'I delight to do thy will, O God.' During the six thousand years to which the existence of the human family nearly extends, he is the only and the single Man, out of the myriads of its unsummed generations, who never, by thought, word, or deed, so much as once broke the law of God. We have here the glory of *the death* of Jesus. The glory of his death? Yea, the glory of his death, and of his cross. To the unenlightened eye nought but disgrace and shame are discernible there. And doubtless by disgrace and shame his death was attended. But there was a glory in it which overcame them. His departing cry, 'It is finished,' dispersed the clouds, and the glory of his cross stood revealed. We have also the glory of his person. He is God, and he is man. He is the Word made flesh. And we have the glory of his mission. He came from God into a world by which God's authority had been renounced, and in which a proud and un-

grateful rebellion was in open and rampant progress; yet he came not to condemn the world, nor to execute vengeance, but that the world through him might be saved. We have, finally, the glory of his work. He is Prophet, Priest, and King. He calls men out of darkness; he makes intercession for them ever; he delivers them from slavery, and he vanquishes death and hell for their salvation.

Notice the *preparation* for the discovery of the glory of the Lord. It is 'with open face' that believers behold it. The expression points to the removal of a veil, whereby the glory would be hid. The veil that was put between Moses and the people was an emblem and type (see ver. 14—17) of a spiritual veil which interposes, in the first instance, between all men and Christ. This veil consists of unbelief and carnal-mindedness. It consists of unbelief: and so the prophet complained of it as hindering the people from seeing the glory of Christ, when he cried, 'Who hath believed our report?' The veil of unbelief, said Isaiah, is on the hearts of all, and therefore He is despised and rejected of men; and they see no beauty in him that they should desire him. It consists of carnal-mindedness. For the carnal mind knoweth not the things of God; neither can it know them, because they are spiritually discerned. And when Paul had in vain set the glory of the Lord before a number of his countrymen, his solution of the failure was, 'the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed.' It is indispensable that the veil be removed. As the bandage must be taken from the eyes of a man that has been blindfolded, before he can see the light of the sun, so must this veil be taken away, that the glory of the Lord may be beheld. God only can remove it. God will, God does, remove it from the hearts of all his own.

The instrument of the discovery is the word. It is in the glass, the bright mirror, of the gospel that we must look for the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord.

The other subject, which the verse before us presents for our study, is a change which is said to be produced. We 'are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

Observe wherein the change consists. It is a change 'into the same image,' that is, into the image of Christ which believers behold; it is a transfiguration into the glorious likeness of Immanuel. It is a change which is otherwise spoken of as a putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a change resulting in a conformity to the exam-

ple Christ set us that we should walk in his steps.

Mark how the change proceeds. It is 'from glory to glory.' It is not instantaneous. No, it takes the lifetime of the Christian to complete it. It is like the change through which the unhewn marble passes, till it is formed into a graceful and majestic statue. Part after part progressively appears, the noble countenance, the powerful limb, and all the rest, until the faithful and admired copy of the honoured original is before us. Thus does the change into Christ's image go forward; it advances from feature to feature, from part to part, 'from glory to glory.'

The means by which the change is produced are the display of the glory of the Lord. Thus was the face of Moses made to shine. And thus are sinners transformed into the image of Christ. Let us steadfastly, therefore, behold his glory.

But means are not enough. There must be an agent too. The agent is the Spirit. The change is brought about by the Spirit of the Lord. Let us pray for the Spirit. Let us earnestly seek after his precious illuminations.

#### FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food,' Job xxiii. 12.*

HAPPY is the man who, surveying his past life, can truly declare thus! Yea, happy is he, although in the midst of trouble like Job, and ills should have befallen him like those that came upon that exemplary patriarch. He will not perish among the waters of adversity: he will be unscathed in the furnace of trial, as were the three children of old; he will be safe, as Daniel was, in the lions' den.

It is our duty to be frequently engaged in the work of self-examination. 'Prove your own selves,' is the injunction of scripture. Sometimes we are specially called of God to do it. In the day of his contendings with us, when we are suffering by his rod, we ought to 'consider our ways.' Well for us, if we can say of Him under whose chastisement we are smarting, 'I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food!' In that case, we may surely believe that he who smites us is our friend,—that all things, and therefore that affliction, shall work for our good,—and that a divine purpose of love is the spring of our troubles.

Let us see what is implied in this remarkable declaration of Job. It is clearly implied that

those wants which are connected with the body are not the only ones that must be provided for, and that the necessaries of the present life are not the only blessings that we should seek to obtain. Job believed that he had a soul; he believed and remembered that the life and welfare of his soul were worthy of consideration. Job did more. He reckoned his soul to be more precious than his body. He valued the life of the former more highly than the life of the latter. In all this Job differed from the generality of mankind, whether of his own day, or of ours. Most men have little or no practical and influential belief in the existence of their own souls. They act as if, when the body falls by the stroke of death, there were no surviving spirit, which is then ushered into eternity. They toil for the body; they toil that it may be clothed and fed, that it may be garnished and gratified. They attend to this world; they are engrossed by this world its cares, its joys, its vicissitudes! And no more can be said of them. We cannot tell of their efforts for their souls, of their spiritual anxieties, of their religious experience! Or, at the most, it can only be said, that some feeble and transient notice is occasionally bestowed on the affairs of their souls, while it is to their temporal interests that they attach the chief concernment, and the one thing needful with them is, that these may be safe and prosperous!

It is also implied that the word of God is necessary to our spiritual well being. 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' There is a double life for man—a natural life to which bread is necessary, and a spiritual life, which it needs God's word to sustain. It is interesting to mark the relish entertained for the word by those who have become partakers of spiritual life. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb.' 'I have longed after thy precepts.' 'I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved.' 'The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold or of silver.' 'How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!' 'I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold!' In such strains as these

did David declare his desires for the word, and the satisfaction and joy it gave him. 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them,' said Jeremiah, 'and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.' And Job says here, 'I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.'

Let us learn to prize the word of God. Let us cultivate the feelings with which David, Job, Jeremiah, and true believers in every age, have regarded it. If the psalmist was right when he exclaimed, 'I rejoice at thy word as one that findeth great spoil,' we must be grievously in the wrong when we set the word at nought. Let us value it for the sake of him from whom it comes. We ought to remember that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it—that the Spirit of the Lord hath dictated it. Let us value it for its own intrinsic excellency. The word of God must be good. It is good. No encomium upon it can be too high. It is better than gold. It is more precious than rubies. Life is in the word.

The word of God is a comprehensive expression, embracing many oracles or utterances, many words of his mouth. There is a fulness and a variety in scripture, that are never enough to be admired. Be the state of the soul what it may, there is that in the word that will answer to it. Do we yield to temptation and indulge in sin? It has threatenings to alarm us. Wax we weary, and are we fainting in our minds? And are lukewarmness and sloth stealing over us? It has rousing exhortations whereby we may be re-animated. Walk we in the midst of trouble? have we fightings without, have we fears, have we sorrows, within? For such an emergency there are 'words of his mouth' in the shape of promises exceeding great and precious, which are yea and amen in Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing,'* Psal. xcii. 14.

'THEY shall bring forth fruit,'—they shall glorify God by their lives; they shall be obedient to his will; they shall execute his commandments.

Who is the man that brings forth fruit? It is he whom God has graciously planted in his vineyard, and whom the heavenly Husbandman has nourished and strengthened. The tree of righteousness is the planting of the Lord; by him it is bedewed with seasonable grace; he makes his Sun, the Sun of righteousness, to shine upon it; and so it produces fruit.

Again, the fruitful man is he who is ingrafted into Christ. Christ is the true vine—the good vine—the only fruitful vine. Adam is the strange vine, whose branches produce nothing. But we all belong to Adam at the first. We are by nature branches of the strange vine. What, then, must be done? That we may yield fruit, we must be cut off from Adam, and ingrafted into Christ. We must become branches of Christ. ‘I am the vine,’ says Christ to his disciples; ‘ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing.’ ‘As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.’

Thus, then, there must be a divine work of grace in order to spiritual fruitfulness. There must be a work of grace in which Father, Son, and Spirit, co-operate. Jehovah is the great Husbandman under whose culture the fruit is brought forth, and to whom it all belongs. Also, this work of grace includes in it the union of the believer to Christ. Without Christ—apart from him—the believer can do nothing. It is necessary for him to be as truly and effectually connected with Christ, as he was originally with Adam. By his union with Adam, death and corruption came to his soul; life and grace are derived to him by his union with Christ. And as death and corruption are fatal to fruitfulness, so barrenness cannot be where life and grace are enjoyed.

Wherein consists the fruit which believers bring forth? Let us select a few specimens of it. It consists in *love*. There is the love of the brethren. It consists in that. How singularly was the love of the brethren exemplified by the first Christians! ‘The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things that he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.’ There is also the love of souls; it consists in that. Behold it in the apostolic labours of Paul! ‘I seek not yours,’ he said, ‘but you.’ ‘I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.’ And there is love to Christ, and to his cause; it consists in that. See it in Paul; see it in Stephen; see it in John. It was peculiarly conspicuous in these, and in others who might be named; but it exists in all the faithful.

Spiritual fruit consists in *obedience to God*. God requires implicit, unquestioning compliance with his will. This is more difficult than at first sight may appear. It was no easy task that was assigned to Noah, when he was directed to spend one hundred and twenty years of his life in build-

ing a huge ark of gopher-wood for the preservation of his family from a deluge in which none but himself believed. Nor was it a light trial that Abraham was subjected to, when he was commanded to take Isaac, the child of promise, and with his own hands slay him in sacrifice to the Lord. By grace, however, these patriarchs were enabled to bring forth the fruit of obedience.

Another specimen of the fruit required of us is *hatred of sin and the crucifying of the flesh*. An example of it occurs in the case of Joseph, when he withstood the seductions of the wife of Potiphar, and refused to sin against God.

Another specimen is *hope and patient waiting on God*. Examples are found in Jacob, who on his dying bed could say, ‘I have waited for thy salvation, O God’—and in Simeon, of whom the Holy Ghost testifies that he waited for the consolation of Israel, and whose memorable thanksgiving, when he had seen the Lord’s Christ, was, ‘Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.’

Yet another specimen is *self-denial*. Moses exemplified it when he preferred the reproach of Christ to the treasures of Egypt, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

The only other we shall mention is *steadfastness*. Behold it in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So firm and true to God were these noble witnesses, that they would not save themselves from the burning fiery furnace by worshipping the golden image set up by the king. Equally courageous and immovable was Daniel, whom the certainty of being cast into the lions’ den, if he broke the commandment of the king, could not deter from doing so by offering up, as his custom had been, prayer and supplication to the God of Israel.

‘They shall bring forth fruit in old age.’ The trees of righteousness never become barren. Increase of years brings to them no decay. It is truly beautiful to see an aged individual adorned with the graces of the Spirit, and presenting himself continually a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. The ready thought with respect to such a one is, that God has prepared him for heaven, and that he will soon be there—that he is too good for the world, that it were unfit to leave him much longer to bring forth his fruit in the wilderness, and that his speedy transplantation to paradise may be looked for.

## FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised,'* Gen. xvii. 9, 10.

THE Christian's walk through time into glorified eternity is by faith and not by sight. Faith, however, is not mere fancy, or vague conjecture. It is a sure and steadfast guide, by the direction of which 'the way-faring man' cannot possibly err. Faith is founded upon 'the exceedingly great and precious promises' of scripture, all of which are stable and immutable as God himself, and is aided and confirmed by visible signs and seals, which God, in his abundant goodness and mercy, has been pleased to appoint. There is little doubt, that sacrifice as a type of the mode in which the promised 'seed of the woman,' should destroy the works of the devil, was the first seal appended to promise; and that by it, the early patriarchs received increase of faith and enjoyment of hope. To Abraham and his posterity, however, whom God was pleased, in a time of extensive idolatry and corruption, to choose as his peculiar people, he appointed the sign or seal of circumcision; by which the people of God were significantly represented as cut off from all inheritance of God's presence or favour through their first father Adam, that they might by adoption in the promised Christ—the second Adam, be introduced as children of God into unsearchable riches and eternal inheritance. The ordinance of circumcision was an initiatory seal of the covenant of promise, to be observed so early as at the age of eight days, and was declared of such importance that the uncircumcised man-child was cut off from the people of God; he remained a condemned sinner in the first Adam, and had no part in Christ the second Adam. To the Israelites in Egypt however, God ordained the confirmatory seal or ordinance of the passover, which the heads and all the members of families were, under the same penalty annexed to the neglect of circumcision, bound to observe (Num. ix. 13.) and in which the blood of Christ even in type, is clearly shown to be the sole fountain of man's salvation (1 Cor. v. 7). These two ordinances, or seals of the covenant of grace, continued in the church of God, to aid and strengthen the faith of his people, until immediately before our blessed Lord's crucifixion and ascension into heaven, when he was pleased to change the

initiatory ordinance of circumcision into baptism, and the passover into the Lord's supper. There is an apparent disparity between circumcision and baptism, which has led some Christians to question or doubt whether the latter superseded or came in the room of the former. Circumcision was suited, and directed to be applied only to males, while baptism is administered to children of both sexes. This disparity, however, is easily and satisfactorily accounted for, from the different condition and constitution of the Old and New Testament churches. In the Old Testament church, there were genealogies of families minutely and correctly kept, in order to maintain the distinction of tribes and the right of inheritance. In the New Testament, on the contrary, genealogies are condemned as 'endless,' and calculated to minister questions rather than godly edifying (1 Tim. i. 4.), and it is declared that there is neither Greek, nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all (Col. iii. 11). In the Old Testament accordingly, the head of the family, the father or the husband, was responsible for the daughter or wife; and had power over her in all matters of religious vows or engagements. If the daughter or wife made a vow in the presence, hearing, or knowledge of the father or husband, it was binding upon her, not because she had made it, but because her father or husband had approved of and confirmed it (Num. xxx. 1—3); but if the father or husband disapproved of it at the time in which it was made, or when it came to his knowledge, it was a mere nullity, and no more obligatory, than if it had never been made. The female was, therefore, in the Old Testament church, viewed to a certain extent, in a religious point of view, as included in the male, and of course represented by him in the introductory rite of circumcision; but as there is no such arrangement in the New Testament church, the introductory ordinance of baptism is administered to the children of believers of both sexes. The covenant of which circumcision was an appointed seal, is most unquestionably the same to which baptism is affixed, Rom. iv. 11; and in Col. ii. 11, believers are said to have been circumcised in Christ, 'with the circumcision made without hands,' because they had been 'buried with him by baptism.' That the Lord's supper is the Christian passover, cannot be questioned. It was instituted in the same night in which our Lord for the last time observed the passover, and with part of the same aliments which had been prepared for this ordinance. We read often of the disciples partaking after the day of Pentecost of

the Lord's supper, but never of the passover; and in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians (v. 7, 8.) that church is exhorted to keep the feast of the supper, not with old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, because 'Christ our passover is,' of course in it, shown to be 'sacrificed for us.'

These two seals 'of the righteousness of faith,' are all the ordinances which Christ the great King and Head of the church hath been pleased to ordain or appoint, and their observance is to continue to the day of the consummation of all things. When our blessed Lord commissioned his apostles to go and make disciples by baptism in all nations, he expressly promised to be with them 'to the end of the world;' and in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians (xi. 26) he declares that the ordinance of the supper shall 'show the Lord's death till he come.' Usurpation of the prerogative of the King of kings, or treason against him, is surely as heinous an offence as similar crimes committed against earthly sovereigns, and therefore the church of Rome, and all other churches who have added to those ordinances, and the society of Friends, who have laid them aside, have greatly erred. Jehovah is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another; and he has awfully declared, (Rev. xxii. 18.) 'that if any man shall add to God's words, God will add to him the plagues which he has threatened in his word, and if any man shall take away from God's word, God will take away that man's part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city.' These ordinances, however, are made efficacious only by the operation of the Spirit of God. That is not circumcision which is outwardly in the flesh, but which is of the heart and in the Spirit. Let all persons therefore when they go to God in those ordinances, endeavour to make their calling and election sure, and to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, through these means of grace; remembering that it is not in man who walketh to direct his steps, and that it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

#### FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,'* Acts viii. 23.

How lamentable and humiliating it is, to contemplate the religious character or history of man! What an overwhelming proportion of the human race are without God and without hope in the

world—the slaves of superstition and error—worshipping they know not what—having the light that is in them darkness—and trusting in refuges of lies! Of those upon whom the name of Christ has been named, how many are like Gallio, they care for none of the things of Christ! And of the comparatively few who make a profession of religion and attend upon Christian ordinances, how many are actuated by selfish, hypocritical, or interested motives! The bible is like a mirror, in which man may be seen in every varied shade of character—you may see him there, as a hopeless sinner, forsaking his own mercy—as a triumphant saint, made more than conqueror—as an humble, confiding, but weak believer, or as a formal, hollow-hearted, and selfish professor. In the last of these conditions, the person denounced in the portion of scripture above quoted, is awfully exhibited. The violent persecution which the Jewish authorities had raised against the infant church at Jerusalem, and which was intended and expected to overwhelm and destroy it, did, in the overruling providence of God, by dispersing believers through the provinces, widely disseminate the word of truth, and extend the name and cause of Jesus. In Samaria, to which Philip, one of the seven deacons, had in his flight, been by providence directed, the inhabitants in general received with alacrity and joy the glad tidings of salvation from his mouth, being convinced by the power of truth, and the miracles which Philip performed; and among them Simon Magus, a famous sorcerer or magician. This man appears, for a long time to have deluded and bewitched the people of Samaria with his sorceries, 'giving out that he himself was some great one,' so that to him they in general gave heed, considering him to be 'the great power of God,' but by the preaching of Philip and the miracles which he wrought, not only did the people abandon the delusions and sorceries of Simon, but he himself believed, was baptized, and continued with Philip, wondering and beholding 'the miracles and signs which were done.' There is no reason to suppose that Simon was from the first a gross and conscious impostor, pretending to a conviction which he did not experience. He appears rather, to have been one of the class of converts represented by our Lord, in the parable of the sower, (Matt. xiii.) by the seed which fell upon the stony ground. Convinced by the truth which he heard, and dazzled by the wonders which he saw performed, he gave a full assent to the truth of Christianity, but there was no depth in his conviction, or power of truth in his heart; and when he saw that 'through laying on of the apostles'

hands the Holy Ghost was given,' conceiving that through that means he might exalt himself and advance his selfish interest, he offered the apostles money for the power, 'that on whomsoever he should lay hands they might receive the Holy Ghost.' What, however, is of greater importance is, that Simon was baptized and that by an undoubted minister of the truth—a man 'full of the Holy Ghost,' (Acts vi. 3.) a man unquestionably in holy orders, and yet Simon had neither lot nor part in the truth, but was 'in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.' Grace is not, therefore, necessarily communicated by ordinances, nor is baptism regeneration, or so absolutely necessary to salvation that infants dying without having received it cannot possibly be saved. Our Lord in his conversation with Nicodemus (John iii. 5.) says, 'except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,' and in Mark xvi. 16. he says, 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Baptism is 'the outward or visible sign of an inward and invisible grace,' and ought never to be omitted where it can possibly be administered; but as a seal, however curious or splendid, affixed to blank parchment, would constitute no legal document, so baptism, by whomsoever administered, when applied to an unbeliever, does not make him a Christian. Our Lord does say positively that 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' Where there is both water and the Spirit, there can be no doubt of salvation. But he does not say negatively, 'he that is not baptized,' but 'he that believeth not' shall be damned. Condemnation will be the result of want of faith, but not necessarily the consequence of want of baptism. How humble then, and dependent upon grace, should Christian ministers be! They are, indeed, honoured to be 'fellow-workers with God,' but they can work none without him, nor is their work of the slightest importance where his does not accompany it. How diligent, also, should all Christians be to examine themselves after attending divine ordinances, lest they be still in 'the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity!' And how earnestly should they supplicate the Father of mercies, before approaching him through the institutions of his gospel, for his Spirit to be their guide, and to witness with their spirits that they are his children! Our blessed Lord has awfully forewarned us, that at the judgment day many shall boast that they had eaten and drunk in his presence, and that he had taught in their streets, to whom he will answer, I never knew you.

All men therefore ought to give diligence to make their calling and election sure, and should try and prove their own selves, lest in ordinances they should be only treading God's courts in vain, and sitting in his presence as his people sit, while their hearts were following after wickedness.

#### SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,'* Matt. xxviii. 19.

THE Author and plan of salvation are both unchangeable, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever,' 'made sin, though he knew no sin,' that believers in every age might 'be made the righteousness of God in him.' The medium through which salvation is received, is also the same in all ages—faith or reliance upon promise; but in the period preceding the death and resurrection of our Lord, faith rested in assurance upon the promise of Messiah's coming; since those events, and to continue to the end of the world, faith rests upon his finished work: and to make all nations acquainted with the importance of that work, and lead them to rest upon it for salvation, our Lord gave to his apostles the commission recorded in the portion of scripture quoted at the head of this meditation. He had previously set his disciples apart for the work of the ministry, by depositing with them the keys of the kingdom of heaven, assuring them, that 'whose soever sins they remitted, they were remitted unto them, and whose soever sins they retained, they were retained,' John xx. 23.; and he now commissions them to enter upon the work to which they had been set apart. It is obvious that the apostles could not go personally to every nation, much less continue in the ministry 'unto the end of the world.' It was therefore implied in their commission that they should ordain and commit 'to faithful men,' the work to which they themselves had been first chosen, set apart, and appointed; and that thus there should be a succession of ambassadors for Christ, effecting reconciliation between God and man, until the time of Christ's second coming. Besides their superiority in the office of the apostleship, the apostles were fellow-elders with ordinary ministers (1 Pet. i. 1; 2 John i.), but they are never styled bishops, nor was the doctrine of diocesan episcopacy in their days either broached or known. The words of their commission, quoted above, are not very correctly translated. In place of 'Go and teach

all nations, baptizing,' the original is, Go and disciplize, or make disciples of all nations, baptizing, &c. The difference of rendering is important only, because Baptists have built a portion of their unscriptural theory upon the slight inaccuracy in our translation, and alleged from thence that children should be grown up and taught, before they can be fit subjects for baptism. Whereas, when the commission is literally and correctly rendered, 'make disciples, baptizing,' and when the latter part of it, 'teach them,' when they have become disciples, 'to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded,' is also taken into account, it obviously includes children; for they are eminently suited to become disciples or learners, and God has commanded to 'train them up in the way they should go,' Prov. xxii. 6. Baptism is the very gate or door of admission into the Christian church. It is a dedication of sinful creatures to the Father, who so loved them as to give the Son to be 'wounded for their transgressions;' to the Son, who while they were yet enemies so loved sinners as to suffer death for their sakes; and to the Holy Ghost, who so loves the souls of men, as to take up his residence in the sinful temple of their hearts, persuading and enabling them to embrace Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, the unity in Godhead, and plurality in person of the supreme Being, was in several places glanced at, or shadowed forth. 'Let us make man,' Gen. i. 26. 'Let us go down and confound their language,' Gen. xi. 71. Above all, 'Hear, O Israel, the Jehovah our Gods (in the original) is one Jehovah,' Deut. vi. 4. demonstrate that while there is no God beside Jehovah, there is in the Jehovah or Godhead plurality of persons: and here, in our Lord's commission to his apostles, that plurality is shown to be trinity. Our dedication in baptism, equally and without the slightest shadow of superiority in the one divine person over the others, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, clearly establishes their equality; and so long as baptism remains an ordinance of the Christian church, the Unitarianism which would reduce the Son to the rank of a creature, and the Spirit to that of a quality or attribute in the Father, must rank at the very head of the gospel heresies. Although, as we have stated, baptism is the very gate or entrance into Christianity, it does not thence follow that some prerequisites are not necessary before it can be lawfully and profitably administered. The baptized is only a disciple or learner, but he must know something of him from whom he is to learn, and be willing to subject himself to his tuition, before he can become a disciple. 'If thou believest with all

thine heart thou mayest,' said Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, (Acts viii. 37) when he requested to be baptized. Adults therefore, whose parents have neglected, or been unworthy and unable to have had them baptized in infancy, should, previously to baptism, be made acquainted with the plan of salvation, and should give satisfactory evidence that they are willing to embrace it, before they are numbered with the disciples of Christ by that ordinance; and this must also be the case with all missionary converts among the heathen. Infants are admitted to baptism, only on the principle that their parents are able to teach them, as they became capable of being taught, 'to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded,' and upon the parents' engagement to perform that duty. 'The promise is unto you and to *your children*,' saith the apostle, (Acts ii. 39). The parent, therefore, must be personally in possession of the divine promises, before he can have any right to baptism for his child. God mercifully looks upon families as one where the heads thereof fear and serve him, and it is not until the children, by departing from their parents' example, and provoking him to anger by wicked works, have forfeited their privileges, that God withdraws from them the love and favour which he had bestowed upon them as children of pious parents, and members of a believing household. When, however, the parent himself is not a disciple of Christ, when he has never known him, or been in possession of any of his promises, it would be solemn mockery to commit to him the education of a child. No man can teach what he himself has not learned, or does not know. No man can give what he does not possess. The church can never make disciples of children by baptism, when it does not make provision for communicating to them instruction in the doctrine and truth of Christ. It may, indeed, give the name of Christian, and swell the number of nominal professors of Christianity; but it cannot fulfil the Spirit of our Lord's commission, or add to the number of the genuine children of Zion. It is just as unwarranted, and absurd, and as wide of the scope or compass of our Lord's commission, to administer baptism to the child of an ignorant, ungodly, or unbelieving parent, as it would be to baptize an ungodly or unbelieving adult. The church therefore should administer baptism to no infants, but the children of such parents as it had reason to believe had received and were in possession of the promise to themselves, that so it might be expected to descend unto the child; and all parents should give diligence to obtain knowledge, faith, hope, and the power of divine

love, that they may be enabled profitably to receive baptism for their children.

#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,' Gal. iii. 27.*

THERE are two 'sore evils' among Christians. The one is, that many persons, from inadequate and imperfect views of the plan of salvation in the gospel, are oppressed with the idea that they are still under the law, so as that their salvation to a certain extent depends upon fulfilling its requirements. Such persons, though many of them sincere and pious, are lying under a grievous yoke of bondage, and experience little of the liberty wherewith God hath made his people free. The other evil is, that because Christ is 'the end of the law for righteousness,' there are professed believers who flatter themselves that they are under no obligation whatever to cultivate personal holiness. Now against both of these evils, or errors, the apostle Paul strenuously contends in this Epistle to the Galatians. That church was partly composed of Jewish, and partly of Gentile converts; and while the former admitted the possibility of the salvation of the latter, they insisted that it was absolutely necessary for them to be circumcised and to observe the whole ceremonial law of Moses. Against imposing such a burthen upon the Gentile brethren in Christ, the apostle urges many considerations in the preceding parts of this chapter. He reminds them, that they had received the Holy Spirit, not through the observance of the ceremonies of the law, but by 'the hearing of faith,' (ver. 2). That miracles were wrought among them, not by the ceremonies of the law, but 'by the hearing of faith,' (ver. 5). That it was not by the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, but by faith that they became children of Abraham, (ver. 7). That their salvation as Gentiles was foretold to Abraham in the promise 'in thee shall all nations be blessed,' (ver. 8). That the law is only a 'school-master to lead men to Christ, that they may be justified by faith,' (ver. 24). That by faith believers are all the children of God in Christ Jesus, (ver. 26). And in the words quoted above, that 'as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.' Adam when created was the Son of God, (Luke iii. 38.) Created in the image and after the likeness of God, (Gen. i. 26.) but when he took Satan for his director, and believed him in preference to God, he was justly

disinherited, and expelled from God's family. God manifested in the flesh, however, was appointed to do on behalf of humanity, what Adam had failed to perform, and to undo or make an end of all the evil which Adam had wrought; so that the act of disinheritance being, so to speak, repealed, and the exiles recalled, countless multitudes of Adam's fallen and outcast posterity might, by adoption, become again the children of God. This covenant, or dispensation of grace, was in every age made known to the outcast and suffering children of men, and all who accepted of it and trusted in it were thereby constituted righteous, and received 'power to become the sons of God.' Abraham in the patriarchal, and David in the prophetic age, rejoiced in this covenant and dispensation, and are eminently distinguished in the divine word, as witnesses for the power and efficacy of faith, (see Rom. iv. 3-6). Abraham was not the first man who accepted and relied upon the covenant of promise; but because he is the first made mention of in the divine history, to whom the information was communicated that of his lineage, through a son of promise, the Christ should come; because he was the father and founder of the Hebrew nation; and because he so unequivocally relied upon the promise as to perform several acts most difficult and painful for flesh and blood, he is styled 'the father of the faithful,' and he received the ordinance of circumcision, a seal or assurance of the righteousness which by faith he had obtained. Abraham thus put on Christ as a full and complete dress, or as a court dress, in which he might with approbation appear at the court of the King of kings; and the same privilege, says the apostle, is enjoyed by every truly baptized Christian, 'as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.' Believers, in baptism, are represented as closely united to Christ. They are grafted on him as branches in a tree, (John xv. 1). They are incorporated with him as members in a body, (Eph. v. 30). And they are cemented to him as stones in a building, (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5). Their wants are all supplied; their diseases cured; their weaknesses strengthened; their filthiness purged; their iniquities pardoned, and their poverty converted into riches by him. They cannot be condemned, unless he be condemned. They cannot fall away finally from grace, unless Christ, as man, with reverence I speak it, could fall away from God. Because he 'lives they live also.' They are bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord their God. These glorious things, however, are true only of those who have been in reality bap-

tized—who have been ‘born of the Spirit’ as well as of water; and in them, not the coercion of law, but ‘the power of living faith, produces new and holy obedience. They love him who ‘first loved them,’ and ‘the love of Christ constrains’ them to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts.’ Their treasure is in heaven. The city and country of their home and of their hope are in heaven. And hence their heart and conversation are in heaven. May God, of his infinite mercy and grace, bring all the baptized then, to look and be prepared for heaven! Amen.

#### SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

‘See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? and Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest,’ Acts viii. 36, 37.

THERE is a most interesting and beautiful harmony among all the different parts of the Christian system. It is indeed a piece of machinery every way worthy of its glorious Framer, for every portion of it is so nicely fitted to another, that there is no strife or contrariety among them to retard the motion; but on the contrary, the movement of each part tends to accelerate the others, and all conspire to accomplish the design for which the whole was framed. Thus, doctrines are beautifully illustrated by living historical scriptural examples; moral virtues adorn and shine in the believer’s character, by the power and influence of doctrine; and spiritual and heavenly truths are embodied and strongly presented to the mind in the sensible signs appointed in ordinances. The ordinance of baptism in particular; although only the gate or entrance into the Christian church, and alas! by too many viewed as a mere ceremony, to which as a positive institution of God, it is necessary and right to attend, is in reality a combined or condensed representation of all the doctrines of Christianity, and of all the hopes and prospects of the Christian. ‘Here is water,’ saith the Ethiopian, ‘what doth hinder me to be baptized?’ Water, what a suitable emblem or sign of the object for which it is appointed. Water in the economy of life answers an immense variety of most necessary and useful purposes. It is frequently required to digest our food; to refresh and recruit our wearied and exhausted frames; to purify and cleanse our persons; to fertilize and enrich our grounds; to give tone and strength to our nerves and muscles; to protect or deliver us from the power of the devouring element of fire; and how eminently useful has this fluid been found, either in the aqueous or

airy state; either as water or steam; in annihilating distances, and bringing remote portions of the earth into acquaintance with each other! Now in all of these respects water is an emblem or sign admirably adapted to exhibit the condition of man, as he is before and subsequent to baptism; as a fallen outcast and condemned creature; or as one of the redeemed of the Lord. Man is by nature the helpless victim of death.

‘He receives the moment of his birth,  
The lurking principle of death.’

And no remedy which the world contains, or man can procure, will antidote the poison of sin, or deliver him from the tyranny of the king of terrors; but faith in Christ Jesus communicates renewed youth, and gives to him victory over death. Man as a sinner ‘walketh in a vain show,’ (Psal. xxxix. 6), and for him there is no peace, (Isa. xlvi. 22); but faith in Christ gives peace and rest. Man, as a sinner, is deeply stained like ‘the scarlet and the crimson with crime,’ but faith in the blood of Christ makes him ‘white as the snow and the wool,’ (Isa. i. 18). Men, as sinners, are barren and unfruitful, or if they bring forth fruit, their grapes are of gall, their clusters are bitter, (Deut. xxxii. 32); but by faith in Christ they are made as ‘trees of righteousness,’ (Isa. lxi. 3), and ‘purged that they may bring forth fruit,’ (John xv. 1). Man, as a sinner, is without soundness, full ‘of wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores,’ (Isa. i. 6); but in Christ Jesus all his ‘diseases are healed,’ (Psal. ciii. 3). To man, as a sinner, God is a consuming fire, but by faith in Christ Jesus he becomes a most kind, affectionate, and merciful Father, (Psal. ciii. 13). And man, as a sinner, is an outcast from heaven, and ‘afar off from God;’ but by faith in Christ Jesus he is ‘brought near,’ and enabled to rejoice in the prospect of an inheritance with the saints in glory. All these important changes in the sinner’s condition are embodied and represented in the baptism by water, but they can only be known or experienced in that ordinance when its administration is accompanied by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The qualification required by the evangelist Philip in the Ethiopian nobleman, is one essentially necessary to the genuine and profitable administration or reception of every Christian baptism. ‘If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest.’ Belief is of different degrees. There is a belief of mere assent, where a truth is not denied, nay, where it is fully admitted, but where it excites no interest, and is considered of little importance. Such a belief, however, although it is to be feared that it is the belief of too many who seek for

baptism, is not sufficient to justify its administration; belief must be not only of the understanding, but also of the heart; nay, it must be with 'all the heart,' to entitle a person to receive admission into the church by baptism. Indeed, the surrender of the whole heart to God is an essential ingredient in genuine or saving faith. No man can give a portion of his heart to Christ in the prospect of salvation. If he know his own unspeakably wretched condition as a sinner, and the unsearchable riches of Christ, he cannot avoid giving all his anxieties to be delivered out of the one, that he may be made a partaker or 'joint heir' of the other. All persons therefore approaching to God through baptism, either in their own personal case, or in the case of their children, should prayerfully and diligently seek the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Ethiopian's knowledge of Christ as revealed in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, was of very brief standing. Indeed, it is not certain that he had ever heard of Christ until Philip joined him in the chariot; but that knowledge was communicated by the Holy Spirit through the word, and was genuine and saving. How uninteresting to the Ethiopian nobleman must have been the portion of scripture which at the time he was engaged in reading? He did not know of whom the prophet wrote, whether of himself or of some other man. He of course could have had no conception of what was meant by 'being wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.' Being profoundly ignorant of the parties of whom the inspired writer spoke, the whole passage must have been to him utterly unintelligible. In fact, although he understood the language in which the prophecy was written, he knew as little of its meaning as though it had been written in a foreign tongue. He was, however, sincerely seeking the Lord, and out of profound respect for his authority, reading while he could not understand his divine word, and therefore God, by a special messenger, rewarded his sincerity and diligence by a full knowledge of the truth. How profitable is it to be engaged in reading the scriptures, even although we should not fully comprehend their meaning! None ever seek God in vain.

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SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,'*  
Acts ii. 38.

THERE is no doctrine of the New Testament

more imperfectly, if not erroneously understood, than the doctrine of repentance. Because in true repentance there is sorrow arising from self-condemnation, therefore many are apt to mistake the sorrow and regret which the criminal feels for the offences which have brought him to condemnation, for that genuine and evangelical repentance which issues in faith and salvation. And because the sinner's first acquaintance with Christ and salvation must be preceded, or at least accompanied by repentance, many are led to the conclusion, that in the renewed Christian's after experience, there is no place for repentance whatever. Evangelical repentance cannot possibly be better defined than in the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism. 'Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin doth turn from it.' A true sense of sin, is a just estimate of its nature, character, and consequences. Sin is in ordinary circumstances viewed by the sinner in the light of pleasure, profit, or honour; and although he may have some misgivings respecting its perfect lawfulness, he flatters himself that, as it was under the impulse of nature that it was committed, God will not be severe to punish him for it. This, however, is far from being a just view of the matter. A correct or proper estimate of sin will exhibit it as an act of gross folly, flagrant injustice, and deep ingratitude. It is folly towards ourselves, it is generally injustice towards others, and it is always ingratitude towards God. True or evangelical repentance is of course the condition of mind and feeling which a just and deep sense of unworthiness upon all those accounts produces in the converted sinner's mind, accompanied by deep detestation of every act that had occasioned that unworthiness, and a full determination to employ every means to avoid such acts in future. No sorrow for crime, the deepest throbb of which is not occasioned by regret for having sinned against a glorious and gracious God, and which is not accompanied by hatred of sin, and full purpose after new obedience, deserves the name of repentance; and of course, while the Christian is in the body, and 'in many things' offends (James iii. 2), he will be again and again called to the duty of repentance. The Jews, to whom the apostle Peter addresses the words quoted at the head of this meditation, were not gross profligates or abandoned sinners. On the contrary, they are said (ver. 5) to have been devout men. Yet Peter calls upon them to repent, and the call was neither unnecessary or ineffectual, for we are informed (ver. 41) that many of them 'gladly received the word,' and (ver. 42.) that they 'con-

tinued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship.' The sin of which these Jews were chiefly called upon to repent, was the combined and complicated offence of negligence, ignorance, and unbelief. God had given them, in the writings of Moses and the prophets, such clear and discriminative marks of the promised Messiah, that had they searched the scriptures with that diligence which their importance merited, they could not have failed to recognise him in Jesus of Nazareth. But they had neglected the divine word, and trusted in traditions of men, and of consequence became grossly ignorant and obstinately unbelieving. Repentance in their case was regret, or sorrow for having forsaken God, neglected his word, and through the blindness of ignorant prejudice crucified the Lord of life and glory; and the reformation required consisted in being 'baptized for the remission of sins in the name of that Jesus' whom they had crucified, and in the hope, that through him they should 'receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' The whole Jewish nation believed in the God of Abraham, and considered that in the scriptures they had 'eternal life,' (John v. 39); but at the time of our Lord's coming into the world, they had lost the knowledge of the God of Abraham, and were grossly ignorant of that eternal life which the scriptures were indeed ordained and able to communicate. The God of Abraham was a God in Christ, for Abraham saw Christ's coming day, and rejoiced at the sight (John viii. 56); and all the prophets prophesied 'of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,' (1 Pet. i. 11). But the Jews appear to have entertained very vague ideas of God, and to have expected eternal life through some kind of favouritism, because they were the children of Abraham. The apostle therefore informs them, that they must return to the religious principles of the founders of their nation, and believe not only in God and in the truth of his word, but in Jesus Christ, whom God had sent, and set forth to be a propitiation for sin. Nothing could possibly be more humiliating to human pride, than the doctrine preached to those Jews. They had ever considered themselves as God's peculiar people, rich, and increased in good things, and in need of nothing. They had specially despised Jesus of Galilee, and the humble fishermen his companions. And they are now told that they must renounce as erroneous all their former religious opinions, lament their ignorance and prejudice, be baptized for the remission of sins in the name of the hitherto despised Jesus, and do honour to the illiterate fishermen, by admitting, that through them as am-

bassadors they 'are reconciled unto God.' We see, however, strikingly in this transaction the power of divine truth, when under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Before it human pride, national prejudice, party spirit, and long cherished or habitual contempt for despised inferiors, all vanish like the mists of morning before the ascending day. The high, aristocratic, and self-sufficient Jews become suppliants before the humble Galilean fishermen, and say, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' and when so directed, they gladly received baptism from them, and fellowship with them. What obligations do men owe to the Saviour! How constantly should they bless Jehovah for him, and how diligently should they seek repentance for every trust in any other refuge, or any act unworthy of their relation to him!

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#### EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call,' Acts ii. 39.*

THE imperfection of man, and weakness of the Christian character, are lamentably exhibited in the feelings and conduct of parents towards their children. They in general love their children with the warmest and strongest affection; but this love is seldom wisely directed. It is either expended in all-engrossing, if not sinful efforts to make them rich and great in this world, or it is dissipated in unmeaning fondness or ruinous indulgence. Notwithstanding the strong obligations under which God has laid them, and the ample encouragement which he has given them to train up their children in the way in which they should go, parents seldom think of their children's true interest, or strenuously exert themselves to put them in possession of the imperishable riches, and unfading honours of the kingdom of heaven. How strong and cogent are the exhortations of the wise man to parents upon this head. 'Chasten thy son, saith he (Prov. xix. 18), 'while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.' Again (xiii. 24), 'He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.' And in verse 22 of the same chapter, he observes, that 'a good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children, and the wrath of the sinner is laid up for the just,' implying that the parent who discharges his duty to his children, by training them up in God's fear, provides for them an inheritance which they will be able to

transmit to their children but the sinful parent who neglects his children's true interest, and labours at the expense of religion or of integrity, to make them wealthy, shall not be able to secure to them that wealth. In God's all-disposing providence it shall wing its way to persons more just. Indeed, experience and observation abundantly demonstrate, that parents who are instrumental in procuring for their children the riches of faith, are in their old age much more honoured and respected by them, than those parents who neglect the religious education of their families, in order to procure for them immense worldly riches and honours. In the one case the parent is still respected by his family, because he has done his duty to them, because they fear that God who has said, 'honour thy father and thy mother,' and because although perhaps old and powerless with regard to this world, he can still lead them to God, and direct them onward to the world to come. In the other case, children as they have not been taught to know and reverence their heavenly Father, have often little respect for their earthly one, and as the only property which their parent had provided for them, and taught them to value, they cannot uncontrolledly enjoy until he shall have been removed, they frequently contemplate without much pain his separation from them by death. The portion of scripture prefixed to this meditation affords to believing Christian parents, the highest encouragement to labour for the edification and religious education of their families. 'The promise is to you, and to your children.' The words were, in the first instance, addressed to the Jews, the peculiar people of promise, but were not confined to that nation; for the same promise, it is added, is 'to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' It is not improbable that this latter part of the statement was not fully understood by the apostle himself, at the time when he uttered it, as we find him a considerable time afterwards unwilling to consider the Gentiles within the pale of salvation, (Acts x. 14—47; and Acts xi. 17). Indeed, the prophets generally did not understand, at the time of their utterance, their own prophecies fully, for the apostle Peter tells us (1 Pet. i. 11), that they 'searched what time, or manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify.' That the words however, 'all that are afar off,' refer to the Gentiles cannot possibly be questioned; for the Jews were by inheritance, by privilege, and by ordinance near unto God, and were referred to in the first clause, 'you and your children;' while the Gentiles, as strangers

and aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, without God, and without hope in the world, are characterized by 'afar off,' but still within the reach of divine call. The amount of the whole, therefore is, that the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is removed; that both are made one in Christ Jesus, and that whenever parents in any nation are by God savingly called to the knowledge of the truth, they are authorized to consider the promise which they themselves possess, to include or extend to their children. In this passage the right of 'the infants' of such as are members of the visible church to baptism, is clearly and unequivocally established. The promise, extended through the parent to the children, must be to them *as children*, or while they are, from under age, incompetent to appropriate promises to themselves. If we understand the words, 'The promise is to you and to your children,' to signify merely, that the promise is to the parent, and will be to their children when they grow up and claim it, the statement will be most unmeaning; for the same is the case with the children of those whom God has not called. If they, the children of unbelievers, when grown up and capable, forsake their fathers' infidelity and wickedness, and turn unto God, the promise is undoubtedly to them (Isa. lv. 7). But there is in the words before us, a special promise through their parents, to the children of 'as many as the Lord our God shall call.' The children are beloved for their fathers' sake (Rom. xi. 28). They are holy (1 Cor. vii. 14); of course, being like the children of Abraham included with their parent within the compass of the same promise, they have, like them, an undoubted right to the seal of righteousness obtained by faith in that promise. How encouraging and consolatory is this portion of scripture to Christian parents? They know that their beloved little ones are in danger every hour. They are in danger in amusements; in the performance of duty; and in juvenile folly. The parents' eye cannot always be upon them; but through those parents, as the called of the Lord, the children have a promise, and there is an eye that pervades at the same moment all space, and watches for them. Parents cannot protect their children from disease, or early death. They cannot provide for them all that affection would desire. They cannot expect to remain ever with them, but in every such strait, they can derive comfort from this promise. How consolatory also, is this passage to ministers of the gospel, and to Christian missionaries! The call of God, and promise of salvation, are not confined to one nation, or one department of the

world, but extend to all that are afar off. God, in the gospel, is no 'respector of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him,' (Acts x. 34). The effectual call, however, is from God. 'It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,' Rom. ix. 16. 'Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the encrease,' (1 Cor. iii. 6). Let then parents trust only in the Lord. Let children early seek the Lord. Let ministers labour in the Lord. And let missionaries look for success only through the Lord. Amen!

#### EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ,' Col. ii. 11.*

THE two chiefly besetting sins by which the church of God has in every age been humbled and afflicted, are unbelief and hypocrisy. By the one, men are led to neglect and estrange themselves from God; and by the other, to mock him with insincere and most unworthy worship. The history of God's chosen people in the Old Testament, affords numerous and melancholy instances of both sins. The Israelites, as a nation, were far from being spiritually-minded, (indeed what nation ever was?) They were disposed to arrogate and claim to themselves, all the privileges which the patriarchs, their ancestors, possessed and enjoyed in the favour of God; but they seldom thought of walking with God, or denying themselves, or confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims in this world, or looking for a heavenly country as those patriarchs had done. Their whole history is a succession of apostacies, chastisements, humiliations of themselves, and merciful restorations to divine favour. Even in the periods of their history, during which they did not apostatize or openly worship other gods, they are charged with a 'drawing near to God with their mouth, and honouring him with their lips, but with having removed their hearts far from him (Isa. xxix. 13). Their grand error in the department of worship however, consisted in mistaking the means for the end, and imagining that when they had observed the ordinance, which was intended merely as an instrument to communicate or strengthen faith, they had done all, although in no way edified by the act, that God required or expected of them. The rite of

circumcision was, in its origin, intended to be a token between God and Abraham and his family. Abraham had believed from the mouth of God that a second Adam—a second federal head and representative, would be raised up of his posterity, and that through and by him he should receive pardon, reconciliation, and everlasting righteousness. In the faith and hope of these high privileges he gave up all connection with his first or original ancestor, and rejoiced to consider himself, by adoption, a member of a new and better family. God then, as a token to Abraham that his faith and hope were well founded, instituted or appointed the ordinance of circumcision, that he might feel and know as well as believe, that he was cut off from the family of the old, and introduced into the family of the new Adam. And God required circumcision in Abraham, his family, and all his posterity, as a token on their part, that they had renounced the family of the fallen and sinful Adam, and entered into the family of him who was 'holy, harmless, and undefiled.' The ordinance of circumcision therefore was, in all that was valuable and important in it, strictly spiritual. Take away what was spiritual and typical from it, and there remained nothing but a painful, useless, and unmeaning rite. The mass of the Israelites however, in every period of their history, but especially in the times of our Lord and his apostles, were blind to its spiritual signification; and yet with extraordinary senselessness and stupidity, they insisted upon its necessity and importance. The ordinance was typical. It was a token, on God's part, that the new and better federal head would come; and on the believer's part, that he and his would continue to expect and rely upon his coming. But the federal head was now come, the family was organized, and while all that was spiritual in circumcision, continued in full force, the material or sensible part was superseded and abrogated for ever. The saints or believers at Colosse were generally Gentile converts, who of course had not in infancy received circumcision outwardly, but Paul tells them in the portion of his Epistle quoted above, that they had now received it spiritually, or inwardly, in believing on Christ, 'In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.' That is, by Christ when they believed on him, and he was formed in them the hope of glory, they were cut off from the guilt, the punishment, and the power of the body of the sins of the flesh, and (ver. 13.) were 'quickened together with him;'

the deadly weight of their trespasses being wholly removed. In the 12th, or immediately succeeding verse, the believing Colossians are informed that they had been 'buried with Christ in baptism,' from which expression Baptists have inconclusively inferred, that the mode of performing that ceremony in the apostolic times was by immersion. There is, however, no analogy or resemblance between the mode of our Lord's burial and resurrection, and the operation of dipping in the Baptist's baptism. Our Lord was not inserted into the earth in burial, as the body in baptism is immersed into the water; nor in resurrection did he emerge from the grave, as the baptized arise above the surface of the water. His body was conveyed horizontally into an excavation in a rock, and after resurrection returned in the same way, so that there could be no allusion in the passage in question to the similarity of the outward form of baptism, to the form of his burial and resurrection. In fact, the apostle is contending for the comparatively insignificance of outward forms, and the great importance of spiritual experiences. It is therefore most obvious, that by being 'buried with Christ in baptism,' he means that by baptism believers are declared to be made one with Christ; that when he died and was buried, they, that is, their life and hope, were dead and buried (2 Cor. v. 14), that when he arose, their life and hope arose with him; that because death could not hold him, it will not be able to hold them (Psal. xxiii. 4), and that because he lives, they shall live also. The Colossian Christians are told that they have received the spiritual circumcision 'in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.' And they are further informed, that it was by baptism into his death that they had 'put off the body of those sins.' They had put them upon the Christ, who came into this world to 'bear them in his own body,' and under them he died and entered into the grave. But as death could not hold him; as he had 'finished the transgression, and made an end of sin,' (Dan. ix. 24), it was not possible that the holy One of God could see corruption (Acts vii. 27), and when he arose, they arose with him. The essentials, the spiritual signification of circumcision and of baptism are therefore identified, or baptism is the New Testament circumcision. And if so, not only are the infant children of believing parents fit and proper subjects for baptism, but it is absolutely sinful and unchristian to forbid or prevent them from being baptized. Circumcision was so cogently enforced under the Old Testament dispensation, that the uncircumcised man-child was declared cut off

from his people (Gen. xvii. 14). Let men then beware, lest they be found obstructing the grace of God, and usurping his high prerogatives. The importance of baptism, however, like the ordinance of circumcision, to which it has succeeded, is its spiritual signification. Let all the baptized then, examine carefully themselves, and let parents study, and attend to the obligations they have come under at the baptismal dedication of their children.

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NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy,'* 1 Cor. vii. 14.

'My thoughts,' saith Jehovah, speaking to the children of men, 'are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' (Isa. lv. 8). Indeed, no two things can be more unlike than the estimate formed of the world by the mere men of the world, and the estimate formed of it by God. In the judgment of worldly men, saints or believers are the most useless, if not most contemptible portion of society. Their scruples, particularities, and self-denials are considered senseless and unreasonable; and their answers and rebukes are condemned as ill-natured and uncharitable. In the judgment of God, on the contrary, they are the excellent of the earth; the pillars of society. 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' said our blessed Lord to his disciples, implying that but for them, the world, which is a mass of corruption, would be lost in rottenness and putrefaction. 'Ye are the light of the world,' saith he again, implying that only for them the world would speedily be overwhelmed with darkness. In the opinion of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot was an insignificant stranger, who came in upon sufferance to sojourn among them; but had there been ten such men resident in those cities, they might have remained until this day. In our Lord's parable of the field in which the enemy sowed tares, the wicked are represented as permitted to continue until the day of judgment for the sake of the righteous. And in the passage under meditation, the 'unbelieving husband' is said to be 'sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband.' There are two kinds of sanctity or holiness spoken of in scripture. The sanctity of dedication, whereby persons or things are appropriated to God, so that they cannot without sacrilege or injustice be employed to any

other purpose. And the sanctity of purification, peculiar to persons, and which consists in a deliverance from every thing which God hates or disapproves; and an absolute conformity of all the powers of body and mind to the divine will and pleasure. It is in the sense of dedication that cities, lands, houses, and household utensils are said to be sanctified or holy, for they are not susceptible of any real holiness, nor did the appropriation of them exclusively to the service of God, effect any change whatever upon their internal structure. It is in the same sense, that the first-born in Israel at the time of the deliverance of that people out of Egyptian bondage, are said to be sanctified or holy (Exod. xiii. 2), for no real change was made upon their mind or feelings by their appropriation to God; and of course, the same is the case with the sanctity of the tribe of Levi in general, and that of the priests in particular. In fact, the sanctity of purification, or perfect and unspotted holiness, was never the property of any man, except the man Christ Jesus. All other men have hearts more or less deceitful and wicked, and if weighed in a just balance, must be found sadly wanting. Christ, however, knew no sin. He never did evil, nor was guile found in his mouth; for he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and as he bore the griefs, and carried the sorrows of his people, he is able to 'present them without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish,' (Eph. v. 27). The sanctity 'of the believing husband or wife,' partakes of the nature of both kinds of sanctification. It is the sanctity of dedication to God which every believer makes of himself, when he is united to Christ; and from Christ in justification, and through his Holy Spirit in sanctification, he receives perfect holiness or spiritual purification. The sanctity of the *unbelieving* husband or wife, however, is merely the holiness of dedication. The husband and wife are one in the eye of God, and because one of the parties is truly dedicated to the Lord, and truly made holy, the other is considered as federally holy, or holy by the bond and covenant of marriage. The unbelieving husband or wife, who is joined in marriage to a believing partner, is, on two accounts, nearer to God, and is more valuable in his sight than the husband or wife of an unbeliever. He or she is nearer to God, because one with a partner in close communion with God. And he or she is nearer to God, because more in the way of being converted to God. 'For what knowest thou, O wife,' saith the apostle, 'whether thou shalt save thy husband; or how knowest thou, O man, whether

thou shalt save thy wife.' And if God for the sake of ten righteous persons, would have tolerated the wickedness of Sodom, and saved the multitude of its guilty inhabitants, much more, for the sake of a believing partner, will he spare and protect an unbelieving husband and wife. Nay, so valuable and dear in God's sight is every believer, that the offspring of the Christian husband or wife, although the other parent be an infidel, is viewed as holy and privileged to approach near unto God. Jehovah will not overlook or neglect the humblest servant (Isa. xlii. 3), and rather than that the faith of one believing parent should, with regard to a child, be barren and unfruitful, the unbelief of the one party is swallowed up in the faith of the other, and the children of both considered to be holy. The holiness here ascribed to the child is obviously the holiness of dedication; for the infant could derive no personal or spiritual holiness from its parent; and this passage of consequence triumphantly demonstrates, that the infants of such as are members of the visible church have a right to be baptized. The apostle speaks as though the holiness of a child, born in such circumstances, was a thing well known, 'Else were your children unclean,' says he, 'but now are they holy.' He does not lay it down as a doctrine, to be in future received in all like circumstances, that the child of parents, one of whom only was a believer, should be considered holy; but refers to it as a doctrine already established, and from which he draws the inference that the believing husband or wife ought not to forsake or depart from the unbelieving partner. It is therefore, most manifest, that as baptism is the gate of admission into the Christian church, or the only path by which, in dedication, we can approach unto God; and as the child of one believing parent was, by the apostles, judged to possess the holiness of dedication, the children of believers, generally, must have at that time been constantly presented to God at baptism, just as the children of believing Israelites were, under the preceding dispensation, dedicated or presented to God in circumcision.

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#### NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven,'* Matt. xix. 14.

'THE whole head' of humanity 'is sick, and the whole heart faint.' The disease of sin, whereby human nature is affected, is not a local malady,

confined to one department, and leaving all other portions of the frame sound and healthy. Nor is it a slight or temporary indisposition, occasioning little annoyance, and likely soon to pass away. On the contrary, it is a deadly distemper, incurable except by the divine Physician, and all the powers of mind and body are under its baleful influence. Many persons have vainly imagined that sin is the result of evil example and acquired habit. That the infant has no natural bias or tendency towards iniquity, but that if surrounded by holy and virtuous examples, it would grow up and walk in purity and truth; but this is a palpable delusion. Of Adam after the fall, it is said (Gen. v. 3), that he begat a son 'in his own likeness after his image,' of course in an exiled, sinful, and condemned condition. When David says (Psal. li. 5), 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me,' he does not speak of his own individual, or personal case, for no 'prophecy is of private interpretation,' but of the condition of every child of Adam, or of the humanity at large. 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child,' saith the wise man, that is, of every child. 'How,' saith Bildad, in the book of Job (chap. xxv. 4), 'can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?' And when our blessed Lord, in the subject of this meditation commands to 'suffer little children to come unto him,' it is evidently assumed that they had need of him as a Saviour. But while there are, on the one hand, men who, in the face of scripture and reason, contend that children are introduced into the world without sin or sinful tendencies, who maintain the paradox, that sinful parents are able to produce sinless children; there are, on the other hand, persons who would prevent little children from being brought to the Saviour, because, as they allege, they are not fit to approach him. It appears to have been for some such reason as this, that the disciples forbade the little children referred to above, from being brought to Jesus, and it is certainly under this pretence that Baptists deny to infants the ordinance of baptism. The Saviour, in his omniscience knew well all the errors and heresies that would afterwards arise in his church; and this case of the little children, and the rebuke given by the disciples to those who brought them to our Lord, together with his most gracious interposition, were ordered, in his divine providence, to put his people on their guard against the error of the Baptists. It is admitted, that Christ did neither baptize these little ones himself, nor directed his disciples to baptize them; nor does it appear that they were brought to him for that purpose.

But in Luke xviii. 15, they are called infants, as the original word signifieth; and in Mark x. 16, we are told that Jesus took them up in his arms, from which it is manifest that they were so young as to be incapable of forming an estimate of the Redeemer's character, or the importance and value of his blessing. They do not appear to have been brought to our Lord that they might be healed or cured of any malady or disease, for of this there is not the slightest mention; nor, had that been the case, would the disciples have rebuked those who brought them. Their parents or guardians must have considered Christ as a prophet sent from God, or they would not have desired his blessing and the imposition of his hands for their little ones. He did not lay his hands upon them to set them apart to any particular office, for nothing of the kind was asked or expected; nor in his reproof to the churlishness of his disciples does he confine himself to the case before him or to the little ones presented to him, but refers to little children in general. He does not say, Suffer these little children to come unto me; but in general or unlimited terms, Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. The reason thus assigned by our Lord why little children should be permitted to come to him, shows that there is something even in infancy which renders little children fit or suitable to approach him. I admit, that in their inexperience and simplicity they are emblems of humility, and this might be a reason why of 'such is the kingdom of heaven;' but it could be no reason why they should come to the Saviour. They are as much emblems of humility in their inexperience and simplicity when they come not to Christ, as when they come; and therefore, there must be something in them besides this, to render it desirable that they should come to the Saviour. In fact, they have a sinful and corrupted nature. They have, in the constitution of their minds and bodies, the root of bitterness; the seed of every crime, and of every deadly disease; and therefore they require to come to him, who is able most freely to forgive their iniquity, to heal their diseases, to prevent them from going down to death, and to crown them with loving-kindness and tender-mercies. 'Suffer them to come unto me,' saith our blessed Lord; but there is no other access or door of approach to the Saviour but by baptism, and therefore our Saviour's words are an implied authority for infant baptism. We are constituted or made learners and disciples in baptism. The Saviour is not now locally or personally present, that little children might literally approach him; but he has promised his pre-

sence in baptism, even unto the end of the world. Impiously therefore do they contradict the Saviour, and grievously do they sin against little children, who forbid them to be ingrafted into Christ by baptism. They cannot indeed prevent the salvation of God's elect, for none can pluck one of them out of the Saviour's hands; but they intrude themselves between children and the means of grace, and deny to them privileges which Christ has purchased and bestowed upon them. It is the highest consolation and comfort which a parent can enjoy, to know that he has presented his little one to Christ, and that he who clothes the lily, feeds the raven, and protects the sparrow is thus pledged on its behalf. The baptized as well as the circumcised child of a believing parent, is the Lord's in privilege and hope. It may indeed, as many of the circumcised Israelites did, forfeit those privileges, and make void those hopes by works of wickedness, but this by no means proves that those privileges were not valuable, and those hopes built upon the most stable foundation. There are many who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, but this does not prove that the word is not able to make men wise unto salvation. Let parents then, be deeply grateful for the high privilege of having their children admitted within the pale of the everlasting covenant by baptism. Let them carefully remember the obligations they voluntarily underwent on these occasions. Let them carefully impress upon their children's minds the law of Christ, in commanding to suffer them to come unto him, and to forbid them not. And let both parents and children labour to make their calling and election sure, that they may together be 'of the kingdom of heaven.'

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TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them,'* Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6.

WE are assured by the inspired apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians, that God has one grand design in all the dispensation of times, viz. 'to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth,' (Eph. i. 10). There is one God, one Mediator, one faith, one spirit, one baptism, one fallen, corrupted, and sinful human nature; and one way of recovery and salvation. 'God appointed a

testimony and a law in Jacob, and in Israel,' that is, in the Hebrew nation, the posterity or descendants of Jacob or Israel; not for a time, or to serve during one age or generation, but to be transmitted from parent to child, until the final consummation of all things, and the gathering into one of all the people of Christ. The law which God ordained and established among his people, is the union or combination of truth and mercy, of righteousness and peace. In one acceptation of the word *law*, it signifieth a system of regulations or precepts, which under severe and awful penalties, men are called upon by God to observe and keep; but it is often used in scripture in a wider or more general sense, and includes under it both judgment and mercy. Both the unspotted holiness of God and his hatred of sin, in consequence of which he will by no means clear the guilty; and his adorable mercy in providing a substitute for helpless sinners, transferring their guilt to one able to make atonement for it, and making him to be sin for them who knew no sin, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him. It is called 'a testimony,' because it is a complicated witness between God and men. It witnesses his holiness, that 'evil cannot dwell with him;' that he is a consuming fire to the worker of iniquity; that the soul that sinneth it must die, and that even the sinless and holy Jesus when the chastisements of our peace were laid upon him, must be cut off. It witnesseth that God is long-suffering, slow to wrath, and abundant in mercy, to the penitent and humble; that he 'will not always chide, neither will he keep anger for ever,' that 'he hath not dealt with us as we have sinned, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities;' but 'that as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.' It witnesses the power of divine grace to convince and convert the sinner, and to build up the believer in his most holy faith, enabling him to 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,' in him who loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood, and hath made him to be 'king and priest unto God.' The law, as a testimony, witnesseth these important things, not only in doctrine and promise, but also in living illustrations and examples. In the case of king Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii), of the apostle Paul (Acts ix), and of the penitent malefactor upon the cross (Luke xxiii. 40), God giveth the most convincing evidence to the converting power of divine grace; while the repentance, and after piety of king David, notwithstanding his complicated and aggravated sin of murder and adultery; and the humility, zeal, and devoted-

ness of Peter, after his cowardice and perjury, are demonstrative evidence, that though the soul were as scarlet with guilt, grace is able to make it white as snow; though it were red as crimson, it may become like the wool. The law, as a testimony, witnesseth, that although the wicked may for a time be permitted to enjoy prosperity, yet his destruction is sure: and the overthrow of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the excision of the seven nations of Canaan; the captivities and final dispersion of the apostate and unbelieving Israelites, the awful judgments upon Achan (Josh. vii. 25), Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. xvi. 32), not to mention the old world in the age of Noah, are awful warnings to nations and individuals to take care and not rush rashly upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler. And the law is, in the cases of Joseph and Moses in Egypt, the three children in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel in the time of king Darius, a demonstrative witness to God's power and faithfulness to protect his servants and save his people in the most imminent straits and danger. It is of course the important and pleasing duty of parents, to make all parts of God's law and testimony known to their household and children. It is important, because the parent's own comfort, the prosperity of his household, and the temporal and eternal happiness of his children, entirely depend upon his faithfulness and success in the discharge of his duty. And it is pleasing, because it tends equally to the glory of God and the edification of both parent and children. In the book of Deuteronomy, chapter vi., Moses strenuously commands the Israelites to teach God's laws diligently to their children; and the prophet tells us in this psalm, that the chief or only object he had in view in writing 'the praises of the Lord and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done, was, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children,' that they might thus be enabled 'to set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.' There is nothing more dishonouring to the profession of Christianity, and ruinous to Christians, than the ignorance of divine things, in which children are often permitted by their parents to grow up. How seldom is God's law, or the doctrines of his word made the subject of domestic conversation? Even where family worship is regularly maintained, and the scriptures of consequence daily read, there is too often nothing but cold lifeless formality in the exercise, and the moment it is concluded, all considerations regard-

ing it are permitted to pass away from the mind. Parents are generally abundantly anxious to obtain baptism for their children, and in this they are unquestionably right. But they ought to recollect, that the baptized child has become a disciple or learner of Christ, and that they have undertaken, out of Christ's word, and by the direction of his Spirit, to make it acquainted with his mind, and teach it to observe whatsoever he has commanded. Were the majority of Christian parents to ask themselves the question, What have they taught, of the praises and the works of God to their children, they would, it is greatly to be apprehended, be startled by the question, and find it difficult to give a satisfactory answer. The besetting and ruinous sin of the Israelites, was neglect of their children's religious education. When God brought them into calamity and distress, they cried unto him, acknowledging their unworthiness and sin, and in his mercy he heard the cry of their distress, and raised up for them a deliverer. And so long as that deliverer or that generation lived, the people continued to fear and serve the Lord, and enjoy peace and prosperity in his favour. But no sooner did they pass away, than the succeeding generation, not having been trained up in the admonition and knowledge of God, again apostatized, and brought down upon the nation the divine judgments. Let then, Christian parents, as they value their own domestic peace and comfort, the respectability and happiness of their beloved children, while in this world, above all their satisfaction and joy, when they meet their children at the judgment seat, be careful to make them acquainted with God, and with the covenant of his promise. They have become bound for them in baptism. They have pledged themselves that their children shall be the Lord's. Let them remember the case of Eli, (1 Sam. iii. 13), and beware lest God's judgments descend upon them, because their children grew up in ignorance, and made themselves vile, and they restrained them not.

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TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay,'* Eccl. v. 4, 5.

DECEPTION and delusion have most extensive influence and empire over fallen humanity. Man is in the habit of largely deceiving himself, and of willingly becoming entangled in self-created delu-

sions. There are two modes in which, by the suggestions of Satan, man usually imposes upon himself. He flatters himself that God's law is not so strict as the words appear to imply, or that God is too good to punish for what he considers slight violations of it. And while he greatly extenuates his own offences, he magnifies his virtues, and thus by lowering God's law to the standard of his own works, and elevating his own works to what he has made the standard of God's law, he succeeds in whispering peace to himself, in circumstances where in reality there is no peace. Man often deceives his neighbour. By a specious exterior, he leads him to judge that he is much better than in reality he is, and by plausible and very encouraging promises, he induces him to repose confidence on him, and of course often leads him to disappointment. From success, therefore, in imposing upon himself, and in imposing upon his neighbour, man is led to the conclusion that he can impose upon God. The fools say 'in their heart, that there is no God.' Or they ask the question, 'how doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?' And 'because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' In this, however, man is awfully the dupe of his own credulity. 'God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins of the children of men, and the service of the lip or the prayer of hypocrisy is to him an abomination. Better it is not to have vowed to the Lord, than to have vowed, and not to pay. The Christian, in the way of his duty, finds occasion to make sundry vows. He vows at the Lord's table. He vows 'when overtaken in a fault,' to be more circum-spect in time to come. There are vows which 'the lips utter and the mouth speaks' when under the pressure of trouble; but the vow to which attention is at present especially requested is, the vow made by the parent when he dedicates his child to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the ordinance of baptism. This vow is, upon several accounts, a most important one. It is not a simple, but a complex vow. It in a great measure includes parents, child, and household in one common bond. In the marriage vow of a Christian the engagement is social, but each individual party is responsible only for itself; and in the generality of other religious vows the obligation and responsibility are individual, and the person who makes the vow is alone accountable for the payment thereof. But in the baptismal vow, both parent and child are

included. The parent having 'opened his mouth unto the Lord,' is personally bound to make good his promise; and as so much of the child's future character and conduct depends upon the parent's example and tuition, he is accountable not only for himself as having vowed, but also for his child. In this point of view, the system which admits in baptism any other sponsors for children than their parents, is exceedingly objectionable. 'The promise is to you and your children,' saith the divine word; but it no where says that the promise is to you and your neighbour's child. Where the parent is dead; where he has deserted his child; or where he is incompetent to appear for it in baptism, and where any Christian man is willing to adopt the child, and receives authority to train it up in God's truth, as it becomes by adoption his child, he may with every propriety dedicate it to God in baptism; and every promise which he himself possesses, he may hope that God will, through his prayers and labours, communicate to his adopted child. But nothing can be more alien to the whole spirit and tenor of the gospel, than for a stranger, who has no interest in the child or authority over it, to come in, supersede the parent, and take vows upon himself, which he can have neither opportunity nor authority to fulfil. Nay, it not unfrequently happens, that sponsors take upon them baptismal vows upon one day; and leave the neighbourhood or country upon the day succeeding, and that with very uncertain, if any prospect, of returning. The parental vow in the ordinance of baptism, manifestly includes in it the following particulars. The parents presenting the child virtually declare, that they believe they have a promise to themselves, and of course bind themselves by vows, that they will act in their household as becomes the possessors of heavenly promise. In the second place, they publicly acknowledge, that they believe their child to be like David, shapen in sin, and conceived in iniquity, and of course they vow that they will seek for it regeneration and sanctification. In the third place, they profess to believe that the Father so loved, as to give the Son; that the Son so loved, as to voluntarily become the gift; and that the Holy Ghost so loved the sons of man, as to make their sinful bodies his temple, that he may savingly appropriate to them that gift, and through it make them heirs of salvation: and the parents' vow, that they will use every means in their power to make their child acquainted with these important truths, and impress them savingly upon its mind. In the fourth place, parents at the baptism of their child profess their belief that faith

and salvation are God's free gifts, communicated through his ordinances; and of course they vow that they will train up their child in the use of those ordinances, in the hope that God will bless and make them to it profitable. And in the last place, they vow that they will, if they and the child are spared in life, use every effort to prepare it to take responsibility and baptismal engagements upon itself, by a well-ordered approach to the Lord's supper. These vows to the performance of positive parental duty, of course include under them the parents' obligation to guard their children against indulgence in any sin. Christ can have no fellowship with Belial, or light with darkness; and while they labour to lead their children to regeneration, sanctification, and heaven through ordinances, they must take good heed to guard them from wandering into the paths of the destroyer, in sinful indulgence. The parents' responsibility for the fulfilment of the baptismal vows, may be understood from an estimate of what will be his feelings, should his child be an outcast from glory through his unfaithfulness, or misconduct. 'Better that thou shouldst not vow, than to vow and not pay,' does not imply that it is good or safe not to vow, but merely that the vow unpaid will aggravate what before was bad and make it worse. The parent, lost himself through unfaithfulness, sees his child also lost through that unfaithfulness, and his own misery is awfully aggravated by that of his offspring through his impropriety and neglect. Let then parents remember that the eyes of the Lord are upon them, that they have opened their mouth to the Lord, and ought not to draw back. And that it is better not to vow at all, than, having vowed, not to pay.

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ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved,*  
Mark xvi. 16.

God could easily have prevented sin and its offspring, death, from entering into the human family, or after it had been permitted to enter, he could, by one sovereign Almighty word, have banished it and its consequences for ever; for with omnipotence nothing can be impossible. It pleased God, however, for inscrutably wise, though to us mysterious purposes, to otherwise order the affairs of this lower world. He permitted, at a very early period of the world's history, an enemy to introduce tares among his own pure and precious seed, and has ordained that those tares should be

allowed to continue among the wheat, until a distant day of harvest. God in the interval, however, is not neglectful of his own precious property. Although he does not permit the tares to be plucked up, or in other words, the wicked to be destroyed, the Lord knoweth those that are his, and has amply provided for their edification and final salvation. 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,' and 'whom he did predestinate them he also called,' Rom. viii. 29. By what appears to the wise in this world 'the foolishness of preaching,' he has ordained to call and save those who believe. Faith is his own invaluable gift, and it gives to those who receive it victory over the world, and a title to everlasting life. 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' In these most gracious and important words, there are obviously three things included: there is danger, from which believers are assured of salvation; there are doctrines or truths to be received, through which that salvation is to be enjoyed; and there are ordinances or seals of these truths, which are by believers to be used and observed. The danger is eternal condemnation with the old serpent the devil and his angels. When Adam and Eve took Satan's advice and promise, instead of the direction and favour of God, they became his servants, and were with all their posterity reduced to the same condition with him. But Jehovah, in his infinite mercy, was pleased from eternity to ordain that the Word should in the fulness of time be made flesh; should fulfil the law, which Adam and his posterity had violated; should in a full atonement satisfy justice; die under the load of his people's sins; and having, in his sufferings and death, finished and made an end of those sins, he should arise in his people's name, take possession of heaven on their behalf, send to them the Holy Spirit as a comforter, prevailing intercede for them at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high; discipline them by his grace in time, raise up their bodies immortal at the day of resurrection, and present them before God without spot or blemish at the day of judgment. These are the exceedingly great and precious truths which God in the gospel publishes to the world, and which by the Spirit his people are enabled to receive. To the learned Greek they were foolishness, and to the prejudiced disobedient Jew a stumbling-block; but to those who are called, whether Greek or Jew, they are Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. These most important and saving truths, upon which God's people are able to confide with unwaver-

ing confidence, are intimately connected with the ordinances or seals of the covenant of redemption. 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' The seal, indeed, is not of equal value with the covenant to which it is attached, nor is it absolutely requisite to salvation. The penitent malefactor, of whose salvation we can have no doubt, was certainly not baptized, nor is it likely that he had been circumcised. The seal, however, is an ordinance of God, and being intended to aid and strengthen faith, it is highly sinful to neglect it. The water in baptism is an appropriate and a striking memorial of Christ's blood, and of course, a strong ground of encouragement and consolation to a believing parent. 'The blood of Jesus Christ,' saith the apostle John (1 John i. 7), 'cleanseth us from all sin.' This is not true of all the blood that was in the human body of the Redeemer, nor does the cleansing power ascribed to that blood depend upon any quality inherent in it as blood. It is the blood drawn from our Lord's side by the spear of the soldier, and which demonstrated that he was verily dead, that cleanseth the believer from all sin. This blood as a witness testifieth that Christ died, and as he had no sin whatever of his own, of which his death might be the wages, he must have died for his people's sin; and as in dying he finished the transgression, made an end of the sin, and arose without even the imputation of sin for his people's justification (Rom. iv. 25), they know that in him they are cleansed from all sin. 'There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood,' saith the apostle John (1 John v. 8), 'and these three agree in one,' the inspiring spirit beareth witness (John xix. 34), that the soldier pierced our Lord's side and thus fulfilled the prophecy (Zech. xii. 10), and the water and blood issuing from the wounded side, wounded in a department intended to ensure death, testify that Christ was in reality dead. He died as a sinner, being 'made sin,' and 'numbered with the transgressors.' But death could not hold him, for it was not possible that the holy One of God could see corruption; and therefore he arose the first-fruits of all that sleep. The spirit therefore, and the water, and the blood, as witnesses agree in this, that Christ suffered death for his people's sins, and in that death abolished their transgression, and perfected for them an everlasting righteousness—such should be the view exhibited by baptism to all who come themselves, or present their little ones through it unto God. Their mind should not rest upon the sign, but upon the thing signified. They should see Christ in the ordinance, 'wounded

for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities,' bearing 'the chastisements of their peace, that by his stripes they might be healed;' and believe, with a most assured confidence, that as certainly as he had appointed the washing of water in baptism to be applied to the outward person, so certainly had he provided justification and sanctification for their own or their children's souls.

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ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,' Heb. x. 22.*

MAN, notwithstanding his wretched and degraded condition by the fall, has still so much of apparent honesty in his conscience, as to confess that he is not fit to approach or appear before God. Adam, after his sin, hid himself 'from the Lord God among the trees of the garden;' and his posterity generally are averse from all intercourse or fellowship with God. It is not, however, properly speaking, honesty, but alienation, enmity, and fear, that render fallen man unwilling to appear in Jehovah's presence. Fallen humanity and a holy God do not approve or like the same, but very opposite things. Man is conscious, that were he in Jehovah's immediate presence, and under his coercion, he could not indulge in the things in which he delights, but would be obliged to attend to duties, which are to him most painful and unpleasant. He is also sensible, that God must condemn every bias and tendency of his mind and feelings; and therefore partly from dislike, and partly from dread, men in general, like the sinful father from whom they have descended, would wish to lie hid or concealed from God. The apostle Paul has accordingly shown, in the preceding context, that two things were absolutely requisite to be performed for us, by the great High Priest of our profession, before we could be brought near, or admitted into the presence of God. He must first, inasmuch as 'it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins,' (ver. 4), and as 'in such burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sins' God had no pleasure, (ver. 6), 'come to do the Jehovah's will, in the offering of his own body once for all,' (ver. 10) by which 'one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' (ver. 14). And then, in the second place, he must by his Holy Spirit 'put his laws into their hearts, and write them in their minds, so that their sins and iniquities shall

be remembered no more. These requisite or necessary things, however, being performed by Christ, an important and imperative duty arises to believers. They ought 'with boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,' and to 'draw near' to God 'with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water.' The duty thus derived from the relation in which we stand to God, through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great High Priest of our profession, divides itself into five subordinate parts. First, 'we are to draw near to God,' and this is to be performed in two ways. We are to set the Lord before our face, or remember that he is always there, and on our right and left hand. And secondly, we are to draw our thoughts and feelings, our words and actions, as near as possible to what God has commanded and required, that he and we may be reconciled, or of the same counsel. 'The way of man,' however, 'is not in himself,' and 'it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' The heart is deceitful in all things, and desperately wicked, and therefore we are, in the third place, 'to draw near to God in a full assurance of faith.' It is indeed the high privilege of the Christian, and the foundation of all his boldness at a throne of grace, that he has an High Priest, a Mediator, and Intercessor, able to save to the uttermost, all who come by him unto God. When a believer is overtaken in a fault; when he laments to find that he has been weak, and ungrateful, and has sinned against light and love, he is prevented from despondencies by the consideration, that he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for sin (1 John ii. 2); and as every man truly acquainted with himself must be conscious that in many things he offends daily, we must always draw near to God in the full assurance of faith in the forgiveness of iniquities. When a believer is weak; when he laments the coldness and insensibility of his heart; when he feels that his approach to God is likely to be tinged with formality if not with hypocrisy, he is encouraged by the assurance that the great High Priest, through whom he presents his addresses to God, holds in his hand the golden censor of mercy, and casts in the incense of his own merits together with the prayers of all saints. He knows that he is viewed by Jehovah, not as he is in himself, but that he is seen in the face of God his shield; that God is well pleased with him, not for his own, but for Christ's righteousness' sake, and therefore he draws near to God

in full assurance of faith in the merits of his High Priest and Redeemer. When the believer recollects that it is appointed for him, in common with all men, to die, and after death to appear before God in judgment, and when conscience would overwhelm him with despair, by presenting before his mind his aggravated sins and filthy rags of righteousness, he is sustained and supported by the assurance, that Christ has unstinged, uncrowned, and abolished death; that he shall enter only into the valley of its shadow, and that for him Jesus has provided robes of linen clean and white, so that the shame of his poverty cannot appear, and therefore he is authorised 'to draw near to God in a full assurance of faith' in victory over death, and in triumphant justification in the final judgment. All these high privileges and exalted prospects the believer enjoys in Christ, but they are his only as a believer. And hence we must draw near to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, 'having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.' The believer is daily conscious of many sins, but he laments them all; confesses them all; and is assured that in Christ he is pardoned the iniquity of them all. He commits no sin that he does not bring to Christ, and lay at the foot of his cross; and as he believes himself forgiven, his conscience retains no dread of evil on account of the offence. There is something exceedingly beautiful and appropriate in the expression, 'the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience.' The Lord knows much, even in the most advanced believer, which would make the conscience evil, were it not for 'the blood of sprinkling,' but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and therefore the Christian is of good cheer, because he knows that his sins are forgiven, and is enabled to go on in his Christian course rejoicing. In the last place, we must draw near to God, having our bodies washed with pure water. This undoubtedly refers to the ordinance of baptism, and through it to an entrance into the church, an outward profession of faith, and diligent attendance upon ordinances. Internal faith and holiness are the essentials in a believer's character, but a public profession of that faith and manifestation of that holiness are also required by God. In fact, it is through the latter that God, in ordinary cases, communicates the former, and therefore he requires the one as his appointed means to obtain the other. The water in baptism is called 'pure,' not in reference to the quality of the material fluid, but to the spiritual purpose for which it is employed. It separates us from an impure world; it leads us to a pure God; it introduces us to purifying

ordinances and hopes; and it finally presents us pure before God, in the many mansions of Messial's purchase.

TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me,'*  
1 Cor. xi. 23—25.

It is of very great importance for Christians to know assuredly that the sacrament of the Lord's supper was instituted by our divine Redeemer himself, as an ordinance to be perpetually observed in his church, till his second coming. This assurance we cannot fail to obtain from an attentive consideration of the passage before us. We might, indeed, have arrived at the same conclusion, although there had been nothing in the sacred volume respecting this ordinance, except what we find recorded in the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, especially in the latter, where Christ expressly says to his disciples, 'This do in remembrance of me,' necessarily implying the perpetuity of this ordinance, as one of a commemorative nature. But there is a peculiar significancy in the fact, that the apostle Paul was divinely directed to repeat the words of institution in this Epistle. He was peculiarly 'the apostle of the Gentiles;' he received instruction in the doctrines of the gospel not from men, but 'by the revelation of Jesus Christ,' 'of whom he was seen, as of one born out of due time.' It was fitting, therefore, that this apostle, in discharging the duties of his great office, and preaching Christ to the Gentile world, should also expressly state both the doctrines and the institutions essential to Christianity, and intended to be of permanent duration; and whatever we find so stated by him, we are peculiarly bound to regard as an ordinance of Christ intended to be perpetually observed.

This sacrament occupies in the Christian church, the same position as the sacrament of the passover did in the Mosaic Dispensation. To this also the same apostle directs the attention of his Corinthian converts. 'For even Christ our passover

is sacrificed for us.' And as Christ is our passover, so the ordinance instituted in remembrance of him is to Christians what the passover was to Jews.

To the Jewish church and people the passover brought back a lively remembrance of that awful night when the destroying angel slew the first-born throughout the whole land of Egypt, and passed over the dwellings of their fathers without inflicting upon them the same deadly visitation. As they slew the lamb, and marked the posts and lintels of their doors with its blood, and having roasted it with fire, ate it in haste, with their loins girt, and their staffs in their hands, like men prepared and hastening to set out on a long and perilous journey, they must have thought of the condition and feelings of their fathers;—how eagerly each strove to get the sign of safety set upon his house in time, before the coming of the dread destroyer, —how, with mingled hope and anxiety, each parent would gaze upon his first-born as the hour of vengeance drew near, that he might see the bright hues of life still glowing on each beloved countenance,—and how, when at midnight arose through all the land of Egypt the groan of death, and the wild cry of despairing anguish, the families of Israel would raise the voice of grateful and adoring love and praise to their own great God and Saviour. And when converted to Christianity, and enabled to see in Jesus 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,' we cannot doubt that Hebrew Christians would perceive a very marked significancy in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, viewed as the Christian passover.

It was not less important for Gentile converts, for all Christians in all countries and times, to be in possession of a sacred sign of such deep meaning to quicken their faith and encourage their hopes; to signify to them that they too are by nature in a state of bondage, under the tyranny of sin and Satan, and exposed to the vengeance of outraged mercy, despised offers of pardon, and offended justice; and that from these awful perils all those were delivered whose souls were sprinkled by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God. All this was very clearly signified in the Christian passover; but there was more. For while the bread and wine were very intelligible emblems of the body and blood of Christ, their eating of these emblems conveyed the idea, that there was not only a sacrifice offered in their stead, but also that there was a real union effected between them and their divine Redeemer. This idea of a real spiritual union between the soul and Christ, forms the very essence of the sacrament of the Lord's

supper; and this renders it more than a commemoration of the great fact of his death, as our passover sacrificed for us, exhibiting also, in very significant emblems, the spiritual benefits, and the new life thence derived.

But this high and pure spiritual view of this sacred ordinance was early perverted, and gradually corrupted to a fearful extent. Instead of continuing to regard the sacrament of the Lord's supper as at once commemorative of the death of Christ, and typical of spiritual union with him, a perverting opinion began to be entertained, that the bread and wine of the sacrament were mysteriously changed into the real body and blood of Christ. By what might almost be termed a refinement of error and folly, a further perversion took place, according to which, the wine was denied to the laity. For they reasoned thus: since the bread is changed into the real body of Christ, there can be no need of wine, because a real body consists of both flesh and blood. This, which is the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation, was the full development of the early perversions of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Many kindred errors arose out of, or were connected with, this perverted and false doctrine, some of which still prevail in Protestant churches,—such as, regarding participation in this ordinance as beneficial to the soul, apart altogether from the existence of faith in the person partaking. Few errors have been more pernicious than the one referred to, which may be termed the materializing sacramentarian theory. It is almost certain to produce the one or the other of two very different states of mind;—either a superstitious and almost idolatrous mode of regarding the sacrament of the Lord's supper, calculated to deter people from enjoying this sacred ordinance,—or, a species of deadening presumptuousness in the mind, which deludes itself with the notion that the bare fact of partaking has of itself prepared the soul for heaven.

A more plain and scriptural view of the important subject would, by the blessing of God, and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, dispel these dangerous errors. When we read the language of the evangelists and of Paul, we find it clearly stated, that our Lord gave to his disciples both bread and wine; and since he gave *both*, we may well conclude that no subordinate authority has any right to deny *either*, and thereby to mutilate his sacred ordinance.

The same mode of viewing the matter would set aside the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation. For it is impossible to imagine that either his disciples, or Paul, understood his language in

any other sense than as figurative, when he took the bread in his hands and said, 'This is my body.' To have understood it literally, would have been to have rejected the evidence of their senses, and to have believed the absurdity, that Christ had two bodies, the one of which was breaking the other and dividing it among them,—or, that he held himself in his own hands, broke and divided himself, and yet remained unbroken, undivided, and unchanged, all at the same instant. The figurative sense was therefore that alone in which they could possibly understand his words. And to them, accustomed to the figurative language of the East, and to his own figurative language, it would be very plain and intelligible. When he called himself a 'shepherd,' a 'vine,' a 'door,' they never imagined that he was literally a shepherd, a vine, or a door; they easily understood the meaning so vividly conveyed by this figurative language: and when he said, 'This is my body, which is broken for you,' they would have no difficulty in perceiving some portion of the figurative meaning of this language, although they could not understand it fully, till they had seen that very body broken on the cross.

How important is it for us to entertain right and scriptural views respecting this sacred ordinance, that we may neither fall into superstition on the one hand, nor into presumption and spiritual pride on the other. We are still liable to the same delusions and errors; from which nothing but the teaching of the Holy Spirit can deliver us. Let our earnest and constant prayer, therefore be, that God for Christ's sake, would graciously send to us the Holy Spirit, to take of the things that are Christ's, to show them unto us, and to enable us spiritually to partake of this spiritual ordinance.

#### TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?'* Gal. iii. 1.

It was the determination of the apostle Paul to know nothing but Christ Jesus and him crucified, whithersoever he went in the exercise of his great mission and ministry among the Gentiles. And when addressing himself to the Galatians, in defence of the great doctrine of justification by faith, he employed the very strong language of the passage before us. Yet this is figurative language, though not such as could easily be misunderstood. When he asserted that before the eyes

of the Galatians Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth, crucified among them, he did not mean that they had been at Jerusalem and beheld the awful scene, nor that it had been actually repeated at Galatia among themselves. His meaning unquestionably was, that by the faithful and earnest preaching of the cross of Christ, such a vivid representation of the truth had been set forth before them, that they had no more excuse for rejecting or perverting it, than if their own eyes had beheld him crucified among them. But if this might be said of the preaching of the gospel, still more emphatically might it be said of that impressive representation of the death of Christ which is set forth in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which had been often, doubtless, set forth among them. And this, in all probability, is what the apostle had chiefly in view, when he used these words.

How great is the condescension of God to his creatures,—and especially to such sinful and weak creatures as fallen mankind! Lest we should forget the awful price paid for our redemption, it is not only recorded minutely in God's holy book, but also by an express ordinance of our divine Redeemer, it is set forth before us in exceedingly intelligible and lively symbols, or signs, fitted and designed to affect the heart through the senses. Take that bread, Christian believer, and as you break it, can your heart be regardless of that Saviour whose body was broken for you! 'Broken for me!' may the believer say, 'yes, broken *by* me, by *my sins*, as this very sign and action most evidently sets forth! And the poured out wine, that lively symbol of his blood, it, too, was shed for me, and *by my sins*! O, can my soul be dead to such lively tokens of dying and redeeming love!' With what exquisite and gracious adaptation to the senses, the heart, the soul of man has our blessed Saviour instituted this sacred ordinance! and with what holy gratitude and love ought every Christian to receive it in remembrance of him!

Let us dwell a little longer on this topic. In proportion to the suitableness of this ordinance to set forth before our eyes Jesus Christ, crucified among us, must it necessarily be our duty to stir up our heart and all that is within us, that in the exercise of a true and living faith we may look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; and equally are we responsible for the use we make of this divine institution. Are ministers ambassadors of Christ?—and is it their duty and high office, in preaching, and in this sacred ordinance, to set forth Christ crucified for the sins of his people, as the price of their salvation? O,

what faith is necessary in them, that seeing Christ themselves, they may set him forth evidently to others;—what fervency of heart and language, evincing their own entire and strong sincerity, that they may awaken corresponding emotions in the breast of others,—and what earnestness and constancy in prayer, that God may pour upon them the spirit of grace and supplication, enabling them to present before his throne of grace and mercy such prayers as he will for the Redeemer's sake hear and answer by imparting spiritual life to the souls of the ransomed of the Lord! Are Christian believers those among whom Christ crucified is evidently set forth before their eyes in this ordinance?—How lively ought to be their faith, that they may see him;—how fervent their hearts that they may love him;—and how earnest and unceasing their prayers, for their ministers, themselves, and all believers, that Christ may indeed be made known to them in the breaking of bread, and that in their sealed redemption he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied! And on the other hand, how culpable, how deeply sinful, must be lifeless formality and cold indifference in ministers and people when engaged in the dispensation of this ordinance, in which they profess to be, and if sincere they must be, receiving Christ, crucified for their sin, and set forth for their salvation! May the spirit of life, and faith, and sincerity, and love be graciously vouchsafed to all believers, ministers and people, throughout the world, when so engaged, for God's glory, and their eternal welfare.

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#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me,' 1 Cor. xi. 25.*

THESE words plainly imply, that there is an obligation resting upon all Christians to observe the ordinance of the Lord's supper in remembrance of Christ's death. The wine poured out signifies the blood shed; and as 'the blood is the life,' its being poured out, or shed, sets forth evidently the fact of his death, as a propitiation for the sins of his people.

'This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.' Many topics of great importance and solemn character are contained in these affecting words. The wine is poured out in remembrance of the *truth and reality* of Christ's death. It was no imaginary suffering that wrung forth bloody sweat from our blessed Lord, when he was in an agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

When his back was lacerated with the Roman scourge, and his temples torn with the crown of thorns; when his hands and feet were nailed to the accursed tree; and when the spear pierced his side and forthwith there came out blood and water, irresistible proofs were given, that the torturing process had fully accomplished its fearful work, draining away the warm red streams of life, and ending in the dread reality of actual death. Of this the pierced side alone might have furnished conclusive proof; but when viewed in connection with the exhausted sufferings previously endured, the demonstration of the truth and reality of Christ's death is beyond the reach of doubt. Christ our passover was indeed sacrificed for us. The Lamb was actually slain, in truth and in reality, according to the 'determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.'

In remembrance also of the *efficacy* of Christ's death. When the Lamb of the passover was slain, and his blood sprinkled upon the door-posts of the dwellings of the Israelites, there might be a period of intense anxiety, while hope and fear, faith and doubt, were struggling in the hearts of the Hebrews, knowing that the unsheathed sword of the destroying angel was flaming around them; but when the cheerful light of day revealed that not a soul had perished among the race of Abraham, they would then clearly perceive the perfect efficacy of the blood of the Lamb, according to God's appointment. And year after year, when the passover was kept, one very important idea in the mind of every pious Jew would be, the remembrance of its efficacy. And is the efficacy of the blood of Christ, our passover, less than that of the paschal Lamb? Is he not the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world? Has he not by that one sacrifice finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness? Surely, then, every true believer, when he receives the ordinance of the supper, will feel that he is at that moment doing so in remembrance of the infinite value and efficacy of the Redeemer's death.

In remembrance, further, of the *necessity* of Christ's death. 'Without shedding of blood is no remission of sin,' is the terrible language of infallible truth. We cannot fathom the deep mysteries of infinite and eternal justice, and we presume not to make the vain attempt. But some portion of the awful truth may lie within the compass of our intelligence, sufficient at least to silence the language of cavilling objections. The laws of God must take their character from his own nature and attributes. These are necessarily infinite and eternal, and demand an

infinite and eternal obedience; or, if broken, involve the criminal in the necessity of bearing an infinite penalty. An infinite penalty cannot be borne by a creature in any other manner than by eternal suffering; because the demands of an infinite law must be satisfied by what is infinite either in *value*, or in *duration*. The violation of a law necessarily infinite in its character must therefore expose a finite criminal to a punishment of *infinite duration*, because he cannot render a satisfaction of *infinite value*. This, the infinite and eternal Son of God alone could do; and therefore he alone could save his people from their sins, by rendering in their stead a complete and final satisfaction to infinite justice. Thus we may dimly perceive the *necessity* of Christ's death as the only method by means of which 'God could be just and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.' But we may more safely arrive at the same conclusion, by simply believing the language of the bible. The death of Christ was the determinate counsel of God. But an infinitely wise, merciful, and gracious God would necessarily determine according to infinite wisdom and goodness; and since he so determined, the death of Christ was infinitely necessary. How awful are the views which such a course of thought gives us of the holiness and justice of the divine attributes, and of the fearful malignity of sin, which required such a sacrifice! And this we keep in remembrance in the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

More tender and attractive ideas may also arise in our minds, while we 'do this in remembrance of Christ.' It may well be, and ought to be done in remembrance of him personally, and of his gracious and blessed works on earth for us. In remembrance of him from whose lips flowed words full of grace and truth; who spake as never man spake; who went about doing good; who fed the hungry, healed the sick and diseased, restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and soundness of mind to the demon possessed, and raised the dead from the bier and from the grave. In remembrance of him who condescended to the weakness and waywardness of his disciples, endured patiently the contradiction of sinners, bore meekly the despiteful usage of his persecutors, and for even his murderers uttered the sublimely pathetic prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Let our souls thus remember Jesus, while approaching to, or seated at the table, where the symbol of his blood is put into our hands, that we may love him with wondering and adoring love.

And, finally, when we 'do this in remembrance of Christ,' we do it in grateful, faithful,

and hopeful memorial of him. His enemies combined against him, and strove, by putting him to an ignominious death, to cover his name with infamy, that it might perish from among men. It is, therefore, the more the duty of his friends to unite together in bearing a public testimony for him, that they may contribute thereby to keep in everlasting remembrance the glory of his great name, and of all his marvellous works. They mocked and insulted, let us honour and extol him. They condemned him to the shameful death of the cross, that they might disgrace him and his cause; let us glory in the cross of Christ, and celebrate his death, with hearts and souls filled with gratitude, with lively faith, and with that hope which maketh not ashamed. Thus let us feel and act, as oft as we drink the cup, in remembrance of Christ.

THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his laws; and forgot his works, and his wonders that he had showed them,' Ps. lxxviii. 10, 11.*

THERE are few more convincing proofs of the depravity of human nature caused by the fall, than the universal fact of our proneness to forget God and all his providential dealings with us. When weighed down under some heavy afflictive dispensation, or appalled by some threatening judgment, we are apt to think that we will never again forget the strong and painful emotions of our inner being. But the affliction is removed, the threatenings of judgment are silent, and in a very short while we totally forget equally our fears, our prayers, and our earnest promises of amendment. In like manner, should God be pleased to bestow upon us some remarkable manifestation of grace and mercy, we often think that the fervour of adoring gratitude which filled our hearts, and seemed to raise our souls to heaven, will never pass away. But the freshness of these feelings fade away, the glowing gratitude becomes cold, and ere long our hearts have sunk into indifference, and our souls are slumbering in torpid forgetfulness of all the rich bounties, and undeserved mercies of God. Whence arises this criminal forgetfulness of both the judgments and the mercies of God?—From hearts that do not wish to retain God himself in their remembrance;—from the carnal mind's enmity against God;—and also, to some extent, from the very weakness and infirmity of our nature, which cannot long endure or retain a strong emotion of almost any kind, least of all, of a sacred character.

This is equally apparent when we apply it to the state of our minds respecting the love of God, and the death of his beloved Son. When God is pleased to shed abroad his love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us, we are apt to think that our souls can never cease to adore him who has so graciously revealed his love to us, and given us the living perception of its power. But alas! how soon does the soul resume its sinful indifference, cease to regard adoration as not more a duty than a delight, and almost forget to pray. We may regard our Saviour as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, in the time of awakened faith and love, when we have been looking unto Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith, and may think we can never again turn back from following him whom our soul loveth; and a short time afterwards we may have lost the fervour of our first love, sunk into lukewarmness, and be in danger of forsaking our gracious and divine Redeemer.

Such considerations may serve to show to us the wisdom and the condescension of Christ, in instituting an ordinance to commemorate his dying love, that it might be often and vividly set forth before us, to revive the expiring embers of our love to him. He knows, that even when the spirit is willing the flesh is weak. And in gracious compassion he has appointed ordinances wherein by sensible signs the great doctrines of salvation are placed before our eyes, that they may be the more effectually kept in remembrance. Israel 'forgot God's works, and his wonders that he had showed them,' although these were such as might well have demanded perpetual remembrance. Christians are as liable to forget Christ's works, and the wonders of redeeming love; but to prevent the fatal effects of such forgetfulness, he has given to us this sacred ordinance. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.'

The very simplicity of this memorial, is an additional proof of the gracious condescension of Christ. It is suited to all places and all times. It involves no burdensome expence; it requires no cumbrous pomp; it positively discards every thing which might tend to make it oppressive or inconvenient to poor and humble worshippers. Originally instituted in an upper chamber at Jerusalem, it may be suitably celebrated still by a small band of devout worshippers in almost any possible variety of circumstances. In the first period of Christianity it was often commemorated in private houses and at midnight, that it might be done in some measure of safety, unseen by persecuting enemies. By Christian exiles it

has been administered and received on shores where all was hostile, or beneath the shelter of vast pathless forests. And perhaps seldom has this sacred ordinance been observed with greater faith, and reverence, and love, than by our Scottish ancestors in the secret heart of some secluded glen, or in the hollow bosom of some wild upland moor, where some wasted yet dreadless remnant had assembled to commemorate the dying love of him, in whose sacred cause they knew not but their own blood might be shed on the desolate heath, ere the sacred rite was done.

In times of prosperity, peace, and affluence, how admirably fitted is this ordinance to call us back to the simplicity of the gospel; in times of stern adversity and trial, how excellently suited to our need, reminding us of our Redeemer's death, re-awakening the faith and patience of the saints, and raising our thoughts and hopes to that abode of perfect happiness, where we shall drink the wine new, with our Redeemer, in his Father's heavenly kingdom. It can give a holier character to all the feelings of the high-hearted patriot; and it can make to the suffering exile any land a home, and all true Christians his friends and brothers.

Yet there are those to whom it is not so fitted, —or rather, who are not fitted to receive it, at any time, or in any place. It is fitted in every possible respect to the spiritual wants and enjoyments of all who truly love their Lord, and who appreciate his death, as the source of their own eternal life. But he who does not truly love the Lord, can have no lot nor portion in this matter, for it is a feast of heavenly love: and he who sees no value in the death of Christ cannot enjoy this ordinance, for its very essence is the showing of the Lord's death, till he come. How important is it for us all to institute a rigid examination of our own hearts and minds with reference to this ordinance; that we may both understand its true meaning, perceive its adaptation to our nature and our necessities, and also endeavour to ascertain our own fitness to receive it, and its fitness to be to us the means of contributing to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, to the glory of the divine Master of the feast, and of him by whose hand it was prepared.

#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come,'*  
1 Cor. xi. 26.

THE expression 'ye do show,' may, with equal propriety be rendered 'show ye' the Lord's death

till he come. In the first of these modes of rendering, it seems to imply nothing more than a statement of the fact, that the Lord's death is showed, or represented, in the sacrament of the supper; in the second, it implies an obligation of a permanent nature, especially when taken in connection with the concluding clause, 'show ye the Lord's death till he come.' But indeed the force of the last clause, without any change upon the preceding, conveys the same meaning, as it plainly states that this sacred ordinance was to be observed till the second coming of him whose death it represents. And thus we are manifestly taught the permanency of the obligation resting upon all Christians, to observe this ordinance till the very end of time, as long as the world endures and contains a church of Christ.

Admitting, then, that we are under a permanent obligation to show the Lord's death till the end of time, we are naturally led to inquire what is meant by 'showing the Lord's death.' The term in the original language is of more comprehensive and emphatic meaning than appears in our translation. It means to *announce* or *proclaim*, including the idea of *praise*, or, as we are accustomed to express it, *celebration*; and in its general import it implies to *set forth*, to *teach*, to *inculcate*, to *preach*: it includes, in short, every method by which the subject to be announced or set forth, can be most attractively and impressively brought before the minds of mankind, and their duty to receive it most urgently and effectually enforced. The great subject to be thus set forth is THE LORD'S DEATH, as that by which God is most signally glorified, and by which alone man is saved; and Christians are bound to employ every method by which this can be announced, proclaimed, celebrated, set forth, taught, inculcated, preached, displayed, and urged upon the attention of mankind, both for the purpose of exhibiting and declaring the glorious marvels of redeeming love, and for the purpose of persuading sinners to accept this so great salvation.

The Lord's death may be very properly regarded as the sum of the work which the Father gave him to do, in reconciling justice and mercy, righteousness and peace, and thereby purchasing salvation to the lost. And as scripture frequently speaks of the believer as 'dead in Christ,' and as 'alive in Christ,' and glorying in the cross of Christ, and Christ living in him, and being his life, it is plain, that the whole life and conduct of a true believer should be devoted to the one great object of showing forth the death of the Lord, by dying unto sin, and living unto righteousness. If

some of those indwelling sins which remain in the heart as roots of bitterness, should again attempt to spring up, they should be plucked out with unsparing hand,—why should they be permitted to draw nourishment from a heart dead to sin? If some of those evil passions which still lurk in the bosom of fallen man should again strive to produce discord and confusion within us, let them be instantly repressed,—why should such stormy elements be tolerated to exist in him who is a disciple of the meek, and lowly, and forgiving Jesus? If the world should again attempt to recover its ascendancy over us, let its allurements be strenuously and indignantly rejected; why should we listen to the false and ensnaring flatteries of a world which lieth in wickedness,—a world of which Satan is the god,—a world which slew our blessed Saviour, and whose friendship is enmity against God? We are crucified to the world, and the world to us, if we indeed be Christ's; and if so, we shall most fittingly show forth the Lord's death, by our own deadness to the world. If we are assailed by Satan's temptations, let these be promptly resisted, in the name and strength of him who has already crushed the serpent's head, and who will bruise that adversary under our own feet shortly. Thus living, in the exercise of lively faith and earnest prayer, our whole life shall be one continued endeavour to show forth the Lord's death.

And as this is to be done 'till he come,' so it is to be done in the prospect of his coming the second time, to final and eternal triumph. How steadily was the contemplation of the apostles fixed on the second coming of the Lord! And in what lofty and glowing language did they speak of that glorious manifestation of their great God and Saviour,—speaking of it as if it were almost at hand, because its surpassing glory caused the intermediate period of time to seem but a dim moment, almost swallowed up in the brightness of eternity. Were the same state of mind more prevalent among Christians now, how much more easily and rejoicingly would they celebrate the Lord's death, not only in his ordinances, but also in their own lives! It is painful to the believer to be engaged in a continual warfare against himself, the world, and Satan, a warfare from which there is no discharge till death; but that would seem but a light affliction for a moment, if the eye of faith were more steadily fixed on the second coming of him who will make us more than conquerors. And when celebrating the Lord's death, in that ordinance which was expressly instituted for that purpose, what faith, fervour, and spirituality would it awaken in the soul of the communicant, to con-

nect these memorials of the Redeemer's humiliation, sufferings, and death, with the certain and the heavenly glories of his second coming.

Let us put one solemn question to ourselves. The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed a glorious subject of contemplation; but is it equally so to all men? When he comes to judge the world, in the glory of his heavenly Father, and of the holy angels, *who* will then 'love his appearing?' Not, certainly, those who never regarded his death as a matter deserving their attention; not those, who though professing to believe on him, neglect the ordinances instituted to show forth and celebrate permanently his death! But those, and those only, who have regarded it as equally their duty and their privilege to 'do this in remembrance of him,' to die daily to sin, the world, and self, and by the whole tenor of their life and conversation, to 'show the Lord's death till he come.'

#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen,' Rev. i. 7.*

THERE is a certain indefinite vagueness which prevails among men respecting every thing future, merely because it is future, so that it cannot be exactly known or understood in present circumstances. This vagueness is greatest with regard to things of a spiritual nature, concerning which the fallen mind of man is necessarily most liable to err. We sometimes think and speak about 'the last day,' and 'the general judgment;' but every man must be aware how very obscure and unrealizable are all our notions on these sublime and awful subjects,—nay, that in truth we think or speak on such solemn and important themes as if we did not really believe them, but merely made use of them as subjects on which the mind might expatiate in the regions of misty speculation, in its vacant and dreamy hours. There is thus a species of unbelief produced by the prevalence of dim and vague speculation respecting that very important and impressive doctrine, the second coming of our Lord to judge the world,—a doctrine on which the minds of the apostles delighted to dwell.

We are liable to fall into this half unbelieving state of mind with regard to this solemn truth, by confounding two things essentially different,—namely, the *fact* of Christ's coming, and the *time*

and manner of his coming. Respecting the *first* of these topics there can be no doubt in the mind of any person who believes the word of God; while respecting the *second* there can be no certainty, because it is not revealed. But although 'it is not for us to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power,' we ought not on that account to doubt 'the promise of his coming,' which has been distinctly declared. 'He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' There is, therefore, an appointed day in which God will judge the world. That judgment the Father hath committed to the Son. Its time and season is not revealed, further than that it shall take place at his second coming, which all true Christians bear in prospect as often as they celebrate his death. And when that solemn day shall come, then not only they who 'look for and love his appearing,' but 'every eye shall see him,'—believers and unbelievers, those who hope, and those who doubt, and those who deny, all alike shall behold, and stand in the presence of their judge.

'Behold, he cometh with clouds.' This peculiar mode of expression, 'He cometh with clouds,' is always used in reference to the second coming of our Lord to judge the world. Its full meaning we may not be able to comprehend, or even to imagine; whether that great day of dread decision and despair, as it has been termed, shall be ushered in with fearful convulsions in the frame of material nature, and the sun shall be so darkened with the thick gloom of impenetrable interposing clouds, that the glory of the coming Judge shall be the only light, constraining every eye to direct its anxious gaze to that sole source of brightness; we cannot venture to assert, though it seems to be the literal import of the passage: or whether the clouds and darkness be chiefly spiritual, resting upon the minds of men, and wrapping them in the dense obscurity of speculative unbelief, out of which they shall be suddenly startled by the brightness of his coming, at a time when the dread question may be asked, and left unanswered, 'when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' it would be presumptuous to decide, except thus far, that both views may be accurate, and that the latter, the prevalence of moral and spiritual darkness, seems to be clearly foretold. And as on the supposition of a general material darkness, broken only by his coming glory, that glory would be thereby the more brightly apparent; so the prevalence of

moral and spiritual darkness will the more constrain every soul to direct its earnest regards to him alone, with an engrossing fixedness, as intense as if there were in the universe but two beings—each gazing soul and the descending Judge, and but one object of thought—the sentence to be by him pronounced.

But, O! how different will be the states of those who will then behold him! They for whom he was pierced; whose souls have been washed in his blood, and clothed with his perfect righteousness; who have delighted to celebrate his death, and to look forward in faith and hope to his second coming, will then lift up their heads, for the day of their redemption not only draweth nigh, but is come, and already they hear him saying, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father!' 'They also which pierced him,' shall look on him whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for him, and 'all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.' Nor does this emphatic expression, 'they also which pierced him,' refer only to those whose wicked hands actually crucified the Lord of glory. To all to whom the gospel is preached, 'Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among them;' and of all who reject the preaching of the crucified Saviour, the apostle affirms, that they 'crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' Christ is therefore pierced by the impenitent and unbelieving, and all such shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall wail because of him. They thought it a light matter to reject the offers of the gospel—to refuse to believe on the Son of God, and to remain impenitent; but then they shall find, that by doing so they were incurring the terrible guilt of crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and preparing for themselves the terror and despair of looking upon him whom they have pierced, no longer as their unresisting victim, but as the Judge of all the earth, a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity, the impenitent, and unbelieving.

He is pierced by those also who refuse to bear their public testimony to the truths of the gospel, by observing its most sacred ordinance. For he who deliberately refuses to celebrate the Lord's death, as that great sacrifice by which salvation was purchased for lost man, virtually denies that such was its true character, counts the blood of the everlasting covenant an unholy thing, and like the Pharisees and Jewish rulers, condemns the Lord Jesus Christ as a blasphemer, because he called himself the Son of God. He who slights the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and refuses to observe it, may not indeed intend to avow

thereby his rejection of Christ, as an impostor and a blasphemer, which the Hebrew rulers did; but nevertheless it is evident, that when he refuses to bear publicly his testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus, his refusal is equivalent to a denial of that truth, and consequently to an affirmation of its opposite. Such a man must be regarded as one of those not *for* whom but *by* whom the Lord was pierced, and who shall wail because of him, at his coming.

And do not those also pierce the Lord, who celebrate this ordinance, and then return to the world, follow its example, and act as if the whole had been merely an empty ceremony, having no meaning or significancy, and involving no obligation? This thought ought to cause us to search our heart with deep care, to ascertain our own sincerity in observing the ordinance; but should not keep any sincere though trembling believer back. Though it should be true that by his subsequent backsliding the Lord has been pierced *by* him, yet if it be true that the Lord was pierced *for* him, he may mourn, but it will be 'as one mourns for an only son,'—a mourning in which deep, heart-warm, unalterable love is the predominating element, and his night of sorrow shall be changed into an endless day of joy at his Redeemer's coming. For such an one there is hope; but how terrible is the language of scripture respecting those who pierced Christ in malice or in scorn, and who, on that day, shall 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!' *The wrath of the Lamb!* gentleness itself turned to wrath! even that which would naturally have tended to soften and abate the strength and fierceness of wrath, becoming that very element, and burning the more intensely in the strangeness of its preternatural transformation! Love, divine, redeeming love, so long insulted, and at last changed into the consuming fires of eternal justice! How terrible the thought! In vain will those who despised the offers of salvation, seek to flee from the terrors of retribution. O, let us be warned in time,—let us hasten to him who as the Lamb of God died to take away the sin of the world,—let us show forth his death, and give ourselves to him, a living sacrifice,—that when he shall appear who is our life, we may appear with him, and enter into the joy of our Lord, even joy unspeakable and full of glory.

## FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?'* 1 Cor. x. 16.

THE leading thought contained in this verse is evidently that of communion in the fullest sense of that term. By *communion*, we understand a mutual participation of at least two parties or things in some master-element common to both, in such a manner that by each sharing in this master-element, they hold intercourse with each other also, and become mutually related to it and to each other. Thus understood, communion is the harmonious combination of different persons, parties, or things, otherwise different, but thus becoming united, so that the ultimate effect, as well as the common principle, of communion, is *union*.

When this explanatory view is applied to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the first aspect in which it attracts our attention is the union of the sign with the grace signified. This union is necessarily of a spiritual nature, depending for its existence upon the positive appointment of our blessed Saviour. When he instituted this sacred ordinance, he did so, not only because the signs employed had a natural adaptation to represent the thing signified,—as the wine poured out very naturally represented his blood shed,—but also, because it was his gracious purpose to communicate sealing grace in that sealing ordinance to those who in faith worthily received it. 'The cup which we bless' is also 'the cup of blessing;' the cup over which we offer thanks to God for his unspeakable gift, is also frequently the means by which that gift is the more largely bestowed on us. The ordinance in itself could avail us nothing; but Christ, in his own ordinance, is the true bread of life, of which, if a man eat, he shall never die. There is thus a spiritual union between the sign appointed by Christ and the grace signified, and the essence and ultimate effect are really one,—Christ represented, and Christ apprehended in his own ordinance.

This directs our attention to another, though a closely corresponding aspect of believing and spiritual communion; and that is, Christ and the benefits purchased by him actually communicated to the believing partaker of this ordinance. This too is spiritually accomplished. Faith, that spiritual gift, realizing the death of Christ evidently set forth in this ordinance, receives him as the divine Head and Mediator of the new covenant, loves him as the Son of God and

Saviour of perishing souls, and entering into, or renewing the sacred relation thus seen and received, sets to its seal that God is true, and by his truth is saved. In this full and fervent act of faith, Christ is received into the heart, and the heart is given to him. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, the love of Christ constraineth the true believer, and over the symbols of redeeming love he gives himself to that Saviour who gave himself for us. Thus is the communion of faith a real union between the soul and its divine Redeemer.

If this union be real, it is also indissoluble. All that the Father hath given to the Son, shall come to him, and none can pluck them out of his Almighty hand. Having loved his own, he loveth them to the end. Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Christ himself is the very essence of this spiritual union,—Christ in us the hope of glory. And all who are thus united to Christ, abide in him, and he in them, and he who has begun his own holy work in them will perfect it unto the end.

The spiritual union thus indissolubly formed between the soul and Christ, is the source of all joy and peace in believing, joy which the world can neither give nor take away, even joy unspeakable and full of glory. What can this world do to the man whose home is in that house of many mansions prepared for him by Christ his living head? What are all the trials and afflictions of this present life to him whose life is hid with Christ in God? What can greatly trouble him who enjoys within his own soul, in the presence there of his abiding Saviour, the peace of God which passeth all understanding to keep his heart and mind? And how inevitably does this union become the source of fruitfulness to God? 'He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.' This, this alone, can make the true believer fruitful unto God; and one great purpose of the ordinance which is thus communion and union with Christ, is that he may work in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight.

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'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,'* John xiv. 23.

It is a well known fact, that love is increased by intercourse and communion with the beloved

object. There is indeed a reflex influence exerted by love and communion on each other. Love impels us to seek frequent communion with those whom we regard with affection, and frequent communion increases our love, when the object of that love is truly worthy to be beloved. Even signs of communion both tend to increase our love, and are themselves valued both as signs of communion, and as the means of increasing love. How precious to the heart is some token of regard from a dear and absent friend,—how doubly precious the letter written by his own hand, bearing tidings of his welfare and assurances of his unchanged affection! And if this be the case in earthly matters, how much more ought it to be in those of a spiritual nature. If in the ordinances that commemorate redeeming love, we have enjoyed true communion with him by whom they were instituted, must we not both love these ordinances, and feel our love to him increased as often as we renew their celebration. To neglect an institution of love would most surely indicate that we had ceased to cherish affection towards him by whom it had been instituted. If we love Christ we will keep his words, we will observe every institution of his appointment; the very words in which it is expressed will become to us more and more precious, as often as they are repeated, and we will treasure them up as memorials of his everlasting love.

Our blessed and gracious Lord not only avails himself of this natural tendency of communion to increase our love, but also gives, as an additional reason, the gracious promise, 'And my Father will love him.' It fills the heart with deep and exulting joy to obtain the favourable regard of any distinguished person; and the more eminent such a person is, the more we rejoice in the enjoyment of his love. How should our souls and all that is within us, be stirred up into a fervour of heavenly joy, to know that the Almighty and Eternal, and only wise God will love us! Will love us, sinful and unworthy as we are! Yes, for his beloved Son's sake, and because Christ is in us and we in Christ, because Christ loves us and has enabled us to love him, therefore his Father and our Father, his God and our God, will love us. When Adam sinned he ceased to love God, because his guilty terror persuaded him that God had ceased to love him; and when he ceased to love God, Eden was to him no longer paradise. But when we are made to know and feel that God can and does love us still,—that 'herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,'—and when in

the ordinance of the supper, we hold spiritual communion with the Son of God, we can then feel and understand some portion of what that gracious promise means, 'my Father will love him,' for then the warm throbbing of our heart responds to its quickening and constraining power.

We further learn, in this gracious promise, the oneness of the Father and the Son, '*we* will come unto him.' Our divine Redeemer had previously said to his disciples, 'I am in the Father and the Father in me,' thereby teaching them the oneness of the Father and the Son; and here he informs them that in their love to him and his to them, there should be communicated to them a proof of that oneness still more direct and self-evident, '*we* will come unto him.' The love of God the Father, and of God the Son, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, gives to the soul that enjoys it a manifestation of the sublimely mysterious doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, infinitely more self-evident to the conscious perception of the quickened spirit than could be otherwise conveyed; as the undistinguishably blending beams of light tell that their essential nature is one. It might also be added, that while this *oneness* of the Father and the Son is thus revealed *in* rather than *to* the soul unto which they come in love, the idea of distinct *personality* is still retained, by the expression, 'make *our* abode with him.' For Christ does not say, make *his* abode, nor make *my* abode, but make *our* abode; so that while the *oneness* is taught, the *personality* is taught also. But we refrain from presuming to attempt explaining or searching into these sacred mysteries, which man can only believe, feel, and adore.

The expression, 'make our *abode* with him,' conveys an idea more within our comprehension, and full of hope, intimating continuance of communion. The hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof is not like a way-faring man, who tarries but a night. When he enters into the soul of a believer, he makes his abode there, and converts it into the temple of the living God. Let this be to every believing communicant a source of permanent joy and consolation. If God and Christ and the Holy Spirit make their abode with him, the earnest and foretaste of heaven must be already his, for that is heaven where God makes his abode. And this ought not only to insure complete heavenliness of mind, as in effect it must; but also to stimulate him to 'cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' How can the soul that is a temple of the Holy

Spirit, permit itself to be defiled with any thing unholly and impure! Let our earnest prayer and our constant endeavour always be to be holy even as he is holy, who dwells in us and we in him.

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SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

'For *we*, being many, are one bread, and one body: for *we* are all partakers of that one bread,' 1 Cor. x. 17.

'THAT one bread;' by these words we perceive that the peculiar force of this passage rests on what we are to understand by this expression. The language of our Saviour himself will best direct us here. 'My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven: for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. I am the bread of life.' The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, is 'that one bread' here spoken of by the apostle; and when he states that 'we are all partakers of that one bread,' he evidently refers to the spiritual union between the soul and Christ, of which the sacrament of the Lord's supper and our participation in it are so clearly emblematical. But it is not so much the direct consequence to the individual believer, of this spiritual union, which is here taught, as the mutual consequences to believers in reference to each other, from being all partakers in this communion, and being thereby united not only to Christ, but to each other. 'For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.'

'We, being many, are one bread and one body;' that bread is the bread of life, the Lord Jesus Christ; that body is the body which was sacrificed for us, which died and rose again, and lives for ever, of which all true believers are members. And being members of that body, are also members of each other,—all one in Christ. Many passages of scripture concur in stating this union of Christians, both in its essential principles and in its general aspect, such as:—'There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.' 'The head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.' Such is Christian union, on Christian principles.

How necessary is union for the welfare of mankind; how ineffectual are all merely human schemes to produce a true and lasting union; and how true, and lasting, and lovely must Christian union be! Mankind are fully aware of the great advantages of union; and many schemes have been adopted for the purpose of effecting such a union. But these schemes are founded on considerations of mutual interest, or policy, or expediency; and are all liable to be dissolved in a moment, if a more powerful element interfere,—or if even the common passion of selfishness put forth its malignant power. For selfishness is the dissociating principle; and whenever its pernicious nature is fairly roused, it rends asunder every merely human bond, and converts each individual into an Ishmael, with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him. And selfishness is the earliest form in which the effect of the *fall* appeared, when Adam meanly and selfishly strove to cast the blame of his sin upon Eve. Every union of fallen mankind is therefore liable to be dissolved by selfishness, whenever self is sufficiently interested to impel it to exert its natural and disruptive tendency. Not so Christian union; for that is in its own nature divine, and therefore unchangeable, and in its effects producing self-denial and disinterested love. 'Behold these Christians, how they love each other!' was the frequent exclamation of the astonished heathen in the first and purest times of Christianity; and although many a guilty error has crept into all Christian churches, and tended to interrupt that brotherly love which is truly characteristic of Christianity, still it is true, that there is a more pure, disinterested, and permanent union among true believers than can be found in all the world beside. They who are 'partakers of that one bread,' still feel themselves to be, though 'many, yet one bread and one body.'

All must acknowledge the excellency and the loveliness of Christian union; and to that extent surely all must deplore and condemn every form and degree of schism. How destructive is the fierce element of civil war!—how unseemly are family dissensions!—how bitter the strife of friends and brothers! But how unspeakably more destructive, unseemly, and bitter are hostilities, dissensions, and strifes in the community of believers, the household of faith, the heavenly brotherhood! How can the hand which partook of 'that one bread,' be lifted up in anger against another to whom it was communicated! How can that lip be moved in language of bitter scorn or fierce reproach against him, who may recently have tasted of the same cup which it trembled to

touch while commemorating the redeeming love of the one Lord and Saviour! Let us flee all such unchristian strife. If we truly love the Lord, let us love one another, as members of his spiritual body, and members of each other.

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SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,' Acts ii. 46.*

In this passage there is presented to us, doubtless for our imitation, a very beautiful example of Christian union. These early Christian converts had received into their hearts the constraining love of Christ: and loving him, they felt it no difficulty to love one another. Like the apostle whom Jesus loved, they could say, 'if he laid down his life for us, we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.' Their hearts were too much enlarged, and their souls too much elevated by the love of Christ to permit the narrow and fleeting things of life and time to be regarded as distinctions among the children of God and heirs of eternity. In whomsoever they saw the likeness, spiritually, of their Redeemer, they saw more than a brother, and their hearts glowed with more than the love of a brother to every member of the household of faith. That narrow, degrading and sinful selfishness which shrivels up the heart-strings of the worldly-minded, was completely destroyed; and they learned to know, because they learned to feel, that each man was to each a brother.

This was divine love putting forth its renovating power and reigning supreme in the hearts of those into whom it had been shed by the Holy Spirit. It was the fulfilling of the whole law, because it prompted equally to what duty requires and to what tender affection could suggest. It told the rich to supply the wants of their poorer brethren, and thereby to discharge their stewardship of God's rich bounties. It told the poor to receive with gratitude every such token of a benevolence which flowed from their common Lord, not repining on account of their own penury, or envying the greater wealth of their more affluent neighbours. In this manner, and from this principle they 'had all things in common;' because their spiritual union with the Lord, and consequently with each other, giving a common interest in eternity, caused the fleeting distinctions of time to disappear. They felt that as

wealth, rank, or any worldly distinction could not purchase God's favour, so the want of these temporal advantages could not prevent it; that with God there is no respect of persons, there being but two distinctions which his word recognises, 'of the world,' and therefore 'children of wrath,' or 'in Christ,' and therefore 'children of God;' and that, consequently, in every thing spiritual there was a perfect equality, all being equally poor in themselves, and all equally rich in Christ.

Feeling deeply and cherishing cordially such sentiments, they exhibited that beautiful example of Christian union recorded in the passage under consideration. They were one in church, 'continuing daily with one accord in the temple;' one in sacrament, continuing with one accord 'breaking bread from house to house,' the Lord being all in all to them. Thence arose that 'gladness and singleness of heart,' which formed the element of their full untroubled joy and peace in believing. Like brethren they dwelt together in unity; and for a brief period it might have seemed as if the blight of the curse had passed away from earth, and the hallowed reign of the Prince of peace had begun.

And should not Christians, who are Christians indeed, eagerly strive to imitate so lovely an example? Nay, do we not pledge ourselves, every time that we partake of that one bread, that we too will be one in church, one in sacrament, one in Him who is the head of his body, the church? It is not necessary that the fleeting distinctions of earth and time should be at once and utterly abolished, in order to produce this union. But let them be placed in their true position, as wholly subordinate to the interests, the hopes, and the prospects of eternity. If such matters as wealth and rank be necessary for this world's arrangements, what are they to the heirs of eternity? They are to the Christian no more than the temporary arrangements for the sake of order and convenience among travellers through a wilderness, beneficial or necessary, it may be, during their pilgrimage, but all to cease when they reach that country to which they are rapidly journeying. Least of all ought Christians to permit nice and subtle shades of sentiment and opinion to cause them to fall out by the way. And yet how miserably do many Christians sin in this respect! Where is the 'one accord,' which ought to fill their minds? where the 'gladness and singleness of heart,' which ought to expel all envy and malice and uncharitableness? Let every Christian church, and every Christian individual look into this matter, for in this all

greatly err. And even when it is necessary to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, let it be done in the grave and solemn earnestness of a soul desirous only of promoting the glory of God, vindicating the integrity of divine truth, and rescuing a brother from dangerous error.

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#### SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body,' 1 Cor. xi. 29.*

How awful is the barrier placed around the table of the Lord by this solemn and dread declaration!—especially as the first glance would lead us to understand it. But the context shows that by the word 'damnation' is not here meant the final and eternal loss of the soul, which that terrible word generally implies. For, not to place much weight upon the different rendering of the original word, which might fairly be translated 'judgment,' since that would still leave us to inquire what was the 'judgment' threatened; the succeeding verse not only entitles, but even requires us to understand it in a different sense. The apostle adds, 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.' It appears also, from the 21st and 22nd verses of the same chapter, that many of the Corinthians had profaned the Lord's supper not only by conducting themselves as if it had been a common meal, but even by being guilty of intemperance and other glaring abuses while pretending to celebrate this ordinance. Such conduct clearly proved that they did not discern the sacred nature of the ordinance itself, and were not at all impressed with the solemn truth it was intended to set forth. This profanation God had visited with judgments, chiefly of a temporal nature, many having been smitten with weakness, with sickness, or with death. These visitations of divine displeasure explain the meaning of the fearful word 'damnation,' or 'judgment,' and show that its direct import relates to the severe temporal judgments of disease and death which had been inflicted on those who had presumed wantonly to profane the Lord's table.

Let us beware, however, of concluding from this explanation, that the sin of profaning the Lord's table is a slight one, involving merely temporal judgments; for these judgments themselves were not slight. And in the last aspect of them mentioned, much more might be involved;

for by the expression 'many sleep,' the apostle evidently means, 'many are dead;' and if they died in such a state, without repenting and obtaining forgiveness, it might indeed involve final perdition. What we have to guard against is, either on the one hand viewing the sin of profaning this ordinance by unworthy participation as slight; or, on the other, being altogether prevented from venturing to partake by terror lest we incur the awful doom of final condemnation, from misapprehending the nature of the crime and the amount of the threatened penalty.

The main character of the crime committed by the Corinthians is expressed by the terms, 'unworthily,' and 'not discerning the Lord's body;' and both of these expressions have reference to the state of mind in which they had presumed to partake of this ordinance. They had irreverently regarded it as a common feast, and had presumed to come with all their selfish passions and grovelling appetites unsubdued and un-mortified. In this unholy state of mind their very presence was profanation. And 'not discerning the Lord's body' implies that faith and love, the chief elements of the Christian character, were wanting: and if they presumed to partake of an ordinance in which Christ, who died to save his people from their sins, was set forth evidently crucified among them, in a state of selfishness, impurity, faithlessness, and want of holy and heavenly love, they were indeed unworthy and unfit to receive it.

A similar sin may still be committed; and similar judgments may follow. Men may still come to the Lord's table without having experienced any change of mind, with all their selfish passions unsubdued, with all their sensual appetites in rank luxuriance, induced merely by the force of custom and example, and without that lively faith which can alone enable them to understand and feel the sacred nature of that solemn ordinance. And if they so come, although the temporal judgments of bodily sickness or death may not immediately overtake them, their hearts will unquestionably be hardened, their consciences seared, and their souls may sink into the fatal sleep of spiritual deadness. For it has often been experienced to be emphatically true of this sacred ordinance, that where it is not a savour of life unto life, it is indeed a savour of death unto death.

While we anxiously avoid incurring such a fearful hazard, let us mark on what our hopes of a more blessed result may be placed, so far as our own state of mind is concerned. If the unchanged depravity of heart and habit, and the

want of faith, were the sins of the Corinthians, which exposed them to such judgments, we ought earnestly to seek a change of heart and the possession of faith. Being convinced that our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, our earnest prayer ought to be that God would create in us clean hearts, and that we might be deeply sensible of our need of the Saviour's blood to wash out the dark inherent stains of our depravity. And following the same line of thought, we should humbly and fervently desire the presence in our souls of such a clear and strong faith as would give us a believing and lively sense of a present Saviour, crucified for sin,—even for our sins. In such a frame of mind we might humbly hope to be enabled with chastened heart and elevated soul, to look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, while celebrating his dying love.

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#### SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,' 1 Cor. xi. 28.*

SELF-EXAMINATION is no easy task. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?' Even he who has most carefully examined his own heart, and endeavoured to explore its depths of depravity, must often be startled by perceiving the sudden and unexpected appearance from time to time of guilty passions and sinful and corrupt inclinations of which he had previously no conception. What crime is there that ever man has perpetrated, of which had time and circumstance and temptation concurred, in the absence of the restraining grace of God, any other man might not have been guilty? At times we are both startled and appalled by the hideous thoughts that rush into the mind; at other times by the snaky feelings that raise their venomous crests within the heart, and shudder at ourselves, and at the terrible possibilities of our own depraved and guilty nature. Nay, even when we are engaged in the attempt to examine ourselves, do we not often find the deceitfulness of the heart manifested in the guileful sophistries with which we strive to extenuate the guilt which we cannot deny,—to explain away our most glaring enormities,—and to draw a flattering comparison between ourselves and others? In some cases we regard confession itself as extenuation; and after having made the admission, that certainly we are guilty sinners,

we rest almost contented with this admission, and conclude that we have some how got quit of our criminality by the mere fact of acknowledging its existence.

Since we are so prone to deceive ourselves, how important is it for us to raise to God the earnest prayer, 'Search me, and try me, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in me!' Give me to know the plague of my own heart. Cleanse me and then I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow. For it is only when God searches us that we can be enabled to know the hidden mysteries of our own depravity. It is only when the lamp of his word explores our bosoms that we can ascertain what is concealed within the chambers of imagery in that secret haunt of wickedness. The standard of examination can never be our own opinion of ourselves, either as we appear to ourselves, or as we appear when compared with others. The only true and sure standard is the word of God, and by that we ought to examine ourselves.

In what points, we may ask, should we examine ourselves? We may safely follow the well known direction, and examine ourselves of our *knowledge, faith, repentance, love, and new obedience.*

Of our *knowledge.* What do we know of God,—of ourselves,—of the way of salvation by a Redeemer? Do we know and believe God to be our Creator, who has a right to the service and adoration of our whole being, soul, body, and spirit? Do we know him to be infinitely wise, powerful, just, holy, and true?—who cannot behold iniquity without displeasure, and whose justice must continually demand an infinite fulfilment of his holy, and just, and good laws? And do we know ourselves to be rebels against his eternal Majesty,—depraved and guilty in his sight,—exposed to the dread vengeance of his violated laws, and incapable of ever rescuing ourselves from the terrible doom that awaits the ungodly? Do we know that God has himself revealed to us a new and living way of salvation, whereby we may be saved from the wrath to come; and instead of that eternal death which we deserve, has offered to us eternal life through his own beloved Son? Do we know that the Son of God has in our stead fulfilled the law which we had broken, and borne the punishment which we deserved, that he might redeem us from the captivity of sin and misery, and make us heirs of heaven and everlasting happiness?

Of our *faith.* Do we not merely know these great truths speculatively, but do we believe them with our whole heart?—for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. Does this

belief give them a real, living, and operating presence in our inner being, so that the truths believed become the moving principles of our existence, working by love, purifying the heart, and overcoming the world? Have we experienced a glad concurrence of our renewed will with the will of God, and a hearty reception of all that his word reveals, so that we can thoroughly venture our eternal welfare upon his mercy and love in Christ?

Of our *repentance.* Have we experienced that great change of heart and nature which causes us to love what once we hated, and to hate what once we loved? Whereas our carnal mind was enmity against God, does it now desire above all things to love God; and is the main cause of our sorrow and self-condemnation, that we do not more thoroughly love him? Is sin, which was formerly our delight, now detestable in itself, not only or even chiefly because it would involve our destruction, but because it is hateful in God's sight?

Of our *love.* Can we humbly yet truly say, that instead of the enmity which was natural to our fallen and carnal mind, the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us? Do we feel it a delight to think of God,—especially of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself not imputing to men their trespasses? Is that love the very element of our happiness, and the want of it the greatest cause to us of grief? Does it spring within our souls like an echo from the bosom of a hill answering to the voice without,—like the bright reflection of the sun from the clear waters, when the love of God to man is revealed, giving and calling forth new answering love?

Of our *new obedience.* Have all these revelations of God infused into our souls so much of a new nature as to produce a new obedience,—not the obedience of compulsion, but the obedience of love! Can we indeed say that his commandments are not grievous but joyous? And do we feel the sweetly constraining power of Christ saying not only to us, but within us, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments?' When he says to us, 'lovest thou me?' can we answer, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;' and is this love the principle of our new obedience?—an obedience more free and delightful than even angels can render?

If we have thus examined ourselves, by the standard of God's word, and obtained somewhat of a satisfactory answer, then may we eat in faith and hope; but not without such examination, lest we profane the ordinance and draw

down upon ourselves the just judgments of that God who will not be mocked.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved,'* Cant. v. 1.

If after a process of self-examination, conducted earnestly, faithfully, and according to the standard of God's word, the answer of the humbled yet enlightened conscience be such as to give us a good hope through grace that we have been born again, and that the life we now lead is not our own, but Christ in us; that we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father, may we not thankfully, and in the spirit of filial love approach our Father's table? Do we still need the encouragement of his gracious invitation? That invitation has been amply given and is continually repeated. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' 'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst Come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' 'Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.' How ample, how kind, how gracious are these invitations! What more can the soul desire to banish all doubts and fears, to quicken every hope, and to awaken the most fervent desire to draw near, to taste and see how gracious is our God, how full of love is our Redeemer?

'Friends!' And does God condescend to call those friends, whose natural state since the fall is enmity against him? Does the divine Redeemer call those friends the burden of whose sins caused the bitter anguish, the sore travail, the deadly agony of his holy, harmless, and undefiled soul! He calls those whom he invites friends; and as the term implies the relation of friendship, they are entitled to call him friend; Jesus, the friend of sinners. And, O, what a friend is he! 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' This Jesus did; not because *they* were *his* friends, but because *he* was *their* friend; for, 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; 'when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.' He is indeed a 'friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' He is a friend, whose friendship springs from eternal love, and shows itself in redeeming love; all the designs of whose

friendship are guided by infinite unerring wisdom, and all its acts rendered effectual by almighty power. Nothing can ever change his friendship; nothing can ever prevent it from accomplishing its purpose: for he is 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;' and 'he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' This our great God and Saviour, is our friend; and he invites us to the celebration of that great act by which his friendship for us was most signally displayed; to a feast intended to confirm our own reception of that divine and eternal friendship between the soul and him, which is salvation.

'Beloved!' In still more tender and endearing terms does he address us, calling us his own 'beloved.' We are accustomed to regard love as refined, disinterested, and elevated friendship, delighting to pour forth its own warm affection upon the object beloved, and asking nothing in return but the generous glow of equal and answering love. In this, too, the Lord our Saviour speaks to our hearts, calling us 'beloved.' How blessed, how inconceivably blessed to be 'beloved' by him whose name is Love! for 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.' This is more than invitation on his part and compliance on ours; it is union of desire and action on the part of both; it is love drawing and love delighting to be drawn; the love of Christ constraining so sweetly that the soul not only yields but rejoices to give itself up to the gracious constraint; it is the soul rejoicing to be willing in God's day of power, and glorying only to imitate Jesus in saying, 'Not my will, but thine be done!' 'Beloved!' O, can we hear the Lord Jesus Christ calling us his beloved, without hastening to accept him as our 'beloved' also? 'My beloved is mine, and I am his!' language not only fit for heaven, but the believing utterance of which is heaven already begun in the soul that is enabled to appropriate and use it!

When Christ thus terms his people his 'friends,' and his 'beloved,' we may readily apprehend the fulness and freeness of the invitation, according to which we are not only permitted to come to the prepared feast, but welcome,—and welcome to an abundant feast. The language of the text is metaphorical; but cold and barren must be the heart that does not feel and apprehend the meaning. What is there that the soul needs to secure its everlasting happiness? All that it can need, and all that it can desire, it may find abounding in the infinite fulness and unsearchable riches of

Christ. To receive him is to receive all the treasures of eternity; to eat the fruits of the tree, and drink the waters of the river of everlasting life. All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' 'In him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Such is the infinite abundance of the feast prepared, and such the welcome given to those whom the Saviour invites, as his friends and his beloved. O, come! Let us hasten to him, that we may enjoy the earnest and the foretaste of life and happiness eternal in our divine Redeemer's everlasting love!

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EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,' John i. 16.

How blessed is the soul; how blessed the people; who on the evening of a communion sabbath, after partaking of the feast prepared for them in the sacred ordinance of the Lord's supper, can with grateful and adoring hearts use the language of this text, and say, 'Of his fulness have we received, and grace for grace.' 'Of his fulness,' 'in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead.' What more can be desired; what more can be imagined? The soul cannot comprehend the vast, the infinite idea conveyed in these marvellous words. But let us attempt to view more minutely some portions of the divine truth herein taught.

The language of this verse refers us directly to that of the 14th, where it is said; 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.' By 'the Word made flesh,' we cannot fail to understand the Son of God incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ, our divine Redeemer. He is 'full of grace and truth;' and all true believers receiving him, receive 'of his fulness.' The very fact that they are believers and that as such they are receivers of his fulness, is itself from him, every part of salvation, and faith its recipient and realizer, being the gift of God. What have any that they did not receive? Man can have nothing that he can truly call his own but sin; for every good and perfect gift cometh from God, and in his unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus, they are all included; all 'of his fulness.'

'Grace for grace;' the proper meaning of the term *grace* is *free favour*,—that is, favour altogether undeserved, and most freely given, without the existence of any claim, and without

respect to the possibility of any requital. Even unfallen man could have had no claim upon God, for what had *he* that he had not received; and since the fall man could not claim even mercy. All God's mercies therefore are of grace; free and undeserved favour; and especially the new covenant established in the hand of the divine Mediator is the covenant of grace.

But there is also a very common, though a subordinate meaning, generally given to the term 'grace,' in which it signifies the effect produced within the soul by the sacred communications of the Holy Spirit, who is the 'Spirit of grace,' the 'promise of the Father,' the 'Comforter' sent by Christ to shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of his people, and to create them anew in righteousness and true holiness. According to this general meaning, all the assistance which God gives to man, and all the results of that assistance in the formation and appearance of the Christian character in believers, may be properly termed *grace*. Faith to receive Christ, help to resist temptation, support under affliction, strength for the discharge of duty, patience, resignation, hope, joy, peace, holiness, are all grace, or, as they are separately viewed, are all Christian graces. In this general and enlarged sense the word is commonly used; and thus we see the meaning of such an expression as 'growth in grace,' by which is meant the increase of divine communications to the soul according to its need, and the increasing triumphs over inherent and assailing evil thereby gained. The same view enables us also to explain the expression, 'grace for grace,' by which is implied, that each successive communication of divine help to the soul, both accomplishes the direct purpose for which it was given, and by its sanctifying influence prepares the soul for more; each gift qualifying for receiving gifts still greater.

The expression has, however, a still higher meaning. The Word, the Son of God, is 'full of grace and truth,' and 'of his fulness have we received, even grace for grace,' or, as it may be rendered, 'grace answering to grace.' In restoring to the soul the lost image of God, the Saviour gives his own, because he is 'the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.' Whatever resemblance to the divine image he bears, and that is *express*, he communicates to his people, that his gifts to *them* may correspond with the gifts in *himself*, that their bestowed graces may answer to his own inherent graces; that they may be like him, being 'changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' This is grace for

grace, grace answering to grace, restoring to the soul the image of God, and preparing it for that which is the very end and object of the whole covenant of grace, glory in heaven to redeemed souls, and through them to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for ever and for ever.

How fitting is such a subject to be the theme of fervent thanksgiving on the evening of a communion sabbath! Have we been permitted to sit down at the table of the Lord, there to commemorate the dying love of our divine Redeemer? Has he been made known to us in the breaking of bread? Has our faith been in such lively exercise that we have seen the king in his glory,—seen him who is the brightness of the Father's glory,—who is the Author and the Finisher or perfecter of our faith? Has he called us his friends, and his beloved, and have we felt the constraining power of his love drawing us most willingly to himself? Have we received him from the Father, and through him have we received the Holy Spirit of grace and truth, and in him all possible gifts and graces? What shall we render to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for all his gracious benefits? O thou most merciful and most gracious God, take our entire being, soul, body, and spirit, and make us thine own,—thine only, thine wholly, and thine for ever! Seal us unto the day of redemption; and put into our mouth now the song of Moses and the Lamb; the song of thy redeemed, a higher and a holier strain than even angels can ever raise! 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!'

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NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High.'* Ps. l. 14.

Of all the exercises of a devout spirit, thanksgiving is the most generous and the most elevating; is most nearly allied to the service of heaven. In prayer we address God as a giver, in thanksgiving we seek nothing for ourselves. In active duty we serve God as a master, in thanksgiving we recognize him as the fountain of all good. But here, as in every other act of worship, it is to be remembered, that there is a difference between the outward expression and the inward feeling of the heart. As to say our prayers is not to pray, so, to employ the language of praise

is not to be thankful. The homage of a merely external worship can never be accepted by him who requires us to present a spiritual sacrifice. It is as distinguished from the most profuse and costly oblation, that we are here called to offer unto God, not the beasts of the forest, nor the cattle upon a thousand hills, which are all his own, but to offer unto God—thanksgiving.

And, the flame of gratitude with which this sacrifice is offered upon Christ the true altar, must be kindled by himself. Thankfulness is not natural to the human breast. There may be the expression of it, the imitation of it, the spurious appearance that may be mistaken for its existence. But it is not the overflowing of the animal spirits upon the receipt, or upon the review of multiplied providential favours; it is not the slight, fluctuating, evanescent emotion, which has a reference to the gift, rather than to the giver: it is not the exhilaration, the buoyancy of elated feeling, awakened by a sense of mere personal comfort and repletion. True thankfulness, as it is inspired by God, is a deep, calm, steady principle. It is founded on a sense of unworthiness. It receives the blessings whether of providence or of grace, as bestowed upon the undeserving, and enjoys them with a double relish, as the gifts of a reconciled and benignant Father. It is not thrown into a state of ecstatic emotion by an unexpected gift, nor is it overwhelmed with despair when its earthly gourd is cut down. As it values the benefaction chiefly from the conscious favour of the benefactor, it can even rejoice in the unchanging excellence of the Great Source of its happiness, when the stream ceases to flow. Its feelings can then find expression in the beautiful language of the prophet, '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 stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.'

Nor are there wanting suitable materials to feed the flame of gratitude when it has once been kindled upon the altar of the heart. The instances of the divine favour are numerous as our moments, and long continued as our lives. Every personal, social, and domestic comfort is supplied by his hand, 'who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.' Whatever means and agencies he may see good to employ,—and in these too, there is no small evidence of his wisdom and beneficence,—he is himself the uncreated fountain, whose overflowings replenish all the streams of created enjoyment.

But chiefly, the feeling of holy thankfulness awakened in the hearts of God's own children, arises from this,—that they have been brought into the most intimate and endearing relation to him, as the members of his redeemed family. It is not that they enjoy outward privilege; that they live amid the light of the gospel day. It is not that they are among the people who have heard with the outward ear the joyful sound. It is not that they stand connected with Christ's visible church, have been sprinkled with the water of baptism, or have gathered around a communion table. These are, no doubt, in themselves high distinctions. To all however, who enjoy them, they bring deep responsibility, and unimproved as they are by many, they will only aggravate their final doom. But the special cause of the believer's gratitude is, that he is a believer; that the source and dispenser of all holy influence has in his experience made those means effectual for the end of their appointment,—the channels for conveying pardoning mercy and renewing grace to his soul.

And when he who has promised to bless the provision of Zion, and to satisfy her poor with bread, has admitted the soul into his own banqueting house, and during a season of solemn communion has given it to know, what it is to have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; then, indeed, has the believer most reason, and is he most disposed to offer unto God—thanksgiving. I have felt, he may then say, the reality and power of those things in which I have been instructed. It is not now a subject of testimony, it is a matter of experience, that there is a true and spiritual intercourse maintained between earth and heaven. God has spoken to me in the language of instruction, and he has opened my heart to receive the truth. He has addressed me in the language of promise, and he has enabled me freely to accept the blessings which he invites me to enjoy. There has been a conscious out-going of the desires of my heart to the exhaustless fulness treasured up in Jesus, and a flowing forth from the fountain of his love, of the blessings of his grace, to enrich and satisfy my soul. What shall I render unto the Lord, for so great and undeserved a benefit. I cannot be profitable to him as a man is profitable to his friend. Let him prescribe the manner in which I am to express my thankfulness, and let me hear his voice, when he thus makes known the return he requires,—‘pay thy vows unto the most High.’

Out of every favour which should awaken our gratitude, there arises a corresponding obligation

to obedience. Has the great Creator given us our existence, and does he daily supply whatever renders that existence a blessing? How can we better express our thankfulness, than by devoting to him the lives he has given, and makes happy by his goodness? How can we more appropriately express our thankfulness for the Bible, than by searching it; for the privilege of prayer, than by engaging in it; for our sabbaths, than by remembering them to keep them holy; for God's unspeakable gift, than by receiving it as our own? What more suitable expression of our thankfulness, in short, can be given to our heavenly Benefactor, than thus rendering his favours subservient to the purpose for which they are bestowed?

Besides the obligation to ‘live unto the Lord,’ which results from the numberless blessings that crown our lot, there is another consideration to stimulate obedience suggested by the words before us. We have superadded our own solemn and voluntary vows. Not only do we owe a debt to divine goodness which we can never calculate, and can never pay, but we have come under a solemn and voluntary engagement which we are bound to fulfil. The most High reminds us of our plighted faith.—What was the language of my behaviour—more significant than any audible utterance I could have employed, when lately I approached his altar, and took into my hands the cup of salvation? It was this,—sin shall not dwell in my mortal body—Satan shall not lead me captive at his will. The Lord shall henceforth be the portion of my soul,—his love shall be my motive, his word my rule, his strength my support, his glory my end. Thou who dost enjoin the duty, give me grace, to pay my vows unto the most High; and, when sloth, or sensuality, or worldliness, or the enticements of sinners, or the force of temptation, would make me faint or grow weary in the way of well-doing, let the scene of my solemn vow arise before my view to rebuke my languor and to stimulate my obedience. Let the house of prayer where I worshipped,—the table that was spread before me,—the memorials of my Redeemer's love over which I vowed to be the Lord's, be made to stand before mine eyes, as the stone of remembrance erected by Joshua when the tribes of Israel entered into covenant with their God.—‘And Joshua took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us: for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.’

## NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten,'* Jer. l. 5.

LIFE is a journey. It is a journey which must soon be finished. Of all men is it equally true that they are passing, smoothly and imperceptibly it may be, but rapidly along the way. It matters not whether they advance with a reluctant or a cheerful pace; they have no control over the rapidity of their progress. Other travellers may pause in their journey, may recline in the inviting shade, or loiter among the enchanting scenes which lie along their road, and resume their path at the point where they had abandoned it; but life is a journey in which none can stand still. In whatever way we employ ourselves upon the road, we are steadily hastening to its end.

And, what is an infinitely more solemn truth: life is a journey which conducts us to a permanent home. We are sojourners through this world to another, in which we must dwell for ever. Death finishes our pilgrimage, not our existence. It is the threshold through which we pass to an everlasting habitation,—a habitation differing in its character, according to the difference in the spiritual condition of the inhabitant. A holy and happy home for the pure in heart; or a home which, if it may be so called, is only entitled to the name, because it must be the doleful and everlasting dwelling-place of the impenitent, where they shall for ever be the prey of the most malignant passions, and the victims of the blackest despair.

Think then, O my soul, whither thy course during thine earthly pilgrimage is likely to conduct thee. Hast thou made thine entrance by faith into the strait gate, and art thou walking in the narrow way that leadeth to life. If thou art not treading with fearless footsteps the broad road to destruction, see that thou art not pursuing one or other of those numerous bye-paths which less obviously, but as surely, conduct to the chambers of everlasting death.

It may serve to guide us in this interesting inquiry, if we look at the group of travellers to Zion here presented to our view. They are a company of captive Jews, who, when the power and pride of their Babylonish oppressors had been broken and subdued, are returning to their own land, to rebuild their city, to restore their temple, and to renew their covenant. But they are examples to us; they show the dispositions and state of mind with which Christian pilgrims,

freed from the captivity of sin, should seek the heavenly Zion.

*They are weeping travellers.* In the previous verse they are represented as 'going and weeping.' The foundation of the spiritual character is laid in the exercises of repentance. Hence we read of 'repentance unto salvation.' It is at once a part of salvation and a preparation for all the rest. The conflict, the enlargement of heart, the longing after holiness, the feeling of unspeakable obligation to redeeming mercy, all the experiences in short of the Christian heart, imply a sense of sin and a hope of forgiveness, flowing through the channel of Christ's mediation. It has been asked, whether the tears of the sojourners to Zion were those of sorrow, or of joy. They may have been both. The remembrance of their sins and of their captivities may have mingled in their bosoms with the prospect of their deliverance, and of their return to their native land. Certain it is, that the Christian feels, that the tears of repentance are not wholly bitter tears. He would not exchange the tender relentings of a contrite and broken spirit, for all that the world calls good. And, his deepest sorrow prepares him for his holiest joy. His most heart-affecting consciousness of sin, becomes the pledge and the prelude of his purest consolations.

*They are inquiring travellers.* Intent upon reaching Zion, they ask the way. Although they have heard of it, and are not wholly ignorant of it, their fear of missing the road induces them to seek the direction of those who know it better, because they have walked on it before. So it ever has been with the travellers to the heavenly Zion. While the formalist and the mere secular professor, are content to pursue the beaten path which opinion or custom prescribes, the pilgrims to the Jerusalem that is above, cannot be satisfied unless they know that they are really on the road that leads to it. They consult the records that have been left by previous pilgrims, who have travelled the same way; they look at the finger-posts which are to be found at the several turnings of the road, for the guidance of anxious passengers. They apply for divine light and direction. This is their prayer, 'Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth and teach me.' And this their answer, 'I will instruct thee, and teach thee the way in which thou shalt go.' Hence,

*They are travellers on the right road.* They ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. How often do men fail of reaching heaven not so much for want of effort, as that their energies have got into an improper channel. They are off

the way; and every step they take they are only receding from the point which they profess themselves anxious to reach. While God has expressly told us in his word the only way in which his favour is to be obtained—by faith in the Saviour whom he has sent; and while he has there no less distinctly informed us of the nature of the obedience he requires—an obedience at once the evidence and the effect of the faith of the gospel; sinners, by a fatal ingenuity bend the straight rule of duty to their own crooked inclinations. They have found out, it seems, that opinions and principles are of no great value in religion, provided external duties are attended to, and substituting something like the effect for the real cause, the good works themselves, for the principle that gives them all their value in the estimation of God, they may imagine that they are travelling to heaven, but their faces are not thitherward. Not having entered by the strait gate, they are not walking in the narrow way. Of those on the other hand whose case is represented by the returning Israelites, their eyes have been turned away from every vain confidence. And they act in conformity, or at least ever desire to act in conformity with the direction of Christ when he says, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me.'

*They are travellers who encourage one another in the way.* Delivered from the same captivity, returning to the same land, they stimulate each other to encounter the hardships, and they cheer each other, amid the loneliness of the way. And true it is, that Christian pilgrims in the wilderness of this world, require all the aids that mutual sympathy and excitement can supply, to withstand the causes of weariness and fainting to which they are liable in pursuing their heavenward journey. Let us seek to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, that we may contribute our share to realize the attractive picture of the group of travellers portrayed by the pen of inspiration, 'they go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.' And finally,

*They are resolute travellers.* They are determined to persevere in their journey, to reach the place of their destination; to devote themselves wholly to the Lord. They propose to enter into a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten. It is perseverance that proves sincerity. He that endureth to the end and he only shall be saved.

TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody,' Is. li. 3.*

To them that follow after righteousness and that seek the Lord, scripture is full of strong consolation. And what renders the blessings promised to them peculiarly sweet as well as seasonable, is, that they are bestowed by the hand of God. Whatever the instruments or the second causes that may be employed for the purpose of transmitting his favours, or accomplishing the designs of his grace, it is the Lord himself that shall comfort Zion. He it is who alone can and will make her wilderness like Eden; her desert like the garden of the Lord.

Should suspicion or unbelief raise an objection to the accomplishment of his promise from the apparent hopelessness of the desolations that may prevail, the desponding spirit is directed to take a retrospective view of what has already been accomplished. By looking at the history of the Jewish people,—the all but miraculous origin of so numerous a race from Abraham their father, and Sarah that bare them, and the truly miraculous deliverances already achieved in behalf of the chosen tribes, the inference is irresistible, that the Lord can, as the promise before us is sure, that he will visit and revive his inheritance.

The prediction seems to have an ultimate reference to the gospel age. The captivities and deliverances of the Jews, shadow forth still more important and interesting events. The revival, prosperity, and renovated beauty of the whole church in the latter days, may justly be considered as portrayed in this delightful passage. But what is the church?—the collective body of believers. Whence its peace, joy, and enlargement, but in the vigour and vital power of grace in the hearts of its individual members? How much soever the feelings of the Christian heart therefore are gratified by the assured prospect of the prosperity of Zion, it may be more useful to view the language before us in the application of which it so naturally admits, to the drooping and languishing soul.

Even in the season of deepest desertion and desolation, there is a wide difference between the character of the spiritually awakened mind, and that of the careless and lifeless sinner. At all times, every believer more or less, manifests the two-fold quality, of following after righteousness,

and seeking the Lord. He would do good, even when evil is present with him. Faint and faltering he still follows after righteousness. Not only is it the habitual object of his desire to be found in Christ,—‘to have the righteousness of God by faith,’ but he longs for that personal conformity to the image of Christ, the outline of which has already been formed upon the tablet of his heart. Knowing, that he cannot find a satisfaction suited to the new tastes and enlarged capacities of his soul in any created good, he is restless and unhappy in the conscious absence of the divine favour. The habitual language therefore, of his heart is—thy face, O Lord, will I seek.

When, notwithstanding such a general character, he walks in darkness,—when enemies triumph and lead him captive,—when he hangs his harp upon the willows,—when faith is weak and hope almost expires, let him hearken to the voice of God. He speaks comfort,—he brings comfort—he expects the expression of gratitude and joy.

In the prediction before us he *speaks comfort*. The Lord shall comfort Zion. Such language of promise is designed to teach us, not only whence every good gift comes, but to induce a feeling of personal helplessness; for God does not promise to do for us what we can do for ourselves:—to call forth a feeling of need; for he does not promise to give, what we do not require:—to promote faith in his word; for he designs us to believe that what he promises he will bestow:—and to awaken devout expectation, that we may wait for God, more than they that watch for the morning. There is thus a connection between blessings promised and bestowed, both upon the part of the giver, and of the receiver. The giver, thus prepares the heart to welcome his favours; and the receiver, is thus fitted to take them with humble gratitude. When the ear of faith therefore, is opened to the voice of promise, it is a blessed evidence that spiritual darkness and desolation are about to be succeeded by light and joy. For the Lord not only speaks comfort,—*He brings comfort*. Man may promise what he cannot perform. Even when the promise is sincere, circumstances may arise which render its fulfilment impossible. Human wishes may be most cordial, yet impotent and vain. We may speak comfort, while our words may only increase the poignancy of grief, or deepen the shade of sadness and sorrow. It is not so with the Lord. When he who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, and who came to declare him, trode in human nature the surface of the world he had

made, he said to the widow of Nain, who mourned the loss of her only son—weep not. Yet this had only been to mock her grief, had he not immediately proceeded to do that which dried up her tears. And, he who says that he shall comfort Zion, does, in his own time, what he promises to do. The same creative energy that made beauty and order to arise out of the rude and chaotic elements of nature, before they were moulded and fashioned by his hand, will, and does at length bring joy and gladness to the desert heart,—so that upon the once arid and barren soil, instead of the thorn and the brier denoting perplexity and desolation, there come up the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree, fit emblems of fertility and joy.

So blessed a change demands to be acknowledged *with the voice of melody and praise*. Great favours call for corresponding acknowledgments. The overflowings of a grateful heart, vent themselves in the channel of thanksgiving. And whence should the voice of melody ascend in fuller notes to the ear of heaven, than from a heart that has been revived and beautified by restoring grace. Can I say then, ‘I was brought low, and he helped me?’—Can I address my redeeming God in the language of the psalmist, ‘thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling?’—let the experience of past desolations enhance my feeling of obligation, and enliven my song of praise; and let my gratitude express itself in the devout resolution,—‘I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.’

TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*‘The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous,’* Psal. cxviii. 15.

REJOICING and salvation should always go together. It is incongruous for salvation to be associated with sadness, or for ruin to be decked with joy. Yet how often are mirth, music, and dancing found in tabernacles where salvation has never come; and sometimes silence and sorrow reign in dwellings where joy and gladness should establish their throne. The fact, however, here stated by the psalmist should be a universal fact. By asserting what often is, he alleges what should always be.

*Who are the persons described?* They are the righteous. But there is, in some sense, none righteous, no not one. There is a meaning notwithstanding in the designation by which they

are thus distinguished from other men. Those here mentioned are righteous in a twofold sense. They stand accepted in the Beloved,—clothed in a robe that has been put upon them, in which infinite purity and justice itself can see no shade of pollution. They are so far too personally righteous, that they desire to be made entirely so. Theirs is that imperfect kind of perfection, as it has been happily called, which consists in an ambition to become absolutely perfect. They would be holy in their measure, even as the Lord their God is holy.

*What is said of them?* They give utterance to the grateful feelings of their hearts. There is a time to speak, as well as a time to be silent. There is a time to enter into our closet and shut our door, and pray to our Father who is in secret; there is also a time to 'speak the praise of the Lord.' The righteous have received light, not only that they may enjoy, but that they may impart it. Their hearts have been gladdened, not only that they may experience, but express joy. More especially, in reference to those with whom they are united in the most intimate and endearing relations of life—their families, the righteous have ever felt that they should unite in social worship.

And *why* is the voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacles of the righteous? Because they know, that the family relation has been instituted by God. 'He maketh him families like a flock;' that the affections of the heart, and the objects upon which they are exercised, are equally created by divine goodness, and that he is the great and unwearied benefactor of their households. Dependent as they feel themselves to be upon him in their family capacity, as well as individuals; receiving as they do from his hand, the health, the provision, the comforts that sustain or sweeten their social existence, nothing is considered to be more reasonable or becoming, than that the incense of family devotion and praise should arise to him, who has formed the ties which unite them in domestic life, who has opened all the sources of domestic happiness and makes their cup to overflow.

The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous, because in this respect they would be followers of them who by faith and patience inherit the promises. They would follow Abraham, who from the highest source of approval has received this testimony. 'I know Abraham that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.' They would imitate the patriarchs of old, who, wherever they pitched their tents, erected their altars

Like Joshua, they would resolve that they and their houses should serve the Lord. Like David, after the occupations of life and even the exercises of public devotion, they would return to bless their house. In regard to these and similar examples of household worship, they would hear their divine Master say, Go and do likewise.

The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous, because they would make their dwellings a nursery for the church on earth. Families are the little communities that supply the various ranks which constitute the mighty mass of human society. The silent but sure process is going on in the various tabernacles of the land, by which the characters are formed that are to crowd the walks of human life. They generally come forth with that stamp which they receive within their father's dwelling. The germ at least of their moral state which time and circumstances afterwards mature, is for the most part planted under the domestic roof; and it is usually from the tabernacles of the righteous that the church is supplied with her members. They would therefore, gather their domestics and their offspring around the family altar, and there devote them to the service of the God of their fathers; there commend them unto the Lord, and to the word of his grace, that peradventure the character may be formed within them, which may render them a seed to serve him in their generation, and to transmit the memory of his goodness to generations yet unborn.

The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous, because they would make their dwellings an emblem of heaven. When the assembled family meet to offer unto the Lord the sacrifice of thanksgiving, to hear him speak to them out of his word, and to kneel together before his throne, they not only present to the eye the loveliest evidence of union and Christian brotherhood, awakening the sentiment in the bosom of the spectator, 'behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity,' but true union of heart is most likely to be promoted: the asperities and strife which an unrestrained and familiar intercourse are apt to engender, are most likely to be allayed; the envies and jealousies incident to domestic life are most likely to be subdued; bonds more hallowed and enduring than the tenderest ties of nature are most likely to be formed, and a pledge and foretaste is often given of the blessings that shall be enjoyed by the family above.

Whatever then be the godlessness or defection that may prevail, let this be our resolution, 'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.'

And in addition to such considerations as have been mentioned, as influencing the righteous in this department of duty, let us think that our tabernacle shall soon be taken down. The word suggests the idea of change and removal. Not only is it true in regard to our individual persons, that the earthly house of our tabernacle shall soon be dissolved; but it is true of our families, that they too must soon merge and be lost in the stream of passing generations. To how short a distance in the upward course of time can the most ancient families trace their pedigree, and in regard to the most illustrious houses, the line of their descendants shall at farthest be effaced by the hand of a few revolving centuries. Shall it not therefore be the object of our Christian solicitude and ambition, not only to have our own names written in heaven, but to have those of our descendants too written there, upon a tablet from which they shall never be erased; that we and they, united in him of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, may live and reign with him for ever.

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 TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him,' Ps. xxviii. 7.*

MANY and great as are the necessities of the believer, he finds in his covenant God a supply for them all. A sense of need however, expressing itself in importunate supplication goes before the communications of divine grace. This language of exultation and joy is preceded by the voice of earnest prayer. It brings before us what God is to the believer—the believer's reliance upon God; and the resolution he forms in consequence of the aid he receives.

*The Lord is my strength and my shield.* It is evident, before such language can be sincerely and intelligently adopted, that he who employs it, must have far other views than men generally entertain, both concerning God, and concerning himself. With the aversion to God which is natural to the fallen heart, his Almighty power is regarded with alarm rather than with confidence, because our guilty fears suggest, that this power may be exerted in our punishment, rather than in our protection. With the self-confidence which we naturally entertain, we imagine that we can ward off danger with our own arm, or that at any rate we have received powers, which,

when suitably exercised, will serve to ensure our safety. But when the love of God has been shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given to us, when brought to feel that this God is our God—we rejoice in all his perfections; in his justice, because it is satisfied,—in his truth, because it is pledged for our well-being,—in his power, because he is omnipotent to save. And, when brought to see that in us 'there dwelleth no good thing,' that we are at once sinful and helpless, we are glad to betake ourselves to the rock that is higher than we. By the one class God is looked upon with suspicion, and themselves with complacency; by the other, God is regarded with confidence, and themselves with self-abasement.

Thrice happy he, who, conscious of his weakness, can truly say the Lord is my strength. He has a prevailing strength, for greater is he that is for him, than all they that are against him. He has a present strength—for he 'is a present help in the time of trouble.' He has a perpetual strength—for he will never leave nor forsake him.—He will perfect his strength in weakness. 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.'

Nor less blessed he who can truly say,—the Lord is my shield. He has an ample shield which leaves no part of the spiritual warrior unprotected;—an impenetrable shield which no weapon can pierce,—a changeless shield, the qualities of which remains unaltered by the progress of time, untouched by the hand of decay.—

Though troubles assail and danger afright—  
 Though friends should all fail and foes all unite,  
 Yet one thing ensures me, whatever betide,  
 The scriptures assure me the Lord will provide.

Yet is it to be remembered, that the support in the season of weakness, the safety in the hour of conflict which the believer enjoys, correspond with his reliance on God. '*My heart trusted in him and I am helped.*' The language is expressive. It denotes a dependence at once sincere and affectionate; the offspring of knowledge and of love. His state of mind whose experience is here recorded, is not that vague and general reliance which is so often expressed in the season of adversity, or in the prospect of death, by those who conceive of the Almighty as such an one as themselves, and array him in their imaginations with the qualities of mildness without moral excellence. The heart that trusteth in him, has been opened to receive the testimony which scripture bears to the spiritual character of its Author. Its reliance is not placed upon an un-

known God. The heart that trusteth in him, has been brought into a measure of conformity to his image and acquiescence in his will. Its reliance is placed upon the God it loves. Its trust is thus so far enlightened, cordial, cheerful, entire. And in proportion as it is so, it finds help. When such scriptural confidence is wrought in the heart, it is the forerunner of safety and repose. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.'

Thus attuned to the exercise of thanksgiving, the rejoicing heart exclaims—'*with my song will I praise him.*' And this is a song which does not consist in the mere language of celebration. It is not the effusion of gratitude, which passing away, leaves no trace behind it, like a dying echo among the munitions of rocks with which divine power has surrounded the soul, or along the mountain sides of the divine benefits. The believer desires that his whole life should become a hymn of praise to his fortress and deliverer, his buckler and the horn of his salvation. From a heart enlarged and purified by the emotions of grateful love, he desires that there should flow forth the streams of a holy obedience, in all the channels of Christian well-doing.

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TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly,'*  
Psal. lxxxv. 8.

God alone can speak to the inward ear. As he only can penetrate the heart with the voice of salutary and saving conviction, he only can bring peace to the alarmed conscience, and apply a healing balm to the wounded spirit. This he does by bringing the perturbed and stricken soul to him who has 'made peace by the blood of his cross.'

The peace which he thus speaks to the man, who, once like others a sinner, is now numbered among his people and his saints, is a peace, sure in source; satisfying in its nature; lasting in its continuance.

Sure in its source, it comes from none of those false and delusive views in which the careless and impenitent seek repose. The unsullied purity, the unchanging obligations, the unalterable sanctions of the divine law, have been unfolded to the eye of the believer. But he has also seen the everlasting Father look with infinite compla-

cy on the finished work of his own dear Son; has beheld the law magnified and made honourable by him, both in its precept and in its penalty. And hearing the voice that speaks to him saying, 'You, who were sometime alienated, yet now hath he reconciled,' his peace rests upon a foundation, firm as the purpose and immutable as the perfections of the eternal God.

Satisfying in its nature, this peace sheds a hallowed influence over the whole soul, and brightens the darkest scenes. The light of conscious acceptance with God rising upon the soul, brings a serenity and gladness which nothing else can impart. Accompanied as it ever is with purity, and promoting as it does exemption from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, it keeps the heart and mind under its blessed guardianship, secure, not indeed against attack but overthrow, from the arrows of external evil, and the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Lasting in its continuance, it may be interrupted, it cannot be destroyed. When a union with the Saviour, which is its foundation and source, has been formed, that union shall never be dissolved. Clouds may overcast the soul, sin may darken, evil passions may agitate, and the storms of temptation may assail, but he who rebukes the raging of the billows shall at length appear and say, Peace, be still. At his command there is a great calm; a happy foretaste of the blessed time when the believer shall bathe his weary soul in the unruffled ocean of eternal rest.

How different this peace which the Lord speaks to his people and his saints, from that delusive security which is the effect of ignorance and hardness of heart. The one is the peace, if indeed it be entitled to the name at all, which a blind man may feel, who, walking on a dangerous way, is secure, because he sees not the danger; the other the cheerful confidence he feels, who, in pursuing his journey sees a smooth unbroken path before him. The one is the unnatural stillness of a flowing stream which has been impeded in its course by an artificial barrier, which it shall soon burst or overflow; the other is the calm unruffled surface of the lake, whose tranquil bosom reflects the mild radiance of the setting sun. The one is like the lowering pause of nature which portends a storm; the other like nature's serenity when the storm has ceased.

That they to whom this peace has been spoken should be in danger of turning again to folly, is a very humbling reflection suggested by the admonition before us. Yet true it is, that the man who once felt the light of spiritual gladness cheering his soul, is sometimes seen groping his way amid

the darkness and dimness of spiritual night. He who had tasted that the Lord was gracious, is sometimes observed to lose his relish for the word of life. The heart that once glowed with affection to Christ, has been known to leave its first love. Christian activity has not unfrequently been paralyzed by the hand of sloth, and Christian hope eclipsed by the false glitter of worldly expectation.

Let therefore the solemn warning be listened to, by those who have heard the voice which has spoken peace, now speaking instruction. Let them not turn again to folly. Such backsliding upon their part involves base ingratitude, and a forfeiture of the peace they enjoy.

It involves base ingratitude. Had they never tasted that the Lord was gracious; had the light never dawned upon their view which revealed to them the darkness that rests upon the mountains of vanity, there had been less wonder that they had continued to wander among forbidden pastures, and to drink at polluted streams. There had in that case too been less dishonour brought upon the holy name by the which they are called, less injury inflicted upon the Redeemer's cause. But to leave the serene cheerfulness of their Father's house for the evanescent and unsatisfying joys of the world; to abandon its wholesome and choice provision for the husks of earthly delight, evinces an unfathomable depth of deceitfulness and desperate wickedness in the human heart. It is to forget and disown the most signal benefits, to slight and despise the tenderest love. It is to do more. It is to bring up an evil report against the land of promise. It is to testify against God, as if he had been to them a wilderness and a land of darkness. Instead of being a light to inquirers in the way, they become a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence, to prevent access into the path of life.

This backsliding must necessarily lead to a forfeiture of peace. The peace of believing is the peace of God. Not only is it spoken to the heart by him, but it is a peace conformable to the character and the purpose of the God who bestows it. He is a holy God. His purpose in regard to his redeemed family is, that they should be 'holy and without blemish.' Their peace arises from the consciousness of pardoned sin, accepted persons, and a heavenly home. But can a sense of pardon subsist in the heart, in union with cherished corruption? Can an assurance of acceptance in the beloved cheer the breast, while a conformity to his image is not steadily pursued? Can the hope of that happy inheritance, wherein dwelleth righteousness gladden the

heart, where no progressive advancement is made in 'holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' It cannot be. While the source of the believer's peace in the unchanging character and love of its Author is ever the same, by returning to folly he embitters with his own hand the stream of his comfort, shuts out the light which would have guided and cheered him in his heavenly way. Nay, he provokes the direct and often severe inflictions of the rod, with which an incensed father compels the return of his wandering children to himself. 'I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.'

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 TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit, let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands,' Is. xlii. 10—12.*

AMID the darkness that rests upon the dispensations of providence towards our world, in reference to the partial diffusion of the gospel, it is cheering to look forward to the dawn of a brighter day. The light of prophecy irradiates the future. It directs the eye of faith to a time when the remedy which infinite benevolence has provided, shall be co-extensive with the evil which it is designed and fitted to remove; when the sound of the trumpet that proclaims liberty to the captives shall reach the remotest islands, and be echoed along the most distant shores.

This happy time, when the isles shall wait for the Redeemer's law, so fully predicted in the previous part of this chapter, is presented in various forms to our view in the book of prophecy. It is the subject of distinct prediction, that men shall be blessed in him, that all nations shall call him blessed. It is embodied in promises given to Christ himself,—'I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.' It is included in promises given to the church, that the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising. It is exhibited in

the aspect of the renovated earth, when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; when they shall all know the Lord from the least of them even unto the greatest of them.

This state of purity and peace that awaits the world, is represented as being of no short duration; not a gleam of light to be succeeded by the gathering clouds of ignorance and sin; but to remain for a long season—as ‘a joy of many generations.’ It is to be a simultaneous condition of spiritual prosperity: not a transference of light from one region of the earth to another, the fitful glare of the torch kindled by a human hand, but diffusive, universal. The earth is to be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

It is with a reference to this bright and happy epoch, that the prophet in the words before us calls for a new song—new, in as much as it shall be sung by new worshippers, and as it is awakened by a new cause of gratitude and joy.

Then shall the waste and barren wilderness where moral desolation has hitherto reigned, the Arab tribes, and the once savage and ignorant inhabitants of the rocks and mountains, offer their tribute of thanksgiving and praise: and in their accession to his spiritual kingdom, shall Messiah reap a part of that harvest of ‘the joy that was set before him,’ and which induced him to endure the cross, despising the shame.

Nor shall there be wanting good cause for their new song. Never had they received benefits so well fitted to attune their hearts to gratitude, and their tongues to praise. Superstition, which inflicts innumerable physical evils and sufferings upon its victims, has now disappeared; the grasp of a cruel and relentless tyranny which fettered their minds, has now been relaxed: the social degradation and misery that embittered their existence, has now yielded to the benign influence of that heaven-born religion, which brings peace to earth, and good-will to the children of men; and above all, their souls enlightened, and their hearts purified and enlarged by regenerating grace, and the infusion of divine and holy truth, they enjoy the highest bliss which man can experience on earth, along with a sure anticipation of the continuance and increase of that happiness in heaven.—Mercies so new, and so abundant, surely call for new and rapturous songs.

And what is the effect which the prospect of so glorious a consummation of the hopes of the church, should produce upon our minds who have already heard the joyful sound? Since a result so honouring to our heavenly king, and so much

in unison with the wishes of the Christian heart, is to be brought about by human instrumentality, what Christian can fail to lend his aid to so high and hopeful an enterprize? Under what pretext can we refuse our co-operation in a work, the most sublime that can call forth human endeavour? How shall we set aside the tender, the powerful, the urgent motives that should induce and stimulate our obedience in this great branch of Christian well-doing? Our distinct obligation,—the honour which a participation in the work confers—the compassion we owe to the perishing—our personal obligations to redeeming love,—the short period during which alone we can contribute to hasten the coming of the kingdom, all concur in commending this heavenly undertaking to our best regards; and in admonishing us, that the desire and prayer of our hearts, should also be the work of our hands.

To us especially, the dwellers upon the British isle, which owes its high distinction among the nations of the earth, to the sovereign grace by which the day-spring from on high hath visited us, is it a solemn duty, not only to rejoice in the light, but to diffuse it. The best and most appropriate evidence of our thankfulness for the favour we have so long enjoyed, is to send forth bands of labourers into the wide field of the world, to break up the fallow ground, and to commit to it the seed of the word;—so that, when the general and joyful acclamation shall arise from the renovated earth, we may join in the song which we have been blessed as instruments to occasion, and both they that sow and they that reap, shall rejoice together.

#### TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*‘As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?’ Ps. xlii. 1, 2.*

BANISHED from the courts of the Lord; wandering by the foot of Lebanon, the royal psalmist found a beautiful and appropriate emblem to represent the longings of his soul after God, in the thirsty hart panting to drink of the rivulets that flowed down the mountain sides. And in the record of his experience there are three things descriptive of the character of a believer. His desire indicates spiritual life; it is intense—it will be satisfied with nothing else but its appropriate object. In these particulars there is a

resemblance among all who have obtained 'like precious faith.'

1. The thirsting for God here expressed, is the experience of a soul made spiritually alive.—Where there is no life there is no sensibility. A body that is dead you may adorn and decorate as you please; you may embalm it, so as to prevent, or at least, so as to retard the humiliating process of corruption to which it is hastening; but no effort you may employ can awaken feeling, can produce appetite. So the soul dead in sin, as the souls of men naturally are, is not susceptible of spiritual desire. It may be adorned with many external virtues. It may be embalmed if we may so speak, by the influence of Christian example, which not unfrequently prevents the inherent corruption of our nature from exhibiting all its offensive and debasing qualities. It may manifest a measure of natural emotion which may be mistaken for the exercise of a spiritual mind; but life being extinct, no true sense of want exists, no nourishment can be introduced, no vigour imparted, no maturity attained. When, however, a new and spiritual life appears, originating not in the will of the flesh, 'neither of man but of God,' the soul begins to hunger and thirst after righteousness. A consciousness of want arises that did not exist before. The man now feels a burden which he wants to have removed; he has a sense of danger from which he wants to be delivered; he has a desire for communion with God, which he wants to enjoy; he has a taste for holiness which he wants to have gratified.

2. Spiritual desire awakened in the renewed mind, is, or should be intense. It was so in the case of the psalmist. The panting of the thirsty hart amid the arid sands, and under a scorching sun, for the clear and cooling brook, is a strong and striking emblem of its intensity. A feeling of urgent necessity,—a conviction that we must either obtain what we are in search of, or perish; that we must strive to enter in at the strait gate, or be shut out for ever, has been awakened in the breast of every regenerated sinner. It is evident, therefore, that such desire can never be entirely suppressed,—it will not evaporate,—it cannot be absorbed.

Unlike the evanescent emotion which is compared to the morning cloud and the early dew, which passes away in a languid wish,—a heartless prayer—a cold and formal service, the desire of the believer after deliverance from sin, and conformity to the divine image, is deep, earnest, persuasive. Its intensity never indeed can equal the value and magnitude of the blessings after which

it aspires, nor does it at all times burn with equal ardour in the heart. Sometimes it is all but quenched by the rising flood of temptation: sometimes the dross and the ashes of a careless and worldly spirit smother the heavenly flame. But it is supplied from time to time with fresh fuel by the hand that kindled it. This holy desire will not be suppressed therefore, by the weight of temptation, it will not evaporate in empty forms and observances,—it will not be absorbed by earthly occupations and cares.

3. Spiritual desire will be satisfied with nothing else but its appropriate object. It is after the water-brooks that the thirsty hart pants. Nothing but the cooling stream is suited to his want, and nothing else will satisfy it. So, the longing of the renewed heart is after God, the living God. Nothing else can bring satisfaction and repose. Wealth cannot do it; earthly pleasure cannot do it; worldly reputation cannot do it. What are all these things to the man famishing for the bread of life, thirsting for the water of salvation? Nay, the word, ordinances, sacraments themselves cannot do it. What are they but means and instruments? Without God they are empty cisterns; and what can empty cisterns do to quench thirst? To have the righteousness of God by faith—to have the sense of acceptance in the Beloved,—to 'come and appear before God,' to enjoy the conscious presence and the blessed fellowship of the Father and of his Son Jesus Christ,—this is the suitable, the sweet, the satisfying provision that can alone meet the desires of the heaven-born soul. Then can the believer say, Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee,—thou hast made me to drink of the rivers of thy pleasures. But even this abundant satisfaction does not produce satiety. So transcendent is the object of his desires, and so progressively enlarging are his capacities of spiritual enjoyment, that he still adds, 'my soul thirsteth for God.' And, in this alternating state of complacency in God upon the one hand, and renewed longing after further communications of his grace on the other, the believer advances in his journey till he shall at length appear before him in the heavenly Zion.

Hence are we furnished with a test of grace. The existence of holy desire proves that the soul has been made alive to God. It is not indeed, the desire of being saved merely from the consequences of sin that proves this. It is not the kind of desire that will do nothing, and part with nothing, that its object may be obtained, that proves it; but, to long after communion with, and conformity to God, shows that He has been

chosen as the portion of the soul. Blessed is the man who has made such a choice. He has chosen a portion that will not deceive him, and that cannot be exhausted.

And hence we also perceive the true object and end of the ordinances of grace. They are designed to bring the soul near to a redeeming God. The services of the sanctuary were valued by the psalmist, and are estimated by the spiritual worshipper principally as the means and occasions of beholding 'the beauty of the Lord.' When, therefore, grateful as it becomes us to be, that no such causes of exclusion as prevented the psalmist from repairing to the courts of the Lord, exist in our case; when we are permitted and invited to inquire reverently in his temple, let this be our desire. 'We would see Jesus.' If conscience shall be satisfied with a mere outward and bodily service, if the means shall be mistaken for the end, if a delusive quiescence of mind shall be induced by the routine of external observances, the ordinances of grace do then, instead of being the channels in which heavenly blessings flow, become barriers to obstruct their entrance into the heart. Let my soul thirst for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

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TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great,' Rev. xix. 5.*

A BLESSED harmony has been produced in the renewed mind with the revealed will, which is just the manifested character of Jehovah. A complacency in the assurance that he is God over all and blessed for ever; that he has a sovereign right to reign, prompts the language of adoration and praise, upon the prevalence of those principles of righteousness and truth that form the glory of his nature and the foundation of his throne. If the triumph of justice and of grace be attended with the overthrow of his implacable enemies; if virulent hatred and stubborn opposition to him who is set as a king on his holy hill of Zion, be crushed and broken with the iron rod of his displeasure, still, all holy creatures in the universe acquiesce in the wise and righteous dispensation. While they could have devoutly wished that no such malignant spirit should have existed against the benignant and equitable government of heaven's eternal king, they celebrate the majesty and might by which it is controlled

and repressed, as they would celebrate the goodness and the power which restrains the rising billows of the deep, preventing them from overwhelming the earth, submerging its fruitful fields, and sweeping away its cheerful habitations.

The voice that comes out of the throne, calling his servants and all that fear him to praise our God, addresses itself to those whose minds have thus been brought into a blessed unison with the character and doings of the Almighty. Themselves reclaimed from their wilfulness, regulated in their aims and in their actings, no longer by the 'desires of the flesh and of the mind;' walking no longer according to the dictates of their evil hearts, they are his 'servants,' making the will and honour of their Master the rule and end of their endeavours. Fearing him with a devout reverence and holy awe, whatever may be their outward condition, whatever their powers or capacities; whether theirs be the capacious intellect of an archangel in heaven, or the limited endowments of the weakest believer on earth, their moral condition, their views, tastes, and desires are in conformity to the divine character and doings. And therefore, even when his judgments are made manifest, they will not be called in vain to join in the language of grateful celebration and to say, 'just and true are all thy ways, thou king of saints.'

While the emblematical representatives of the church and her ministers in heaven, are described in the immediate context as uniting in the praise offered to the Lord, for vindicating his justice, truth, and power, the voice that issues from the throne invites us who are upon earth to join the song. And truly the call is fitted to humble us; to quicken us; and to inspire us with an exalted and enlarged conception of the honour which 'have all the saints.'

It may well humble us to reflect, that our hearts have hitherto been brought so little into a grateful, adoring frame. Hard thoughts of God; suspicion and distrust arising from partial and unscriptural views of his dealings to the children of men: The want of a deep and intense conviction of our own evil deservings, which justifies the Eternal even when he judges and condemns: The absence of an entire submission of mind to the Sovereignty of him to whom as the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, we should delight in ascribing honour and glory for ever and ever; the prevalence of a selfish, slavish, careless, carnal, unbelieving spirit, has put our hearts grievously out of tune, sadly unfitted us to join in the celestial harmony.

Yet, let us seek grace to obey the voice, which

so well accords with the place whence it comes 'praise our God.' A view of his excellency as he stands revealed in 'the Beloved,' will soonest and best attune the heart to adoration and praise. This is well illustrated in the experience of President Edwards, who thus records the emotions awakened within him, when the light of heavenly truth first shone into his heart. 'My sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more inward sweetness. The appearance of every thing was altered. There seemed to be as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost every thing. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in every thing; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water and all nature, which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance; and in the day, spent much time in viewing the clouds and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things; in the mean time singing forth, with a low voice, my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer.'

How delightful and animating the thought too, that all Christ's servants, and that all who fear him of whatever name in heaven and in earth, shall one day join with one heart in the song of Moses and the Lamb. The causes that now impede or interrupt their praise having been removed, and an enlarged and comprehensive view of His doings 'who is marvellous in counsel and excellent in working,' having been unfolded to their minds, the voice that cometh out of the throne shall meet with a grateful and cordial response from those that surround the throne. Angels mingling their ascriptions with the still more fervent acclamations of redeemed sinners shall say 'with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.'

Meanwhile, let us seek on earth to catch the spirit which pervades the bosoms, and animates the songs of the ransomed hosts who have reached the plains of heaven. The elements of happiness and the causes of praise are essentially the same in this world and the next. Why is heaven the place of unmingled happiness and uninterrupted praise? because there grace is perfected. The nearer therefore we approach perfection on earth, we enjoy the more of heaven. They who are raised to the mansions of blessedness give utterance to the voice of melody and praise, because God is there,—because the unclouded serenity of his countenance ever rests upon their souls: if

now therefore, we walk with God, and the light of his countenance be made to shine upon us, we shall share the very joys of the redeemed. The saints are happy in heaven, because they are holy there, no longer harassed with those turbulent and evil passions that agitate the breast, they bathe their weary souls in the unruffled ocean of eternal peace; if now we shall be enabled therefore to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, and if every root of bitterness that springing up in the heart would trouble us, be eradicated by the hand of Almighty grace, we shall enjoy the essence of heavenly bliss. The throng of happy spirits around the throne, enjoy a felicity which we cannot conceive, because every heart glows with gratitude, and every tongue joins with one accord in the song of the Lamb; if now therefore a sense of infinite obligation to redeeming grace, a view of the low estate from which Christ has rescued us, and the extent and duration of the blessings he has purchased warm our hearts, they shall glow even in this cold world, with a kindred flame, not indeed so pure and so ardent, but with a flame kindled from the same celestial altar, whose sacred fire has lighted up the ecstasy of the adoring saint, who celebrates the glory of him who sitteth upon the throne, and who worships the Lamb.

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 TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:'* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

It is useful often to remind believers of what they are. A remembrance upon their part of this, can scarcely fail to renew their sense of infinite obligation; and thus by the grace of God to humble them,—to quicken and animate them to 'walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.'

The condition and privileges of God's people in the gospel age, are, in the passage before us, described with a reference to the state of the church under the Jewish dispensation. A link of connection is thus maintained between the several parts of the great system of inspired truth. The past and the future are brought together, as equally affording space for the development of the one great purpose of redeeming grace.

Of the Israelites, is it true that they were a chosen generation. Selected, with no special

reference to any previously existing qualifications in them, which attracted the divine regard, their progenitor Abraham and his seed in the line of Isaac, were the objects of a sovereign choice, that Jehovah might by means of them preserve the knowledge of his character, and maintain the existence of his church upon earth. So, believers in Christ are the objects of God's everlasting love, irrespective of any foreseen qualities in themselves, for the will of God to implant such qualities must necessarily have preceded their existence. In accomplishing the purpose of his grace, he draws them in the time of their effectual calling to himself,—they have not chosen him, but he has chosen them, and called them with a holy calling. And, although unlike the Jews of old, they belong to different kindreds and nations, and people and tongues, they are, notwithstanding, in an important sense, of one stock—the spiritual seed of Abraham. Born from above, united in one head, and partakers of one pervasive and vital influence, they have one hope on earth, one home in heaven.

Although the next part of the description of believers, as 'a royal priesthood,' carries the thoughts back to the former dispensation, yet to represent the higher honour of the saints in the gospel age, the apostle combines in this expression a reference to two offices never united in the Jewish church. Their kings were not priests; neither were all the tribes of ancient Israel admissible to the priesthood. But in regard to Christians, it is true of them all, that they are kings, inasmuch as they are made conquerors in Christ over their spiritual enemies; the victory is not indeed actually completed, but their triumph is secure, and their crown is awaiting them. They are priests—the way into the holiest of all has been open to each of them,—no exclusion but that of their own unbelieving and suspicious hearts exists to their entering in. The altar has been prepared and consecrated upon which they are enjoined to lay the bloodless sacrifice of their whole persons 'holy and acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service.'

Like the Israelites of old, believers in Christ too, are 'an holy nation.' Set apart and consecrated to his own special service, that ancient people stood in a different relation to Jehovah, from the other nations of the earth, and his commands are enforced by this consideration,—'I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.' So, the spiritual Israel are a holy nation. The true church of Christ, separated from the world,—washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness—sanctified by the word applied by his efficacious

working, in whose hand it becomes the incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth for ever, the church stands forth with the characters inscribed upon it of HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

And nearly allied to this view of the condition of true believers as represented in connection with the Old Testament Church, is the remaining part of the description, in which they are said to be 'a peculiar people.' Peculiar as the Jews were in their exclusive knowledge of the only true God, in their national character, and in the rites of their religious worship, which kept them in a state of separation from the rest of mankind, so is it of the family of Christ. Their distinctive features are indeed in some sense of a different kind, but no less marked and decided. They are peculiar in their principles. While others are influenced by some of the various forms of selfishness, they are constrained by the love of Christ. They are peculiar in their aims. While others seek as the object of their highest ambition, the attainment of some earthly good; their desire is that they may glorify God, and be conformed to the image of his Son. They are peculiar in their hopes. While the views of others are limited by the narrow horizon of this earthly state; they look through the curtain of time into the light of eternity, and hope when they awake in the invisible world, to be satisfied with the likeness of the eternal God.

Nor can it fail to enhance their feeling of infinite obligation to distinguishing and redeeming love, that their character, privileges, and prospects, contrast so strongly with their previous state. Once were they darkness, now are they light in the Lord. And, viewed apart altogether from any expressed intention of him who has called them out of this darkness to his own marvellous light, there arises out of their very condition, and relation to him, the clearest and most powerful reason why they should show forth his praise.

But when He who has transferred them from the darkness, oppression, and misery of sin, into the light and privileges of the gospel, has expressly told them, that he has done so, with the very design that they should show forth his praise. When he has thus by undoubted implication informed them, that in so far as they fail to do so, they frustrate the very intention of their heavenly calling; how much more impressive and affecting does the consideration become! This it was, that rendered the defections and idolatries of God's ancient people so peculiarly displeasing to him, and that brought down upon their heads such terrible visitations of his wrath.

Saved as they had been from the iron furnace, redeemed, honoured, blessed, separated from the nations, in order that Israel's God might be known and magnified, 'that his name might be declared throughout all the earth,' when they relapsed into the darkness and heathenism of the surrounding nations, not only were they chargeable with the basest ingratitude, but their conduct went, so far as human perversity and rebellion could go, to frustrate the intention of divine benevolence, and to extinguish a light which was designed to irradiate and bless the world.

Let not then the view of Christian character and privilege here submitted to us, be presented in vain. Let us seek grace to prove, that we are a chosen generation, by choosing God as the portion of our souls—that we are kings, by maintaining the dignity of Christian character, and an ascendancy over the lusts of the flesh;—that we are priests, by devoting ourselves anew as living sacrifices to God: that we are among the number of the holy nation and peculiar people, that form the true Israel, by being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—that we are called out of darkness into light, by living as the children of the light. This is not only our imperative duty, in connection with the privileges we have received, but in connection with the purpose of God in bestowing them. He has redeemed us, that we might be a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

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 TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?'* Exod. xv. 11.

'This,' said the Saviour, 'is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' It is in the character of a redeeming God, that he can alone be adored and loved in our fallen world. In this relation it is, that his superiority to all the false objects of religious worship, as well as his supremacy over all earthly potentates is recorded in this song, in which Moses and the children of Israel, delivered from the hand of their oppressors, and standing upon the opposite shores of the Red sea, which had closed its devouring jaws upon the pride and the chivalry of Egypt, celebrated the praises of their great Deliverer.

In fallen man, there is neither a moral capacity to apprehend, nor a moral taste to appreciate the true excellence of his Maker. The natural man

may indulge in curious and profound speculations indeed, concerning the being, the infinity, and the eternity of the Godhead. He may and often does derive a high gratification in contemplating the incommunicable qualities of the uncreated Mind. His imagination may wander over the immense fields of space, filled as they are with numberless proofs of the beneficence, wisdom, and power of the Eternal. He may descend in his survey to the more minute arrangements of the world he inhabits, and be delighted with the beautiful and complicated structure of organized bodies whether in inanimate or living forms; but the righteousness, purity, and truth of Jehovah,—those attributes of his nature that have a relation to man as a moral and accountable creature, are naturally neither the objects of his adoration, nor of his love.

Sin has destroyed the moral capacity of knowing God aright. It is not unusual to say of those whose hearts, and whose habits are deeply depraved, even in the estimation of their fellows, that they are not capable of comprehending a virtuous action. In order to estimate moral qualities in another, these qualities must be possessed in some measure by ourselves. Men are ever apt to judge of the conduct of others, by the principles that regulate their own. A being therefore, whose principles of conduct are naturally selfish, can never so know as to appreciate the intensity and purity of divine love; and he whose soul is polluted with sin, can never estimate the beauties of holiness.

Nor is the incapacity to know God which sin has induced, greater than the disinclination to know him which it has occasioned. His moral qualities are not only enveloped in darkness to the natural mind, they are shrouded in terror. Man cannot altogether elude the conviction, that he is noticed, and will be judged by that great power of whose character he knows at least this much; that he is not conformed to it. Should we suppose it possible therefore, that sinful men while remaining so, could apprehend in any measure the divine excellence, if they feared rather than loved that excellence, they would desire to relapse into the security of ignorance, rather than to be continually awed by the light of truth.

This twofold obstruction to the entrance into the mind, of those views of the divine character that prompt the language of heartfelt adoration and praise, is met by a twofold provision of sovereign grace. It is met on the one hand by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and on the other by the manifestation of reconciling love. Truly to know God, implies that our moral nature is so

far renewed, that we can apprehend in some degree the divine loveliness, and that the affections of our hearts are drawn forth by the perception of it. This is the result of a gracious operation upon the soul. The right and practical apprehensions of God that lead to confidence, adoration and love, are communicated in fulfilment of the promise, 'I will give them an heart to know me that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people and I will be their God.'

Every right and practical apprehension too of the divine nature, must be connected in the mind of fallen man with the plan of redeeming love. When the glory of the Eternal is beheld by the believing sinner in the salvation of the lost; when from the shores of deliverance and safety upon which he stands, surveying the sea of misery and danger from which he has been rescued, with the mingled emotions of gratitude and awe he can take up his song, 'Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods; who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, to be feared even when thou art praised,—doing wonders?'

Then does he begin to see, inadequately indeed, but not unscripturally, the beauty and excellency of the Godhead. He views with complacency his unrivalled supremacy. The delusive phantom of his own imagination, arrayed in the attributes of mildness without moral excellence to which he once paid a fond but mistaken homage, has disappeared. Then, the immutable character of Jehovah has dimly perhaps, but really opened upon his view. While he sees that there can be no abatement from the infinite purity and perfection of 'the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning,' he desires not that the justice of God should be less strict, his holiness less untainted, his truth less inviolable; for to these qualities he has in some measure been conformed, and he longs for that conformity being perfected. In those very attributes too which once alarmed him, he sees the pledge and assurance of his safety.

Let this then be the object of my desires and prayers, that I may be made to behold the beauty of the Lord, as it stands revealed in the wonders of redemption; that I may see his majesty and power in my deliverance from the thralldom of sin; his glorious holiness in Christ's finished work; not only that my heart may be attuned to praise him as a great King above all gods, but that devoting myself to him as the God of my salvation, I may say, 'What have I to do any more with idols?'

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen,' Ps. lxxii. 17—19.*

OF whom speaketh the prophet this? To no earthly potentate assuredly can the language apply. A greater than Solomon is here. Distinguished as he was for his wisdom, his wealth, and the prosperity of his reign, in all these respects he has no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth. Long ago has he resigned the crown, laid aside the sceptre, and descended to the silent grave, where kings mingle with their subjects. And, except for his subserviency to the establishment of the throne occupied by the Prince of peace, the root and the offspring of David, his name, together with that of the line of kings to which he belonged, had long ago been forgotten.

Christ is in the prophet's eye. The perpetuity of his reign—the blessedness it brings—the universal acclamation with which it shall one day be hailed by the nations,—and the ascription due to that wondrous power and grace by which it is established, are his glorious theme.

His name, the same unchanging and unchangeable Saviour, has endured as long as the sun. Not only in his divine nature is he from everlasting God, but scarcely had the sun begun to run his race, than he entered on his mediation. He was the object of Abel's faith, of Enoch's prediction, of Abraham's vision. His character Moses typified and foretold. He was the substance of ritual shadows,—the true tabernacle, the spotless sacrifice, the sacred temple. When in the fulness of time he trode the surface of the world he had made, the very malice of men, by which they sought to have extinguished his name, was made the unwilling instrument of extending it. For, it was by his death, that he specially triumphed over death, spoiled principalities and powers, and introduced the gospel age. Then was his salvation proclaimed over the face of the earth, and the tribes of men bowed at the name of Jesus. When subsequently, that great 'name given among men, whereby we must be saved,' was in part obscured amid the darkness of superstition and idolatry, its inherent qualities remained ever the same. And when the clouds that darkened it were made to pass away, it shone forth

in all its original glory. Its past continuance amid all the fluctuation of human affairs, and all the vicissitude of events, in combination with which it has existed, accords with the voice of prophecy in telling us, that it shall endure for ever.

It shall endure, as a continual and increasing blessing. Men shall be blessed in him. Besides the indirect, the accompanying benefits which his spiritual administration brings to the world, it confers unnumbered and lasting blessings on its true subjects. They are blessed in him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places,—with pardon, acceptance, peace, purity, eternal life. The happiness enjoyed by the subjects of the most powerful and enlightened of human administrations, affords a faint emblem of their blessedness, who own the sway of him, who reigns upon Zion's hill. Earthly kings cannot know the whole of their subjects, but he is intimately acquainted with them all. Earthly kings cannot always defend their subjects from the aggression of a foreign power, but he will at length bruise Satan, and all their other enemies, under their feet. The enactments of earthly kings cannot reach the heart, the seat of much of the disquietude and misery that embitters the existence of man; but he, having access to the spirit he has made by all the avenues through which it may be approached, can rectify its disorders, and pour into it the oil of spiritual gladness. And, where human power and legislation cannot extend,—for their jurisdiction is limited by the grave,—Christ stretches the sceptre of his authority, having the keys of the invisible world and of death, to open for his subjects the portals of immortality, and to make them blessed with himself through the whole range of a ceaseless being.

Well therefore may they who are so highly favoured, raise their ascription of gratitude and praise, to the source and dispenser of their blessedness. And how delightful and refreshing to the Christian spirit to reflect, that such blessedness is yet to be shared, and such ascriptions are yet to be raised by ALL NATIONS. Hitherto the rightful authority of our heavenly King has only been partially acknowledged. Many causes have tended to impede the establishment of his kingdom. It shall not be so always. The truth as it is in Jesus, fitted as it is for universal diffusion, shall be universally diffused, to bless the world. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

To whom do we owe such signal blessedness, such bright anticipations? To the power and grace of him, who 'only doeth wondrous things.'

Lest, from the deceitfulness of our own weak and wicked hearts, the privileges and prospects here revealed should produce the feeling of personal elation, we are reminded of the author and the giver of them all. The deep consciousness of obligation to free and sovereign grace, should mingle with every favour we enjoy, and every hope which we cherish. These feelings of humility and gratitude will prompt the prayer, 'Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.' This language, the sincerity of which must be evinced by corresponding endeavour, will ever be that of all the true subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom.—What claim had we to thy favour, which all do not equally possess. If we are the happy people who truly know the joyful sound, it reached our ears when we too were the captives of sin; let it penetrate still deeper the dark and dismal dungeon, and bring forth other sinners from their captivity. If we have been made an obedient people, and our minds enlightened with the knowledge of thy will, no obduracy is too great to be subdued by thy power, no soul too dark to be irradiated by thy glory. Let that light shine into every heart, till the whole earth, filled with its brightness, shall reflect with its full orb, the uncreated effulgence of the Sun of righteousness.

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come,'* Psal. lxxv. 2.

A MERE consciousness of guilt, danger and helplessness, may lead to superstition, not to prayer. To deprecate by outward acts of homage, by painful, or it may be by bloody rites, the wrath of an offended and dreaded power, is a very different thing from the offering of a spiritual and acceptable worship. Two things are equally essential to the existence of a devout spirit; some knowledge of God, and some knowledge of ourselves. He that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. It is from an acquaintance with his revealed character as the hearer of prayer, that unto him shall all flesh come.

The cry of alarm for deliverance,—the cry of guilt for mercy, may indeed be the first utterance of the awakened sinner. But, as the believer is progressively taught to pray in the exercise of filial fear and love, expectation and confidence, he will be progressively instructed in the character of the great object of his worship,

as seated upon a throne of grace. It is in Zion therefore, or in other words, as Jehovah has manifested himself in his church, as a reconciled and redeeming God, that praise waiteth upon him as a devout and grateful attendant, that prayer is now presented by his saints, and shall at length be universally offered.

Unto God as the hearer of prayer all flesh should come. Prayer is a commanded duty. He who came from heaven to instruct us in the will of God, spake a parable to this end, that men should pray always and not faint. The injunction of his word is at once distinct and imperative, 'be instant in prayer,' 'pray without ceasing,' 'in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.' No one therefore who desires to be regulated in this matter by a regard to the divine will, needs now to ask,—Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?

Prayer is a befitting and reasonable duty. To whom should we yield the homage of our adoration and worship, but to him who gave us our existence, and in whom we live and move and have our being? To whom should we come confessing our sins, but unto him whom we have offended, and who only can pardon us? To whom should we come making known our wants, but unto him who alone can supply them? To whom should we come expressing our gratitude, but unto him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy? What more reasonable, than that creatures should acknowledge their dependence upon their Creator, than that redeemed sinners should bend with reverence and thankfulness before their redeeming God.

Prayer too is the appointed means for bringing down from above, spiritual blessings. It is connected with the reception of these blessings in some sense, as the cause is connected with the effect,—as the sowing of the seed is connected with the reaping of the harvest. Ask, and ye shall receive. Receiving is suspended upon the condition of asking. And that, by no mere arbitrary act of the divine will. Desire is the essence of prayer; and desire must necessarily precede its fulfilment. A capacity to receive spiritual blessings must be induced, before they can be bestowed. Hence the relation of prayer and its answer, is that of faithfulness upon the part of God, to fulfil the desire he has awakened: And of fitness upon the part of the recipient, to welcome and enjoy the favours implored.

Prayer besides, exercises the most beneficial moral influence upon the heart of the spiritual worshipper. It brings the soul into nearest con-

tact with the most solemn truths, and the most sublime realities. Never is a sense of spiritual destitution more intense, never has temptation less power to prevail, never does sin seem so exceeding sinful, never does the world appear so insignificant and unsatisfying, never do the beauties of holiness rise with so much attraction upon the view, as when we come with any measure of the spirit of prayer into His presence, who has promised to supply all our wants according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. By such effects produced upon the devout mind, there is an immediate accomplishment of the promise, 'While they are yet speaking I will hear.'

And this brings us to remark, that prayer should be made from the consideration that Jehovah condescends to reveal himself as the hearer of prayer. Shall he whose displeasure we have incurred open a way of access to his favour and presence, and shall we neglect or refuse to enter it? Shall he whom it hath pleased, that in Christ all fulness should dwell, invite us to seek that we may obtain the rich provisions of his grace, and shall we prefer to perish with hunger? Shall the great Lord of the universe bend his ear to listen to our supplication, and shall not the silence be broken by the sigh of our contrite acknowledgment, or by the cry of our urgent necessities.

Yet, numerous as are the inducements and encouragements to prayer, the duty has never been suitably performed, nor the gift suitably exercised, till the grace has been bestowed. Let this therefore be our request—Lord, teach us to pray. Then that which should be, is that which shall be. The mournful disinclination to this spiritual duty,—the coldness and formality in its performance, will be made to disappear, when the spirit is poured out from on high. The gracious command will be obeyed, the reasonableness of the service will be acknowledged, the efficacy of it will be felt, the benefit arising from it will be enjoyed, the grace and condescension of the hearer of prayer will be estimated, in proportion as the promise is fulfilled, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.'

Few as are now the number of spiritual worshippers, even where the name of Jehovah is known and professedly adored,—and large as are the regions of the earth, in which it has never been proclaimed; the language of prediction encourages the petition we would present; Pour out thy Spirit upon all flesh, and then, O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

## TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Like as father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,'* Ps. ciii. 13.

God is in some sense the parent of the universe. Intelligent creatures are all his offspring. He made them, and upholds them in the existence he gave them. But a delusive inference is deduced from the truth, if it be hence imagined, that he will without reference to their dispositions and conduct, be equally indulgent to them all. At once the parent and the governor of the universe, his administration is, and must ever be conducted in his great household, by those principles of rectitude and truth which form the unchangeable excellence of his nature.

Where there has been a departure by any of his creatures from those principles, and from himself the centre of all good, they must be brought back to a conformity to his will before they can be happy. In producing this result in regard to any of our apostate family, he first makes them the subjects of his regenerating grace.—They are born of God. They receive the spirit of children here expressed by the one epithet of fear,—filial fear which is the essential element of true religion in the heart. They thus become in a more strict and peculiar sense, the objects of his love and care, the children of his family. But still helpless, and liable to innumerable evils, infirmities, and sufferings, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

And, in regard to this paternal pity it is tender,—constant,—enlightened, and it will bring ultimate relief to those who are the subjects of it.

It is tender. It is likened not to the pity of a stranger, or even of a friend. It is the pity of a father. What more touching evidence can we have of its reality. Exceptions indeed, there may be, even in the working of the natural affections of the human heart. But where amid the imperfection of earthly things can a fitter image be found of the overflowings of the divine compassion, of the depth, the sincerity and truth of his relentings, who repenteth him of the evil? who cannot find in his heart as it were to strike the deserved blow; whose memorable language of soliloquy is, 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?'

It is constant pity. Not the transient emotion of a spectator who witnesses a spectacle of woe, but soon leaves the object, or forgets the scene that drew forth his tears. It is the pity of a father towards those who dwell beneath his roof, who live under his eye,—of a father who

every day and hour knows all their sorrows, perplexities, and fears, and who is ever present to soothe and to comfort them.

It is enlightened pity. Not the childish and feminine pity, amiable it may be, but ruinous, which would fondle a wilful, malignant, or disobedient spirit, which would scruple to curb ungovernable passion, or restrain unbridled license. It is the pity of a wise father, who consults the present welfare, and the prospective happiness of his children. In the case of his reclaimed sons and daughters in this our fallen world, it is reasonable therefore to suppose, that the discipline to which their heavenly Father may see it necessary to subject them, should sometimes be both protracted and severe. Evil tendencies are to be counteracted, evil habits to be broken, evil passions to be expelled. Difficult lessons are to be learned, hard conquests are to be achieved. Self-denial, conflict, suffering, are consequently unavoidable. The Father of our spirits loves his children too well to spare the infliction that is for their profit. But assuredly, his pity is too great to subject them to one moment's suffering not absolutely necessary to make them partakers of his holiness.

It is a pity that will bring ultimate and effectual relief. Here all earthly comparisons fail. A father's pity while it is sincere may be unavailing. He may see the object of his tender solicitude pining away before his eyes. Notwithstanding all his compassion, his assiduity, his efforts, his prayers, his child is in the hand of an inexorable power, from which he can do nothing to deliver, and the tear of pity which he lately shed over the bed of the helpless sufferer, is succeeded by the tear of sorrow which bedews his grave. But in the case of our heavenly Father, his infinite pity towards the children of his spiritual family is united with Almighty power. He regulates and controls the whole process to which they that fear him are subjected. He says with the voice of resistless authority to the agents or instruments he employs for their discipline,—hitherto shall ye come, and no further. He makes use of the furnace not to consume but to purify. Every member of the household of faith may adopt as his own the confiding language of one of their number,—'he knoweth the way that I take, when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'

Let this view of the character of God induce submission to his will under afflictive dispensations. Let ours be the resignation, not of the man who bends under the pressure of a visitation, which he knows he cannot escape,—who yields

with a sullen and reluctant spirit, to a stern necessity over which he feels he has no control: let ours be the calm, cheerful, hallowed acquiescence, which arises from the thought, that our lot is cast, and all its varying circumstances arranged by a wise and tender Father. It is THE LORD, let him do what seemeth him good. If the infliction should seem dark, protracted, severe, overwhelming, let us still remember, that as a Father he pitieth his children. While we do not know what is needful, or what is best, we know this,—that no ingredient of bitterness will be shed into the cup of affliction put into the hands of his own dear children, that is not essential to promote their spiritual health, and their eternal welfare. Now, 'no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' Shall we not therefore be 'in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live.'

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 TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

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

It was the psalmist's delight to make known to others what God had done for his soul. He was happy and satisfied in the possession and enjoyment of God's plenteous grace, and heartily desired to see others as happy as himself. He keeps not to himself the secret of his abiding joy. Grace will not let him. If it but once get entrance into the heart, it must break out from that heart again. It comes from God, and it must go back to him. It enlarges also the heart's pity for the perishing, it must go forth to them. The dying thief no sooner looked with gracious confidence to Christ, than he poured out his heart to him, and would have his fellow-malefactor do the same. David found God a refuge; an un-failing refuge, and he will have all poor sinners to be as secure as himself.

It has been well said that from beginning to end the voice of all God's promises and invitations is, 'Prove me, prove me.' Sin has made us suspicious of God. The silly heart dreams that he will do it evil and not good, that he will visit it with wrath. While affection remains alienated, the eye can discern no ground of confidence in God. To meet and overcome this suspicion, and put the fears of the heart to shame, God has established in his word the standing testimony of many witnesses, that they confided in him and were not ashamed. Of

these the psalmist is one of the chief. He had long tried the faithfulness of his God. He had put it to the test in all circumstances. Among friends and foes, on the field of contest, as well as in the shepherd's tent, in youth and in age, in the day of spiritual gladness, and in the very depths of mental agony, he had put his trust in God, and ever found him his strength, his defence, his rock, his salvation. And now from long tried experience, from the sweet convictions of God's readiness to meet the confidence of sinners, he breaks out, 'Trust in him at all times, ye people.' He cannot be satisfied till others are as blessed as he.

1. God reconciled in Christ can alone be the sinner's refuge. A refuge implies protection to such as flee to it, and confidence on their part in its security. Before a sinner turn to God as his refuge, he must know 'that he is pacified towards him for all that he has done.' He must be the sinner's salvation, before he become his refuge. For how could God protect the creature that has insulted his authority, contemned his goodness, and made no satisfaction? Or how could the alarmed and guilty conscience of the sinner rest peacefully on him, who will not clear the guilty? He bids us then come to him in Christ, who has magnified his law, and made it honourable. No other manifestation of God will beget and sustain the heart's confidence.

2. All may come and make God their refuge, for his heart is large, and his power omnipotent, Isa. xl. 28. He is not content with inviting one and another here and there. In him the fatherless findeth mercy, the helpless a refuge, and all need these blessings. And all, if they will, may have them in God. A believer shall not share the less, that all around him are satisfied to the full. My neighbour lessens not my share of the sun's light, by opening every window to catch his beams, nor will he diminish my share of grace by opening his mouth wide that the God of all grace may fill it. Nay, let all my neighbours get to the full, I only shall have the more, for their getting will only enlarge their heart to pray for me.

3. And all are commanded to trust in him at all times. The beginning of our confidence ought to be kept steadfast. Why should it be ever abated? Our necessity never ceases; our need of a refuge is constantly felt. God never wearies in giving strength and grace. He fainteth not neither is weary; therefore it is no fatigue to him to support. He is ever merciful, therefore he will reckon it no intrusion for us to flee unto him every hour of the day. He bids us come, for he is able to make all grace abound toward us, that

we always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound in hope, and rest in his love. Much need then have I to beware lest I dishonour his goodness and vex his compassionate heart, by even once admitting the thought, that he who spared not his own Son, could even for a moment let go the desire of his soul to do my soul good.

4. Since God reveals and pours out his heart of love, to beget our confidence, we must meet his gracious approaches by pouring out our heart before him. But if we pour out our heart before him, we shall display before his sight all its filthiness, and its abominations. We like not to unveil it to ourselves, how shall we unveil it to our God? Fear not to do it. He bespeaks our confidence not to beguile us to the confusion of our face, and then laugh us to scorn, but that he may search and try the evil that is in us, purify us from it, and lead us in the way everlasting. Let me then hold back nothing of my heart from my God. Let me unreservedly pour out all that is in it, my rebellious enmity, my wilful frowardness, my earthliness, my suspicions, my guile, my unholiness, and my guilt. I well may be ashamed, but I need not dread to do as he bids me. It is God in Christ who entreats my willing obedience. Specially in the time of need, let me pour out my prayers for a refuge in him. Whether in gladness or affliction, in comfort or distress, in joy or in sorrow, 'God is a refuge for us.'

5. True prayer is the voice of the soul reposing on the promises of God, who keepeth covenant and truth for ever. Knowledge of God may make the lips speak fluently, but trust in God can alone draw out the heart. And trust in him is found only in the heart that can call Jesus Lord. And the ability to call Jesus Lord comes only from the grace of the Spirit. May the Lord grant me this Spirit otherwise my prayer must be sin. David implored his God not to forsake him until he had showed his strength to the generation then living, and his power to every one to come, and he has received an everlasting answer to his prayer. The Spirit has in all generations past made David's experience an encouragement to every believer's heart. The Spirit, to the end of time, will employ David's confidence for the same end.

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TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me,' Isa. xxix. 13.*

OUR earnestness and sincerity in prayer, ought to be in proportion to the encouragement which God

gives us to engage in the exercise. He loves to bend his ear to the requests of his people. Genuine prayer on the part of a poor sinner is a strain well pleasing to the ears of Jehovah. It is the acknowledgment of his supremacy, and the creature's dependence. God is not in all the thoughts of the wicked, they cast off fear, they restrain prayer, and in the spirit of rebellious Israel virtually say, 'We are lords, we will no more come unto thee.' This spirit is the spirit of proud independence and defiance of God. But to the hearer and answerer of prayer, confession and supplication intimate a return to the lowliness and humility which becomes a creature, and God loves to hear them because he delights in all his works, but especially in the triumph of his grace.

But the prayer which the Lord delights to hear is the prayer of the heart. In vain is it to have the language graceful, and the words ever so well chosen, if there be no hearty desire to do honour to God. This was the fault of Israel's devotion. The blood of the sacrificial victim was shed with the deepest solemnity; the priest carried it with awe and reverence into the temple; the cloud of incense ascended, while he sprinkled it before the vail; and while intercession by blood was made within, the multitude without bowed the head and worshipped. No one would have suspected any fault in all this. But to the eye of the heart-searching God it was only a mock show of worship. 'The people drew near with their mouth, and with their lips they honoured him, but they removed their heart far from him.' This is the solemn declaration of God himself. Let me then inquire what it says to my soul. It says—

1. That God takes due notice of every thing which is presented to him in the form of devotion. True prayer glorifies him, and he takes special notice of it, that he may answer it. Mock prayer dishonours him, and he takes special notice of it, that he may reward the mockers. It was so in the case before me; he solemnly declares, that because Israel mocked him by heartless prayer, he would proceed to do a marvellous thing, 'the wisdom of their wise men should perish, and the understanding of their prudent men should be hid,' that is, he would utterly remove from them the fear of the Lord, and all wish to depart from evil, so that they would proceed from evil to evil, helpless and unpitied.

2. God not only notices every thing which is presented in the form of prayer, but he scrutinizes the nature of it. Genuine prayer is God's own work. It is not the voice of the sinner, simply feeling what he needs, and venturing to

hope that God may supply; it is the voice of the Spirit of grace in the heart, making intercession for us through the Mediator according to the will of God. The preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue are both from him. Never then let me forget that when I pray, he will search my heart and inquire if the voice of his own Spirit be there. He will honour no prayer with an answer save that which arises from the Spirit helping my infirmity. When Israel drew near and prayed, God listened. It was the voice of 'that strain, the sublimest which reaches the majesty on high.' It was the open expression and dependence, love, trust, honour, humility and gratitude, and so he listened but he scrutinized the prayer. He looked for the mind of the Spirit. It was not there. It was a heartless form, apparently a dealing with him, but no business; words, but no adoration; confession, but no sorrow; petition, but no desire; thanksgiving, but no gratitude. And so discerning all this, he determined that in room of a blessed and a gracious answer, the bands of the mockers should be made strong.

3. God is mocked by such prayer. It is one of the grossest insults which a rebellious sinner can offer, either to his sovereign majesty or his infinite compassion. As sovereign he claims the submission of the creature, as infinite in compassion he claims his sincerest gratitude—gratitude exemplified in a hearty closing with the offers of his love, and a corresponding acknowledgment of need and unworthiness. How then must he be mocked by heartless prayer—wherein instead of a lowly and sincere acknowledgment of his sovereignty, there is only a hollow-hearted, earthly compliment in bare sound; and in the room of an earnest closing with his offers of mercy, and a correspondent acknowledgment of need and unworthiness, there are well turned periods of fluent and graceful language, but no heart.

4. The guilt of withdrawing the heart from prayer is the sinner's own doing. 'This people have removed their heart far from me.' It was Israel's own act to do this. They willingly did it. It was their own pleasure to go through the form. No one constrained them to offer heartless prayer. God demanded sincere and hearty devotion, and if in genuine obedience to this demand they had come to his courts, he would have enabled them in all sincerity to discharge the duty. But they were weary of serving him. Their heart was on the world and its vanities, and if prescribed form must be gone through, the less heart that was in it the more pleasing to them. O let me remember that if I withhold my heart from prayer, the guilt of this mockery

will rest not on my frailty, for God pities and is able to strengthen me, not on my ignorance, for he teaches how to pray, but on my godless and rebellious heart.

5. It is a melancholy proof of the sad condition to which the fall has reduced man, when the very end of intercourse with God is made the means of insulting him to the face. It is scarcely possible to conceive any mark of depravity more plain, any sign of rebellious impudence more open. To mock God when we professedly honour him, and to vex him to the heart when we draw near to acknowledge his love; beyond this, depravity cannot go. It is awful for creatures to break his law. It is awful for sinners to refuse his grace. But what crime is equal to that of doing external homage to his sovereignty while the heart is wishing his throne were abolished? or that of doing homage to his love, when it is trampling his promises and the blood of atonement under foot?

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#### TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,'*  
1 Pet. ii. 5.

THE worship of the Christian is not a mockery of the holy Jehovah, like as was the worship of the corrupt Jews, who drew near with the mouth, and honoured God with their lips, while their heart was far from him. It is a spiritual worship. God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. No other worship can be accepted by him. By none other do his people enjoy communion with him. And that such may be the worship of his people who believe in Jesus, is not only his desire, and his demand; he has graciously adapted the constitution of every believer individually, and of his church collectively, to this end. Individually believers are living stones in his spiritual house; collectively, or as the church, they compose that house. Individually, they are priests; collectively, a holy priesthood. In such a temple, built of such materials, and served by such a priesthood, there can be no sacrifice that is not spiritual, not one unacceptable to God.

Here let me contemplate the nature of Christians individually, and of Christians collectively, as the household of faith; and the gracious end which severally and together they are called to discharge.

1. Of Christians individually. The figure under which the Christian is represented in the text, exhibits him on the one hand as a lively stone in the spiritual temple, and on the other as a priest in it. These two, taken together, exhibit the preciousness, stability, duration, and dignity of the child of God.

He is precious as a lively stone. When we 'look unto the rock whence he was hewn,' we find it none other than Christ, the rock of ages. He was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world,—and in due time being made alive unto God through the Spirit, he has been united to Christ. He is built on him the living and precious foundation, and is, because of this connection, lively and precious.

But he is stable also. He is no rolling stone, —no stone lying in the open field, which may be moved about or put to any use. He is fixed in his place in the spiritual temple—the place allotted to him in the plan and purpose of the grand Master Builder, and fixed so that none can pluck him thence. He is destined to see the whole building completed, and the 'top stone brought forth with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it.' Then shall every danger of attack or removal cease, and the efforts of enemies to pluck him from the temple for ever be at an end.

He is also durable. All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place that knoweth it now knows it no more; vain then, and transitory is the fabric of society on earth. You see it stable and flourishing to all appearance to-day, and pillars of strength, and ornaments of shining beauty and perfection are there. But look again by and by, and all is changed, the pillars are gone, and the ornaments vanished. They have found the grave, they are rotting in the dust. But no stone, no pillar, is lost to the church of Christ. Yesterday, to day, and for ever the same, the great Master Builder, who is himself the foundation, imparts everlasting durability to every stone of the fabric.

Nor is the Christian less dignified than durable. It is transcendent honour to be chosen and placed as a stone in Christ's spiritual house. It is dignity of the loftiest character to be made a priest in it. Yet the Christian is a priest. The Lord Jesus, the great High Priest of our profession, has made all his redeemed people kings and priests unto God,—kings to reign with him, to share his glory,—priests to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable through himself.

2. But while Christians individually are lively stones in the spiritual temple; collectively, or as

a church they are that temple, a spiritual house, which outshines and sinks into insignificance the far-famed temple of Solomon.

Its foundation was in the holy mountains; glorious things were spoken of it. True as this was of Jerusalem's temple, it is more true of Christ's spiritual house. It has withstood the decay of a thousand generations. It shall shine undecayed as eternity rolls on. Against its gates the hosts of hell have in vain been confederate. After all their incessant attacks, it stands at this day more lofty and glorious, than when God laid the first polished stone of the marvellous fabric on the Rock of ages. Reared on this unperishable foundation, by the omniscient skill of him who built the universe and lighted up the firmament with his glory, it is age by age advancing to complete perfection. And now, while its erection is going forward, as one stone after another is added to the structure, and fixed in its position,—as one pillar after another is hewn out and erected to strengthen and beautify the whole,—the Saviour writes on that stone, and on that pillar, the name of his God, and of the city of his God; and his own new name, the seal of his own workmanship, the token of his abiding presence; and the temple is lighted up, not by a lamp which, if left untrimmed, must flicker and die,—not by the beams of a sun which rises and sets, is sometimes brilliant, but oftener obscured,—but with the ever-cloudless brilliancy of the Sun of righteousness, that never is dim, and never goes down.

While believers unitedly compose this spiritual house, they are as the household of faith, a holy priesthood,—not like that of Levi, that became corrupt and was removed, but holy, like the high priest of their profession, and like himself, established by the word of a changeless oath.

3. Severally and together their end is the same, —to offer spiritual sacrifices, not the blood of slain beasts,—not dead offerings of fine flour, oil, and wine, but living and spiritual sacrifices.

They offer the blood of Christ by faith, present it in behalf of themselves and others. They offer themselves living sacrifices. They offer the sacrifice of the broken spirit and the contrite heart, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and that of soul-devotedness to the cause of Jesus, as well as their prayers, alms, and works of righteousness,—all sacrifices, which prove more gracious to God,

'Than bullock, ox, or any beast,  
That hath both horn and hoof.'

## TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them: but the Lord, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power, and a stretched-out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice,' 2 Kings xvii. 35, 36.*

THE worship which pleases God, and glorifies him, is equally removed on the one hand from a heartless form of external devotion, and on the other from the overwhelming power of superstitious dread and distracting terror. When the king of Assyria peopled the desolate land of Israel with the idolatrous tribes of his first conquest, they erected their old idols, and followed the worship they had originally maintained. But when God, to punish their unholy pollution of his land, sent lions among them, and slew them, they complained to the king of Assyria, that they were not 'acquainted with the manner of the God of the land,' and so had offended him, by bringing into it the worship of other lands. He accordingly sent them one of Jehovah's priests, who instructed them how to fear and to worship the God of Israel. But they turned not wholly to the Lord, although both warned and instructed. They continued to dread the God of Israel, whom they deemed the God of the land; but they combined the worship of their former idols with his worship, and brought down the fear and worship of Jehovah to the wretched level of that offered to idol gods, deeming the latter equally good, and equally imperative as the former; for they and their children continued to fear, that is, to dread or stand in terror of God, and served their graven images.

Alas! that to this day, within the bounds of God's visible church, the generation whose worship is so emphatically prohibited in the text, should still exist. If any thing present itself to them in the form of religious worship, and the devotees of it claim to be conscientious, these men fancy it, as agreeable to God, and as safe and profitable to the worshipper as the spiritual worship of the genuine Christian. With them the will of God is nothing in comparison to the inclination of man.

But to the Christian there is only one rule of spiritual worship,—the declared will of God; and but one ruling motive drawing him to it,—the experience of his saving grace. Both must be combined ere any soul worship Jehovah aright. The great principle embodied in the text, and forming the foundation of the prohibitory com-

mandment which it presents to us, is that God's worship, in addition to its being spiritual and living, must be pure. It is not enough to engage sometimes in spiritual worship; at no time are we at liberty to engage in any other. We may not fear or pretend to fear other gods. To Jehovah alone, may we bow ourselves.

Jehovah claims at our hands the spiritual and lively acknowledgment, that he alone is the author of our life, and the maintainer of our comfort. And it is a high attainment to be able to rise above the instrumental causes with which he works, to recognize and acknowledge him in his character. Let our souls strive to do so, and we shall find a constant tendency to worship and honour the secondary cause, without thinking of him,—we apply to it instead of calling on him to work with it; and are too often ready to ascribe to it, what is due to him. We profess to fear him alone, but practically in a thousand instances are 'only fearing the Lord, and serving our graven images.'

Now, to cure us more and more of this inclination, and lead us to honour Jehovah our God, let us recognize more thoroughly the relationship which his creative hand has established between us and him, and combine with it a sense of redeeming grace. Prayer under the solemn impressions arising from a consideration of these things, will be spiritual honour offered to God as he is revealed in Christ, that is, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the hearer and answerer of prayer. It is in the character of our Redeemer that he wins us back to himself from the miserable and rebellious service of Satan, and no spectacle can be more humiliating than a poor sinner pretending to worship God through Christ, while as yet he is the servant of sin. As well might the captive Israel have tried to thank God for deliverance when groaning in the brick kiln, as a poor unawakened sinner to glorify him for redemption, while yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. And yet there are a multitude of worshippers who never judge of the worship of God, as demanding the first place in their heart and life. They do not deny its claim,—they admit it to a share of their attention, and deem themselves not a little worthy of praise, that they find a corner in their heart for it. Alas! if they would examine themselves, they would find that it never had a place in their heart. They would confess that they had found a place in their heart for the credit of being deemed religious by others, but were utterly destitute of a spiritual frame, and, above all, destitute of that impression of the oneness of God's claim which, wherever it

exists, settles down the soul on the exclusive and abiding claim of the Creator to the pure and unmingled reverence and love of his creatures.

Redeemed by the blood of Jesus from the thralldom of sin's bondage, and brought under the bonds of the covenant of grace, the believer, while he laments the littleness of his spiritual attainments, and the mixed character of his devotions, is ever striving to give to God the supreme place in his heart, and exclusive honour in all his worship. He laments that so many competing idols, so to speak, should dispute the Lord's claim to honour so justly and so exclusively his due. He chides himself when he finds that some insinuating idol has crept in to stand side by side of his only God. By grace he brings it out, and destroys it, and longs earnestly for the day when, set free from earth, and cleansed from all his idols, with the new heart in full play, and unopposed by the clog of the old man, he shall worship his God,—not simply with spiritual vigour, but with a single eye, and with all his heart.

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 TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us,' 1 John v. 14.*

THE confidence which the believer has in the faithfulness of Jehovah, is ever in proportion to his ability to grasp that faithfulness by a genuine faith. This confidence is one of the most important elements in true prayer. Nay, so absolutely indispensable is this element to the existence of true supplication, that without it, the most eloquent and impressive words are as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal in the ears of God. It is our honouring Jehovah's faithfulness, our taking him at his word, our persuasion that he will do as he has said, that is the essence of this confidence.

Two things are presented to our contemplation by this text.

1. The confidence which we as believers have in God. 2. The limit of it.

1. The confidence is both a privilege and a duty. The poor wretched sinner, long suspicious of God, long mistrustful of his goodness and mercy, long the wretched slave of unbelief, is by the quickening and subduing grace of the Spirit brought to know that God is gracious, and faithful to those promises which grace has given, and that he may now rest assured that God will fulfil these promises

to him, not because of his personal worthiness, but because he who gave them is the eternal Yea and Amen. Surely it is a privilege.

But the confidence which we are called to exercise in prayer is also a duty. It is a mockery of God to go through the form of devotion, and call on his name, while we remain indifferent whether he fulfil his word or no—and it is an insult, and an offence to supplicate his favour, yet unbelievably doubt whether the faithful God will be as good as his word. O my soul think of the two fearful sins, between which thou art liable to be tossed. The world comes in with its mighty and attractive influences, and in a day of quietness and peace thou art satisfied with praying in form without faith. Or in a day of guilt felt and feared, the mountain weight of sin awakens suspicion that though God fulfil the promises to others, yet he will not fulfil them to thee. And whether it be indifference or unbelief, both are offensive to God.

Such as are sensible of their liability to those sins can only avoid them by striving to acquire confidence in God, and that is acquired not from reasoning with ourselves on the sin of unbelief, not by any abstract logical demonstration, that God cannot deny himself, not even by impressing our minds with the testimony of God's faithfulness, left on record by all believers who have gone before us in the walk of faith, but by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit on the heart, working in us all the good pleasure of God's goodness, even the work of faith with power.

This confidence once given is to be maintained to the end. No doubt the enemy of souls once defeated by that faith which giveth the victory, will labour hard to destroy it, and should he but shake it, he may succeed in bringing desolation on the soul. The only way of resisting him and securing an established victory, is daily to prove God's faithfulness by pleading his promises with a believing heart, and looking up confidently for the answer. Thus honouring the promises, our God will fulfil, and our confidence will grow, until prayer and expectation be so interwoven, as to be unseparable, and we shall be able to bruise him under our feet.

2. But though this confidence should be boundless, our request must be limited. Confidence indeed is unlimited in one sense, for we cannot trust God's promise too far; but in another it is limited, for we can exercise confidence only where God has promised. That very promise then which forms the warrant of unlimited confidence, bounds the nature of the request. It is only in asking for things agreeable to God's will

that we know he heareth us. We can have no right to ask what he has not promised, nor any comfort in asking what we are in doubt about. It is our duty then, to study the word of promise diligently that we may know both the height of our confidence, and the limits of our desire. Ignorance of God's will exposes us to the sin of asking amiss; and to the punishment of God's rebuke in refusing to hear.

And here we may indeed be covetous of better gifts. We feel our need of the blessings that gladden the life of the body; and though God has limited our requests regarding them to ordinary necessaries, yet unless we regulate our desires, we shall find them enlarged, and growing beyond the limit assigned them, and our relish and desire for spiritual blessings, narrowed and lowered below the standard God has set. He has set bounds to our desire for temporal blessings. Covetousness of them he condemns as idolatry. But he has set no bounds to our relish for spiritual mercies, and our desires for them. Here the more enlarged our hearts, and the more covetous our desires, the more earnest and energetic will be our prayer. Let us open our mouth wide for God can fill it, and he is heartily willing.

It is this confidence in God that has done such wonders through prayer in time past. Elijah prayed in confidence, and God for three years and a half made the land of Israel the prey of drought—again the prophet prayed in confidence, and the Lord sent the fertilizing showers. Daniel prayed in confidence, and the lions' mouths were shut. His companions glorified a faithful God in the flames, and came forth unhurt. Paul and Silas shook the prison by their prayers. John Knox made Mary Queen of Scotland to tremble by his prayers, for she knew that what he prayed for came to pass. When he spread out his requests before God, he laid hold so on the faithfulness, that the answer followed as a thing of course.

And this too is the confidence we may put in him. Elijah, Daniel, Paul, and Knox, were poor sinners like ourselves. Their confidence was of grace, so may ours be. The foundation of their confidence remains the same. It is offered to us. We may build on it. And building on it, we too shall overcome the world, and gain the glorious victory of faith. We shall learn to direct our prayers to God, and looking up shall expect an answer, as sure as he who is faithful, and who cannot deny himself.

## TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Having, therefore, brethren, 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,' Heb. x. 19, 20.*

FRIENDS may hold communion with each other by letter, and when separated by great distances, may in this way maintain mutual intercourse. But though such a mode of maintaining communion may suffice, when no better mode can be adopted, both parties feel that the life and spirit of mutual intercourse, lies in holding communion with each other face to face. The believer feels that this rule holds to the full in his communion with God. When he feels God as it were at a distance, when he can only as it were send a messenger, and wait for a reply, the communion is lifeless and unattractive; but when by faith he can press into the very presence of God, and realize communion face to face, then is the hour of prayer the sweetest of his hours below.

It is the believer's privilege in these last days to enjoy such communion at all times, and in all places; and herein lies the difference between him and his fellow-believers of old. Under the Mosaic dispensation they were not permitted to get so near God as their heart desired—and if at any time he did manifest his more immediate presence they trembled. They had neither nearness nor boldness. Like Moses they would cry out, 'Show us thy glory;' or like Job, 'O that we knew where we might find him, we would come even to his seat;' or like David, 'Our soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall we come and appear before God.' They had not that access to God which they desired. But when his presence shone forth,—like Moses at the bush, they trembled and could not behold, 'for they were afraid to look upon God;' or like Job, they acknowledged themselves 'vile;' or like Isaiah cried out, 'Woe is us for we are undone, for our eyes have seen the King the Lord of hosts.'

Now all this distance and alarm by which the aspirations and faith of ancient believers were tried, is done away in Christ. Jewish believers were constrained to worship God in the court of the temple, while the high priest went with trembling into the holiest of all; but believers now can follow the High Priest into the very holiest, and that without fear; and so instead of worshipping the Lord at a distance, can address their supplications to him as it were face to face.

Let us contemplate, 1. The privilege. 2. The way of access.

1. The privilege is that of coming with boldness unto God's very presence. By the holiest of all, is meant the very presence of God. That presence was visibly displayed in the holy of holies within the tabernacle, and the high priest once a year, with the blood, the sacrifice, and incense, went in and looked on it. But Christ hath made us all priests unto God, and so what the high priest alone of old enjoyed, we all are privileged to possess. Virtually through our High Priest Jesus Christ, we come unto God's very presence. In our behalf he has entered into the presence of God for us, not with the blood of others but his own. He stands there as our surety and representative. And we are regarded by God as admitted in him. But we enjoy the privilege substantially by faith. This grace lifts us into the presence chamber of the great King. The confidence of faith realizes the presence of God, and gives us substantially access to it. And at last, when summoned to the glory of the believer in heaven, we shall personally enjoy the privilege which at present we long for, and the boldness with which we come is not presumptuous and impertinent familiarity. It is warranted by God in the provision he has made, and he demands it that he may be glorified in our freedom. We can come with as much ease and boldness as children to a father. We need neither tremble nor fear. Love brings us with due reverence, but a sense of the love that draws us, brings us with filial boldness, for we know that if we are dear unto God as his children, there is nothing which he has bidden us ask that we may not boldly ask.

2. And the way of access is as wondrous, as the privilege is exalted. It is through the veil of Christ's flesh, a way consecrated to us by Christ himself. That is, it is a way through the blood of atonement. When the high priest entered into the holy of holies, he could not dare to go without blood. And Jesus our surety, when he entered heaven, took with him his own blood. He entered glory as one who had satisfied for sinners, who by suffering had magnified the law, and made it honourable; and in virtue of the same atonement we get near unto God. Did conscience testify that sin remained unatoned for, did it testify that God was still frowning because the insult on his law was not avenged, then we could not come. We would not dare to present ourselves before an offended Judge. But when the word testifies, that Jesus has fulfilled all the demands that could be made against us, and that God is infinitely satisfied with his work, and invites us, yea beseeches us to employ it, as if

we had done all ourselves, we are encouraged boldly to come through the appointed atonement, and to come with confidence, that we shall have, yea already have what we ask.

And this way of access is as living and life-giving as is the way itself. It is blood with the life in it, which Jesus presents before God. Not dead blood such as flowed from the victims under the law, and which when once shed remained dead, but blood even his own, the blood which he gave for the life of the world, and which, as the ever-living atonement, he ceases not to present to God in our behalf. This is our life. It turns away that wrath of God which is certain death; and applied by the Holy Spirit to our souls, makes us spiritually alive. Well might Paul term this a new way. It is not the way Adam in innocence enjoyed. Nor the way angels employ. Nor that by which the self-righteous, who deem themselves so good, approach unto God. But a way new to Christians as compared with the Jews, new to men as compared with angels, new to spiritually-minded believers, as compared with what they were wont to confide in the days of their self-righteousness. It is indeed a new and living way.

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#### TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;'* Rom. viii. 26.

How many inestimable blessings we owe to the love of the Spirit, this eighth chapter of the Romans declares in detail. He is, indeed, the help and comfort of the people of Christ. He enables them to walk as Christ did, ver. 1—4. He removes their carnal mind, when they cannot do it themselves, ver. 5, 6. He gives them life and peace, ver. 6. He is to them a seal of their purchase by Christ, ver. 9. He fills them with the Spirit of God's children, ver. 14. He enables them to support calmly the trials and troubles of life, ver. 18. He inspires them with elevating hope, ver. 24. He invigorates their patience, ver. 26.

Nor is this all.—Likewise also he helpeth all their infirmities, specially those connected with prayer, ver. 27. O how much we owe to this gracious Spirit!

The infirmities here mentioned are numerous and pressing, including our every weakness, but

it would appear that the chief infirmity alluded to by Paul, is that experienced by the Christian in the duty of prayer. He is taught by the Spirit to desire communion with God, and to feel the blessedness arising from it. But in attempting the duty that he may enjoy the privilege, he labours under a two-fold infirmity. He feels his ignorance of what he ought to supplicate and confess,—and still more so his want of the spirit that becomes a privilege so high, an exercise so solemn. Often when he goes to his knees, he knows not what to say. He feels his heart like a dry well, where the fountain hath ceased to flow. He has neither words nor desire; or, if he can speak fluently—if matter and expression come readily, he is too often compelled to deplore the absence of unction and spirituality of mind. These infirmities are seriously felt and deplored by the child of God. Two reasons impel him to lament and mourn over them. He does not glorify God, save he come in faith and with spiritual desire. Again, he has no profit to himself, if he knows not what to ask or how to ask it. But God leaves not his child to labour under the overwhelming weight of difficulties like these. He sent his Son to bear the sins of his chosen, and he sheds down his Spirit to help them when sinking under infirmity. He gave his Son to be their life. He gives his Spirit to impart to them that life.

And the Spirit becomes the teacher of God's children, in the duty of prayer. He is to them the Spirit of grace and supplications. He unveils to them their wretched condition,—opens their eyes to see how poor they are, how miserably blind and naked. He spreads forth before their eyes all their destitution. As he caused Ezekiel to go round the dry bones and survey their number, and be affected with the dreary and hopeless death that consumed them,—so he causes the children of God, having opened their spiritual eyes, to survey all their misery; and under the sight, they not only mourn, but are compelled to sigh, yea, groan after deliverance.

But this is not the only sight which the Spirit gives. He lifts their eyes from themselves to the suffering Saviour,—and if the sight of themselves made groans come from their innermost soul, because of their sad ruin; the sight of Jesus suffering for them, constrains them yet more to mourn and be in bitterness, both over their personal vileness before God, and the agonies the blessed Jesus endured in their behalf. But this sight, which produces the deepest sorrow, ministers the most elevating hope, and awakens the liveliest spiritual desire, by showing them what

God is ready and willing to do for them. Did the Spirit but make manifest the glory of Jesus as the spotless Son of God, in contrast with their individual vileness and pollution, and leave them at the same time destitute of the blessed assurance, that the death of the Surety is the sinner's hope, the sight of spotless holiness in him, contrasted with unmeasured guilt and inexpressible pollution in themselves, would but extort the mutterings of despair, not the groanings of spiritual desire.

But this gracious Teacher, whose love for the comfort of Christ's chosen, is the same in amount as the love that prompted the endurance of the cross in their behalf, displays the death of the Surety as the pledge that his spotless righteousness and holiness shall be the possession of all who long for them, and who cast themselves on sovereign grace for the precious gift.

And the combination of these varied views of ourselves with Christ, and the end of his death combined with the power of the multitude of faithful promises which it seals, reveal to us, when taught and led of the Spirit, how loathsome and destitute we are, how glorious and full is Jesus, how ready and willing to give, is our God, who spared them not.

By these means does he help our infirmity. Under a soul-impressive sight of ourselves and our sins, we know what to confess and mourn, and so does the Spirit at times represent sin and guilt, that groans not words declare our feeling before God.

Equally heartfelt, and equally inexpressible in words, are the desires which he who helps our infirmity in prayer, awakens in our hearts, when the holy beauties of a spotless Lord are set forth to our eyes in all their glory. We must have them or die. We cannot rest without them. They inspire the soul perishing under sin-sickness, with longings after eternal restoration to spiritual health, which nothing but that health can satisfy. He who has had a sight of Jesus as he is, and of his image as the Christian's eternal inheritance, well knows that the petitions of the tongue, under the yearnings of heart after holiness which the Spirit stirs up, are poor expressions of the heart's desires. Their depth and extent may be heard in groans; but where the Spirit gives these longings, the language of earth cannot embody them. Thus is it that the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings. He it is that inspires our prayers. If we pray aright his are the words. If we pray in the Spirit, his is the sincerity both of supplication and confession. If we have faith he gives and upholds it.

Truly the provision made for our encouragement in prayer, is worthy of God, who hears and answers it.

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 TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness,'*  
 Job xxxvii. 19.

THE friend of Job, like all other children of God, felt the infirmity of ignorance in prayer. He felt that however eloquently and forcibly he could order his speech before men, he was rude and ignorant, as a very beast, when he tried to order his speech before God. He could with lively eloquence in some good measure reprove the patriarch's distorted views of God's dealings, and even plead for the justice and equity of his providence; but when he came to order his own case before the Almighty, to glorify him for his perfections, to confess sin and implore his mercy, he found the need of that teaching which enables the sinner to draw near to his God.

If we at all are made alive from that wretched state of death and dumb silence which sin has entailed upon us, we shall be ready to join in Elihu's request,—and to prefer it, not to our companions in the faith, however prayerful, but to him whose Spirit helpeth our infirmity in prayer. The majesty and holiness of Jehovah, the distance at which we find ourselves from him, with the felt blindness of our natural understanding, will all combine to make us feel the absolute necessity of being taught how to pray.

The disciples of our Lord Jesus, after some short intercourse with him, were led by the Spirit to discern how ignorant they were of the right manner and spirit in which they ought to discharge this duty, and they accordingly preferred this request to him,—'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' Jesus had been praying. With a heart full of faith, and felt need, he had poured out his requests unto God; and one of his disciples, in thinking of the scantiness and meanness of his own devotions, compared with the fulness and spirituality of his Master's, preferred his request in name of all his brethren, that he would teach them to pray. Our Lord at once complied, and prescribed to them that most child-like, yet full and sublime form of prayer, Our Father who art in heaven, &c.

Now it is encouraging to us in the highest degree, to notice that the request was no sooner made than it was answered. Jesus delayed not

to comply. He loved his Father too well, to delay teaching his disciples how to honour him. Nor will he the less readily send his Spirit of grace and supplication to us, when under the felt pressure of natural ignorance, we cry to him, Lord teach us to pray.

But let us dwell, first, on the request before us; and secondly, on the reason of it.

1. 'Teach us what we shall say to him.' It is to the holy, infinitely exalted Jehovah, that we propose to address ourselves. Were we called to speak to an earthly sovereign, and introduced to his presence, if unaccustomed to address the ear of royalty, and unacquainted with the behaviour, which becometh a subject in the company of his sovereign, we should at least feel uncomfortable, and fear lest our awkwardness or impropriety of speech might offend. And if we realize in any measure the majesty and holiness of our God, and contrast these with our own meanness and vileness, if we at all reflect how most utterly ignorant we are of what we ought to say, we shall indeed feel not only awkward in expressing homage, or in preferring our requests, but we shall stand in awe, and tremble lest we offend by our sad want of that knowledge of God and of what pleases him, which so becomes them that would draw near to him. And if we at all realize his adorable greatness, and our own condition as sinners before him, we shall be afraid yet the more lest the spirit we manifest be unbecoming his glorious majesty, and the high privilege given us of access to him. So that whether we regard the matter of prayer or the spirit of it, we are equally at a loss unless we be taught. And the reason of this unskilfulness in prayer is manifest, for

2. We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our mind, we know not what to say to him. A state of sin is a state of alienation,—a state of revolt. The children of God who have kept their first estate, and been brought up under his eye, been taught of him all along, and continually in his presence, know both their Creator and themselves. It is their natural delight, and their daily employment to hold communion with God. There is no darkness in their minds. They have all the knowledge they need, and they constantly live in the highest exercise of a devotional spirit. But alas! we know nothing of this happy state, while surrendered to the helpless ignorance of alienation from God. Living far from him, pleased to be ignorant of him, loathing the very thought of nearness to

him, and shrinking from the influence of a devotional spirit, we pass our every hour till arrested by grace, and constrained to cry to God. And then when the will is given, and the attempt made, we are made painfully sensible of the blindness and deadness of our soul; so that with Elihu we are ready to say, 'Teach us what we shall say unto him, for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.'

Elihu preferred his request to those who were very unfit to counsel him what to say, and who being themselves destitute of power to rouse their own hearts to spiritual life, could ill impart the spirit of genuine supplications to him. But we are encouraged to prefer the request to him, who teaches all his children, gives them a heart like his own, and who imparts to them all the Spirit of grace and supplication. We shall not in vain solicit their privileges. His word is—'ask and ye shall receive.' Let us learn to prove him. He will give us of his good Spirit; and then by groaning, if not in words, we shall know both what to say to him, and how, and in what spirit to say it. We shall no longer utter the words of devotion with the spirit of the world, but offer spiritual homage to him who is a Spirit, and is to be worshipped in Spirit and in truth.

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THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

'Pray without ceasing,' 1 Thes. v. 17.

SOME have professed to wonder at this injunction of the apostle, as if it ordained a practice incompatible with the discharge of other duties equally imperative as that of prayer. But the example of our Lord Jesus is at once the most impressive comment on it, and the most satisfactory explanation of it. He spake a parable (Luke xviii. 1—8.) to show his followers that men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint, illustrating in it the nature of that gracious importunity which will not be put off without an answer; evidently intending his people to understand that in praying *always*, or as the apostle expresses it here, in praying without ceasing, importunity is one element. But his personal example shows, that by *always* he does not intend uninterrupted prayer. Never any of his followers accomplished more active labour than he, or met engagements so numerous and so diversified. In preaching publicly, instructing privately, working miracles, in attendance on stated ordinances, familiar visits, travelling from place to place, he abounded from the commencement of his ministry to its close,

and while engaged in these he could not be praying,—yet he prayed *always*, prayed without ceasing. He was constantly in a devotional frame, and was ready at any time to lay aside the duty he was pursuing, in order to lift up his soul unto God. Combining, then, his example and his parable, we infer that the two leading elements in the ceaseless prayer enjoined by the apostle, are an uninterrupted devotional frame of spirit, and gracious importunity.

1. When I think of the nature of a devotional or prayerful frame of spirit, I have indeed reason to be ashamed, and to ask myself, whether after all my profession and all my prayers, I have ever yet attained to the possession of it. It is a frame so utterly opposed to the ordinary spirit of the godless world, so elevated above its unbelief, that the Spirit of grace and supplications can alone give it birth. To live as in the very presence of God, to maintain a constant sense of my spiritual wants, and to hang by a child-like confidence on him for the supply of them all, to lie low before him as vile and unworthy, and yet never to fail in my confidence that he will hear my cry and have respect to my imploring look, and so to be ready to turn to him with all my wants, saying as Jacob, 'I cannot let thee go until thou bless me,'—such is a devotional frame. And it arises not from a sense of need, nor from a knowledge of God's fulness and readiness to supply, but from the powerful blessing of the Spirit of prayer, shed abroad in the heart, and drawing out the soul under a sense of its destitution, and confidence in God's promises, to ask, believing that he will do exceeding abundantly above what can be asked, or even thought.

Like the other holy habits of the Christian life, which grow out of the quickening and moulding influence of the truth as it is in Jesus, this habitual frame of devotion is not acquired in a moment, but gradually gathers constancy and strength. And though the foundation of it is ever the same, and remains at all times within my reach, experience has taught me, that without the habitual exercise of prayer, a devotional frame dies away, and refuses to return at my bidding. God's promises are the same to-day as they were from the beginning, his readiness to fulfil them is unaltered; my need is as great as it was when first I felt it, yea, greater; the throne of grace is open to me at all times; there is not only no obstacle in the way, but a pressing invitation to come, because the way is clear; and yet if I have not been active in plying my suit before the hearer and answerer of prayer, the knowledge of these truths that awaken so power-

fully in others, the spirit of supplication, leaves me little if at all impressed. It is the practical use of them that gives the soul such ability and confidence to wrestle with God.

In order then to obey the apostolic precept, two things are requisite. (1.) My set seasons of prayer must not be neglected. The psalmist called on God seven times a day, Psal. cxix. 164. He had one of these seven at midnight, Psal. cxix. 62. If I set not myself seven seasons of regular prayer, yet I must, to maintain a devotional frame, have stated hours of intercourse with God, and allow nothing to interfere with them. (2.) Nor must I, between these, drop the duty of looking up. Ejaculatory prayer is at all times within my power. Wherever I am, I may secretly lift up my heart. It is here that the true secret of constant prayer lies. If I can but attain to the exercise of ejaculatory prayer, I shall pray without ceasing.

2. But in praying always, importunity is as much an element, as a devotional habit of mind. The importunity which pleases God, and honours him most is that which grasping the faithfulness of his promises, and his character as the hearer of prayer, will not be put off without an answer. The answer may be delayed; nay, to all appearance, may seem denied, and, when after long looking up, the prayer remains before the throne, but the blessing is withheld, it is indeed difficult for the soul to uphold its faith, and prevent fainting. But grace, in a thousand instances, has enabled believers to persevere, amidst apparent rebukes and refusals from God. The woman of Canaan was thus tried. She implored Christ's help, but he answered her not a word. She continued to cry, but he would not acknowledge her as one of Israel. She still implored compassion, but he called her a dog. And yet her importunity was not put to silence. She caught his words, acknowledged herself a dog, yet pled for a share of the children's crumbs. Nor did she plead in vain. He had been but proving her faith, and having tried it, he removed the term of reproach, acknowledged her as one of his own, and gave her to the full out of his heart, all that he had put into her heart to desire. And so am I to be importunate. The Hearer of prayer may be giving earnest heed to the prayer I offer, when the answer is delayed; nay, he may be preparing the most gracious answer, and the most full, when he seems to frown me away. To pray without ceasing, when by his frown he as it were says, 'Let me alone; speak no more unto me of this matter;' this is indeed to be importunate. Such importunity shows that he

himself gives the grace and confidence to carry it on, and leaves me no room to doubt, that if he sees it not meet to give me my heart's desire, he will give me far better, even his own.

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### THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Is any among you afflicted? let him pray,' James v. 13.*

THERE is no situation in which we can possibly be placed, in which, if children of God, we shall not find prayer an inestimable privilege. But specially in affliction, shall we find this privilege inestimable. The soothing balm which the covenant provides for the consolation of the broken and bleeding heart, is most successfully applied, when we bend in the lowliness of submission before the throne of our Father, and implore him to lift on us the eye of his compassion. Affliction manifests the real character of the comforts of this gay world; it strips them of their hollow guise; and if we have been trusting to them alone, such a dispensation lays the idols at our feet, crushed and broken,—like the idols of Babylon, that went themselves into captivity, and could not deliver them who trusted in them; our idol comforts at once declare their inability to support us, and at length are compelled in truth to say, 'We are nothing but vanity.' But this dispensation, which reveals the inadequacy of the comforts of this world, only more fully displays the tried and stable consolation which cometh from God.

If affliction is the call to prayer, the righteous man will often hear the summons. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, (Psal. xxxiv. 19) and therefore the calls of the righteous to prayer are multiplied. And the separate experience of individual Christians, as well as the united experience of all believers, testifies, that there is no refuge in affliction, so secure and so suitable as the throne of grace. But the truth of this will be more manifest, by referring to individual cases.

1. Are we suffering from the failure of long cherished hopes, the vanishing of expectations we had reason to think would soon be realized, what more powerful comfort or support can we enjoy, than in casting ourselves on the exhaustless resources of the gracious God who bids us take him in Christ as our portion, and who, in the room of blighted hopes, can furnish us with manifold blessings, better far, and more satisfactory, than our brightest imaginations ever conceived? (Psal. lxxxiv. 11.)

2. Or are we afflicted and smarting under the loss of some source of pleasure and joy, for ever removed, and that after having been long delighted with it; to what consolation more abundant, to what stay more sure can we betake ourselves, than to him who having all things in his hand can easily supply, and thoroughly make up our every loss, and is himself a portion surer and better than all he can bestow? (Ps. cxix. 57.)

3. Or are we afflicted with the malicious calumnies of the wicked, holding us up to the scorn of a blind and misjudging world, to what tower of defence in the innocence of our heart, and galled by such surmises, can we better retreat, than to him who can bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noon-day? (Ps. xxxvii. 6.)

4. But these are not the only afflictions we have to endure. They are heavy and powerful, when viewed by themselves; but easily borne when compared with those that burden the heart in view of the consequences of sin.

There is no affliction equal in intensity to that of a conscience wounded by the guilt of sin, and suffering from the terrors of the wrath of God. When the soul seems set as a mark for the bolts of the Almighty, and when eternity unfolds the prospect of coming terrors, which its endless duration alone can display, there is no rest, no comfort for the trembler, but in God. And O! how often has the cry of despair, 'Lord, save me, I perish,' been heard and answered? At the throne of grace peace has broken in on the troubled conscience, and the trembling suppliant has risen from his knees, saying, 'Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.'

5. But even after peace is restored to the conscience, and the soul has found rest in God, the believer is afflicted by the assaults of temptation. The attainment of genuine holiness was never peaceably or quietly made. It were too much for Satan's malicious envy to endure, that a Christian should attain conformity to God's image without a struggle; and accordingly we find, that

as fast as we strive to grow in holiness, Satan strives to harass and annoy us with temptation. To a true believer, such an affliction is galling in the extreme. The sorrows of the poor worldling, poignant though they be, are trifling compared with a believer's grief, when assaulted by temptation, and thwarted in pursuit of holiness. But he finds a refuge in prayer,—For,

Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.

It is by the prayer of faith, the wrestlings of supplication, that victory is obtained. The bird when attacked flies to its mountain, the coney to his rock, the soldier to his stronghold, the child to his father, and the Christian to his God. Jesus has gotten the victory over Satan, and he has promised to give his people the victory too, when they call upon him.

But sometimes they fall before the tempter. They dishonour their profession, and disgrace the Saviour, wounding him again in the house of his friends, and so put him to shame. A sense of such conduct brings with it overwhelming sorrow; yea, affliction under which they would perish, but for access to the throne of grace. But when admitted to the presence of God, and drawn out in genuine confession of depravity and their guilt in denying and betraying their Lord, they are restored to the joy of God's salvation, and upheld by his free Spirit.

Nor is this all. When pining sickness, in its wasting power, has attacked the bodily frame, and the outward man is perishing under it, and when this affliction is evidently the messenger of death, the believer indeed feels how precious and how suitable is the privilege of access to a throne of grace. Such an affliction, when viewed as the stroke of God's hand, bows the heart to holy submission, and lifts the thoughts from things seen and temporal, to things unseen and eternal. It quickens him to communion with God. He is speedily to be introduced to his immediate presence; and the more full his begun communion on earth, the more perfect will be his fellowship in heaven. Is any man then, afflicted? let him pray.

## D E C E M B E R.

## FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,'* Heb. iv. 15, 16.

It was a leading and prominent duty of the high priest under the Aaronic dispensation to intercede for the people, to come between them and God, and plead by the blood of atonement that they might be forgiven. For this solemn purpose he was chosen of God, duly set apart and qualified for his work. The nature of his duty was clearly described, and the whole method by which he was to supplicate the favour of God for the people duly recorded, that in all things he might be faithful to him who appointed him. For in the matter of interceding between God as an offended judge and sinful creatures, it is plain that the judge's will alone must be fulfilled; since it is not only of sovereign grace that there is forgiveness at all, but he alone knows how it is to be conveyed to unworthy sinners consistent with his dignity. The high priest therefore was chosen by him, ordained, qualified, and instructed by him how to act, and every offering requisite was previously determined, that in all things the holy majesty of God might be honoured; for it is a standing requisite in the interceding high priest, that he be faithful in all things pertaining to God.

But God in appointing the high priest of old, while he had infinite respect to his own majesty, had equal regard to the infirmities of poor sinners. And having purposed to save them, he determined to accomplish their salvation, not as a haughty lord would rescue his slave from death, to gratify his pride of lordship, and display his sovereignty, but in a way which would equally manifest his compassion, as establish his right to leave them to ruin. It is in the sovereignty of tender compassion, in the multitude of mercies, that sinners are redeemed. And therefore, instead of sending angels to be high priests, he all along from the beginning appointed to the office, those

who were as much compassed with infirmities as were the sinners for whom they pleaded.

Perceiving the consummate excellence of the Mosaic system of worship, as compared with all the rituals and creeds of the idolatrous heathen, the sons of Abraham kept fast to their profession, under the assurance that, excepting their own, there was no other form of worship appointed of God. And so long as the Mosaic dispensation lasted, such faithful cleaving to it was incumbent duty. It is on this ground that Paul reasons in the passage before us. We too are to hold fast our profession, knowing assuredly that saving the way of acceptance through Jesus Christ, there is none other by which we may come to God, for in Christ he has abolished the ritual of Moses.

And if poor sinners of old were encouraged to come near unto God, through the offices of a high priest appointed of him, and able to sympathise with them; much more may we be encouraged to draw near unto him now, considering the High Priest who intercedes for us. Three things give us confidence.

1. The appointment of Jesus to the office of Intercessor is from God. He is chosen of God, his elect in whom he delighteth, his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased. Such an intercessor must prevail.

2. Being appointed of God, he was faithful. Knowing the mind of God, having it himself, he understood thoroughly what consisted with the majesty of God as an offended Judge, and what became his own character and work as appointed High Priest. He ever did the thing that pleased him.

3. And while God has given us in the choice of his beloved Son, and in his faithfulness to appointed duty, an unqualified confidence, that his voice as Intercessor shall never be heard in vain, he has given us boundless encouragement to apply to him, because he can sympathise with us. And here is the condescension of our High Priest. Inasmuch as we are partakers of flesh and blood, he himself likewise took part of the same. That he might pity us he compassed himself with infirmity. Nor is this all his condescension. Instead of guarding himself from the assaults of Satan and the wicked world, and retiring from

the crushing power of human infirmity and common grief—he permitted himself to be tempted as we are, in every way. By Satan, by the world, by weakness, by grief, by the hidings of God's countenance, the accusations of the law, the fear of death, in all points like as we are tempted, the Redeemer out of love to us consented to be tempted too. And now having as the man of sorrows, borne our sicknesses, and taken our infirmities, and suffered our temptations, he indeed knows how to pity us, and how to plead for us. And although he be the Son of God, yea, the mighty God, at whose beck universal nature trembles, and whose eye at one glance can scan the infinite dominions of the Eternal; yea, though of purer eyes than to regard evil save with abhorrence, he yet can pity poor sinners, and finds it his highest glory, his choicest delight to plead they may be forgiven.

With all boldness then may I come to God. He sits on the throne of grace, ready to forgive, not on the throne of judgment to condemn. He has glorified his Son Jesus, and by oath made him an accepted Intercessor for ever. There is no mercy or grace which I need that this Redeemer is not willing to ask for me, or that God is not willing to give. If I obtain not mercy and grace then, unbelief lies at the root of my failure. And it is a just cause why I should fail. What more could God have done to re-awaken my confidence in his love, or fortify my assurance that when I come back to him, he will meet me with the love of the father who has been bereaved of his child and yearns for his restoration? If I go not immediately it is because I would rather be rebellious still. If I go faltering and in doubt of acceptance, I am in so far making God a liar. For he that gave his Son to die for sinners, will never withhold the pardon and the holiness he died to procure.

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#### FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full,'* John xvi. 23, 24.

THE confident expectation of an answer to our prayers, is an essential element in the spirit of genuine supplication. When God promises so faithfully and largely, and when he bids us come and ask that we may receive, to ask in doubt whether he will give, is double dishonour to him; it belies

his faithfulness in promising, and it virtually declares that we cannot put confidence in the way of access and acceptance which he has provided. Hence the apostolic injunction, 'let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.' To doubt whether we shall get as we ask betrays lurking unbelief. We would gladly have the blessing implored, but we fear God will not give it. O how suspicious of our Father in heaven, sin has made us.

But suspicion is not only dishonouring to God, it is unworthy of our Christian profession. For this is the confidence, that we may have in him, 'that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us. And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we desire of him.' Such is the Christian's confidence in looking for an answer. And the secret of it is found in the Saviour's words.

It was very gradually that the mind of the apostles, even under the teaching of Jesus, was opened to comprehend the full excellence of the truth, and the glorious privileges of the children of God; he unfolded to them gradually the nature of his intercession. They did not at first pray in his name. They had indeed prayed, but as the Old Testament saints, by appealing to the Father's mercy, and without reference to Jesus as Intercessor. They had asked nothing in his name. Now they were to ask in that name. They were to change their manner of prayer in this respect. They were not even to content themselves with the prayer he had taught them, for it includes no mention of his name, but they were to ask whatsoever they desired in his name, as standing between them and God.

And to encourage them thus to pray, our Lord most solemnly assures them, that prayer in his name will not fail of an answer. He pledges them his true and faithful asseveration. Verily, verily, that the Father would give whatsoever they asked in his name, and invites and provokes them to prove his words. How condescending the grace of him who spake as never man spake.

And not only had they not in time past prayed in his name, but all they had asked was a mere nothing in comparison of what God was prepared to give. And so while he here instructs them how to pray, he bids them in time to come be no niggards in asking, because his Father is honoured in giving bountifully. He who gave his Son to die, can give to sinners any amount of blessing they need. He gives not simply a little to relieve the pining misery of sin-laden souls, he gives fulness of joy. Let them therefore open their mouth wide that God may fill it.

What the blessed Jesus here said to his apostles, he says to us all. He would have us prove his faithfulness and ability—to do as he has said. Well may we reproach ourselves, and that in more ways than one, that we have not met offers and promises, so gracious and so bountiful, with larger faith, loftier desire, and more abundant importunity.

God sent his promises to our need. It is wide, deep, and continuous. Utterly destitute of all spiritual provisions, he limits not his supply, but opens the exhaustless stores of his grace in Christ, and bids us draw on him for all we need. But though he suits his promises to our need, we never suit our prayers to his promises. Where we should be greedy we are soon contented. We stop short with a simple touch, when we may take and carry away to our heart's fullest desire. We, as it were, ask nothing—and are content to be very poor, when we may be in affluence.

Nor is the reason of this scanty measure of request difficult to find out. It arises from our judging of God, as we would of ourselves. Narrow-minded and selfish, in equal extent as we are ruined beggars, we permit our hearts to be carried away with the thought that God is as narrow-minded in giving as our suspicions represent him. We find it the most difficult thing we can try, to exercise confidence in God's willingness to do as he promises. To ordinary reason it seems as easy as to comprehend the truth, that God cannot lie. We take his imperishable faithfulness, his free invitations, his solemn and earnest calls, and his provisions in Christ, and to enlightened reason, faith seems as easy as these things are plain. Alas! alas! all the power of reason ever known, never yet imparted one particle of confidence to an alienated heart. Let us after the most lucid comprehension of God's faithfulness, love, willingness, and ability, try to settle our hearts confidently in the truth, that he stands waiting to give us the pardon of sin, and a new heart to enjoy it, and we shall find that such faith is not the fruit of reason, but the fruit of the Spirit. And if simple confidence in God's good will towards us, be so difficult to attain, how much more to pray in confidence of having what we ask? Are we not conscious of often praying, while all along as the words flow from our lips, they are accompanied in the heart with the suggestion of unbelief, that God will not answer us. We can trust him for others but not for ourselves. At least the Spirit of our prayers is perhaps, 'God will pity us and send us an answer of peace.' It is not the confidence that we have the petitions we have desired of him.

And this is an infirmity which the Spirit alone can help. It is not of ourselves that we come to rest on the foundation laid in Zion. Our eye may see it, we may be assured of its stability, and have a conviction that God is willing we should lay our burden on it. But none save the Spirit can lift us on to it. Surely his grace is as condescending as that of Jesus. But for the love of the Spirit, we should die in sight of eternal salvation, and remain everlastingly poor with abundance at our side.

#### SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

*'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men'* 1 Tim. ii. 1.

THE apostle wrote this epistle to Timothy, to instruct him in his public and private duties as a minister of the gospel. It is one of unquestionable authority as coming from the pen of him who was constituted an apostle 'by the commandment of God our Saviour, and the Lord Jesus Christ.' Timothy had not only given early proofs of piety and grace, but the spirit of prophecy then in the church indicated that he would be eminent as a minister in the cause of Jesus, and the service of his people. Considering his youthful piety, and these prophecies regarding him, Paul penned to him this charge of instruction, to qualify him more fully in warring a good warfare. It cannot then be otherwise than in the highest degree important to observe how this eminent apostle counsels one so manifestly called to the ministry by the Lord Jesus.

1. Let us then mark that the first head of the charge inculcates the indispensable duty of prayer, as occupying a most prominent place in the catalogue of a Christian's obligations. 'I commit,' says he, 'to thee this charge, son Timothy, according to the prophecies that went before on thee—I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications be made for all men.' We have already meditated on the nature of prayer, the confidence that ought to accompany it, and the importunity which ought to characterize it, as well as the teaching we need to enable us to pray with the spirit and understanding, and the way of access through the intercession of Jesus. But the passage before us directs our attention to the objects of prayer and the nature of petitions we are to employ, in behalf of these objects.

2. We would mark then, in the next place, that the religion of Jesus stands distinct from

every other with respect to its Catholic and benevolent spirit. It views all men, irrespective of name, nation, character, or conduct, as the objects of God's pity, the proper subjects of our prayers. It shuts not up the soul of its adherents within the limits of a narrow-hearted bigotry; bidding them pray only for the few who may attach themselves to the Redeemer's interest, and leave all others disregarded—it enjoins prayer in behalf of all men. And among the many and varied proofs that Christianity is from God, this is one, that its spirit is strictly in accordance with the ordinary and universal dealings of his providence. He provides for every living thing, and gives bread and clothing to all mankind, causing it to rain on the field of the ungodly as well as that of the faithful and devoted servant of Christ, and his sun to rise on the evil as well as the good. And as he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked but will have all to be saved, he enjoins supplications and prayers to be offered for all—from the sovereign that sits on the throne to the meanest subject—and from the man who is highest in exalted piety to him who is lost in alienation from holiness—all, all are the objects of his compassionate care, and the interests of all ought to be near to our heart.

3. Next we would remember that each of us individually are included among the ALL, for whom we are to pray; and as without an honest and good heart in the sight of God, and a safe condition of soul, we cannot discharge a duty so sacred and solemn as that of pleading for others, it will be our leading duty in obeying the injunction to pray for all, first of all, and most heartily to pray for ourselves, that our iniquities being blotted out, and our acceptance with God secured, we may be sanctified to bear the image of Jesus, and filled with his Spirit. Then and then only having given ourselves to Christ, shall we be qualified to engage worthily in this service of pleading for our fellow-men.

4. Let us next notice what is the nature of the prayers we are called to present. Four different species of prayers, are here enumerated, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks. By *supplications* the apostle intends earnest and imploring deprecation of the evils to which men are exposed. Sin has entailed a multitude of evils on mankind, exposing them to the wrath of God, and speedy ruin. And our supplications ought to be presented unto God, that he would guard them from evil, and save them from wrath. By *prayers* are meant those petitions for necessary and promised mercy, of which all stand in need, even when guarded from evil, and saved from

wrath. By *intercessions* we may understand, those special supplications for mercy and grace which after the example of our Lord Jesus, we are called to offer in behalf of any who may injure us, or compass our hurt. And by *giving of thanks*, a grateful acknowledgment of the blessing bestowed on ourselves and on all men, either without our asking, or graciously in answer to our prayers.

5. The general injunction to pray for all men, necessarily commands our prayers to be specific. God does not bestow a world of general blessings, but where he gives, he in wisdom bestows the blessing that is exactly required. In our prayers then for all men, their case and condition ought to be viewed as suggesting the nature of the petition we are to offer. The life and soul of genuine devotion, and true prayer, arise from well marked speciality as regards both what ourselves and others require. A string of general confessions, or general petitions, may have the outward form of prayer, but can neither be profitable to us nor pleasing to God. Our Lord prayed for all, but he suited his prayer to the subjects of it. For himself, with strong crying and supplications and tears, he entreated deliverance from the fear of death. For the benefit of the Jews at the tomb of Lazarus, he entreated a manifestation of divine power with his miraculous raising of his friend, that they might be converted. For his disciples, he entreated all preserving and edifying grace, with the prevalence of the Spirit of unity. And for his enemies who nailed him to the cross, he implored forgiveness. And we are to copy him, moulding our prayer according to the subject of our request.

The Christian need never be at a loss for prayer. His own case, if rightly viewed, would of itself suggest more matter for supplication and thanksgiving than all his opportunities of devotion can well overtake; and if in addition to it he think of his friends and foes, the church of God, and his fellow-believers, and the infidel and heathen world, there is presented a multitude of objects too great for the single energy of any praying heart to embrace, and too diversified for any wisdom to grapple with, but that supplied by the Spirit of grace and supplications. O that God would grant me that Spirit in full measure, such as my obligations, and the necessities of all around me, demand.

## SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance :  
feed them also, and lift them up for ever,' Ps.  
xxviii. 9.*

AMIDST the deepest impressions of his individual necessities, and his most earnest prayers for personal grace, the Christian forgets not that he is a member of the body of Christ, and that he has the interests of that body to care for as well as his own. Few of God's people have had deeper impressions of their need of grace, or of its inestimable value than David—and we may say on consulting his psalms, that no one who has followed him in the walk of faith, has more frequently remembered the necessities of Zion when pleading his own case before God. The same fact appears in the history of Moses, Jeremiah, Daniel, Paul, and a multitude of others; their feeling of Zion's needs being ever suggested by the felt impression of their own. So that the rule of this feature in the Christian's character may be thus stated: 'The deeper his sense of his own need of God's grace, and the more exalted his interest in it, the more urgent will be his pleadings for the welfare of the church.'

In the psalm before us, we find the psalmist in deep-distress, and his life in eminent jeopardy from the crafty and malicious plots of enemies, who were determinately bent on accomplishing his ruin; while they pretended much peace and friendship. The child of God has a refuge in his Father's care, and David graciously made aware of his eminent danger, betook himself to the strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe. Nor did he flee thither in vain. God was his refuge in the day of trouble, his present help, his saving strength.

The experience of this personal deliverance, stirred up the memory of the church's need; and so David pleads the one cause of all, while he prays for himself. This sweet passage supplies much that is profitable for meditation. Observe, first, the titles by which the church is designated.

1. The church is God's people,—his family, his nation. Israel has all along, from the beginning, been his son—his first born. The church is the body of Christ—the body of the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of God; and as there is no one so dear to God as his Son, so next to him there is none dearer than his church. By choice, by redemption, by adoption, by new creation, the church is God's, his property, his purchase, his dear family.

2. Again, the church is his inheritance. Viewed in this light, the proprietor of the church is the

Lord Jesus Christ. He is the heir of all things by appointment. And though Jesus can say of heaven, earth, and hell, 'all is my inheritance,' he is pleased to regard his people as peculiarly such. A man may have a variety of minor treasures, but if he display the mass of the gold and silver, and the store of the jewels left him by his father, he shows the riches of his inheritance. Therein lies the glory of it. And such is the glory of Christ, yea, the riches of his glory in his inheritance in the saints, that to comprehend it, and behold it, demands the powerful aid of the Holy Spirit illuminating the inner man. The church is truly the inheritance of Christ. On its redemption, he lavished the full treasures of infinite wisdom, compassion, and power. Nay, on the church he bestowed himself, all that he was or had, and so the church had not been in the heirship he would have given his all away, and had, so to speak, nothing left. But the church is in his inheritance, yea the glory of it, and as it is dearly purchased so is it dearly beloved. It is precious and honourable, he keeps it as the apple of his eye. He has engraven its name on the palms of his hands, and put it in his heart. Any prayer to him as the proprietor and protector of Zion, will indeed be heard.

Let us then, for our guidance and instruction in the duty of supplication, observe,

2. The fourfold prayer which the psalmist offers for Zion.

1. Save thy people, *i. e.* from every foe, and from all danger. There is a day coming when this petition shall be no longer requisite—a day when dangers shall be as far away as they now are near. But now while so many dangers surround her, and so many enemies are set against her, she must buckle on the armour of righteousness, watch on the right hand and left, and pray always, with all prayer, for salvation from all evil, and from all her foes. It is sweet for me to know, that so many are praying for me individually, when they cry, 'Save thy people, O God.'

2. Bless thine inheritance. This implies that in addition to deliverance from all evil, God will bless his people with all positive good, even, all spiritual blessings in heavenly things through Christ. And O with what confidence may we offer this prayer. His is the heart of man. He has made it, yea, all hearts are his—a father and a mother's heart too are of his formation, and the firm tie of love and attachment that binds the hearts of affectionate parents to their beloved offspring is a cord spun by his wondrous skill. By this love he draws out the hearts of parents to bless their children, with every good

in their power. What then must be the heart of our Father in heaven? What his attachment to his redeemed people? What his readiness to do them good? According to his ability, so is his will—and he can bless his inheritance with all good.

3. Feed them also. To feed a flock implies rule and authority, as well as care. Zion is fed, is ruled by pastors of God's appointment. It is here then that David prays God to send forth labourers into his vineyard—shepherds to care for his flock. He prays for the permanent continuance of a standing and effective ministry of God's choice, and God's appointment.

4. Lift them up for ever. This is another of the blessings God is ready to give. He is ready to exalt, and is at all times carrying on the exaltation of his people. He is ever and anon calling such of them as he has fully sanctified to glory; and although we see it not, he is causing all events occurring in the world to tend to the ultimate exaltation of his church, from her present state of trouble and depression, to ease and eternal triumph. Such is the true nature of right prayer for the church. We can use no stronger pleas than these, that she is God's own and Christ's inheritance.

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THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth,'* Psal. lviii. 11.

'THE chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.' To do so, is the highest dignity of man. It is the grand purpose of his being. It is 'the end' for which every creature in the universe has been brought into existence. It is known and rejoiced in as such, by all holy intelligences throughout the creation. It was so regarded by man as he came from the hand of his Maker, bearing the image of the divine holiness. It is so, alas! no longer. 'The crown has fallen from his head.' 'Every imagination of the thought of his heart is only evil continually.' And, to use language still more awful,—'the carnal mind is enmity against God.'

The agency of the Holy Ghost is necessary to produce a saving change. And when his power is graciously put forth for that purpose, the man becomes a 'new creature in Christ. Old things pass away. All things become new.' The sinner is transformed into a saint. He is introduced into a new relation to God. He enters into the great moral design of his existence. He

seeks as his 'chief end to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.'

This is strikingly exhibited to our view in the scripture which this morning engages our meditations. The psalmist here rises above every thing selfish or secular. The glory of God is his grand concern. In comparison with it, every thing besides is felt to be unworthy of his thoughts. Nor is he singular in giving to this object a supreme, and all-absorbing importance. He speaks the language of the whole church of the first-born;—of all, that is, who are 'called, and chosen, and faithful.' Is ours, then, let us ask ourselves, the spirit which it breathes? Is ours truly, and in the full import of it, the prayer which it offers?

What is the import of that prayer? Not, surely, that there may be an increase of the essential greatness or glory of Deity. In the majesty of his own attributes, God is infinitely exalted above the heavens;—in the wonders of his works and ways, his glory is infinitely above all the earth. 'The heavens are not clean in his sight.' 'The nations before him are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; and he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.'

But, while the infinity that characterizes all the perfections of Deity proclaims that they are necessarily incapable of an augmented lustre, the degree in which they are manifested, and by the creation perceived and acknowledged, may be exceedingly various, differing to an extent not less than does the faint dawn of the early twilight from the bright radiance of the noon-day sun. The degree in which they are discerned, and their influence felt, may therefore be increased. To that, this scripture refers;—and the prayer which it breathes, (and every child of God loves to make it his own,) is, that the holiness, and love, and grace, and power, and wisdom, and all other perfections of Jehovah, may be revealed in such fulness of light and glory to the entire creation, that in heaven above, the spirits who surround the throne may strike a loftier note in their songs of praise; and that on the earth beneath,—on this dark, rebellious, and wretched world, truth may have a universal triumph, and God be all, and in all.

In many ways God manifests his glory, and especially, in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ. Let our thoughts now be fixed, for a moment, on that glorious theme. It is not only all our salvation. It is also God's great work.

1. What a marvellous discovery does it make of the love of God? By sin we had forfeited every claim to the divine favour, and were ob-

noxious to God's wrath. We had brought upon ourselves the curse denounced against transgressors. Righteously, we might have been abandoned to eternal ruin. We were polluted in our own blood,—and there was no eye to pity, and no arm to save. But God is love. He would not that we should perish in our guilt. But sin must be punished. The law must be vindicated. How then shall sinners be saved? 'God spared not his own Son, but gave him up freely unto death,' that through the merit of his obedience and sacrifice, sinners, even the chief, might be reconciled and saved. O! our souls, bless the Lord. Herein indeed is love,—a love that passeth all understanding.

2. How gloriously does this economy harmonize the claims of the divine law, and the honour of the divine government, with the salvation of the guilty! The gospel which proclaims the glad tidings of reconciliation, is not simply a manifestation of the mercy of God. It is more. It is the revelation of 'mercy and truth met together;' of 'righteousness and peace' embracing each other,—of God, 'just in justifying' the ungodly. It proclaims a free salvation to the guiltiest of human kind; but the salvation, which is free to them, has been bought by the blood of Jesus. 'Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.' The ransom paid for the redemption of sinners, has magnified the law and made it honourable.

3. How admirably is it adapted to the condition of man! The blessings which it provides are absolutely free to every sinner upon earth. Nay, more, they are pressed on the acceptance of every guilty and perishing outcast to whom the gospel is addressed, without money and without price. Are not these glad tidings indeed, to thee, my soul? And how inestimably precious are the blessings thus graciously provided, thus freely proffered! They are these, and many others of a like kind,—pardon, reconciliation with God, a new heart, union to Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, sanctification by the truth, meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; and, finally, an eternal crown and kingdom. What canst thou need then, O my soul, that is not to be found in Jesus and his finished work? Trust in him as thy Righteousness. Take counsel with him as thy Friend. Glorify him as thy Lord, and King, and All. And thus thy peace shall be as a mighty river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. But canst thou, my soul, enjoy peace in believing,—canst thou triumph in Jesus, and yet be indifferent to, or not supremely concerned for his

glory, in the salvation of the ends of the earth? Impossible! thine, if indeed thou art Christ's, are the spirit and the prayer of the psalmist, with whom, and with all sanctified men, thou dost join in ardently seeking that thy God may be exalted above the heavens,—and that the glory of thy Lord may be above all the earth.

### THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee,'* Psal. cxxii. 6—8.

How solemn is the call here addressed by a child of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to all saints, on behalf of the church of Christ, regarded as involved in the trials and dangers of the wilderness!

1. What is the object which believers are here called to pursue? It is the peace of the church of Christ. That, again, is intimately connected with her spiritual prosperity. These two are united by an indissoluble bond. However we may make them separate subjects of thought, they are never found, in reality, apart the one from the other. This is a truth of infinite moment;—but one which we are sinfully prone to overlook. Let it, then, be deeply impressed on our minds. Let it be so deeply engraven on our hearts, that it may ever be present to our thoughts, when with the prayer of an earnest heart, in faith, we seek the good of Jerusalem.

2. Observe the high privilege which God confers on his people. He honours them to be 'workers together with himself,' in promoting the welfare of his church. From him comes peace. He gives prosperity. The glory is his, not theirs. Yes, but let us not shut our eyes to the precious truth which this scripture sets before us, that God is pleased, in infinite condescension, to employ the services of his children, and to make their instrumentality effectual for accomplishing his purposes of mercy to Zion. He allows, he invites them to pray for Jerusalem's peace, and he has promised to fulfil their petitions. Is this questioned? Can it be doubted? Then study his word. It is full of invitations to his people to intercede for Zion. They meet us in every page. They are here. They pervade the Old Testament. They are of not less frequent occurrence in the New;—and they are embodied in language which forbids us to assign a limit to the

efficacy of the intercessions of saints, in so far as they are in harmony with the will of God;—and no believer can desire his prayers to prevail beyond that, whether for others, or for his own soul. Is not this marvellous grace? Is it possible to imagine greater honour than that which God thus confers on his children? The only difficulty lies in realizing the fact that such privileges are truly theirs. It is of unspeakable moment that our views of this matter be founded on the word of God, and in full accordance with it. Satan would have us to question the reality of these privileges. He would have us to disbelieve the efficacy of prayer, as a mighty instrument for good alike to the individual suppliant, and to the whole church. Let us then beware of his devices. These are the privileges of the people of God. Their intercessions avail much. Hear the invitation of Jesus, 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' Consider the language of Paul, 'This shall turn to my salvation through your prayers.' And does not scripture record ten thousand instances of effectual intercession? Witness the histories of Abraham, and Moses, and Daniel, and Elias, and David, and Paul, and others passing number whose names are written in the book of life, who in the days of their flesh 'offered up,' like their blessed Lord, 'prayers and supplications, with crying and tears,' and whose prayers were answered with blessings of mercy to countless multitudes of their guilty race. And why have these things been recorded in God's word? Why, but for this cause, that the world should learn the glory which God confers upon his saints for the sake of Jesus, and also that his people should thereby be stirred up to greater fervency in the use of a privilege, in the exercise of which they are, in the noblest sense, friends of the world. Are we, in the faithful use of so high a privilege, 'workers together with God?'

3. All saints are thus fellow-workers with God. The welfare of the church is unspeakably dear to them. They mourn over her wounds. They weep over her distractions with a filial grief; they mark her troubles. Their hearts bleed within them as they survey the misery which strifes, and debates, and schisms have entailed on the 'Lamb's bride.' Jesus would have her to stand out to the eye of the world as one, and he has made ample provision for maintaining her unity. For as there is one Lord, so there is one faith, and one hope, and one baptism, and one spirit, and one heaven. But, alas! how does Ephraim envy Judah, and Judah vex Ephraim! How are brethren divided, disunited, and separated one from another! How is the communion

of saints hindered! and the beauty of the church marred! and her efficiency, as the grand instrument in the hand of God for the salvation of the ends of the earth, impaired! The formalist may care for none of these things. The hypocrite may laugh at them in bitter mockery. The scorner may point to them in malignant triumph. To the saint—to every saint, they are the occasion of deep afflictions. He would heal the breaches. He would unite brethren. He has love to all who love Jesus, and he longs, and prays, and labours for the removal of every barrier which ignorance, or prejudice, or Satan has raised to divide the servants of a common lord, and heirs of a common salvation. Fain would he have every thing taken out of the way that tends to impede the full flow of Christian affection to all saints. He seeks the peace of Jerusalem. He seeks it with his whole heart and soul. It habitually occupies his thoughts. It has a chief place in his prayers. Nor are his prayers in vain. Dictated not seldom by the anguish of a broken spirit, they are heard by him who regards the sighs of captives, and the groans of mourners. They are registered in the book of heaven's remembrance. And the time shall come, oppose it who may, and how long soever delayed, when they shall be answered with 'showers of blessing;' when they shall issue in the peace and prosperity of the whole church. On all who thus love Zion rests the benediction of Jesus: 'Blessed are the peace-makers.'

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#### FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner;'* Luke xviii. 13.

IN the word of God, the whole family of man is divided into two classes;—and which are represented under such designations as these:—the church, and the world;—the sheep, and the goats;—the godly, and the ungodly;—the righteous, and the wicked;—the saved, and the lost. And as every human being is necessarily comprehended in one or other of these classes, it becomes an important inquiry, Does scripture furnish to the man who honestly searches for the truth, the means of decisively ascertaining to which of them he belongs? Does it represent the connection between the character and the destiny of every individual as certain and fixed, or as capricious and doubtful? And if these are

so connected, that it is universally the godly who are the saved, and the ungodly who are the lost, do the scriptures place within my reach, if I will faithfully apply them, the means of determining whether I am in the church, or in the world;—whether I am in the narrow way that leads to Zion, or in the broad way that leads to the chambers of death? They do. The parable of the pharisee and the publican is one of those portions of God's word, from which a prayerful and honest student may learn to judge aright of his spiritual state.

The character and worship of the pharisee are easily described. He is proud, self-righteous, worldly-minded, ignorant of God, and of his own heart. He confesses no sin. He mourns over no iniquities. He trusts, not in the blood of sprinkling, but in the virtues by which he is distinguished among his fellows, and more particularly in his exact compliance with the external duties of religion, such as the observance of fasts, and payment of tithes. In all these respects he may have been, and probably was exemplary. And such value did he attach to his external compliance with the positive and ritual institutions of religion, that he manifestly considered himself as not requiring mercy; as not needing it like others of inferior attainments, or who were less exact in their outward observances, or like the publican who stood at humble distance beneath, and whom he regarded with abhorrence or contempt, but as entitled to offer a plea of merit at the throne of God. In that spirit he entered the sanctuary. In that spirit he worshipped there. His offering was rejected. His sacrifice was abhorred. He went down from the temple unblest.

Survey now the character and worship of the publican. In every respect they are the opposite of what we have now been contemplating. He is humble, self-abased, and spiritually-minded. He realizes the holiness of God. He realizes also the plagues and pollutions of his own heart. He regards himself as a sinner, or rather, as his prayer implies, as the chief of sinners. For, emphatic as the prayer is, as it stands in our translation, it is much more so when rendered literally. 'God be merciful (or propitiated) to me the sinner.' He dares not to lift up his eyes to heaven. The thought of infinite purity lays him prostrate in the dust. He dares not even to place himself beside the pharisee, who is worshipping in the temple at the same time, and whom he regards with the reverence due to superior sanctity. He stands afar off. It is an honour of which he is unworthy, to plant his foot

within the precincts of the house which God has hallowed for his own worship. He is a poor, wretched, helpless sinner. What prayer shall he offer? What plea shall he urge? What argument shall he use? He knows one, and only one. He smites upon his breast. His heart is bleeding under a sense of sin; and the external act expresses the depth of his inward emotion. He prays,—'God be merciful to me the sinner;' and it is added, 'this man went down justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'

It is impossible to study this history without learning from it the following all-important truths.

The humility of a self-abased spirit is essential to acceptable worship. Whatever may be our character and attainments, as compared with others, they afford no ground of self-reliance in the sight of God. Pride is the object of his everlasting abhorrence; and it is not for man. Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We are miserable sinners; and we cannot offer any act of worship which shall not be rejected as worthless and vile, that is not pervaded by a sense of our infinite distance from the Father of spirits, and of our utter unworthiness to take his name into our polluted lips.

And farther, if we would be accepted in our worship, we must have our eye turned to Christ as all our salvation. He is our Daysman and Advocate with the Father. He is the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by him. He is the only way of access. If therefore, we would have sin pardoned, and a blessing bestowed in answer to our prayers, they must be offered in the faith of Christ. The prayer of the publican was so, and it was this that gave it all its efficacy, and brought down upon him the blessings of mercy. 'God be propitiated to me the sinner,' is the literal rendering of his prayer; and does not that point directly to those sacrifices under the Old Testament economy, which were typical of the great atonement? and was it not, on his part, a solemn profession that his only hope was founded on the mercy of God, as flowing to sinners through the blood that should be shed for the remission of sins? Had he used other argument, he must have failed. But resting, as he did, on the one foundation that is able to sustain the guilty, the plea which he offered was irresistible. It is so still; and it is the only one which a sinner may prefer without provoking the displeasure of the Holy One of Israel. Let the chief of sinners use it, in the spirit of the publican, and like him, he will be blessed in his offering.

## FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise,'* Psal. li. 17

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' Let us keep this in mind, whatever portion of God's word may engage our thoughts. On many accounts, it is peculiarly important and necessary that we do so, as we study the history of the psalmist of Israel, the man according to God's own heart. What are the lessons, let us inquire, which his language in this scripture is fitted to convey?

1. It reminds us of the spirituality of God's worship. There is no truth which we are more prone to overlook than this, and none which it more concerns us to constantly realize. It lies at the basis of all practical religion. 'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' How little, alas! is there, even with such as have been born from above, of this spirituality in their approaches to God! How much is there of worldly-mindedness, and formality, and unbelief in their purest offerings! How often, under a sense of this, are they constrained to cry out, 'Wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us from the body of this death?' And yet their most enlarged view of the sin which these imperfections involve is infinitely short of the reality. My soul, seriously ponder this. It concerns thee for eternity. When Jesus was fulfilling his ministry on earth, he found multitudes of his countrymen deceiving themselves to their eternal ruin by resting on the fact that they were the children of Abraham, although they were enemies to Abraham's God. And so it is now under the gospel. How many are there who have a name to live, and yet are dead! They call Christ Lord, but obey not his word. They have a form of godliness, but deny its power. It is an unhallowed fire which lights their altar. Their sacrifices are an abomination in the sight of God. Practically, they know nothing of the spirituality of his worship.

2. But we are here further reminded of the frame and temper of mind in which alone God can be acceptably worshipped. 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' Such sacrifices are the only 'reasonable service' which a sinner can offer at the throne of God. But why does the Psalmist reiterate the sentiment? Why

does he urge it with such solemn emphasis? Just because all obvious as the truth which he announces may appear, sinners are prone to miss it, and to rush into the presence of Jehovah in an unhumbled and unsanctified spirit, and are thereby in danger of bringing down upon themselves his vengeance, by the very act by which they profess to seek his blessing. But it is not simply an apprehension of wrath, and a confession of unworthiness, that will constitute a contrite spirit. These may be where the heart is proud, and the affections unholy, and the whole man dead in sin. Contrition, in the heart of a sinner, is a plant of heavenly growth, a fruit of divine grace. It indicates spiritual life. It involves a spiritual discernment of the holiness of the character and law of God;—an abiding conviction of personal defilement,—an undivided reliance on Christ as Mediator of the new covenant, and on his finished work,—and the renewal of the soul to righteousness, by the agency of the Holy Ghost. Assuredly, these are the elements of godly contrition, and are known experimentally to be so, by every spiritual worshipper. The first truth which we are called to contemplate in the word of God is the entire and universal depravity of man, and, as its necessary consequence, the liability of all men to God's wrath and curse. How then can the heart be broken under a sense of sin so long as this first principle of the oracles of God is not understood, or not credited, or not realized, or so long as it is not brought home to the sinner's conscience as a matter of personal concern? The thing is impossible. And not only so,—sin cannot be seen in its true character, in its 'exceeding sinfulness,' so as to produce godly contrition, until the eye has been turned in faith to Calvary, and in the blood there shed to make atonement, has discerned at once God's infinite hatred of sin, and his infinite love to sinners. All scripture, and all experience prove this. The terrors of law may alarm,—the thunders of Sinai may arouse,—the forebodings of future and endless misery may distract and agitate the soul—but they can do no more. Only the 'still small voice' of mercy can melt it into godly penitence. Only the sight of a dying Saviour can awaken genuine contrition for the sins that nailed him to the tree. And it never fails to produce this effect. 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,' is the language of every soul that has seen Jesus. And the more that Jesus is seen, and known, and loved, the more does the soul know of its own vileness,—the deeper is its self-abhorrence, the more tender its contrition before God. O! then

as this tells us of the power of the cross to bring sinners back to the Father of spirits, and to deepen the humility of his ransomed children, and to carry all his saints forward to higher spiritual attainments, let us not forget the agency to which we are indebted for faith, and hope, and love, and peace, and joy. These are the fruits of the Spirit of Christ. It is his work to open the blind eyes, to quicken the dead heart, to lay the sinner low at the foot of the cross, and to keep the believer there in the abasement of a contrite spirit, looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life.

Is this contrition ours? Have we seen the holiness of God? Have we realized our own vileness? Have we looked to the cross of Christ? If we have not, we are still in our sins, and the wrath of God abideth on us. If we have, what shall we render to the Lord for the grace that has brought us up out of the 'horrible pit?' How should our hearts burn with his love, and our mouths be filled with his praise! But alas! how cold are our hearts,—how faint and languid our praises! It is of mercy that we are not consumed. To us belongeth confusion of face. Teach us, good Lord, how vile we are in the presence of thy holiness, and help us ever as we approach the throne of thy majesty, to offer the 'sacrifices of a broken and contrite spirit.'

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#### FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth, Psal. cxlv. 18.*

THE efficacy of prayer is one of those truths on which inspired scripture has shed the light of its brightest revelations; and one, which we cannot too often contemplate, whether for the purpose of learning to conceive aright of the character of God as revealed in his word, or of finding encouragement to pour out our hearts before him, in the confidence of filial love. Invitations to pray are spread over the whole of the sacred record; and they are uniformly accompanied with the assurance, that prayer, offered through the one medium of acceptable worship, and whether proceeding from a soul filled with the joy of the Holy Ghost, or sunk in the depths of spiritual depression, ascends in sweet memorial before the throne, and is mighty to prevail with God.

The declaration of the psalmist in this scripture tells us of the gracious readiness of Jehovah to regard our supplications. 'The Lord is nigh

unto all them that call upon him.' There is no exception. Wherever a praying sinner is found, the Hearer of prayer is near to bless him. He invites all to make known their wants to him; and he never said to any, 'seek my face in vain.' He is nigh to all that call upon him. In the essential ubiquity of his presence, indeed, he is nigh to all whether they call upon him or not. He is near to the prayerless sinner. He sees him by night and by day. He marks every step of his history. He records every act of his life. And O! how it should awaken serious thought in the bosom of all such to reflect that, as the eye of God is on them continually, and as all their thoughts, and words, and deeds, are registered in heaven, so there it will be recorded that they did not pray,—that they asked no blessing,—that they lived without God in the world. Are these words now read by any in this dreadful condition? O! that they were led to consider, not only the guilt in which they are involved, and 'the wrath that abideth' on them, but also the abundant encouragement which this scripture gives to all who do truly seek God. No matter what they may have been before,—their sins may have been deep as crimson, or red as scarlet; in number, they may have been countless as the sand on the sea shore,—no matter; they call upon God, and he is nigh unto them. He is graciously nigh to them. They have been aroused out of the lethargy of nature. They have been quickened from a death in trespasses. They have returned to God, and he has received them. They call, and he answers: they cry, and he sends help out of Zion. Blessed truth! Surely none can be more precious to those who know that they are poor and needy, and that God alone can be the refuge, the resting-place, and the portion of their souls.

But that is not the only truth which is here set before us. There is another of equal importance, which we are called to contemplate. It is this—that to prevail in prayer we must be honest in our requests. If the Lord be near to all who call upon him, those only are regarded as doing so, who call upon him 'in truth.' The psalmist speaks of sincerity in prayer; and that, in every case, is indispensable to its success. What can be conceived a more daring and impious mockery of the Eternal, than for a sinner to stand at his footstool, and in language to implore blessings of which he knows not his need, or which he would be unwilling to receive? But can such a case occur? Is it possible that any sinner should practise such deception on himself, or be guilty of such impiety towards

God? Does not the very nature of prayer render it impossible? Impossible! there is nothing more common, as there can be nothing more perilous. For if it were not so, must not spiritual prosperity be spread over the whole visible church of Christ? There should then be no complaint of barrenness, and no room for it. The peace of the church should be as a mighty river. 'Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full,' is the gracious invitation of the Saviour. That our joy is not full, or that we have none, is not because the word of Christ is of none effect, but because we do not ask, or because we 'ask amiss.' And that man knows little of his own heart, and nothing of prayer, who has to learn that the suppliant at the throne of mercy is not only always in danger of approaching God under inadequate views of his own wants, weaknesses, and sins, but also without honest desire of the blessings which he professes to implore. Take, for example, growth in holiness. Nothing surely ought to be dearer than this to any man who prays, and every man with whom prayer is not merely a form, does with earnest heart seek it as a blessing of chief value. His prayer is, 'sanctify me by thy truth.' But how often do even those who are truly godly, at the very time when they prefer this petition, allow some idol to hold his place in their affections! How frequently in this way does Satan prevail against them! And, in this may usually be detected the beginning of those spiritual declensions which bring dishonour on the cause of Christ, grieve his Spirit, and plunge his people into deepest misery. With regard to formalists in religion, it is manifest that however they may in words pray that they may be sanctified, the bare possibility of their prayers being followed with that effect, would, if they could realize it, fill them with dismay. It is not in all their thoughts.

O! then, if we would have a blessing and not a curse to follow our prayers, let us draw near by the new and living way, and with a true heart. If now we have access to the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,—if at the throne of mercy we may pour out our hearts in the spirit of adoption,—if the mercy-seat be sprinkled with blood that we may have free approach to God,—if his ear be open to our cry,—and if, withal, his promise guarantee a blessing to the prayer of faith, who shall estimate the guilt of those who by the insincerity of their requests, profane so high a privilege, and provoke God's judgments? Let every worshipper, as he kneels at the throne of grace, hear a voice from heaven saying to him, 'Give me thine heart.'

## FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt,'* Matt. xxvi. 39.

THESE are amazing words. They are so under whatever aspect they may be surveyed. There is a depth of meaning in them which no finite intellect can fathom. They are the words of Jesus,—of him who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and whose name is the 'Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace;' but who humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and died, that he might reconcile sinners unto God. They are the words of Jesus, moreover, in the hour and power of darkness, and as he trode the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Then was put into his hands a cup of trembling, which he must drink even to the dregs; and it drew from him, as he drank it, the most piercing cry that ever sounded in the universe. The nature of the Saviour's anguish in the garden, we can never fully comprehend. Some of its elements, however, are clearly ascertained in the word of God,—and they furnish materials of instructive reflection.

(1.) There was present to the mind of Christ a vivid realization of the infinite evil of sin, and of the tremendous consequences which it involves. Personally, he was without sin. But, standing to his people in the relation of their Federal Head, all their sins were imputed to him. And, He must bear their griefs, and carry their sorrows. The hour has come when he must exhaust the penalty due to their iniquities;—and he had not been man, if, realising the position in which he then stood, and the load of guilt which rested on him as the surety of a countless multitude of lost souls, and which was now to be expiated, he had not anticipated with dismay a scene of such appalling misery; or, if he had not sought that, if he might escape from it, and yet fulfil the end of his ministry, that cup 'might pass away.'

(2.) To this element of agony was added another proceeding from a different source. Jesus is left to 'contend alone with the powers of darkness.' Of that, scripture leaves us no room to doubt. Why it should have been permitted, is an inquiry which we are not able to resolve. But whatever may have been the reasons that led to this affliction, and how important soever the ends which it was designed to accomplish, it is necessary only to bear in mind that Jesus was perfectly

holy, and knew all the evil that is in sin, to perceive that it must have been a dreadful element of misery to his righteous soul, to enter into conflict with Satan and all unholy spirits, and all alone to encounter them in the 'hour of darkness.'

(3.) To these must be added a farther source of misery to the Saviour as he agonized in the garden. He bore the wrath of God due to sin. Let us humbly and prayerfully study this appalling truth, and it may discover to us more of the evil of sin than if we were to witness the final wretchedness of all lost souls. It will also aid us in conceiving of the love of God to our guilty world. Christ now endured the wrath due to sin,—to all the sins of all the miserable outcasts whom he died to save. It was necessary that he should do so, in order that he should exhaust the denounced penalty, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. Is proof of this needed? Scripture is full of it. The entire economy of redemption involves it. The most emphatic declarations of the inspired record affirm it. What then is there in the wrath of God due to sin? Two things are necessarily involved in it. First, the soul on which it rests cannot enjoy communion with God; and, secondly, it involves the infliction of all the suffering which infinite holiness has declared to be the righteous punishment of transgression. Combine these, and we have, in so far as we can realize them, the elements of that mysterious woe which wrung the Saviour's soul with anguish as he made the propitiation for sin. He suffered for the guilty, in their room, and as their surety and substitute. Though he knew no sin, he was made sin for them. He bore for them an agony which otherwise they in their measure must have borne for ever. 'Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?'

These observations serve also to indicate the reasons which made it impossible that the Saviour should be relieved from drinking of the cup that was put into his hand. That it was impossible, the simple fact of his prayer not being granted, though thrice offered with urgent importunity, sufficiently proves. And why? By his own voluntary act he had become the surety of sinners. Had he not done so, and only his own spontaneous deed could have brought him into that relation, he had not been required to suffer. In that case, there could have been no room for his prayer. But having engaged to redeem them that were under the law, he must be dealt with

according to the demands of eternal justice. He must for them magnify the law, and make it honourable. By agreeing in the everlasting covenant to be their surety, he assumed the liability of enduring all that their sin had merited. His covenant engagements must be fulfilled, and these include suffering even unto death. His submission to wrath for his redeemed is the condition of their being accepted of God. All the promises, too, whether pointing primarily to Christ, or to his spiritual progeny, have special reference to his sufferings, and are so connected with them as to place it beyond a doubt that all he endured was indispensably necessary for the accomplishment of his great work,—the salvation of sinners. That cup, which overwhelmed his soul as with a flood of anguish, could not pass away, if sin should be pardoned,—if the Holy Ghost should be imparted,—if sinners should be saved.

What then must be the evil of sin? If God would save sinners, he cannot spare his own Son. O! my soul, often survey the record of the Saviour's anguish in the garden, and from his prayer there learn what are thy obligations to his love and grace. Eternity shall not exhaust them. Let his example also teach thee how to pray. Like him, learn to say from the heart, to thy Father in heaven, 'Not my will, but thine be done.'

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#### SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments,'* Job xxiii. 3, 4.

THE history of Job is one of the most deeply interesting and most variously instructive of any that have been recorded in the word of God. And to whatever portion of it we turn our thoughts, whether to its commencement, its progress, or its close, it is eminently adapted to promote our instruction in righteousness. From every page, if we study it in the spirit of prayer, we shall learn lessons of heavenly wisdom.

Let us fix our thoughts for a little on that portion of the history to which the scripture before us calls our attention.

1. It sets before us a case of spiritual desertion. Job has many trials. He has lost his substance. He has been bereft of his children. The partner of his life has turned against him to be his enemy. The friends who have come to

mourn with him, aggravate by their reproaches his distress. But worse than all,—the refuge in which he has heretofore found safety now fails him. God is no longer a very present help to him in his time of straits. The countenance of his heavenly Father is hidden from his view. That God is not far from him,—that he is on his right hand, and on his left,—and that he is intimately acquainted with all his ways, Job well knows. But still it is not with him as in days past, when the 'candle of the Lord shined within him,' and when by his light he walked through darkness.' Then he could say, Abba, Father. Then he could pour out his soul in prayer. Then he could rejoice in God as his Guardian, and Portion, and Friend. Alas! he can do so no more. God has deserted him. His Father has forsaken him. This is the burden of his misery. Where shall he obtain help? 'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!'

2. Is it possible to account for the desertion which these words represent? And, if Job's be no solitary case,—if similar trials are in greater or less measure experienced, generally, by God's children, how are they to be interpreted? Have they their origin in caprice, or accident? Or, are they effects of something going before, and which stands related to them as their cause? These are important inquiries, and they admit of a satisfactory solution.

In the case of Job, it will be difficult or impossible to resolve his distress into other cause than the sovereignty of God. Sin, committed under the trial, may have augmented his misery, and probably did so. Still, as we survey the whole case, unable to discern the reason of the dispensation in any backslidings of Job, (for the record speaks of eminent spiritual prosperity, as immediately preceding his distress,) we can only point to a higher wisdom, and say, 'Even so, Father, so it seemed good in thy sight.'

It merits special remark, however, that scripture records no case similar to that of Job,—none, that is, in which spiritual darkness is not seen to be the effect of spiritual backsliding. It may be thought, perhaps, that an awful parallel is furnished in the last agony of Christ, when he exclaimed, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' That, unquestionably, was a case of spiritual desertion. And our Lord was without sin. It was nothing therefore, personal to him that caused the hiding of his Father's countenance. But did he not stand in the room of sinners? Was he not the substitute of his people? Were not all their sins imputed to him? And was not that darkness which overwhelmed

his soul, part of the penalty which he bore that they might be saved? Yes, and it unspeakably concerns God's people to have these views continually present to their thoughts.

3. Consider the experience and exercises of Job under desertion. He is unutterably wretched,—and it is the spiritual darkness that surrounds him that makes him so. He could have borne all other afflictions. But now his trials are more than he can bear. That he has not freedom of access to God as his reconciled Father, is a source of intense and intolerable misery. And not all creation can make him blessed, so long as he knows not where he may find God.

But not only is he unutterably wretched under a sense of distance and estrangement from God; he is desirous above all things of renewed communion with his heavenly Father. He would pray, if he had access to the mercy-seat. And unlike thousands and tens of thousands more who have no definite object in view, when they call upon God, he has a 'cause' to plead. He has to unbosom griefs that sink him to the ground. Nor, did he but know where he might find God, should he be without arguments with which to enforce his suit. He would plead the love, and grace, and faithfulness, and covenant, and all the exceeding great and precious promises of his Father in heaven. Nor would he urge these arguments in vain. He would urge them with a resistless importunity,—with that effectual fervency of prayer which has power with God, and prevails. He desires, above all things, the 'spirit of grace and of supplication.'

And so does every saint, especially in similar circumstances. In nothing, perhaps, does the character of a child of God differ more widely from that of other men, than in this, that in prayer he has a 'cause.' The formalist has none. The unbeliever has none. The saint has, and that, one of eternal moment. Besides what he asks in common with and for all other saints, he has much that is personal to himself to make known to the Hearer of prayer. He pleads with God,—and just as his apprehension of his own wants, and weaknesses, and sins, becomes more vivid, the more urgent are his pleadings for pardon, and for the spirit of holiness. Nor, when in the spirit of prayer can he want arguments with which to enforce his plea. The bible abounds with them. And, whatever be the evil deprecated, or the blessing implored, there is one argument which, used in faith, can never fail of success; and that is Christ, our elder Brother, and Advocate,—in honour of whom, and of his finished work, the Father is ever ready to open the win-

dows of heaven, and pour down blessings till there be no room to receive more. Prayer in the name of Christ must prevail.

#### SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?* Rom. x. 14.

'He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' are the words of Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews,—and in the scripture before us, he illustrates the principle which they embody by a reference to the case of the Jews.

Apart, however, from the case to which he immediately refers, his words set before us certain views of divine truth which it is of the last moment that we rightly understand. These, with the consequences which they involve, and the lessons which they inculcate, let us now seriously contemplate.

If sinners are saved only by faith in Jesus, the knowledge of God's revealed will is essential to salvation, and it becomes the most sacred duty of believers in Christ to put forth every effort for the universal diffusion of the record which God has given concerning his Son, 'the gospel of our salvation.' Part, at least, of this statement will be assented to by all who profess themselves to be disciples of the Son of God. That it is by faith alone in Christ that any of our guilty race are accepted of God, is written on every page of his word as with a sunbeam. Nor, from the nature of that spiritual transformation which faith, in every instance, implies, is it possible that the belief of the gospel can truly exist in the heart, without inspiring ardent desires of all spiritual blessings, or without leading to the expression of these desires, in the fervency of prayer, at the throne of mercy. But is not faith founded on the word of God as its basis? Is it not through the 'incorruptible seed of the word,' that the soul is quickened to its exercise? And is it not again and again declared in scripture, that faith presupposes the knowledge of the truths which it embraces, and on which it rests? On this subject nothing can be more decisive than the testimony of the apostle in this chapter. How this affects the salvation of such as die in infancy, and of the heathen to whom no messenger has carried the glad tidings of reconciliation, is another, and a very solemn inquiry, though one, which, excepting for the purpose of ascertaining

our duty in relation to the latter, we are not called upon to consider;—as it is one which we are not competent to resolve. In reference to the former class, there can be no question that they may be made meet for the heavenly inheritance, by the renewing agency of the Holy Ghost, operating in a way of which we can form no conception. And who does not fondly cherish the persuasion that they are thus renovated, and through the blood of Jesus saved for ever? Of the heathen, again, it is certain that the righteousness of God shall be vindicated, equally in respect of their present condition, and their future destiny. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Assuredly, their condemnation shall not turn upon their rejection of a gospel that was never preached to them. They that are without law shall be judged as without law. Their responsibility is not greater than their opportunities of knowing the will of God. But according to these they shall be reckoned with, and there is no name given under heaven whereby men must be saved but the name of Jesus.

These are the true sayings of God, and they can hardly fail to originate such reflections as these, in the minds of all who seriously consider them. How vast the obligation to divine goodness of those who enjoy the revelation of God's infinite love to man in the mission of his Son into our world, to 'seek and to save that which is lost!' How awful the responsibility which attaches to so high a privilege, and how it concerns those to whom it is given so to use it, as that when called to render an account of their stewardship they may return their Lord's with usury! How sacred the duty on the part of believers, of consecrating all their resources to the diffusion throughout the world of the word of life, and of sending along with it to every kindred, and every tribe, the heralds of salvation! How long and sadly has the church of Christ neglected, and how inadequately does she now fulfil this duty,—a duty which she is specially bound to discharge by a regard to her Lord's will and glory, her own welfare, and the salvation of immortal souls! How dreadful the condition of such as are destroyed for lack of knowledge,—and how deep the criminality of those who, in the possession of the divine record, allow to perish for want of it so much as one human being, who by 'their mercy' might have been blessed with those scriptures, which are able to make wise through faith unto salvation! Are we without sin in this matter? Let every reader answer that question as in the presence of God.

Finally, with what gratitude should we receive

and use the Bible as our directory in prayer? Without it we could neither know what to pray for, nor how to pray,—neither the proper subjects of prayer, nor the medium through which alone it can be offered with acceptance, and followed with a blessing. Even with this divinely inspired guide, we need the farther gift of the 'spirit of supplications.' It is from the scripture that we learn our need of that divine Agent, and it points us to the channel through which his grace is imparted. And how does he teach us to pray? Simply by bringing the understanding and the heart under the power of the truth as it is in Jesus. Those only are the petitions which God will fulfil, which are founded on, and conformable to his own word. All other desires are irregular, unwarranted, and unholy. Let those who would not pray in vain beware of making requests which cannot be granted,—and that theirs may be the prayer that is mighty to prevail, let it not only be presented through the right medium, but,—while offered in the name of Jesus, let it also be for things agreeable to the will of God, as that is made known in his word.

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#### SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father; &c., Luke xi. 1, 2.*

PRAYER may be regarded as a duty, or as a privilege, or as both,—as the duty of all men without exception, or as the special privilege of those who by faith are sons of God; and in either view, it is of unspeakable importance that we have the directions of a divine Instructor in a matter of such vast and universal concern. The disciples to whom this scripture primarily refers, realized their need of divine teaching in prayer. They ask Jesus to teach them. He grants their request, and the instruction which he gave to them now lies before us for our learning.

Consider, first, how Jesus was employed when the disciples asked him to teach them to pray. 'He was praying in a certain place.' Whether he was then alone, as he often was, offering up in secret the desires of his soul to his Father in heaven, or whether he was praying in concert with his disciples, as was his wont also, and leading them along with him in the petitions which he offered, we are not told. It is merely said, that

he 'was praying.' There were not wanting occasions on which prayer was addressed to him while on earth, as it continually is by the whole church now that he is in heaven,—and then, as now, he delighted to hear and answer prayer,—a circumstance which might well supersede the necessity of farther argument to prove that he was truly God. But important as that truth is, it is not more so than another in connection with which it ought always to be viewed, viz. that he was man, not less really than he was God, and that in all things, sin only excepted, he was made like unto his brethren. Hence prayer was necessary for him, even as it is for us. O that his faith and fervency in prayer were ours!

But it is not enough that we pray. We must beware of praying 'amiss.' And we are constantly in danger of doing so, either by asking what is unsuited to our circumstances, and not for our advantage, or, by offering requests proper in themselves, in another spirit and for other ends than those which befit suppliants at the throne of the heavenly Majesty. Would we be preserved from displeasing God in this way? Let us attend to the request of the disciples, 'Lord, teach us to pray.' Whether we consider the prejudices of their early years, or the duties of the apostleship that were before them, it will be perceived that this request was peculiarly appropriate to their circumstances. They had but recently emerged out of darkness dense as that of midnight, and they were soon to go forth in the face of dangers, privations, and death, to enlighten a world that knew not God. The prayer then which they addressed to Christ was specially adapted to their position and prospects, and the answer it received, proved how well-pleasing it was to their Lord. Before that period, he had often by his word, and example, and Spirit, taught them to pray. Still they feel their need of farther direction and aid; the blessing they so earnestly ask, Jesus delights to bestow.

But now let us beware of imagining that the special appropriateness of this prayer to the circumstances of the first disciples, implies that it is either unsuitable or unnecessary for us. It is always necessary, always appropriate. The more that we have of the Spirit of Jesus, the more shall we realize our need of this request, as often as we engage in prayer. Let us make it ours in faith, and it cannot but be that Jesus will fulfil our petition. Yea, he will do unto us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

The answer which Christ returned to the prayer of his disciples is full of encouragement to

all who come to him in the same spirit, and for the same end. He furnishes them with a model of prayer. It is characterized throughout by divine wisdom. There is neither defect nor redundancy in it. It comprehends every request which a godly suppliant can desire to offer, expressed in language such as a sinful man may use at the footstool of a holy God. It is recorded in scripture for the direction of the church, to the end of time. That implies, obviously, that it is the will of Christ that it be used by all his people in their approaches to the throne of God. But that it is to be used alone, or always,—to the exclusion of other petitions, or along with them uniformly, and at all times, is a proud and foolish imagination for which there is no semblance of warrant or foundation in the prayer itself, nor in any other portion of scripture, nor in the practice of the church of Christ. On the contrary, it is plainly contradicted by all these; for all of them concur in representing it as a model of prayer,—a directory for the guidance of believers in approaching their Father in heaven,—as that, and nothing more. This appears sufficiently from the circumstance that the prayer as recorded here differs in some respects, though not essentially, from that contained in the parallel passage of another of the Gospels,—which could not have happened, had it been the design of Christ that his people should always use the language of that prayer, and no other. And, it is farther of importance to notice that while the New Testament furnishes no instance in which the prayer, as given by two of the evangelists, was employed by our Lord's disciples; it records instances of prayer offered by them, and accepted of God, which though in perfect harmony with the spirit of the petitions expressed in this admirable model, are embodied in other words, and these more specifically adapted to the occasions on which the prayers were offered, and to the objects which they had more immediately in view.

This account is farther confirmed by the consideration that this prayer does not expressly conclude with the name of Jesus, without reference to whom as the only Mediator between God and man, no suppliant can be accepted, and no prayer heard. That Jesus was not to be excluded when this prayer was used; on the contrary, that he was to be all and in all in it, must be apparent to every one who knows the power of godliness, and to every one whom he has taught to pray. That his name is not mentioned in it, whatever other end it may serve, should teach us to regard, and value, and use it as a directory in prayer.

## SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,' &c., Matt. vi. 9.*

THAT the prayer which these words introduce was intended to be used by the church of Christ, is too obvious to admit of doubt, or to require illustration. The chief purpose, however, for which it was given, was to serve as a directory in prayer. It is important that we should consider it under both of these views. It has been dictated by divine wisdom. Let believers habitually use it, then, in their approaches to God. It is perfectly adapted to the circumstances of all suppliants. But let them not be restricted to the use of this prayer, perfect and admirable though it be. Christ has not only said, 'when ye pray, say ye, Our Father,' &c., but also, 'after this manner pray ye.'

The Lord's prayer, viewed under these aspects, suggests the following reflections.

I. *It teaches us what to pray for.* Assuredly it is neither expedient nor safe to ask any thing of God which, in substance, is not included in the petitions embodied in this admirable summary. The Lord's prayer is a perfect model,—and in nothing do its divine perfections appear more clearly than in this, that it expresses every desire which a sinner may lawfully cherish, or which he may offer in prayer before the Searcher of hearts. If, on comparing the petitions we present at the throne of God, we find that there are any opposed to those which are here expressed, or which cannot be resolved into them, we need no farther evidence that we have prayed amiss.

II. *It reminds us of the character in which we are to approach God in prayer,*—as our 'Father in heaven.' And this, let it be well considered, implies that we draw near to him as children, and under the influence of the sentiments and affections proper to that relation. As our Father, he is to be regarded with filial confidence and love;—as our Father in heaven, exalted infinitely above our highest conceptions of his glory, he is to be approached with deepest reverence and awe. The combination of love and reverence, of confidence and awe, constitutes the beauty of holiness in the worship of God,—and as these are the sentiments that befit all his worshippers throughout the universe, they are specially appropriate to those for whose benefit this divine directory has been provided,—for those who amid the pollutions of a fallen world, approach God, as their reconciled Father. For they only do so who have set to their seal that God is true

in the testimony which he has given concerning his Son, and who by faith therein are become his children, and being children are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The carnal mind may cavil at these truths. The formalist may dispute them. The perplexed saint may, in the season of darkness, view them with alarm. Still they are the truths of God. Christ is the way to the Father,—the only way. If any man believe not, the wrath of God abideth on him. By faith we become sons of God. He is Father only to those who are in Christ. They only, therefore, can address him in the language of this prayer. He is their Father; and in the relation which that name indicates, is involved every blessing which his children can ever need, or ever enjoy.

III. Observe the *social principle* which pervades this prayer. It stands in striking contrast with the native selfishness of the human heart. How prone are we to pursue what we consider our personal interests, without reference to, or concern for, the welfare of others! How often does selfishness characterize our prayers! It has no place here. The prayer which our Lord sets before us, teaches the child of God to keep the necessities of his brethren constantly in mind, while he seeks the supply of his own wants. He may not ask blessings for himself alone. It is not merely that he is to pray with others, and that then his intercessions must be embodied in language adapted to united prayer. We fail to carry away with us one of the most important lessons to be learned from the study of this scripture, if we learn not from it, that in all our approaches to the mercy-seat, we are not merely to pray for ourselves, and our brethren in Christ, but are, in the spirit of universal love, to plead for all mankind.

IV. Let us consider the *comprehensive brevity* of this prayer. If it embraces every blessing which a suppliant can desire, it comprises them in few words. Then, is the prayer of a believer in no case to exceed the limits of this admirable pattern? That has been maintained;—but as a moment's reflection will satisfy, without warrant in reason, or in the word of God. For it is not long prayers, *as such*, that Christ disapproves. He merely exposes the folly of supposing their efficacy dependent on their length. And then it is not repetitions in prayer that he condemns, but vain repetitions. That this was really the design of Christ, may be decisively inferred from his own example, which, it will be owned, carries the same authority as his doctrine. He spent whole nights in prayer; and, in Gethsemane,

he thrice offered the same petitions in the same words. Our prayers are not open to censure on the ground either of length or repetition, so long as they are such as beset suppliants at the throne of mercy, and so long as the spirit and the understanding go along with them. Beyond that they are unavailing,—they are sinful. It should also be remembered, that even when the spirit is willing the flesh is weak. Every faculty of the soul should be concentrated in prayer. But that can seldom be for more than a short period. Let those who are impelled and strengthened by the Spirit to continue long in prayer, give thanks for the grace so abundantly imparted to them, and let them gladly use their privilege. But, excepting in such circumstances, let them not prolong the exercise beyond such limits as a due consideration of this perfect summary recommends.

V. Consider the order of the petitions in this prayer. They are six in number, and all necessary. How are they arranged? Precisely in the same way, and on the same principle as that according to which our Lord instructs us in the relative importance of the two tables of the law. The love of God he declares to be the first and great commandment. The love of man, which is like to it, is second. So here we are taught to pray for the glory of God, before we seek our own good. The hallowing of his name,—the coming of his kingdom,—the doing of his will, are the first petitions;—after them come the requests for daily bread, the remission of sins, and deliverance from evil.

Lord, thou hast taught us by thy word,—O, teach us by thy Spirit 'after this manner' to pray!

#### EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

'For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,' Gal. iii. 26.

OF whom does the apostle thus speak? of all men? or of a certain class only? And if of the latter, what is the circumstance which specifically distinguishes them from the rest of mankind? How has it arisen? What are its evidences? What shall be its results? These are important inquiries, and they may be easily answered.

It is of believers—of all saints, and of them alone, that the apostle here speaks. And in reference to them, he tells us how, from being aliens and enemies, they have become sons of God. 'For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.'

What is that faith to whose instrumentality a change of such magnitude, and involving such results, is ascribed? Is it a merely intellectual perception of and assent to the truth of the doctrines contained in the word of God? Or, is it something more? The question is one of vast importance. Let us with prayer for divine guidance, seek to ascertain what are the views in which it is presented to us in the word of God.

The following statement rests directly on the authority, and is expressed almost entirely in the language of inspired scripture.

Faith has respect to and embraces the whole testimony of God contained in his word. And, as the grand object of scripture is to 'testify of Christ,' so faith has a special reference to him. It receives and rests upon him alone for salvation. It has regard to him as 'made of God unto every one that believeth wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'

Faith is a 'fruit of the Spirit.' 'By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.' 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ to believe in his name.' 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' Nor is the agency of the divine Spirit necessary for the production of faith merely, it is equally so for its maintenance and increase in all the stages of the spiritual life.

Faith is essential to salvation. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' Not that it has any thing in itself meritorious of the divine favour, and of an heavenly crown and kingdom; its reference to Christ alone for salvation excludes every such idea; but because without it there can be no union to the Son of God, and none of the consequences which that union involves. These are partly present, and partly future. Some of them are realized on earth, others are reserved for the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven. Thus, it is only the soul that is united to Jesus that does or can mourn for sin with a godly sorrow, in the anguish of genuine contrition, with a repentance that is unto life. It is only the believer in Jesus who does or can truly prosecute an entire conformity to the will of God, so as to seek with the whole heart, to have the same mind that was in Christ, and to be changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. But godly repentance and true holiness are not less necessary to salvation than faith, or rather they are parts of salvation, invariably and necessarily resulting from union to Christ. Hence, while the necessity of faith is being contemplated or affirmed, let it not be regarded as referring merely

to the justification of the sinner before God. For that, it is indispensable,—and it is by faith alone, and without reference to its fruits, that the sinner is justified. But it is not merely as connected with justification that faith is necessary. It is not less so considered as involving all those results which flow from union to Christ, whether in time or eternity, and whether as regards the transformation of the believer now into the image of the divine holiness, or his destiny hereafter in an inheritance of celestial glory. Of that union faith is the bond; and hence instead of being exhibited to our view in scripture as a naked and abstract principle, it is uniformly represented as one of great practical efficacy,—as the spring, indeed, of all holy and evangelical obedience. Faith 'purifies the heart,' 'worketh by love,' and 'overcometh the world.' Universally, and in all circumstances, these are its fruits. Where it fails to achieve these moral triumphs, it is spurious. 'Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.'

Faith, like every other grace of the Spirit admits of being improved and invigorated; it acquires strength by exercise. The degrees of energy with which it operates are exceedingly various, and that not merely as regards different individuals, but the same individuals, in different circumstances, and at different periods of their spiritual history. In some it is characterized by the feebleness of infancy,—in some, by the vigour of manhood,—and in some, by the ripened maturity of age,—even as there are babes, and young men, and fathers in Christ. And what is more, in the same individual, it may at one time be so weak as to make its existence a matter of painful and perplexing uncertainty to the conscience; while at another, it shall have risen to such confident assurance as to fill him with anticipations of the beatific vision, which it enables him to realize as all his own. Seldom, however, does it manifest that rapid progress, or rise to that mighty energy which might be expected from the provisions of the well-ordered covenant. On the contrary, alas! it is usually slow of growth, and irregular and inconstant in its exercise. Much cause for prayer and fasting on this account have all God's children, even those who have made the furthest progress, and reached the highest attainment in the 'life of faith.' And it concerns all God's saints,—it unspeakably concerns them all, to have faith strengthened, to have it perfected,—for in the measure of its energy, will they triumph over the 'world, the devil, and the flesh.' Let them ever make the prayer of the disciples their own, 'Lord, increase our faith.'

## EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

'Our Father, which art in heaven,' Matt. vi. 9.

HAD no more of the instructions communicated by Jesus to his disciples than what is contained in this admirable model of prayer been transmitted to us in the inspired word, we should not have been without the means of ascertaining the divine excellence of his teaching. In it we should have recognised the wisdom of Deity. The highest effort of human intellect could not have framed it. The spirit which it breathes, the comprehensiveness of its requests, the language in which they are expressed, and withal the order in which they are arranged, indicate an intelligence infinitely higher than that of man. Whether we study in succession each separate portion of it, or survey as a whole, and at one view, the entire prayer, we are impressed with a sense of its divine perfection,—we feel that he who condescends to be our Teacher is God. For the present, let us fix our thoughts on the preface of the prayer, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.'

Consider the relationship which these words express. And that we may the more clearly perceive what is involved in it, let us survey it under three distinct aspects, as it indicates the relation in which every believer stands to the Father, to Christ, and to all saints.

Jehovah is the Father of all who are in Jesus. He is specially their reconciled Father and covenant God in Christ. He has adopted them into his spiritual family. He has placed them among the children. Through Jesus they have access to him in the confidence of filial love. In the spirit of adoption they say, Abba, Father. They are the sons of God,—for, to 'as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' Nor is that a name merely expressive of high dignity. The relation which it denotes involves every blessing which the love and power of God can impart. 'If sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ.' What is included in these few words infinitely surpasses the comprehension of man. The highest seraph around the celestial throne, cannot fathom it. But in all its immensity of glory, it is involved in, and springs out of the relation which our Lord here teaches his people to regard as subsisting between them and the everlasting Jehovah. O how blessed is it for a worm of the dust to stand in so sacred, so endearing a relation to the Father of spirits. How blessed to be able to say in faith, 'Our Father!'

Again, this same expression, if the whole mat-

ter be attentively studied, and surveyed with a spiritual eye, will farther direct us to an important view of the relation in which the believer stands to Christ. He said to Mary after his resurrection, 'Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.' And to the same effect are the words before us. O how sweet and precious is this view to all who know Jesus. He is their elder Brother. He is with them, as such, in all their approaches to the throne of the heavenly Majesty. While they plead on earth, he 'stands at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense, that he should offer it with the prayer of all saints upon the golden altar before the throne.' And in instructing them to say, 'Our Father,' he teaches them ever to have their eye fixed upon him as one with them, and to take him along with them in all the infinity of his grace and power, as they lift up their souls to God, and thence to be assured that their prayers shall be answered with blessings higher far than they can conceive, and in number more than the sands on the sea-shore.

Another most important truth which these words set before us remains yet to be noticed, viz. the relation in which every child of God stands to every other, and to the whole household of faith. They are brethren. They are the body of Christ; and as in the natural body, though there be many members, the body is one, so is it with the church of God. It consists of many members—of a multitude which no man can number. In it are countless myriads of once wretched outcasts on earth, who are now glorified spirits in heaven. In it are untold multitudes of pilgrims travelling all unseen and unheeded by the world, in the narrow way that leads to the Zion above. All are one. They form but two departments of one holy society, having one Father, one Lord, one Spirit, one home. Alas! how little is seen of this oneness among saints on earth! How often do they fall out by the way! How many dissensions exist among them! how many divisions! how many strifes! Whence come these fightings? Of the flesh surely. They are opposed to the commands of the Saviour, and injurious to his cause. They retard the growth of his kingdom, in its progress onward to universal establishment. They give occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully. They weaken the energies of the church. They impair her spirituality. Often they turn her aside, to a sad and sinful degree, from the grand object of her institution. They grieve the Spirit of Jesus. In whatever form, and to whatever

extent they exist, they are condemned in his word, and by his doctrine, and precepts, and prayers. And, O if, as there can be no question, it was the design and will of Jesus that his people should continue in prayer, should pray always,—and if the prayer which he taught to his disciples was intended to serve as a model to his followers in all circumstances and in all ages, O how should the spirit of brotherly love which pervades it, rebuke every selfish and sectarian feeling on the part of his servants! How should it teach them to remember that they are one, and to seek each other's welfare as identified with their own! They have one Father, and one Lord. They are all his children. And it is the gracious purpose of Jesus in the words which he has here provided for their use, at once to remind them, constantly, of the relation in which they stand to the Father, and to himself, and to one another, and to lead them earnestly to seek and diligently to cultivate the spirit proper to that relation,—the spirit of filial love and holy reverence towards God, and of universal and ardent benevolence towards his and their brethren. Blessed Spirit of Jesus, teach us thus to pray!

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NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Hallowed be thy name,'* Matt. vi. 9.

THE petition on which we are now to meditate, is, on many accounts, remarkable. It takes precedence of all the requests contained in the prayer which Christ taught his disciples,—and the inference thence seems not more obvious than it is important, that the subject matter of the petition is of greater moment than that of any by which it is succeeded,—and that it ought to occupy the first place in the hearts of God's children.

What, then, let us inquire, is the import of this petition? What is comprehended in it? What is meant by the 'name' of God in the connection in which it stands here? And how is that name to be hallowed? The name of God is to be understood, undoubtedly, as comprising Jehovah himself, in all the glory of his perfections,—of his moral perfections, above all,—especially as these are manifested in the economy of human salvation, and in the peculiar relation in which he stands to his people as their reconciled Father in Christ. But how, then, may his name be hallowed, or sanctified? Is it not essentially, absolutely, infinitely holy? It is, and therefore can-

not be sanctified in any sense which shall imply that it may become that which it is not, or that the degree in which it is holy may be increased. But it may be so relatively, though not absolutely,—and as regards the creation, though not as regards God. It is in this sense that our Lord would have us to offer this petition. God's name may thus be hallowed. And not only so,—there is a striking propriety as well as beauty, in the language in which the petition is expressed. It is not said, 'Glorified be thy name', though that might seem to be of equivalent import. It would not, however, have been equally appropriate. All creation glorifies its Maker. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth his handy-work.' But though they glorify God, they do not hallow or sanctify him. That, with reference to what takes place on earth, is at once the high privilege, and the special prerogative of believers. This they do primarily, by giving themselves up to him in the gospel of his Son, and thereafter, by walking in the beauty of holiness, and thereby leading others to glorify their Father in heaven. Their most successful endeavours, however, to consecrate themselves wholly to the Lord, fall immeasurably short of their high aim. There is a law in their members that warreth against the law of their minds, and bringeth them into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members. Around them, too, they see the name of God dishonoured, his law violated, his grace despised. And just as they have been taught of the Spirit to seek God's glory as their chief end, they esteem it their noblest privilege to be encouraged at all times to approach their Father in heaven with this petition,—and to pray, with reference to themselves, their brethren in Christ, and the world that lieth in the wicked one. 'Hallowed be thy name.' 'Show us thy glory.' 'Let all the people praise thee.'

This petition, then, on the part of believers, is essentially a prayer for growth in grace, as regards themselves, and all their brethren in Christ. It includes, therefore, much more than a desire for more enlarged views of the holiness and majesty of God. These it connects with the habitual exercise of faith in Jesus, as the spring of all holy obedience; for in this way it is that believers sanctify the name of their heavenly Father. Without reference to Jesus, and the redemption in his blood, they cannot, in any circumstances, realize the object of this petition. Their eye must still be turned to their elder Brother. Their heart must be filled with his love. On his arm they must lean in going up through the wilderness.

It is only in this way that they can preserve their garments unspotted from the world: it is thus, and only thus, that they can glorify God with their bodies, and with their spirits, which are his. They would see God in all things,—they would glorify God in all things. Thus living on the fulness that is in Christ, and enjoying holy fellowship with him, the petition before us, is with them, not a reality merely, but involves their chief good. It concerns the glory of God, and that is their 'chief end.' They identify it with the perfection of their own blessedness. They groan because of a body of sin and death. In them, 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and hence they always come short of perfectly hallowing the name of their Father; and, alas! they not seldom dishonour it. This fills them with the deepest sorrow. Hence they often use such language as this: 'O that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, that we might weep day and night for our transgressions.' Hence also the necessity, at all times, of the petition before us, viewed in reference to the individual suppliant, and to all saints,—'hallowed be thy name.' It is the prayer of a renewed and contrite heart for more enlarged discoveries of the divine glory, and for more intimate communion with God; and above all, for grace to glorify his name, by a bright reflection of his image, in the virtues of a life of faith and holiness.

As regards the world that lieth in wickedness, also, the believer is taught to fervently pray, 'Hallowed be thy name.' He cannot contemplate without deep commiseration the condition of such as live without God, and without hope. That condition is one of utter wretchedness. As such, it awakens the compassion of every child of God. He would see those wanderers brought into the fold of the good Shepherd. He would have them plucked as brands from the burning. The charity of the gospel constrains him to seek their salvation. On their account, therefore, and with a view to their good, he offers this petition. But that is not the only ground on which, as regards them, he thus prays. They are rebels against God. They will not have him to reign over them. They are blind to the glory of his character, and to the excellence of his law. They resist his authority, pour contempt on his clemency, and dishonour his name. The language of their hearts and lives is, 'No God,'—and if their power were equal to their ungodliness, they would cast Jehovah down from his eternal throne. They sin, and they make others to sin. Can the believer contemplate such wickedness without deep concern? Or, while he views it in all its

malignity, and bears in mind the inadequacy of all power but that of Omnipotence to open the blind eyes, and quicken the soul that is dead in trespasses, is it possible that he can survey such a condition as that of sinners denying or dishonouring God without calling upon his 'Father in heaven' to take to him his great power, and reign in their hearts, and to expel the prince of darkness from his usurped dominion there,—without offering, in reference to them, this prayer,—'Hallowed be thy name.'

#### NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified,' Lev. x. 3.*

EVERY page of the bible bears testimony to its divine original. It is full of God. From beginning to end, it is a revelation of his character,—a record of his procedure in the moral government of the universe,—a manifestation of his grace and truth, of his clemency and holiness. Throughout, and in every form, it tells us that his ways are not as ours, that they differ from ours more than heaven is high above the earth. Its great object is to display God's infinite love in the redemption of sinners by the blood of Jesus. That is its chief theme, and it is set forth as in letters of light. But it reveals the 'severity' not less than the 'goodness' of God. It calls us to contemplate both,—and we are chargeable at once with ingratitude and irreverence to him who has given us his Word to be the light of our feet, amid the dangers of an evil world, and with a criminal inattention to our own highest interests, if we limit our survey to partial views of divine truth,—if we study not, and with the docility of little children, the whole and every portion of the word of God. The passage which is now to engage our meditations specially calls us to contemplate the holy severity, the awful justice of Jehovah; and it gives forth lessons which are at once of permanent use, and of universal application to the church of Christ.

1. God is to be approached by his worshippers under solemn apprehensions, and with humble adoration of his infinite holiness. He has been graciously pleased to make himself known to us in his word under various designations, but by none more frequently than this, 'the Holy One.' The glory of his holiness, as of his other perfections, we can but imperfectly

discern so long as we carry about with us a body of sin and death. In heaven, where all is purity and light, it is fully realised: and there, we read, the blessed worshippers veil their faces with their wings, and exclaim, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.' It is not necessary to suppose that the other attributes of Deity are excluded from their view. On the contrary, all are present to their thoughts, and it is the lustre of all combined, shining on them in brightest radiance that discovers to them the majesty of the Godhead, and lays them prostrate in humility before the eternal throne. But of all the infinite perfections of Jehovah, that which shines most fully in the view, and engages most of the praises of the celestial worshippers, is his holiness. And what is holiness? Not purity merely, but purity as opposed to, and the antagonist of sin. As the sin-hating God, he is worshipped in heaven. And to whom has he promised to manifest himself on earth? With whom of our guilty and wretched race will he condescend here to dwell? 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy, to that man will I look who is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.' How often, alas! do we engage in the exercises of divine worship with inadequate conceptions, and without realizing views of the holiness of God. Can we wonder, then, if we are unblessed in our offering? Rather is it not wonderful that our blood is not mingled with our sacrifices? Let us seriously consider this in the light of the warning with which it is enforced in the doom of Aaron's sons; and ever as we come before him in the multitude of his mercies, let it be to worship in his fear towards his holy temple.

2. God can be acceptably worshipped only in the institutions of his own appointment. This is more particularly the lesson which the scripture under our consideration inculcates. It was by neglect of this all-important principle that Nadab and Abihu sinned. They did what God commanded not in the offering which they laid upon his altar; and it was not necessary that they should have gone in the face of a positive prohibition, to have merited the judgment with which they were visited for their sin. It was enough that in matters which concerned the worship of God, they did that for which they had no authority,—that they acted otherwise than in conformity to the institutions which divine wisdom had established. These were perfectly suited to the end for which they were given. They were free alike from excess and from defect, and they were not to be changed or modified in accommo-

dation to the tastes and the tempers of men. Now this is a truth of universal application, and one whose practical importance it is impossible to overrate. From the neglect of it have arisen the most disastrous consequences. O! then, let us have it impressed deeply on our memories and hearts. Put in a form adapted to the circumstances of all worshippers, it may be thus expressed:—human ingenuity may not attempt to omit, as superfluous, any of the services which God's word prescribes; nor may it, under the guise of piety, add to those which are of divine appointment; nor may it in any way, or to any extent, deviate from the divinely instituted manner of performing them. 'God's law is perfect.' In all that relates to the divine worship, in all its parts, scripture is a sufficient, as well as an unerring guide. It is at once so comprehensive, and so specific in its exposition of the great principles on which a sinner may acceptably worship God, and of the way in which these are to be practically applied, that he who runneth may read.' It points us to a 'new and living way of access into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus.' By that way alone may the guilty approach the Father of spirits. The haughty looks of man must be abased, and the Lord alone exalted. All worship must be offered in the faith of Jesus, and all glory ascribed to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And in presenting it, the Spirit must be our teacher, and his word our guide. We must give heed to the sure word of prophecy, as unto a light shining in a dark place. Our neglect of its lessons, or departure from them, whether in the spirit, or manner, or amount of the services which we offer, cannot but be displeasing to God, and to ourselves may be followed not with a blessing, but a curse. Who is sufficient for these things? Let us ask wisdom of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. He will hear our cry. He will answer us in peace. He will teach us,—even as he alone can. 'O send out thy light, and thy truth: let them lead me: let them bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles,—then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God! my God.'

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TENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,'* Matt. vi. 10.

THE kingdom here referred to is not of this world. It is a spiritual dominion over spiritual

subjects—and though every thing in nature is tributary to it, yet it is a kingdom of grace. The heart of man is its capital. It relates to the feelings, the life, and conduct, the hopes and fears, the interests and cares of immortal things. Christ is king in it. The Spirit of God is his viceroy, and all the proceedings of that kingdom are either in accordance with the holy mind of God, or compelled by his omnipotence to subserve the purposes of his glory. So entire is his dominion, and so irresistible his sway, that even the wrath of man shall be constrained to praise him. It is, however, in the souls of his elect that the peculiar glories of that empire appear on earth. 'The kingdom of God is within them,' and the Spirit has declared that 'that kingdom consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' 'The work of righteousness there is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.' Now, when we pray 'thy kingdom come,' we express to the Holy Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the desire of our hearts that his dominion may be every where established; that the effects of the first Adam's fall may be counteracted by the grace and truth which came by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. We pray that that kingdom may be established first in our own souls—that the Holy Spirit may rule there for Christ—may subdue all that exalteth itself against him; and bring our minds into holy conformity to his will. We pray, next, that the same blessings may be extended wherever there are sinners to be saved from the power of sin on earth, and the punishment of sin in the world beyond the grave. We pray that the horrid abodes of superstition may soon be lit up by the light of him who enlighteneth every man,—that idolatry may be everywhere abolished, and God in Christ extolled as God over all. Briefly but emphatically, all this is comprehended in the prayer, 'Thy kingdom come.' Our heart's desire is that men may cease to be rebels against God; and every where become a willing people under him who is 'anointed king in Zion'—'King of kings, and Lord of lords'—and finally, that all who are ordained to everlasting life may be gradually prepared for that state of being where grace is merged in glory. Meditate, then, O my soul, on the large and catholic spirit which the Lord Jesus thus desires his people to display; for one single clause of a prayer in their lips comprehends the universe in its sweep. Sectarianism is indirectly abolished; the breathing of a believer's soul goes forth, in one sense, like the benevolence of the Godhead; for as Christ's people are 'made partakers of the divine nature,' (2 Pet. i. 4,) that

nature seeks an outlet in the well-being of all. It embraces the universe in its arms, and puts forth desires on its behalf similar to those which actuated the eternal Father when he spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death, that the wretched might be made happy; that the dying might live; that the doomed might first be reprieved, and then acquitted for ever.

But is it enough to utter this prayer? Is duty then discharged? Ah, many seem to think so,—as if all that were required of us were to use certain words, or express certain desires without adopting means for their accomplishment; and because the church of Christ has acted in this mistaken spirit for ages past, the wide world is still but partially subdued to God and his Christ. Seven hundred millions of immortal beings are hastening to eternal misery, without the true God and therefore without hope; in one generation, or thirty years, these millions will have past into that world where there can never be hope because there is no Redeemer. The remissness of Christians is thus occasioning the ruin of myriads. In this life they are left to worship stocks and stones, insomuch that in Hindostan alone it is computed there are three gods for each man; one hundred millions of men, and three hundred millions of gods. In the life to come they are left to be the heirs of a misery as intense as unending.

Now, though there were no heathens but the Hindoos, is not this a loud call, as loud as if God were addressing it personally to us, for the forth-putting of missionary efforts? It must appear to all who will take time to think upon the matter, that it is only a mocking of God to pray without employing means—to utter certain words, and then sit down as if no more were needed, is either hypocrisy or superstition. But surely it is time that the church of Christ in general, and every Christian individually and apart, were more alive to the spreading of the gospel, and the use of means to promote that end. Every family should become a missionary society, and seek both by prayer and painstaking to spread the good word of the kingdom. My soul, art thou clear in this matter? Hast thou done what thou couldst to promote the kingdom of Christ as king in Zion? By thy prayers, by thine example, by thy contributions as the Lord hath prospered thee, hast thou sought to advance his cause? Solemnly, and as in the sight of God the Judge, I ask thee, Hast thou done what thou couldst? Is no heathen at this moment hastening to perdition because thou hast withheld the means of rescue? O, is there no blood of souls in thy skirts? Art thou guilty of mocking the holy One—the God of

all the ends of the earth, by praying that his kingdom may come, and then withholding thy hand from promoting that blessed result? If there be reason to doubt, (and I ask again, Is there?) go and terminate doubt for ever; go and help the Lord against the mighty; go and learn in thine own experience what the scriptures mean when they say, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Be fellow-workers with God.

But what is it that we aim at in thus seeking the conversion of the nations to the Lord and his Christ? As regards this life, it is to make those men happy who are at this hour grinded and oppressed by sin. It is to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. It is to rescue mothers from the horrid crime of infanticide, and children from the doom which makes us shudder—of being butchered by the mother that bore them. It is to rescue the human race, in short, from the thralldom of Satan, and the dismal effects of the primal curse. And in reference to the next world, we seek to make those the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, who in their natural state are the heirs only of perdition. We try to hasten on the time when men shall be brought nigh to God by the blood of the cross, lifted from their deep degradation by the power of the eternal Spirit, and made to sit in heavenly places with Christ, as they have been trained to walk with him here. Such is the design of all the efforts made to hasten the coming of Jehovah's spiritual kingdom, and what sacrifice can be held too great for promoting that result? 'Freely we have received; should we not freely give?' The silver and the gold are the Lord's; should we not therefore employ them as his, and 'devise liberal things, that by liberal things we may stand?'

TENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus,' Rev. xxii. 20.*

THE close of the word of God points us onward to the close of time, and tells us of the coming of him who is to revisit our world 'without sin unto salvation.' As the teacher sent from God, he had testified in the midst of the church. He had unfolded the will of God for our salvation—and, in his character of prophet, had announced the events that were to take place from the period of his testifying till time should be

no more. Having thus finished the work which God gave him to do, he closes the book of inspiration by telling us that even at the longest, his return would not be remote; one day is with the Lord as a thousand years; and the great I AM here turns the thoughts of all, but especially the church of his redeemed in every age, to the time when this world's purposes would all be served; when he would return to reign over a reclaimed and a regenerated globe. A new heavens and a new earth where righteousness shall dwell, are to be set up. He who is now hid from our eyes, but in whom, though now we see him not, we believe, will come, and his reward with him. He will come, to complete for ever the number of his elect—to gather the wheat into his garner, to bundle up the tares and burn them, to gather out the good fish that are in the net and cast the bad away. He will come to dry the tears, and terminate the sorrows of his people, by making a perfect end of their transgressions. He will come to take vengeance on his enemies, to be admired of them that believe, and extort from these that would none of his control, the self-condemning 'cry to the mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the wrath of the Lamb.' In one sense, the Saviour is coming daily. In his providence he comes to testify that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth. In his grace he comes to convert and edify his people; but it will be when the world in which we dwell shall have fulfilled the Godhead's design in calling it into being, that Jesus shall return to be seen by the eye of sense, as he now is by the eye of faith, as the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely, the adored of angels, the beloved of the redeemed, the eternal delight of the Father.

And since such wondrous things are told in connection with the Redeemer's return, need we marvel though the church should promptly prolong the assurance and turn it into a prayer, 'Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus?' Here it is in the wilderness; and though the Lord of glory often by his Spirit speaks comfortably to his people, and does great things for them there, still this world is not their home. Heaven, that is, wherever the Redeemer dwells, is the country for which they long; and looking forward to its blessedness, they cannot repress the prayer, 'Come, Lord Jesus;' come, guide us to the end of our wanderings—come, deliver us from these sore perplexities—come, and rescue us from our enemies around us, and our own hearts within—come, that that which is in part may be done away—come, that we may see thee as thou art,

and be like thee, and dwell where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

It is thus that the church of Christ, and all its spirit-taught members, make his words and promises the bases of their hopes, and the topics of their prayer. Does he proclaim, 'Surely I come quickly?' With the promptitude of a spiritual instinct, the church exclaims, 'Amen, come.' Does the Redeemer say, 'seek ye my face,' then the heart of his people replies, 'thy face, Lord, will we seek.' The mind of the Lord's people is thus the echo of his. They are one spirit with the Lord, and, loving what he loves, seeking what he commands, shunning what he forbids, they are taught by the Spirit to enjoy that perfect peace which none but the people of God can know. With a promise for our warrant, and prayer for our privilege, we may go on our way rejoicing. It may be dangerous and rugged, but greater is he that is for us than all that can be against us.

How marvellous it is, that the world, which is ruled by a holy God, should be the abode of so much wretchedness—that that God who is LOVE, should tolerate the anguish and the miseries that riot among men! How inexplicable, while reason is all we have to guide us, to see that generation after generation is remorselessly cut down, that this earth is turned into an hospital for the immuring, or a church-yard for the interment of all its inhabitants! Ah, what must sin be in the eyes of the holy God, when, in consequence of one sin called venial, and by many regarded as insignificant, he has consigned the universal race of man to the first death—and countless myriads to the first and second death in one! But 'I come quickly,' spoken by the Lord of life throws light upon the mystery. He will come, and sin and sorrow shall be over—death shall be abolished—and the glory of God the Redeemer shall fill the earth and heaven. We see these effects already partially begun, in the new Eden, the church of Christ which he purchased with his blood. But this is only the first-fruits—the full harvest is approaching, when 'they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy—when he that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'

But is there no danger lest all this should prove but like a dream to me? May I not admire what I shall never enjoy? Is there no danger lest I should be captivated with the beauty of what I shall never see, but as Moses saw Canaan from Pisgah? The Lord may come, but what if it be to take vengeance on me? The

church of Christ, gladdened by his promise, may turn it into a prayer, and then rest in hope—but what if I, at his coming, hear these stabbing words, 'Depart from me, I never knew you?' Warned by all this, I would seek to have Christ's reign established in my soul, by the power and persuasion of his Spirit. I would remember that 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force;' that I must 'strive (agonize) to enter in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way;' that I must 'work out my salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in me both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' He that is to come shall come and will not tarry, whether it be to punish or to bless. Meanwhile he is waiting to be gracious, have I sought grace for grace? He knocketh, have I opened? He says, 'turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' Have I turned at his reproof—even here am I thus entering on the joy of our Lord? The conduct of most men is like that of little children gathering pebbles by the sea beach when the tide is flowing. Busied with their sport, they heed not its approach; they are surrounded, and they and their toy things perish together. My soul, is it different with thee? Art thou on the rock, which is Christ? In him as the ark of safety, art thou floating to the heavenly Ararat, 'the holy mountain, where there is nothing to hurt or to offend?'

#### ELEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,'*  
Matt. vi. 10.

WE have in this portion of the word a model set up, and a prayer for power to imitate it. The model is the mind and will of the holy God as it rules unchallenged in heaven; and the prayer is that earth may become as heaven, that is, it is a prayer for the utter extinction of sin, and the universal prevalence of holiness; for 'the will of God' is only another name for the complete observance of both the tables of the law.

Now consider the model, that we may learn what the copy should be,—How is the will of God done in heaven?

It is done *universally*. Not one among the ranks of the sinless has a single thought or a single desire at variance with the mind of Jehovah. The angels and archangels, with all the host of heaven, have no will but his. Could trial and tears find entrance among them, all would be submitted to, because he had sent it. It is as if

one heart and soul did animate the whole. Their very nature would be outraged were there one dissentient among them all. Having but one God and King, they have but one law; and heaven would cease to be heaven were violence done to the universal concord that is there.

And God's will is done *continually*. Never for the twinkling of an eye does a thought wander from the great centre of all blessedness; but as the heart in living men is continually beating, so the continual and unbroken desire of all heaven is that God may be all and in all.

And all this is done *cheerfully*. The city of our God contains not a single inhabitant that does not delight to do his will. It is their blessedness because it is his pleasure; and whether their commission be to live in the uncreated light of the Godhead's countenance, or to hasten on an errand of mercy to some suffering child of God,—their obedience is equally prompt and joyous,—they are 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' Nothing has occurred to occasion a disruption of their minds from Jehovah. His will is therefore theirs, his law and pleasure theirs; so that though men find it difficult, even when they soar the highest, to comprehend what heaven will be, this may be regarded as a description of its blessedness.—All that enter there do God's will universally, continually, and cheerfully.

Now, we are taught by the Lord Jesus to pray that earth may become blessed again by the prevalence of such a spirit there. With the design of restoring man's happiness, and lifting him from the wretchedness into which his revolt from God has sunk him, the Shepherd of Israel would guide us back to the spot from which we fell. And what so reasonable as that God's will should give law to his intelligent creatures? What so reasonable as that God, who is love, should be allowed to regulate our movements, and apportion our lot? Yet, O how hard the task for proud though fallen man to take God's will for his! The tempter at the first succeeded in alluring us from God, by holding out the prospect that we should be 'as gods unto ourselves;' and as that was the first lure held out to man, it still too fatally succeeds in keeping him far from God. He either obstinately opposes, or rebelliously murmurs against the Almighty's awards; and if the holiest child of God would strictly watch the movements of his mind for a single day, he would discover how prone his heart is to feel, whatever his lips may express, like those who say, 'who is the Lord, that he should be God over us?' He is surprised, and disappointed, and murmurs when the Most High

does not act according to the desires, or purposes, or pleasures of his sinful creature.

Hence the difficulty of cordially praying, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.' Reasonable as it is, and full of blessedness as it would be to afflicted man to have God's will concerning him accomplished; so wayward is he, that multitudes struggle against that will until the hour they die,—even the child of God finds it the most arduous of tasks to bring his mind into conformity with Jehovah's. Man must be made a new creature in Christ before that can be accomplished. While all is harmony in heaven, all is discord on earth. While even the Son of God made it his meat and drink to do his Father's will, man as perversely exalts his own will above his God's, until he is renewed in the spirit of his mind. In such a case, what should be his alternative? Prayer to God to be made willing in the day of his power, to be taught by the Spirit of all grace to 'be still, and know that God is God,'—and submit with holy acquiescence in all that the Lord is pleased to send. To resist him is to be wretched, to take his will for ours is to be blessed, for 'good is the will of the Lord; and the man that truly loves his soul, will pray for daily grace as he prays for his daily bread, to bring down every high imagination, and submit the whole soul to God's awards, exclaiming, 'Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints.'

But is there not a length and breadth of meaning in this petition, which is often overlooked? We pray in words that the will of God may be done on earth. Now it may be his will to take away my best loved enjoyment. It may be his sovereign pleasure to lay me on a sick-bed, which shall become my death-bed. The child of my affections may be marked for death by him whose doings admit of no challenge. It may be his pleasure to make my tears flow so fast, that a fellow-mortal cannot dry them. All that may be THE WILL of my covenant God; for all that, therefore, I pray as often as I say, 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven.' And yet, how much am I surprised and startled, when God answers my prayer, and *does according to his will*. How do I mourn and often murmur because he has been pleased to do according to his own holy mind! I would rather bring down his will to mine, than lift mine up to his; and in such a case, the inmost soul must feel the need of constraining grace to bring the mind into conformity with God's.

And now my soul, is it thus with thee? It is the nature of light to spread and gladden. It is the nature of rivers to run to the level sea.

It is the nature of animals to breathe. It is not less the desire, the prayer, and the effort of a regenerated soul, to do the will of its God,—my soul, *is it so with thee?* Is it thy practice in sorrow to imitate him who, in his hour of agony, said, *Not my will, but thine be done?* To acquiesce in God's holy will, is heaven commenced,—it is the proof of our kindred to Christ; for 'whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,' and greatly blessed are the people who are thus taught of God.

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ELEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,'* Job i. 21.

How prone man is to be a theorist in religion, to be contented with knowing, without doing; to hear of heaven without preparing for it! But wherever God has a purpose of mercy, he employs the means which are needful to make man a doer of his will, as well as a hearer of his word. We see this exemplified in the case of Job. In the school of sore affliction he was disciplined, by stripe after stripe, to take God's will for his, and act to the very letter on the prayer which teaches believers to say, 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven.'

For edification's sake, then, meditate on the case of Job. Message after message was brought to the patriarch, announcing blow after blow. His worldly substance was swept away in the twinkling of an eye by one form of trial,—his sons and daughters were torn from his bosom, to be buried beneath the ruins of their eldest brother's house by another; and he who at sunrise had sat a prince among princes, was at sundown like one alone in the world, peeled of his substance, childless, and forlorn.

Amid this complex misery, what was Job's alternative? Did he repine against the Author of his trials? or did he stop short at second causes, and impute his loss to accident, or the tempest, or men's malice? No, but like one whom God himself had taught, he ascended at once to the great primary cause; and well aware that not a sparrow could fall to the ground without God, the patriarch traced all up to his right hand as the source,—he actually blessed the Lord who had in holy sovereignty sent such crushing trials.

And notice the reason for this uncomplaining

submission on the part of Job. He knew that he had nothing which he had not received,—that what he had was only lent by God. He might, therefore, at any time assert his right of property in what he had lent, take back his own, and leave his creatures naked and bare as they entered the world at first. 'Occupy till I come,' is the tenure by which man holds all things here below. Job felt the truth of that; he therefore blessed God, because in taking away he had only asserted his right, and resumed his own.

Consider also how prone man is to put God's gifts in the room of himself, and behold in that another reason for the calamities that befel the patriarch. Give me enough of the creature, and I care little for the Creator;—let me have God's bounties, and I shall think but little of the bountiful One. These are the sentiments acted on, though not expressed, by every member of the human family, till the grace of God renews us. But to check this idolatry, and lift men's thoughts to God over all, the Sovereign proprietor from time to time displays his power in sweeping away all that we are prone to cling to, and it was thus with Job,—it has been thus with multitudes besides,—and blessed is the man who is taught to cleave to the Creator when the creature is removed,—who can call the unsearchable riches of Christ his own, when other riches make themselves wings and flee away.

When we see the patriarch Job thus precipitated from the utmost affluence to the depths of poverty, what Christian mind can help recurring to him who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor,—who left the bosom of the Father, and welcomed poverty, persecution, a cross, and a grave, that his people might be the 'heirs of God.' With him for our companion in poverty, though the things of earth may melt away in our grasp, with the prophet of old the believer may joyfully sing, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; 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 stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' If God hath given his Son to die for us, will he not with him freely give us all things?

But for the encouragement of a tried believer's soul, contemplate the case of Job in another light. We have seen that he was sorely afflicted, that blow after blow came down, each one of them enough to overwhelm him. At the same time, we have noticed the patriarch's uncomplaining acquiescence in God's awards. His right of property was recognised, his sovereignty was

bowed to, and a declaration the most ample was made, that the Judge of all the earth had done right. And what was the end of all these things? Had God forgotten to be gracious any more? Was his mercy clean gone for ever? On the contrary, we may declare that the patriarch was never more precious in God's sight than when the furnace of affliction was the hottest, and the result proved that in very 'faithfulness had God afflicted him.' Deeper insight into God's character on the one hand, and his own upon the other, was the consequence of his trials, (chap. xli. 5, 6.) Even his temporal interests grew brighter after the eclipse they had experienced; for 'the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.' It was true that Job could take no part of his wealth to the world of spirits, but while he continued here, he was made glad according to the days wherein he had been afflicted, and the years wherein he had seen grief. And what is the opinion of Job regarding his trials *now*,—what has been his opinion ever since he died in the Lord, and was blessed!

And seeing that tribulation is our only certain heritage on earth, how important is it for us to learn whither we should flee when the day of trial comes! In the first instance, man always resorts to the creature for comfort and defence, for God is thought of only when all else has failed. So true is it that man is living without God in the world, that when affliction comes heavily upon him, he often knows not the way to his throne, for grace to help him. But be it ours to be familiar with the way to the throne. Let it become a daily trodden path in the sunshine of prosperity; and when the day of trouble comes, we shall find that 'a man (the man Christ Jesus, the man of sorrows) shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,' (Isa. xxxii. 2.)

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TWELFTH DAY.—MORNING.

'Give us this day our daily bread,' Matt. vi. 11.

How different, nay, how completely opposed is the mind of fallen man to the mind of God! On the one hand, our thoughts are supremely set on the things which are seen and temporal. Our very spirits cleave to the dust; and even after we have reason to believe, that we are converted and renewed in the spirit of our minds, by the power of the Holy Ghost, it requires a constant effort to preserve the mind from sinking down to its former level, far from God, heedless of him,

and joined to our idols. On the other hand, his holy mind is that our affections should be set on things above—that we should live for Him and eternity—that our lives should be hid with Christ in God—that we should live in the Spirit, and walk with God as Enoch did. We have this contrariety illustrated in the Lord's prayer. In it there are six petitions, and only one of them relates to temporal things. The Redeemer would have us to fix our thoughts supremely on spiritual things, to pray for them in the first instance—and for earthly things only in a subordinate and secondary sense. Worldly men, who know or care for no better portion than earth can give, may grasp and long for all they can amass of this world's objects. But the child of God, led by his Spirit, is to seek a better portion—to limit his desires to things needful and convenient regarding this life—regarding the life to come, and all that can promote the glory of God and the well-being of the soul, man is to ask much, and to expect much; he is to 'open his mouth wide and God will fill it.'

Let me now solemnly ask, Is it thus with me? Whether am I labouring most earnestly for the meat that perisheth, or for the meat that endureth for ever? He who spake as never man did, has taught me to be at least five times more desirous of spiritual than of temporal blessings. I call him Master; and profess to hail him as a teacher sent from God; do I then act according to his lessons? am I praying with holy zeal? waiting with holy avidity for the promoting of God's glory, the advancing of his cause in the world, and the blotting out of sin through the blood of atonement? or does my chief anxiety, in spite of the Saviour's warning, relate to what I shall eat, or what I shall drink, or wherewithal I shall be clothed? O how self-delusive is it to know these things, yet not do them in spirit and in truth!

Farther. It is one of the peculiar characteristics of the gospel that it is preached to the poor. Now in one point of view, the prayer, 'give us this day our daily bread,' is specially designed for them; for a rich man who has goods laid up for many days, can scarcely enter into the meaning of the words. He is not so likely to have that spirit of constant dependence upon God which the godly poor are morally obliged to cherish, and though beyond a question, a rich man, taught by the Spirit to pray, can understand the petition, it cannot be so precious or so touching to him as to the poor man who is dependent on the bounties of each successive day for the preservation of life, and the averting of poverty. How compassion-

etc, then, the Saviour, to have placed in the very bosom of the prayer a petition designed expressly for the poor! How considerate to have supplied the poorest with words wherewith to come into the presence of his God and their God; how merciful to have placed this petition as a moral barrier against want, between poor dependent man and the Father of lights, from 'whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift.'

But short as this clause is, its information is not yet exhausted. It is said, 'give us *this day* our daily bread,' so that the Saviour here fastens down our thoughts to the day that is passing. We are to 'take no anxious care for to-morrow,' but commit it wholly to him who feeds the young ravens when they cry; and who has assured his people that when they 'trust in the Lord and do good, they shall verily be fed.' Why should the child of God be careful about that which may never come to him? Why should he aggravate the actual evils of to-day by adding to them the contingent evils of to-morrow? It is thus that men often become their own tormentors, rebelliously breaking God's commandment not to be anxious for to-morrow, and faithlessly distrusting the goodness of Him who hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' But the true secret of a believer's peace, regarding the things of this world, is to cast himself with all his cares upon his covenant God, to live one day at a time, and leave the future to him who calleth things that are not as though they were. This is the spirit which honours God, and which God in Christ will honour. It is this state of mind which the Lord Jesus wishes his people to cherish—and their own interest as well as his holy pleasure, should constrain them to obey.

And O how blessed are they who are thus taught to wait on God! They are free from the cares that haunt and harass the unbelieving. If they seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, they are sure that all else will be added to them, for THE TRUTH hath spoken it. To-morrow, when it comes, may bring with it a multitude of ills, but they cannot rob the believer of his covenant privileges. The ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth is still open to his cry. The bread of life which cometh down from heaven is still spread before him in ample abundance. In short, all things are his, and he is Christ's, and Christ is God's—upheld by that, the believer prays in the words, and seeks to wait in the spirit which Jesus taught, while he hopes for the provision which Jesus promised. In the crowded city we often meet a helpless child borne along by its mother or its nurse. Not one successful effort

could that child make were danger at hand—but still it sleeps composedly on the bosom of her that carries it. It has no anxiety, and feels no alarm, though ten thousand incidents might happen to destroy it, and is thus borne quietly and safely to its home. And it is just thus that the heavenly Parent, who cherishes his people as a nurse her child, takes cares of them all. Confidence on their part is ever followed by protection on his—and the smitten rock shall yield them drink, the fowls of heaven shall bring them food, ere they lack any good thing.

Go, then, my soul, cast all thy cares upon him that careth for thee, and whose Son has been given in pledge that all else shall be added. My bread may be a crust, and my drink only water—but is not that a pilgrim's fare, and am not I a pilgrim? Lean upon him whose all-sufficiency is thy guarantee—whose omnipotence is thy strength—out of whose abundance thy wants are all supplied. From day to day live by faith upon the Son of God—and then some Joseph will be raised up even in the Egypt of this world to lay up stores for thee—the rich glories of heaven will be all the more welcome at the last by reason of the troubles or discomfort which befell thee by the way.

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#### TWELFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain,'* Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

WHAT is enough? is a question which has never yet been answered except where the grace of God enabled men to say, 'I have all and abound,'—'my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ.' The Christian alone can answer the question, and he does so by saying, 'that is enough which my God is pleased to send.'

It was somewhat in this spirit that Agur offered up his prayer. As the Lord himself, when he came in the flesh, taught his followers to pray, 'give us this day our daily bread,' that is, to be contented in a state of constant dependence upon God, so his servants who longed for his coming, prayed in a similar spirit for a competent portion of the good things of this life and desired nothing more. They did not ask for poverty, for that would have been praying for trial and suffering, which the believer is scarcely free to do. They did not pray for affluence, for that would

have been supplicating God to surround them with snares and temptations—but they besought their God to grant them things convenient—they left the nature and extent of these to him who judgeth righteous judgment, and spoke as if they felt that their happiness consisted in being what God appointed, and enjoying what God sent.

And who that knows his own heart does not feel the suitability of this prayer? No sooner does God laden us with the bounties of providence than we begin to put them in his place, to deny him and say, Who is the Lord? The creature and the gift are preferred to the Creator, the Giver; and when they are torn from us, or take to themselves wings and flee away, is not the heart of many disconsolate, like those of old who cried, 'ye have taken away our gods, and what have we left?'

Behold, then, the wisdom of the prayer of Agur. He wished to be kept from creature-dependence, and therefore besought his God in mercy neither to visit him with poverty as a trial, nor with affluence as a temptation. And O how countless are the temptations which befall the rich! On no point is the scripture more explicit, for on none is man more prone to err. '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.' 'Mortify covetousness, which is idolatry.' 'How hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of heaven.' 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' 'The wicked blesseth the covetous whom the Lord abhors.' These are some of the passages of the word of God which unfold his mind regarding the universal passion, the love of money. And on the one hand, how solemn is the thought that so many in this nominally Christian land are guilty of this idolatry, 'saying unto the gold, Thou art my god, and to the pure gold, Thou art my confidence!' On the other, how wise the prayer, 'give me neither poverty nor riches.' Keep me by thy providence in the golden mean, where my soul shall neither be oppressed by poverty, nor elated by wealth.

But while the child of God leaves all to his Father regarding the riches that perish in the using, there is one kind of riches concerning which his soul is insatiable, the unsearchable riches of Christ. The believer's heart longs for these with a desire which increases from day to day. Avarice here is a virtue, ambition has free scope. While the riches of earth elate, and render men in fancy independent of

God, the riches of Christ render them humble, for they feel that they have nothing which they have not received. The riches of earth drown men in perdition; the riches of Christ lift men to glory and fit them for it. The riches of earth often render man the more unhappy the more he has amassed, the riches of Christ constitute the very fulness of joy. The riches of earth must all be dropt at the grave's edge; the riches of Christ pass with us into eternity, and unceasingly grow more precious there. Who then that has learned to weigh things in the balance of the sanctuary, would not covet earnestly the *Christian* riches? Which is preferable, the riches that prompt us to say, Who is the Lord that he should be a God to us? or the riches which make God himself our portion? The riches which laden us like thick clay, and sink us at last into a deeper grave, or the riches that make good our title to the skies, the righteousness wrought out for us by the Son of God?

There can be no question as to which of these a believer's soul would prefer; reason, religion, self-interest, and the Spirit of God all conspire, in various ways, to show that he is not rational and most certainly not religious, who prefers what he must relinquish when he dies, to what he could carry with him into eternity. Say, then, my soul, which do you prefer? Is it Christ or mammon? Is it the creature or the Creator? Whether would you have the riches which covetousness gathers, grasps, and hugs—or the riches which rank among the things which God himself has taught us earnestly to covet? By setting God and mammon over against each other as he does, the Judge of the quick and the dead, would teach us that both cannot be served,—which then are you serving? In this matter, life and death, blessing and cursing, are set before you, and God says, Choose. Have you chosen—and is your choice such as the hour of death and the day of judgment will approve? Have you laid up treasure on earth, or in heaven?

Farther,—see how signally God often manifests his displeasure even upon earth against the love of money. Have not some men with thousands at their command, been so deprived of judgment as to deny themselves their daily bread, and necessary clothing, lest they should diminish their idol hoards by the value of the smallest coin in the realm! Have not others been driven to phrensy and died lunatic, because they had been stript of their gold, which was in fact their god? Have not the children of miser parents often squandered in profligacy the ill-gotten gains of their fathers—so that if man may

interpret providence, parent, and child have perished by the same blow! Now if we will take the bible for our guide, may we not see in these things a protest from the God of providence against the abuse of his creatures—may we not infer the need of grace from God to help us to pray, and act upon the prayer—‘give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain?’

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*‘Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,’*  
Matt. vi. 12.

As long as God is man’s enemy, he must be essentially wretched—for God fights against him with the word of his mouth, till sin be taken out of the way. To be an unpardoned sinner is therefore to be essentially a miserable man. It is true that countless myriads do not believe this fact—they move onward to perdition with a step as glad as if they were moving onward to glory. As the poor maniac often seems happy when ‘laughing wild amid severest woe’—so countless unconverted men seem happy while they pass onward to the bar of their God with a lie in their right hand, yea, in their very heart.

Hence the deep significancy of the words, ‘Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.’ Till sin be taken out of the way, there can be no happiness for man, because no friendship with his God. Its guilt must be atoned for—its pollution washed away—its punishment borne, ere the soul of man can have peace. According to the scriptures, it does not appear that even the Almighty God could make an unpardoned sinner happy.

How blessed they, then, who have been guided by the Spirit of all grace to the fountain opened for sin—who have sought forgiveness from God through him whose blood cleanseth from all sin! Have I gone to the fountain thus opened? Is my conscience sprinkled from dead works? God hath promised to wash us and make us whiter than the snow. Is it so with me?

But it is not enough to be pardoned, and accepted, or justified by God. That act on his part is indispensably necessary—but it is no less so that we daily recur to the throne of God for mercy to pardon daily sins. As surely as we need daily bread, we need daily forgiveness, and if this were not obtained, our souls would after all be lost. But Christ maketh continual inter-

cession for us, and therefore ‘though the righteous falleth seven times in a day, the Lord will lift him up.’ Renewing grace will guide the sinner to the spot where pardoning grace is vouchsafed—and thus mercy and peace are imparted to the child of God. The believer, no doubt, is often tempted to fear that his sins are so numerous and prevailing that they will one day overcome him, and at the same time he often dreads that his sinfulness is so great that he should not approach his God. This, however, is a temptation, and the believer, taught by the Spirit, is enabled at last to overcome it. He sees that instead of keeping him away from God in Christ, his felt sinfulness is a reason why he should obey Christ’s invitation to come. If he keep aloof from Christ, he must perish—if he resort to the Saviour in spirit and in truth, he cannot perish—he cannot be condemned, for Christ has been condemned in his stead. It is thus that the child of God learns at last to glory in the words, ‘Christ can save unto the uttermost;’ and as God pardons for his own sake, saying, ‘I, even I, am he that blotteth out iniquity for mine own sake, and will not remember transgression;’ the believer encouraged thereby, from day to day resorts to the fountain—and there he finds peace, for there he finds purity.

But forgiveness is not all that is needful. If God have in mercy blotted out my sins, I must testify my gratitude by my holiness, by living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit. In this way I am to manifest the graces of the Christian life, and prepare for the dwelling-place into which nothing that defileth can enter. To be washed, and justified, is thus only a prelude to being sanctified; and where the latter does not follow in some degree, my repentance and forgiveness are spurious and fanciful—not the work of God’s free Spirit, and his sovereign mercy. ‘Surely after 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,’ Jer. xxxi. 19.

Here, however, it is requisite to interpose a caution. When we pray to God to ‘forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,’ self-righteous men are prone to think that our forgiving others is the price we pay to God for forgiving us. They thus come to him, but it is not on the terms on which he invites us, viz. without money and without price. They would take, but it is not in the way that God offers, viz. freely, as a gift, a donation, a present. Now in this state of mind, man is overthrowing the gospel of free grace. He is expecting forgiveness for his own sake, not for Christ’s sake.

He is laying another foundation than that which God hath laid. He is making mention of another righteousness than Christ's. In short, either the gospel of the Son of God, or that man's hopes, must be overthrown. That we are bound to forgive is certain—for the man who can harbour malice or revenge in his bosom proves thereby that he is not a disciple of him who prayed for his very crucifiers—and whose blood washed some of them from their sins. A malicious Christian, a revengeful Christian, an unforgiving Christian—who sees not that these words are utterly incompatible when used together? A Christian must needs be forgiving, merciful, in short, Christ-like; and if a man is not so, he cannot use this clause of the Lord's prayer without mocking the heart-searcher and imposing on himself. While the Christian therefore from the heart forgives others, and prays for them that spitefully use him, he is deeply conscious that only the grace of God could enable him to do so. He therefore casts away all such hollow confidence as that which rests on ought that is self-derived. 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ.' 'I am determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified.' These are the maxims on which a believer acts in all that relates to God, eternity, and the soul—and acting thus, he is guided by the Spirit of all grace to the spot where he enjoys the blessedness of that man 'whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and unto whom the Lord imputeth not transgression,' Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. He goes on his way rejoicing that 'there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 1.

Is it thus, my soul, with thee? Are thy sins blotted out through the blood of atonement—and connecting duty with privilege like a Christian indeed, hast thou forgiven, as Christ did, all that ever offended thee? Is there no human being for whom thou wouldst not pray? Answer these questions now, as you must one day answer unto God.

#### THIRTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,' Eph. iv. 31, 32.*

'The gospel is unfriendly to morality,—by suspending man's salvation on another's good works

and not on his own, it takes away every motive to virtue, it actually holds out a bounty upon sin.' Such is the objection brought against the gospel of our salvation by men who do not understand it. They allege that we substitute a mysterious dogma for practical morality, because they can only discern the fact, that salvation is made to depend on faith, without knowing farther that faith is only a name, or a pretence, unless it 'work by love,' and 'purify the heart,' and 'overcome the world.' It is true that those who never felt the power of the truth as it is in Jesus have too plausible an argument against it in the godless lives of many unconverted professors—but the gospel in itself and its results as it is found mapped out before us in the bible, is throughout a system according to godliness. 'Be ye holy, for God is holy,' is the standard of its morality.

As an instance of this, consider the passage which forms the subject of this evening's exercise. Let that passage be carried out into practice, and how complete a revolution would it work among the children of men? Those who are now haunted and convulsed by evil passions might become the 'sons of peace.' Public discord, and private slander would be banished—mankind would become a holy brotherhood, and therefore happy. In short, word is here heaped upon word to show the necessity of guarding against every shade and degree of the sins that are reprobated. Having the spirit of Christ, men are to imitate his example, and manifest dispositions like his, so as to be living epistles of the Lord Jesus, seen and read of all men. Wrath against a fellow-mortal is prohibited, for wrath is akin to hatred, and 'he that hateth his brother is a murderer.' Anger is forbidden in all its sinful characteristics—for the Saviour said, 'if any man be angry with his brother without a cause, he shall be in danger of the judgment.' Evil-speaking is also forbidden—and thus our religion would dry up a copious fountain of bitterness to man. On the other hand, the opposite graces are recommended and enforced. That men might know the blessedness of dwelling together in unity—they are to be tender-hearted and forgiving. The meek and merciful Redeemer by his Spirit would stamp his own image on his followers (2 Cor. iii. 18.); he would raise up a race of men who should be models to the world of all that is kind, and generous, and benevolent. His own character was thus foretold, 'He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; and were his followers what they profess to be, their character would be similar to his.

But it should be noticed with peculiar care, that the forgiveness which God extends to sinners is held out as the model for us to imitate. If the holy Jehovah has forgiven us our countless talents, much more are we to forgive a fellow-mortal his penny. If he has blotted out offences that were like crimson and scarlet, how prompt should we be in blotting from our memories and hearts every trace and remembrance of offences against us! The plan of redemption is by excellence a system of forgiveness, and the man that is unforgiving, thereby sins against the whole gospel—he sets himself in opposition to the mind of God, who is revealed to men as the God of pardon—the God that delighteth in mercy. The Christian should therefore have no enemy but one, viz. sin. Towards every other he should steadfastly present the aspect of kindness—and never are we more like him who prayed amid his dying agonies, ‘Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,’ than when we are enabled by the grace of God to pray for and pity even the men that traduce, and would persecute us.

But farther. So exquisite is the religion of the gospel in its structure, that if we are not forgiving we cannot be forgiven. ‘If we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us.’ As restitution is an essential part of repentance when we have inflicted injury, so forgiveness is an invariable result of that faith which worketh by love, and which connects us with him through whom alone pardon can be obtained. For us, therefore, to pray to God to pardon us while we refuse to pardon another, or while malice rankles in our hearts, is to mock God by asking what he assures us he will not give. It is just as certain that a revengeful man will not obtain pardon from God, as it is certain that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. The man who can harbour revenge cannot be a believer in him who loved his enemies—who died for them—and taught his followers to ‘bless them which curse us, and pray for them which despitefully use us,’ and if there be no belief in Christ, there can be no pardon.

And now let us apply all this in the work of self-scrutiny. See that man toiling at that shapeless block of stone. He designs it for a statue—and has just begun his labour. It bears no marks upon it which could tell the inexperienced eye what purpose it is to serve. But slowly under the artist's hand, it emerges into beauty, and now it stands an exquisite monument of his skill. That is an emblem of the New-Creator's power upon the heart and soul of man. Rude and shapeless it is at the first—but slowly it grows

in ‘the beauty of holiness.’ The word is the implement employed by the Spirit for that purpose. It is at once the model and the means of producing conformity to itself. Has it been thus with my soul? Have I been brought by the blessing of God's Spirit from a state of rude nature, where all was morally deformed, into a state of grace, where the soul ripens for glory? That is, am I growing in conformity to Jesus who prayed for his crucifiers—who loved his people to the death—who ‘suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should walk in his footsteps?’ If we have gospel grounds for thinking that that is the case, then ‘bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all our iniquities: who healeth all our diseases: who redeemeth our life from destruction: who crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender-mercies,’ Psal. ciii. 2—4.

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#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*‘Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen,’* Matt. vi. 13.

‘LET no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.’ Such is the mind of the Holy Spirit regarding temptation. For his own holy purposes, God may try us ‘what manner of spirit we are of.’ He may place us in new positions,—and in providence expose us to new tests; but he cannot tempt us to sin with the design that we should commit it, as wicked men tempt each other. Affliction may be sent to try our faith in God, and our patience under trial. When our religion is only that of the hand, or of habit, and not of the heart, God may in holy providence permit us to be tested, that the hollowness of our religion may become known to all as it is to him. But as God himself cannot be tempted to sin, so neither can he become the tempter of others. That is left to him who is at once the tempter and the accuser of the brethren. To show that He will be just when he judgeth, and clear when he condemneth, God may draw out the evil that is already in our souls. He may unmask the hypocrite, and cause our sins to correct us, but he can neither originate nor perpetuate sin by any *direct* act of his.

But while the holy God tempts no one to perpetrate sin, trials may often come, and his people are often the most sorely tried. ‘The prosperity of the fool destroyeth him; and to

prevent destruction, chastisement after chastisement is sent. Think of Job, how his temptations were multiplied—how blow after blow came down, and how he was tempted at last to curse God and die. The tempter, for God's holy purposes, was let loose upon him; and so trying were the assaults that were made both on his body and his soul, that the patriarch felt as if he would be overwhelmed in the conflict. But behold a greater than Job amid his temptations,—the Son of God himself. He is led into the wilderness expressly to be tempted,—and how deeply did his temptations enter into his righteous soul! The first snare which the tempter laid for him was that he should deny the providence of his Father and our Father,—the second would have led the Saviour either to commit suicide, or tempt God to work a miracle to save him,—and the third would have led him practically to dethrone the Eternal, and worship a creature in his stead. These were the temptations which befell the man of sorrows, while, for the accomplishment of his own holy purposes, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ permitted him to be assailed. That he might know what sore temptation is, and be able to succour his people when tempted, he passed through that tribulation, even as we must do; and O, how full of comfort is it thus to feel that the Son of God is with us in the furnace,—that in six troubles, yea, in seven, he is a God at hand to save!

But though our covenant-God be pleased to send temptation, we are not forbidden to pray for its prevention or removal. The Redeemer himself in his agony prayed,—‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;’ and one of the very purposes which temptation is sent to promote, may be to foster a spirit of prayer,—to bring us and to keep us near to Him who alone can shield us. If trial be not removed, it may be blessed. If trouble on the right hand and on the left assail us, the grace of God may be magnified in supporting us under it,—and thus good may be brought out of the seeming evil.

But lest we be tempted, and snared, and taken, the Christian should live upon his watch-tower; he should ‘watch and pray, that he enter not into temptation.’ As every thing that the eye can look on, or the mind contemplate, may become a snare, the believer shall live ever on his guard. He should ‘make a covenant with his eyes,’ that he fall not into iniquity. He should not ‘look upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; for he knows that ‘at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.’ It should

therefore be his heart's desire and prayer, to shun the appearance of evil; when the wicked entice him, he should refuse to go. He should not watch without prayer, for that would be presumptuous self-confidence; he should not pray without watching, for that would be either superstition, or hypocrisy; but he should combine the two, that is, he should watch and he should pray,—he should take pains to be holy, and by the good hand of God upon him, he would thus be made more than a conqueror.

And now let us commune with our own hearts,—has it been thus with us. Temptation, in some of its countless forms, has assailed us all. Has patience had its perfect work? Have we been driven to him who is able to save unto the uttermost, though our temptations were numerous as those of Job, and heavy as those of Jeremiah—‘the man that had seen affliction?’ Temptation is sent to show the sinfulness of sin,—have I discovered its malignity and loathsomeness in the eyes of a holy God? It is sent to show the need of a Saviour from sin. Have I felt my need of some one mighty to deliver; and have I fled to him who compasses his people about with songs of deliverance? Temptation or trial is sent to prompt us to repent, to show how intensely God hates sin, especially in his people, and therefore to lead them to deeper humiliation and repentance. ‘As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.’ Have I profited by God's warnings, and fled from my sins to my Saviour? Or temptation is sent to teach us to cease from man. Our best-loved friends often allure us away from ‘the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.’ Creature-confidence often at once robs God of his glory, and man of his peace. Have I therefore learned to cease from man, and lean upon the Lord alone? Or farther, trial is sent to deepen our attention to spiritual things. Have I learned, amid my temptations, to live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit? Then bless the Lord, again, O our souls. He hath done great things for us. Tribulation is the way to the kingdom, and he has guided us in it.

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#### FOURTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*‘My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not,’*  
Prov. i. 10.

WHO are meant by the word *sinners* here employed? All the unregenerate; for every man that is not renewed in the spirit of his mind by the power of the Holy Ghost, is a centre of unholy influence,—his example is spreading evil,

and that continually. The young are tempted by him, the old are countenanced and encouraged; and, like the meeting of two flames during some great conflagration, evil is thus propagated by the combined power of wicked men. But while this is the case, in a measure, with all the unregenerate, there are some who are signalized above others in enticing men to sin. They find a Satanic pleasure in seducing the unwary, and inexperienced,—in outraging their principles, and either storming or sneering them out of their virtues, thus rendering them as much the children of hell as their tempters. In spite of the 'woe' pronounced by God, such men 'give their neighbour drink: they put their bottle to him, and make him drunken,' and never halt in their machinations till their victim has become as great an adept in iniquity as themselves. How often does it happen, when the young first leave their parent's home, that some of these tempters seize on the inexperienced youth, and ply him with their temptations, and their rallery, till he learns too well to imitate their example,—becomes perhaps a ringleader in guilt, and casts away from him all the parting warnings of a father's affection, and all the tenderness of a mother's prayers. O, surely if parents rightly valued the souls and the eternity of their offspring, or if they knew the scenes into which they may thus be precipitating their child, they would pause ere they exposed him to such evil; rather than put his soul in such jeopardy, they would lower their ambition for his advancement in the world, and gravely ponder the maxim,—'better is a dinner of herbs, and love with it, than a stalled ox and strife.' If the young escape contamination amid scenes like these, it would be tantamount to a moral miracle; and there is reason to apprehend, that the day which is to disclose the secrets of all hearts, will show that the souls of many have thus been immolated on the altars of Mammon, as much as the children of the idolaters of old were sacrificed in the arms of Moloch.

The sorrow which this occasions to a godly mind, is increased when we think of the sources of that power which 'evil men and seducers' possess. The hearts of all, but especially of the young, are, by nature, as prone to evil as water to seek a level. They, therefore, embrace with alacrity whatever accords with their propensity, and tempters thus possess a power over the heart of man, which nothing but omnipotence can effectually resist. They find an enemy within the citadel ready to receive them, and hence the secret of their power, the explanation of our danger, and our frequent falls amid temptation.

Sin is to the mind, while unregenerate, its native element, Satan abets every destructive scheme,—and thus thousands unwarned, and unsuspecting, hurry down the path which leads to the chamber of death.

With facts like these, before us, so painful that they often cannot be over-coloured, who that loves the souls of men, would not ply his utmost efforts to counteract the evil influence of wicked men? And does not experience combine with scripture to show the ruinous effects of their power? A mother's heart broken, a father's gray hairs brought in sorrow to the grave,—a soul sunk in wretchedness here, as a prelude to the misery that is awaiting it hereafter, are some of the obvious and frequent results of warnings slighted, and temptations yielded to; and have not all these things a voice, had we but ears to hear, or hearts to feel them? On no point, moreover, is the word of God more explicit, than regarding the contagion of evil example. 'The companion of fools shall be destroyed!' 'A companion of riotous men shameth his father.' 'Keep not company with the wicked, neither be envious at them.' 'Whoso keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.' 'Depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God.' It is thus that the scriptures, by precept and example, seek to fence us round from the contamination of the wicked, and even the experienced Christian feels that he needs every warning, and every effort to resist the influence of evil without, abetted as it is by indwelling sin from within. How much more, then, should the young and the inexperienced live upon their guard! They need a double portion of the grace of God, and should write up before them these words of sagest warning,—'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' By the ruin of uncounted thousands, by the preciousness of the soul, by the love of Christ who died for it,—by the importance, and yet the shortness of time, and by the dread realities of a fast-coming eternity, they should be warned to flee from the contagion of evil example. They should seek to cleanse their way by taking heed to it according to God's word. The tempter should be repelled with, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' Leaning on the grace of God, and consulting his wisdom, they should join trembling with their joy. They should kiss the Son lest he be angry, and they perish from the way. They should seek to have these words written on the conscience by the Spirit of God: 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways

of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment,' Eccl. xi. 9.

Then as to parents, seeing that the young are exposed to peril on the right hand, and on the left, how wise, and assiduous should they be, in training them up in the way that they should go! We need not wonder though the young seek enjoyment in the haunts of the profligate, if their parents have neglected to rear them for God. Be family prayer neglected,—and family religion therefore, if it exist at all, at the best but a form; be the parent's example on the side of evil, and need we wonder, though youth, untaught and untrained, rush upon sin as the horse rusheth into the battle? But be family religion cultivated, and blessings from God over all drawn down,—be the conversion of youth prayed for, watched for, laboured for by precept and example, then may we hope that the blessing of the eternal Spirit will be upon even the inexperienced. They will be prepared, by the grace of God, to resist temptation, and 'when sinners entice them, they will not consent.'

Finally, what language can denounce with sufficient emphasis, the conduct of the men who employ their ascendancy or their powers to blunt the edge of virtue, and speed the young on the way to ruin! Such men are not merely servants of Satan,—they are his agents and allies. They are of their father the devil, and his works they do. They may be honoured among men; for at man's tribunal, wealth or power, not godliness, is the basis of honour. But still they are doing for those around them what Satan did for our world, and by the sure decree of God, 'their sin will find them out.' 'Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core,' Jude 11.

#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen,'* Matt. vi. 13.

It would be difficult to find words more full of meaning than those. What is the kingdom here ascribed to our Father who is in heaven? It is his moral and providential government over every thing that is—it stretches from the vastest globe that rolls, to the minutest sand-grain, and regulates the movements of the archangel nearest to the throne, as well as of the most microscopic insect that lives its little hour and dies. In short, this kingdom has infinity for its extent,

eternity for its duration, and omnipotence for its defence.

And what is the power that is here ascribed to our Father? The power which spoke the wide universe into being—which sustains every thing that exists, and which could equally create another universe, or annihilate and crush that which is created.

And what is the glory? Who shall tell it? The ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands that surround the throne, could not describe it though all their hearts be one. It is the glory which all creation accords to the eternal I AM—which the angels in heaven, the doomed in hell, God's people, and God's enemies on earth—which even the material, inanimate world, all in their different spheres, do either gladly, or by compulsion ascribe to the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace.

It is thus that we are taught to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—to trace every thing up to him, and observe how all is hanging on his sustaining power—to proclaim that in heaven above, his mercy, and in hell beneath, his justice will be glorious, world without end. As God is the origin or great first cause, so he is the end, or final cause of all that has existence. By his word it was created, by his power it is sustained, by his will it is governed, and not merely the intelligent creation, but earth, and sea, and sky proclaim his glories, for 'how excellent is his name in all the earth, who hath set his glory above the heavens.'

But how vain would it be to use these solemn words, unless we act according to their meaning! Do we then *in practice* ascribe the kingdom to our God and Father? Do we act like his subjects, maintaining his honour, and obeying his laws? We confess that the Most High reigneth in heaven and on earth. Do our wills therefore move at his bidding—are our lives regulated by his holy pleasure? Then we ascribe power to God—and do we in practice remember that though that power may be outraged, it cannot be resisted? When affliction comes, do we keep in mind, that even in the furnace God can sustain? When temptation comes, do we remember that he can deliver, or do we faithlessly yield as if the power of man were greater than the power of God, or as if we could rush uninjured upon the bosses of his buckler? And lastly, do we ascribe glory to our Father in heaven, and is it our chief end to glorify him on earth? Have we made up our minds which attribute we shall

glorify—his mercy in pardoning and accepting of us in Christ, or his justice in rejecting us, because we in practice reject the only Saviour?

Farther. In this clause of our Lord's prayer we are taught that our encouragement to enjoy the privilege of prayer, is to be found only in God. There is nothing in self to commend us to his favour—we have nothing but sin, and its constant attendant, misery, to present to his notice—and had he not invited and encouraged us to draw near in prayer,—had he not opened up a new and living way of approach, then instead of drawing nigh, we might have called on the mountains to fall on us, and cover us from his wrath. But while we have destroyed ourselves, 'in God is our help found.' He points us to himself as keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and thus encourages us to approach like children drawing near to a father that loves them. His kingdom is set up in our souls by his Spirit. His power is put forth to deliver us by grace from the grasp and thralldom of the enemy of souls. His glory is signalized, for grace abounds to the chief of sinners, and thus we can approach unto God animated by the Spirit of adoption, having our consciences sprinkled from dead works, to be accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of the grace of God. When we look to self for a ground of confidence towards him or encouragement in prayer, we seek the living among the dead. But when we look to God himself—to God in Christ reconciling sinners to himself—laying aside the unbending character of a judge, and dealing with us in the character of a father who pities his child, it is then that we come with holy confidence—not with presumption and yet with expectation—not in the spirit of one that would demand as a right, and yet with 'boldness,'—through him for the sake of whom mercy to pardon, and grace to help, is guaranteed to all the sons and daughters of our Father who is in heaven.

And this is the believer's joy and rejoicing. The world would fain have some self-derived ground of confidence in the prospect of meeting God—but the Christian knows that all such attempts are like going to Egypt and Assyria for help. He can find no peace and no resting-place till he abjure self, and lean upon the Lord alone. Then, O how tranquil and composed! No more condemnation. No more crouching like a slave. The handwriting of ordinances that condemned is taken out of the way and nailed to the cross of Christ. He was condemned in his people's stead—and the Holy Jehovah will not condemn both *the sinner, and the sinner's substitute*. Eye hath

been given for eye, and tooth for tooth, and hand for hand, and foot for foot—and now, according to the terms of the well-ordered covenant, the child of God can even here enter on the joy of his Lord. 'Come and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow,' was true of the atoning Redeemer; 'come and see if there be any peace or joy like mine,' is true of the believer—for 'the Lord keeps that man in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on him, because he trusteth in him.'

Finally, do we never appear to honour God as the hearer of prayer, without equally honouring him as the answerer? We ask, but do we expect? Nay rather, do we not grieve God's Spirit, by turning carelessly away, as if no blessing were to be waited for, no answer sought in the use of means? But the closing word of this model prayer teaches us to honour God as the answerer of our petitions—to confide in him not merely as the high and holy One who commanded us to pray—but who will honour those who honour him, and do to them and for them above all that they can ask or think. Be God confided in. Be his love trusted. Be his truth honoured. Be his promises pled, and their fulfilment expected. Then will he spread a table for us in the midst of our enemies. Goodness and mercy will follow us all our days, we shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Amen.

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#### FIFTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name,'* Dan. ix. 19.

THE man of God that spoke these words is manifestly in earnest—if 'the inwrought fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,' this prayer cannot pass unheard. His whole soul is obviously intent on an answer. He is like one that postpones every consideration to the obtaining of God's favour. He neither speaks with the indifference of one who had little interest in what he said—nor with the affectation of one that would hope to be heard for the eloquence of his words—but he pours forth his soul in language that is at once fervent and simple—charged with meaning, and at the same time intensely earnest. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force,' 'even the righteous shall scarcely be saved,' and Daniel here speaks like one who knew the whole force and emphasis of these truths.

And why is it that Daniel is so urgent? It is that he and those for whom he confessed and prayed might obtain a pardon, 'O Lord, hear; O Lord, *forgive.*' The sinfulness of sin was felt lying like a load upon the conscience. It had raised a cloud between Jehovah and his people. They had been sowing the wind, and were reaping the whirlwind. They had gone astray, and their iniquities were visited with a rod. In the midst of his sore pressure, the prophet wrestles with God in prayer, like him who said of old, 'except thou bless me, I will not let thee go.' With holy importunity, he seeks forgiveness as that without which man could only be wretched in time, and wretched for ever. As long as sin stood in the way between God and the people, they could not approach him, for 'our God is a consuming fire' to sinners, and the thunders of Sinai are in effect renewed whenever God is sought apart from Christ. The master desire of Daniel's heart therefore is that sin may be blotted out, and only then could he enjoy that peace and hope which belong to the people of God.

Moreover, Daniel prayed that God would *do*. He wished actually to obtain a pardon. Most men are prone to be satisfied with asking it—Daniel was bent on having it in possession—and in this the believer finds a model that he should ever copy. He should seek to enter even now on the pleasures of godliness, by being made even now an actual partaker of the benefits of Christ's redemption. It is not enough to know that we have the fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore in *reversion*—we should endeavour every passing hour to enter on the fruition of that blessedness which Christ sets before us, and offers so freely in the gospel. The wicked deceive themselves by thinking that at the worst they are not to be condemned till some distant day, whereas the truth is that 'he that believeth not is condemned already.' In like manner, some are prone to think that the pleasures of a godly life are far off in the future, and are not to be enjoyed till we enter on the purchased possession—but in truth, even here, amid all our trials and sorrows, we may enter on the joys of our Lord. We injure our own souls, and we bring an evil report against the truth, when we do not make it our endeavour to show that 'the melody of joy and health is to be heard in the dwelling of the righteous.'

Let the believer, then, in this be a follower of Daniel. The soul is in jeopardy every hour while sin is unpardoned—and God's countenance turned in anger away. Whether it be the power of indwelling sin, or the pollution of actual trans-

gression that presses on the believer, he should seek with holy zeal to see light in God's light again, through him in whom God is reconciling sinners to himself. And the scriptures give abundant examples of the holy earnestness with which a child of God may plead with him. At one place David confesses thus, 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep,' and then prays, 'Lord, seek thy servant.' How strange to ask the Lord to go in quest of the servant, and yet it is the mind of the Spirit that God's people should employ such language in pleading with him whose tender mercies are over all his works. At another place David thus prays, 'Lord, I cry unto thee, make haste unto me.' He could not endure suspense, and therefore he used a holy boldness in pleading with his God. 'How long wilt thou forget me, Lord? For ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?' 'Lord, how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions.' 'How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry for ever?' O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? 'Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.' These are some of the passages of God's word which show the childlike confidence with which a believer can draw near to him. His merciful invitations encourage us. The gift of his Son, and the guarantee therein contained that all else will be added, emboldens the believer yet more. Urged by his felt spiritual necessities, and convinced that if he die unpardoned he dies unsaved, he presses nearer and nearer to God in the appointed way—he waits at the posts of God's doors till 'the Lord bless him, and keep him, till the Lord make his face to shine upon him, and be gracious to him, and give him peace.'

And let the believer observe with care the argument which the prophet employs in pleading with God. 'Defer not, for *thine own sake.*' It is nothing in the sinner that can supply an argument. He deserves but wrath, and the attempt to plead aught of his own would of itself prove him perverse. But he shifts the ground of appeal away from self to God. That God might be glorified, that his free grace might be magnified—that his mercy might have free scope, Daniel pleads with him for pardon—and believers in every age should go and do likewise. He encourages his covenant people to come with holy freedom to his footstool—and when they come in the way which Jesus marked out, nay which Jesus *is*, for 'no man cometh to the Father but by him,' he, even he doth blot out our transgressions for his own sake, and will not remem-

ber our sins.' O how will it aggravate our misery, if we perish at last, to discover that salvation was offered to us freely, for the taking, while we would not take it!

It is thus that God encourages his people to return to him to find mercy to pardon. Sin may be great, but Christ is a greater Saviour. Conscience may produce many charges—but Christ has satisfied even the Lord of conscience, God, and thus we may draw nigh through him in the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed as with pure water.

#### SIXTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord,' Psal. xxvii. 14.*

It is easy for man to persuade himself that he is serving God when he can do so without any sacrifice of his own will or inclinations. For example, as long as God continues to us the enjoyment of health, and suffers us to engage in the ordinary activities of life, it is not difficult to appear to be religious,—to serve God even with zeal, and wait on him in the way of his appointment. When 'the candle of the Lord is shining on our tabernacle,' we are ready to confess that all his ways are ways of pleasantness. But when the Lord is pleased in holy sovereignty, to send some cross,—when he takes away the delight of our eyes with a stroke, or when he comes, and lays his hand upon ourselves, consigning us to a sick-bed, which may become our death-bed,—then begins the struggle, and the difficulty in the mind of self-willed man. To take God's will for ours, to be nothing but what God is pleased to make us, and enjoy nothing but what God is pleased to send,—to receive evil at the hand of God as well as good,—these are the events which chafe our spirit, which often prompt a murmur; nay, which suggest to the heart, though the lips may not utter it, the impious interrogation, Why hast thou made me thus? We then forget that God is the potter, and that we are only the clay. We are taken by surprise when God does according to his own will and not according to ours.

But the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will teach them the spirit and dispositions of a creature. By his Spirit he will persuade them to wait on the Lord, to honour him as the sovereign Jehovah, to take his will and time for theirs. Though he tarry, yet will

they wait for him, assured that he that shall come will come, and will not tarry when the set time has arrived.

But this waiting frame of mind is not to be acquired without the use of means. Our covenant God has accordingly appointed means to be employed for bringing down all that would exalt itself against the will of the Most High; and he is to be served and honoured in all the ways of his appointment.

*First.* God is to be waited on in the privacy of our own souls. Every high imagination is there to be studiously brought low. All that is opposed to his holy pleasure is to be mortified. When no eye sees, and no ear hears but his, then is that process to be gradually advancing, which shall end in the entire subjection of every rebellious thought,—which shall resolve our wills into our heavenly Father's, and train us to say as Jesus did, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God!'

*Next.* We are to wait on God in our families. He hath himself declared that 'them that honour him he will honour, but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.' Now it needs no elaborate argument to show that we do not honour God in our families unless we wait on, and worship him there. What is such a family but a nursery for wretchedness here, and for ever, unless the Spirit of Jehovah in sovereignty interpose to turn the hearts of parents and children to himself! He should therefore be waited on in our families; our day should commence with honouring him; it should be closed in the same hallowing way,—and thus our souls would feel how true it is that they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint!

*Farther.* We should wait on God in the ordinances of his house. How blessed to join our praises there to those of his people who can tell what great things God does for their souls! How salutary to have our souls searched by his word, refreshed by his promises, soothed by his comforts, or urged onward and upward by the terrors of the Lord! And how unutterably blessed to be permitted in this world of wants, to spread out all our necessities in prayer before the All-sufficient—to wait on him to supply them,—to have our wills advanced into holy unison with his, through the spirit of grace and supplication! It is by this process that God's kingdom is set up, and completed within us. It is thus that God is glorified in ripening us for heaven, and completing by his grace the grand design of

Jesus' death, to make his people one in him, as he is one with the Father. The believer thus learns that the path of duty and the path of privilege, are in fact identical. It is duty to wait on God as the sovereign Lord of all,—and it is privilege also; for 'lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation,' Isa. xxv. 9.

It is often the lot of God's people to encounter numerous ills; nay, it sometimes appears that they are 'of all men the most miserable,'—and in providing a religion for them, he kept his eye steadily fixed on the sorrows that were awaiting his redeemed on earth. He foreknew that at one time, the plague of indwelling sin would vex and harass them; that at another, rivers of water would run down their eyes because men kept not God's law. He foresaw that at one time, the force of temptation would lead them into actual sin, that then their hope would perish, and despair take its place. He knew, moreover, that the fiery darts of Satan would assail them, and 'a great fight of afflictions' would therefore be their lot. And amid all this, what is the Lord's counsel to his people? 'Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage.' It may seem as if iniquity were prevailing against you like a flood; but Jehovah Nissi, 'the Lord my banner' will defend. It may appear as if you were making no progress in the work of mortifying sin, and cultivating holiness; but be of good courage,—Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide; as thy days are, so shall thy strength be. Look to self for encouragement, or wait on the creature for deliverance and strength, and your hope will end in despair; but wait on the Lord, and then Omnipotence is on your side. Take hold of it in the hand of faith; and though your enemies were countless, and often triumphant, still 'greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world,'—'greater is he that is for you, than all that can be against you.' In short, wait on the Lord; and then it is thus that he speaks comfortably to you, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith our God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned,' Isa. xl. 1. Having that sure word of promise, may we not wait upon the Lord in holy confidence and hope?

And let us think farther, how long we kept God waiting ere we turned unto him. In providence, and in grace,—by conscience, by his word, his ministers, and his Spirit, he stood at the door and knocked; but O, how long did we refuse to open! For twenty, thirty, nay, perhaps

for threescore years, we grieved the Spirit of God, and preferred the vanities of earth to him, who is over all, blessed for ever. Is it wonderful, therefore, that he now teaches us, in our turn, to wait for him? Lay aside the thought that he is the sovereign Jehovah—dwell only on the fact that for years we refused him an entrance into our hearts, preferring his creatures, perhaps in meanest forms, to himself,—and then say, need we marvel though our sin correct us, and though God teach us to 'be still, and know that he is God?' Go then, and lay the hand upon the mouth, after confessing that 'just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints;' and O, remember, if Satan tempt you to cease from waiting, remember that no one ever was condemned who waited for the Lord,—but myriads have perished who refused to wait. Imitate the fishermen apostles. They toiled all night and caught nothing; but they still toiled on in hope. At last Jesus came, and a rich net-full rewarded their perseverance. It will be even so with us, if we learn to wait on the Lord; yea, though he tarry, still wait for him, and be assured that heaven and earth may pass away, but they that truly seek the Lord, shall not lack any good thing.

#### SIXTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength,'* Isa. xl. 28, 29.

'UNSTABLE as water, thou shalt not excel,' is the character not only of Reuben, but of the universal race of man. When left to himself, he is subject to constant vicissitudes and decay; and so much is this the case, that the word of God has plainly said, 'cursed is he that maketh flesh his stay: 'the man that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.'

Such being man's condition, where is he to find repose? Since self, and the creature in every form is unsatisfactory and transient, where shall man find a resting place? Under the protection of Him 'who fainteth not, neither is weary.' It is not more natural for the sun to give light, or for living animals to breathe, than for man to seek happiness and rest. Even the most exhausting toils and perilous adventures aim at the production of happiness as their ultimate object, in one form or other. All desire it, and yet none can find it, except in one way,—the way to which

the scriptures point us. The bleat and the wail of suffering humanity, too plainly tell that man is self-robb'd of his happiness,—he is, in fact, born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; and why? Because sin has seduced him from his God; in whom alone is the happiness of man's spirit found. Be man estranged from his Maker, and he is thereby made wretched, though he wore a diadem, and wielded a sceptre; but be man guided back to his God, and the enjoyment of his favour, and that man is happy, though he fed upon a crust, or dwelt in a dungeon. Now, the great design of God's word, and the truth which it unfolds, is thus to reconduct us to God, and so to promote our happiness. That word beckons us to Jehovah through Him who was God manifest in the flesh. In ourselves we are miserable, but in him we have peace and joy. In ourselves we are poor and destitute,—in him we have unsearchable riches. In ourselves we are unstable as water,—in him we are planted on a rock. We find that he is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, and that the Eternal God must grow feeble and decay like mortal man, ere his people can be deprived of their hope and their joy. Man is changing every moment that passes,—God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and when he has been brought to confide in his Maker again, he learns to share the very peace of him who is without variableness, or shadow of turning. Having acquainted himself with God, he is at peace.

O! how blessed they, then, who have learned in this manner to regard the character of God as the bible describes him. Consider the Christian's God in contrast with the views of heathens regarding their idol-divinities. One nation, and that the wisest of antiquity, actually worshipped vegetables, insomuch that one has said regarding them that they had only to walk into their garden, to find a divinity. Others worshipped insects and the lower animals, so that to destroy one of them was a more heinous sin than to destroy a man. Others have deified the grossest passions that harass and degrade mankind; others, in millions, have fashioned gods for themselves of wood and stone; and then the being that was created at first, in the image of God, might be seen bowing down before those idols in the rude images of birds, and beasts, and creeping things. 'The world *by wisdom* knew not God.' He was regarded by the best as altogether like to fallen man; and while myriads were worshipping such idols as have been mentioned, others were doubting whether there be any God at all, or boldly denying and arguing against his existence.

But the religion of the bible was imparted to man. Israel was commanded to hear,—for the Lord his God was ONE God; and from that moment the knowledge of the true Jehovah was re-established on the earth. He was revealed to us as infinite in his goodness, his justice, his mercy. He was disclosed as man's portion; for 'the Lord is the portion of his people.' A Mediator was sent to guide us to his favour; and thus our views of the Godhead's character became at once more honouring to him, more comforting, and more full of blessedness to us. It is true, there is still a tendency in man to lower God to our level, to ascribe to him our weaknesses, and think of him as altogether like ourselves. Some, for example, have supposed that it would be beneath the Godhead's majesty to listen to the prayers of his people; and others have argued that the eternal I AM would never so far interfere on behalf of our little world, as to send his Son to die for sinners there. But O, how unworthy are such thoughts of the infinite Jehovah; how mean and degrading to him compared with the simple statements of the Saviour, which tell that not a sparrow falls to the ground without him, and that he numbers the very hairs of our head! Surely the weakest among us may find strength in such a truth. Our sorrows may abound, but consolation may much more abound, when God himself is the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever.

But is He in very deed my portion? He offers to become so,—has the offer been accepted? If it be, then there was a time and a place where I chose God in Christ as my all. Where, then, is the field, the house, the chamber in which I said to him as my God,—'Thou, O Lord, art my portion which I do choose?' When was it,—in infancy, youth, or manhood, that I did freely accept of 'Immanuel God with us,' as the joy and confidence of my soul,—my rock, my fortress, and high tower? or has that choice still to be made? Whether am I leaning on the Rock of ages, or on a broken reed, which can only pierce me through with sorrow? Can it be that I am living in error, and passing on to the judgment with a lie in my right hand? or does the Spirit of God bear witness with my spirit that I am a child of God, sustained by his love, and called to be an heir of his blessedness! In the one case, how irrational, how suicidal my conduct! In the other, how wise, how rational, how religious; for the wisdom that cometh from above has become my guide!

## SEVENTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work;'* 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.

The believers at Thessalonica expected the speedy coming of Christ. Paul directed them to look rather for the coming of Satan first, in a great falling away, the revealing of the man of sin, the son of perdition. In the fearful prospect of an almost universal apostacy, the apostle consoles himself and them by the certainty of their salvation, to which, from the beginning, they were chosen, by exhorting them to hold fast the word of God, and by praying in our text for their full establishment and comfort, in the spiritual life. In this prayer for believers exposed to the brunt of Satan's greatest and most energetic assault, we see the provision for the church militant, what blessings believers already have in full right, and what daily supply they are to obtain at the throne of grace.

What blessing have we already as believers? Great, manifold, unutterably precious. 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.' We have 'our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father.' 'The Lord Jesus Christ' is not only a prophet, to tell of peace and holiness, and a priest, by his obedience unto death having obtained these—but he is a Lord and King—with all might to give his people peace and power; exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, honoured and delighting in the happiness and holiness of his saints. And he is *our* Lord—the Father hath given him in the everlasting covenant to be a witness, leader, and commander to his people. He hath given himself *for* us on the cross—and being given *to* us in the free unlimited offer of the gospel, he hath become our Lord, by the eternal union of the Spirit, in the day of our spiritual birth, and engrafting by effectual calling into the true vine. From that day, we are entitled to call him *Ishi*, and no more *Baali*. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Our Lord Jesus Christ himself is for us, and who can be against us; with us, and what can we want; over us, and by whom can we be conquered; around us, and what evil can come nigh our dwelling; in us, and he will never leave, or forsake? His righteousness is ours by imputation, and who shall condemn us; his Spirit is ours by vital union, and who can destroy us?

The Lord rebuke thee Satan, are not these brands plucked out of the burning. Our sun shall no more go down, for our Lord himself shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

And we have God, even the Father, to be our Father, 'that the love wherewith thou hast loved me,' said Jesus, 'might be in them, and I in them.' Jehovah, the self-existent I AM, the infinite eternal One, is in Christ the Father of each believer. 'Will God in very deed dwell with men on earth? Behold heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; how much less this house which I have built,' said Solomon. But with greater amazement may the believer ask, Will God in very deed take me to be his child, will he stoop so low towards dust, as to be my Father? Yes, self-condemned, believing soul, he hath already acted a Father towards you. From everlasting he hath loved you, with a love that shall not end or change while he is what he is. His love to you has not been dormant in the deep recesses of his being. He has chosen, predestinated, and given you to Christ. Your sins have been laid on the Son of God, and he has obtained for you eternal redemption. And in having brought you to Jesus in the day of power, he has given you in his adopting grace the beginning of everlasting consolation, a sure ground of hope for all good. Having given you Christ, he hath given you all things. The righteousness imputed to you, and the Spirit imparted, ensure you eternal consolation from all evil, and may raise you above doubts of obtaining all good. The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. What a debt, believer, you owe to the grace of the Father,—the eternal, sovereign, free, distinguishing, irresistible grace of God in Christ.

If such and so great were the blessings the saints in Thessalonica already had, what were those they had yet to seek and expect, that they might stand in the evil day? 'Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.' Already justified in their Lord, and adopted by the Father, they needed the comfortable sense of the privileges they had, and to abide in the steadfast and growing exercise of the grace given them.

Peace of conscience through believing application to the blood of Jesus, assurance of the love of the Father, and the gladness that the indwelling Spirit ministers to growing believers, rejoicing in hope,—these are the constituents of that comfort of heart which the saints seek and attain

in this life. 'Now the God of hope fill you with all peace and joy in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' The Comforter is the author of holiness; he comforts that he may sanctify; and the more he sanctifies, the more do his consolations abound. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' To know that we have an interest in Christ, that we are justified freely by his grace, and have the beginning of eternal life, will animate us to run the race set before us. We love him, knowing that he hath first loved us; and grateful admiring love is the mainspring of all holy obedience. The fruits of the Spirit grow and ripen under the warm beams of the Sun of righteousness. To have the word of Christ dwelling in us richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; to have increased measure of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; to be advancing, in wisdom and knowledge of divine truth, into the stature of full grown men in Christ; these are privileges set before us, to be sought and prayed for; and when through grace attained and our souls thus established in every good word, we become girt about with truth, and able, as good soldiers of Christ, to wield the sword of the Spirit, to stand in the evil day, and to put to flight the enemy of our salvation.

'Faithful is he who hath called you, who also will do it.' Having chosen from the beginning unto sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, he will assuredly sanctify wholly whom he hath chosen freely. Having believed the truth as it is in Jesus, let us then, in the happy assurance of his choice and purpose, of his love and grace, be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and praying in the Spirit, knowing that our work and prayer shall not be in vain in the Lord.

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#### SEVENTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen,' Jude 24, 25.*

THE mystery of iniquity did already work in the days of Jude. The floodgates of false doctrine, and immoral practice, were opened among the churches, and the foundations of the great structure of the apostacy were being deeply and securely laid. The last writing of Peter, and the

only writing of Jude, are simultaneous warnings; these two watchmen together sounded their trumpets to warn against the sword coming on the city of the Lord. Having denounced the principles and practices of the wolves who were going about in sheep's clothing, Jude calls upon believers, while contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, to use means for self-preservation. 'But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,' ver. 20, 21. Deeply sensible, however, of their inability to keep themselves; that except the Lord kept the city, the watchmen would watch in vain, that the charge of the flock must be left to the chief Shepherd, and that he would never suffer the gates of hell to prevail against his church, he concludes his warning and the didactic writings of the New Testament, with the solemn ascription of praise to him who never slumbering or sleeping during the dark night of apostacy descending on the churches, would preserve a witnessing remnant in every age, and at last bring his church on earth to the rest and glory of millennial blessedness, 'Now unto him,' &c.

In this it is implied, that, however anxious, believers were unable to keep themselves from falling, or to present themselves faultless in heaven. They were for these blessings absolutely dependent on Christ. 'Without me ye can do nothing.' 'Hold thou me up and I shall be safe.' And it is also implied, that on the part of the Redeemer, there is every willingness to preserve and glorify his people. 'Father, keep them from the evil that is in the world.' 'I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.' The apostle directs attention to his power, 'he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him;' in order that believers having a closing memento of the power of the Saviour, may ever with undoubting reliance on his love, depend on him for their preservation in time and glory through eternity.

Do we admire him, who, at the head of his little band in the mountain pass, the gate of his country, withstood the shock of millions, and broke the strength of the invading barbarians? Is the pilot worthy of praise, who steers safely through midnight tempests his little bark of shipwrecked mariners, till they reach a friendly harbour? Is he to be applauded whose wisdom enables miners to live amidst deadly fumes, or who guides travellers across pathless deserts by

wells of waters, till they reach their homes in safety. How much more worthy of praise, and honour, and glory, he who keeps his chosen people as the apple of his eye, from all evil; amidst the bottomless pit smoke of antichristian delusions, exposed to the tempests of persecution, withstanding from age to age the assaults of Satan and all his hosts in earth and hell, until each successive company travel safely through this wilderness to the Canaan above. What glory over Satan from his defeat in the case of Job. Adam, with every possible advantage leaning on created strength, fell. Job, amidst every possible disadvantage, sustained by grace, stood a conqueror. To him who kept Abraham patient, believing, hoping, a pilgrim and stranger for a hundred years; who kept Joseph from falling in his master's house, and in the prison; who sustained Moses for forty years amidst the seductions of a palace, for forty years in voluntary servitude and pilgrimage, and for forty years under the cares of government; who kept Daniel in the den, and his companions in the fiery furnace; to him who hath kept his hidden ones since he ascended, and has never been without his witnesses even during the long, dark, cruel reign of the spiritual Sodom, Egypt, and Babylon, to him be glory and majesty.

Let us trust him. Having taken him for our all in all; his righteousness for our plea at the bar of judgment, his word to guide us to heaven, his grace to sanctify, his strength to be perfect in our weakness, and his love to bless and satisfy us; let us be well assured, that greater is he who is with us, than all that can be against us. Leaning on the arm of the beloved, we may go through the wilderness safe and unharmed; having loved from the beginning, he loveth to the end; having paid our ransom he will break our last chain; having begun a good work in us, he will perfect it. His eye follows all the dark windings of the serpent, and he will keep his own in safety. He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he restraineth. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but will with the temptation make a way of escape. He teacheth Ephraim to go, taking them by the arms. He carrieth the lambs in his bosom. Having delivered from death, he keepeth from falling, to walk before God in the land of the living. He is the shield, and the glory, and the lifter up of our heads. Happy then, art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, 'O people saved by the Lord; the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Not only shall the sheep of Christ never perish,

not only shall he by his Spirit restore their souls from all diseases, temptations, backslidings, and decays, but he will at last present them faultless in the presence of the Father's glory with exceeding joy. Having loved his church and given himself for her, he will present her a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish; those whom the Father hath given him he keepeth, not one lost, all presented before the Father. His princely sons born to him in Egypt shall be presented by Joseph to the Father to receive his everlasting blessing; Manassch, forgetting all his earthly sorrows; Ephraim, to advance evermore in heavenly joys and glories. The bride of the Lamb clothed in the snow-white righteousness of her Lord, shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father. 'Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.' Accepted in Christ the Beloved, the saints shall be nearer the throne, within the angelic circles; nearest kinsmen of Immanuel, they shall be the royal family of heaven; nobles and kings of the universe, bearing the image of God, temples of the Holy Spirit, brethren of Christ, beloved of the Father, pillars in the temple of God never to go out. Standing before God in dignity beyond that of archangels, they shall eternally set forth the love of the Father and the glory of the Lamb that was slain. There was singing for joy among the angels at the foundation of the earth; glory to God in the highest at the birth of the Saviour; gladness in heaven when the risen Redeemer was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows; joy in the presence of the angels, over each redeemed sinner on coming to repentance; but O what inconceivable joy, exultation, triumph, when at the head of the army of the risen and glorified saints, Immanuel shall present himself before the Father, saying, Behold me and the children which thou hast given to me. 'With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace.'

#### EIGHTEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding;'*  
1 Chr. xxix. 15.

It filled David with adoring wonder, that he and his people should have so high an honour conferred on them, as to be able and willing to give wealth sufficient for the erection of the temple. 'But who am I, or what is my people, that

we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.' That strangers sojourning on his land for a few days, erected the Lord's palace, was wonderful; but how much greater the wonder that a few strangers should be honoured during the few days of their shadowy sojourn on the earth with the privilege, ability, and will of building the eternal palace of the King of kings in heaven. Yet so it is. 'Ye are the temple of the living God.' Coming to Jesus as to a living stone, chosen of God, and precious; ye are built up a spiritual house, an habitation of God through the Spirit.'

'I am a stranger and sojourner with you,' said Abraham over the dead body of Sarah, 'give me a possession of a burying-place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.' The grave is our only possession and resting-place on earth; our dust mingles with the common clods of the valley, and our names perish. We come forth as a flower, and are cut down; our days pass away as the eagle hasteth to the prey; our life is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away: we spend our years as a tale that is told,—as a watch in the night. All flesh is grass. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and all flesh, in whom his word by faith dwelleth, shall abide in eternal union and communion with the Lord.

The strange and shadowy insects that sojourn in the dark depths of the Pacific ocean, themselves ephemeral and unseen, guided by the wisdom and power of God, are said each to build their little house and tomb over those of past generations, until the countless myriads rise above the ocean, and form islands inhabited by Christian churches, by heirs of heaven. So the saints, little in the eyes of the world, and less in their own, do, by the wise and powerful grace of God, in their holy lives and triumphant deaths, build up the temple of heaven from the depths of earth below, are themselves the living stones, laid on the foundation stone, Jesus; inhabited by the Holy Spirit, fellow-heirs of God,—to inhabit for ever the region of eternal sunshine, where the storm and billows of life shall never reach.

Who built the pyramids of Egypt,—who sculptured the monuments of Ellore and Elephanta? Strangers, who sojourned their brief day as shadows, and left no abiding memorial of their very names. The proofs of their existence, are enduring monuments of their oblivion. They were, and no man knows for certain who they were. But the people of God have their names written with his own finger in the book of life.

Though strangers here, they shall be known for ever in heaven. Sojourners on earth, they have eternal mansions near the throne of the Lamb; and though their days on earth are as a shadow, by their united efforts they erect an edifice of which not one stone shall ever fall, which shall stand out in full glory when the earth and visible heaven pass away, and no place shall be found for them.

Our short and shadowy existence is connected with infinity. It is the door to eternity, the journey to the state in which we shall abide. Let us then be concerned about something higher than the accommodations in the inn, about abiding realities, not fleeting shadows. Let us, as David, feel ourselves strangers and sojourners like the fathers, dwelling in tents, looking for a better country. To have our lot assigned in the heavenly Canaan, mansions prepared by Christ for us there, treasure laid up in heaven, our eternal home with the Lamb and his blessed company, constitute a high, and holy, and happy ambition. 'My son, give me thine heart.' If the Lord Jesus have our hearts now, he will have us wholly with himself for ever; if we now love him for his own sake, and part in affection from all things for him, and feel ourselves knit to him, and estranged from the world, it is not in death to part us. 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, I was a stranger, and ye took me in.' He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.'

How humble is the highest position of this earth; it is but the position of a stranger and sojourner. There is no stay on earth; and during the brief sojourn here, we are shadows. Let us then seek another and a better country. Treasures in heaven alone can avail us; all other riches will take themselves wings and flee away. Let us set our affections on things above, where Christ dwelleth at the right hand of God.

#### EIGHTEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work,'* John ix. 4.

WE are not our own. The Most High claims over us as his creatures the right of property and dominion. Created and upheld by him in whom we live, and move, and have our being, we are his, and ought ever to serve him. But we contest his rights, and rebel against his sovereignty; 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?' is the language of every unrenewed heart. Happy are

we, if at a day of effectual calling we have yielded ourselves to the Lord, persuaded by the prevailing argument of redeeming love, and now habitually inquire, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

Our Creator and Lord, who in Christ is our heavenly Father, hath sent us hither to do his work, and speedily to return to himself. His work is worthy of himself, honourable and glorious to us. As it was the work of Christ on earth to glorify his Father by obtaining everlasting redemption for us, so it is our work to glorify him in accepting the redemption he hath purchased. 'This is the work of God,' said Jesus, 'that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' It is not by works, but by faith,—not by keeping the law, but by receiving the gospel, that we please our heavenly Father, and fulfil the work for which he hath sent us into the world. It is thus we obtain deliverance from the condemning, blinding, and depraving power of sin, without which it is impossible to please God. Jesus has purchased this deliverance, by himself bearing the condemnation of sin, and receiving the Spirit of truth and holiness to enlighten and sanctify his people. In accepting Jesus, and relying on him alone for pardon, light, and holiness, we glorify the Father, magnify the law, satisfy his justice and truth, come into the full current of his love, and are made partakers of his likeness. We are complete in Christ. In him we have righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption. Death the next moment after believing on Jesus, would be to us great gain. But the Lord detains believers in the wilderness. This is needful for the salvation of others, as well as promotive of their own advancement in grace and ultimate glory. The Lord has work for his disciples on earth. To treasure up the word of Christ in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; to be ever going within the rent veil to the mercy seat, to bring blessings from above; to be contemplating Jesus, imbibing his Spirit, actuated by his love, conformed and submissive to his will, so as to become as living pictures and representatives of him on earth; to be instrumental in plucking from the burning some few of the myriads of the perishing souls on earth, delivering them from going down to the pit; to hold up the banner of bible truth against the falsehoods of the kingdom of darkness; to help in drawing on the conquering chariot of Christ, until he subdue all nations,—these are parts of the work given us to do. 'The King's business requireth haste.' The time is short, the night of death hasteth to cover each one of us. Moments are

precious; hours can never be recalled. We work for eternity, and our eternity will take its character from our present exertions. We shall be judged and rewarded according to our works. Let us then follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, bear the heat and burden of the day, fight the good fight of faith, run the race set before us, toil up the steep ascent of sanctification; and laying up a good foundation for the time to come, lay hold of eternal life, and the crown of glory.

Believers should regard themselves as on a mission from God, like the two angels sent to Sodom. Let us not, like Lot, make our abode here, lest like him we lose all the results of our labour on earth, and scarce escape with our lives. They had a work to do,—an appalling work of vengeance, and they hastened to do it while it was yet night. We have a work, a blessed work, like Lot, to flee to the mountain, to get into Christ, and to induce as many as possible to come with us before the flames of vengeance overtake, and turn into monuments of everlasting indignation against sin. Ah! how full of folly and sin is the whole life of this world's votaries. They spend their day of life doing the works of darkness, preparing for eternal night; and in a moment descend into the pit, and in hell lift up their eyes in torments. The floods of wrath descend on them as on Sodom. They go down to the depths like Pharaoh, and the floods cover them. Their work is not done, their race not run, the prize not won, their lives mispent, their time thrown away, their souls lost, and the debt they have contracted to their Creator and Lord, must be paid by their being sold over to the tormentor for ever. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.

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#### NINETEENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand,' 2 Tim. iv. 6.*

THESE words Paul wrote in immediate prospect of his martyrdom. It was long since the ravening wolf of Tarsus had been tamed, and turned into a lamb of Zion. The persecutor had been long an apostle; the blasphemer had filled the earth with the praises of Jesus. The time now drew nigh when he who stood by and consented unto his death, when the blood of the martyr Stephen was shed, was to shed his own blood, a martyr of Jesus Christ. What hath God wrought! Behold the wonders of grace, the trophy of a victory of redeeming love and power. As Jacob

welcomed the waggons sent to carry him to Joseph, as Elijah advanced towards the chariot of fire that conveyed him to heaven, so Paul welcomed the approach of death; he rejoiced to die for those whom once he persecuted unto the death. 'Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.'

From the hour when the glory of God in the face of Christ shone into his heart, he had given himself a living sacrifice to God; had bound himself with cords of love to the horns of the altar,—lived no longer to himself, but to him that had died for him; night and day praying exceedingly, he ceased not to warn every one with tears; counted not his life dear to himself, was ready not only to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; 'in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in death oft.' The time now drew nigh that the chief of the apostles must die,—arrested and imprisoned, he knew that his gray hairs were to be brought down to the ground with blood. But none of these things moved him. Under the law of Moses, the victim devoted to sacrifice was brought before the altar; and after the drink-offering of wine had been poured on its head, it was instantly led to the slaughter. To this Paul alludes, as if he had said, the libation has already been made, the drink-offering poured, immediate death now awaits me. He was in the valley of the shadow of death, but he feared no evil, his Lord was with him; the sting was taken from death, the victory from the grave. 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.'

Death to the apostle had no terrors. It was his departure; as the earthly remains of the patriarchs were transferred to the earthly Canaan, so the souls of believers are borne by angels to the heavenly Canaan, where they rest in the Lord, in the bosom of Abraham. For Paul to depart was to be with Christ, to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord; he knew that if his earthly tabernacle were dissolved, he had a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. He earnestly desired them to be clothed with his house from heaven, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Since the end of life is death, let it be our daily concern to die well. 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'

But almost universally men die as they have lived. To end a sinful life by a holy, believing, penitent death, was a miracle worthy of signaling the cross of the dying conqueror of death. To spend life in unbelief and impenitence, hoping for a similar miracle for a death-bed faith and repentance, is the height of madness. One such miracle took place that none might despair; only one, that none might presume. Let us then live in the faith if we would die in it; open our hearts now to Christ if we would not have him shut the door of heaven against us,—now labour if we would eternally rest,—now fight if we would obtain the victory,—now run the race if we would win the prize. There is no second experiment of life. As death finds us judgment shall be passed upon us. A great gulph is fixed between the dead and the living. 'In death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who shall give thee thanks?'

The conscious and assured state of preparation for heaven, which it was the happiness of the apostle to enjoy, may be attained, and ought to be sought by all. We may and ought 'to make our calling and election sure.' If in Christ, we may 'know that we know him;' 'that we have passed from death to life;' 'that our sins are forgiven us, and that we shall never come into condemnation;' 'that now we are the sons of God, and, therefore, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.' It is the privilege of all believers to have the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father,—to have the Spirit witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, and to be assured that nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Happy are we when thus we realise our interest in Christ, and his interest in us; that the Beloved is ours and we are his. Death is deprived of his terrors by the assurance of faith. When 'we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit,' we have boldness in the day of judgment. Aim at this happy state. Walking with Jesus by faith, as our own Saviour, made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, we will desire earnestly to be with him where he is, to behold his glory. Longing for the coming of our King, death his messenger will not be unwelcome. Ever maintaining the intercourse of faith with him, we will joy to enter on the intercourse of sight; our souls, accustomed to a heavenly frame, will pant after the heavenly state. Having long taken a Pisgah view through

the glass of faith towards the goodly land of our heavenly inheritance, strained our dim eyes to catch a passing glimpse of the King in his beauty, and of the land that is afar off; and having long mourned for the spiritual privations and hostile aggressions of our wilderness state, how welcome the order to pass over this Jordan, to inherit the land flowing with milk and honey.

We walk by faith of joys to come,  
Faith grounded on his word;  
But while the body is our home,  
We mourn an absent Lord.

What faith rejoices to believe,  
We long and pant to see;  
We would be absent from the flesh,  
And present, Lord, with thee.

#### NINETEENTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them,'* Rev. xiv. 13.

As it is appointed to all men once to die, how good a thing it is, that it can be said, Blessed are the dead. The last enemy is indeed overcome, when the sting is taken from death, and the victory from the grave. The curse is turned into a blessing, and the head of the serpent bruised. Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The dead lie not until the resurrection all in unconscious sleep; some are blessed, in a state of conscious enjoyments and activity. Moses, though dead, came to the holy mount, and conversed about the atonement, along with Elijah, who hath not tasted death. Lazarus and the rich man, after death, were both awake and active; the one in enjoyment, the other in torment. The dead thief was with Jesus in paradise. The spirits of just men made perfect are with the Mediator of the better covenant. The souls of the slain witnesses are in the holy place, taking interest in the movements of providence on earth. It is far better for the soul of Paul to be as now with Jesus, than when going about embodied as the burning and shining light of the churches. Yea, saith the Spirit, blessed are the dead. But what dead? all the dead? nay, only some of them,—they which 'die in the Lord.' It is they who sleep in Jesus that God will bring with him; as the tree falleth, so shall it lie. They who die in the Lord, angels convey them to Abraham's bosom; others die, and in hell lift up their eyes, being in torment. 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' But how to secure this?

how to obtain, that our souls may have imputed righteousness and saving grace in living union to the Prince of life, when the king of terrors shall make his last assault? The way to die in the Lord, is to live in him. If we live after the flesh, we shall die; but if we by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. Are we then after the flesh, or after the Spirit? Born again, or yet dead in trespasses and sins? Is sin our burden or our delight? Is this world or heaven the home of our affections? Have we fled for refuge to the cleft rock of ages; and resting on the finished righteousness of Jesus, have we found peace in the redeeming love of the Father? or, are we still serving in the law's house of bondage, bound in the chains of sin, under the flesh and mammon, as our task-masters; Satan our ruler, death our wages, and hell our destination? How solemn and awakening this inquiry. To-day is the accepted time.

Life is the season God hath given,  
To flee from hell, and rise to heaven.

They that are blessed in death, have lived for Christ, and laboured for him; for 'they do rest from their labours.' The servants who traded with their talents, were rewarded with their ten and five cities; but the slothful servant, who hid his Lord's money in the earth, was thrown into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Sweet is rest to the weary. The active, self-denying servant of Jesus, is often weary; not, indeed, of the work, but in it. He delights in the law of God after the inward man, but has often to cry, Ah! wretched that I am, because of his own defects and sins, the reproaches, hatred, and persecution of the world, the ingratitude of brethren, and the slow progress of truth and holiness on the earth. But obtaining help of God he continues until death, bearing the heat and burden of the day; though faint, yet pursuing; carrying on war against indwelling sin, self, the world, and Satan. Following holiness, doing good to the unthankful and unworthy,—bearing injuries, reproaches, and crosses, and following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Labour shall be followed by rest, sorrow shall be turned into joy, reproach into commendation, sickness into immortal vigour, poverty into unsearchable riches, and suffering for Christ into glory, honour, and immortality.

Let us go on, then, without fainting. Many are against us, but One greater than all is for us. His grace is sufficient, and his strength made perfect in weakness. No duty is too difficult with his help,—no cross too heavy if he

support us. One look of him will cheer us in the depths of disappointment and sorrow. One word of commendation, 'Well done, good and faithful,' will make us forget a thousand reproaches. Bought by his precious blood, let us glorify him with our bodies and spirits, which are his; forgiven much, let us love much, and forgive much; having received a free title to heaven, let us spend our short time on earth in doing the work of him that sent us. Not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, we shall rest enough in the grave; let us now, not indulging the slothful body, work diligently, with unmovable steadfastness, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For although it is by the merit of his works that we get heaven, it is by the works of grace in us that we prove our union to him, and show our sincere love, and grow in assurance of being his, and shall not be ashamed before him at his coming. To feed, and clothe, and visit, and comfort Jesus in his members, are indeed good works, well pleasing to his Father. And these works shall follow us into rest. 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labours of love which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.' Believers indeed are ashamed of their best works, but God commends them in the Beloved. I have finished my course, I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, said Paul, yet I am chief of sinners. 'Remember me, O my God, concerning this also,' said Nehemiah in reference to his great service as to the Sabbath, 'and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.'

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints; accepted in the Beloved, they sleep in Jesus; arrayed in his righteousness, they enter into the presence of the King; death arrests the body, but angels convey the happy spirit to the joy of the Lord. 'In thy book all my members were written.' Not only is the believer's name written in heaven, but an inventory of his dust is kept there, and death must render all up at the last day. The happy soul is made perfect in holiness,—all remaining sin perishes like the Egyptian host at passing the Red sea. The song of redeeming love learned on earth, is sung in heaven amidst the choir of saints redeemed, and angels ever blessed. The uncreated light is approached to, therein is seen infinite love. The soul rests in God, beholds the King in his beauty, worships the Lamb that was slain, admires, adores, loves, and is most blessed for evermore.

### TWENTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,'* Mat. xxii. 31, 32.

THE Sadducees and the Pharisees, totally opposed to each other as sects, agreed in casting off the fear of God. They were the types of the infidel and the formalist. The vital truths of God were by the Sadducee rejected, by the Pharisee covered over with vain additions; the one cast away the sword of the Spirit, the other hid it in a scabbard. Unbelief and credulity, opposite extremes, met in the point of practical ungodliness. Jesus rebukes both alike. In our text, the main tenet of the Sadducee is refuted; in the context, the Pharisee is taught that the love of God is more than all forms, than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

In their public assault on our Lord, to put down his authority as a teacher, the Sadducees tried to perplex him on the doctrine of the resurrection. They disbelieved in angels and spirits, and taught, that as the soul dies with the body, the body shall never rise from the dust. Their frivolous difficulty, as to the woman with seven husbands, so characteristic of the shallow and trifling spirit of infidelity, is at once disposed of by the fact, that in heaven they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, there being no death there, and therefore no need of marriage to replenish the inhabitants. But he not only turned aside this their blow at his teaching; he publicly dried up the right arm of their system, by demonstrating the life of the soul and resurrection of the body, on an authority recognised by themselves.

The Sadducees received the books of Moses as the divinely sent lawgiver of their nation. They did not suffer their infidelity publicly to carry them the length of removing the foundation of their institutions and property as a nation; they were wealthy and powerful, and therefore not levellers; they kept by the law of Moses. Accordingly Jesus proved to them, that the very preface to the law, the very commission in virtue of which Moses became the lawgiver, contained a refutation of their doctrine. Other parts of Old Testament scripture contain more and clearer testimonies as to another life, but this was quoted as one which the Sadducees could neither refuse nor refute. The patriarchs were dead long before God spake to Moses from the

burning bush. Yet there he called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. According to the Sadducees, these men had been long since dead, non-existent. Their souls had died with their bodies, and their bodies were mingled and lost in common dust. What a dishonourable name for God to assume to himself, to proclaim himself to be the God of beings non-existent, of nothings, of beings that had perished; to whom, during their existence, he had promised to give Canaan, and had not done so, and as they now had no existence and never would, his promise had failed for evermore. 'God is not the God of the dead,' who have sunk into non-existence, 'but of the living,' who are capable of enjoying his favour. The life and the resurrection of the patriarchs were both proved by the name of God. They lived at that time in his favour and enjoyment; 'I am the God of Abraham;' and as man consists of body as well as soul, they would rise again to obtain the fulfilment of all the promises made to them. The whole reasoning of our Lord intimates, that the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state is as certainly contained in the Old Testament as in the New. That man was to be raised from death, was involved in the promise; that the author of death should have his head bruised. Unless there were a life to come, why call Eve the mother of all living, after sentence of dust to dust had passed upon all? If no future life, what profit had Abel that he was righteous and pleased God. Enoch's translation demonstrated another state, where not the soul only, but the body also would live. Job expressed his firm belief of life and resurrection. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God,' Job xix. 25, 26; on the other hand he states, 'The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath,' Job xxi. 30. Accordingly Balaam prayed, 'let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' And the psalmist, 'gather not my soul with sinners,' 'the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,' 'my flesh shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' 'The righteous,' saith Isaiah, 'is taken away from the evil to come; he shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.' 'Go thou,' was the last word from God to Daniel, 'go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.'

Seeing that even in the scriptures of the Old

Testament, and much more in those of the New, life and immortality have been brought to light; time being the seed of eternity; this state being the infancy of our existence, the training school for heaven or for hell, how dread the importance of the consummation! Standing on the banks of eternity, are we to plunge into the depths of infinite woe, or to rise to the thrones of endless felicity? Eternity perfects what time begins. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, confessed themselves to be pilgrims and strangers upon earth, and looked for a better country, even an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. Happy art thou, O soul, that partakest of Abraham's faith and imputed righteousness; that dost meditate with Isaac, and delight thyself in the law of the Lord; that dost wrestle in prayer with Jacob, and waitest for the salvation of God. Dust shall indeed soon go to dust, and ashes to ashes, but life shall return to the fountain of life, and souls redeemed shall rest in the bosom of Abraham, of the eternal and unchangeable Father of the faithful. 'Thou shalt behold the King in his beauty, and be for ever with the Lord.'

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TWENTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

*'Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die,'* John xi. 25, 26.

How clearly does the doctrine of the resurrection shine forth in the New Testament. 'Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' The dead heard the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard lived. The son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus of Bethany, in being severally raised from the dead, proved that death was made subject to Jesus. And while himself yielding to death, he showed that he was the conqueror of the king of terrors, for at the moment of giving up his spirit, the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and appeared unto many. All whom he raised did notwithstanding return to the grave and saw corruption. But Jesus himself having arisen, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. He saw no corruption. He arose the first fruits of them that slept. And if we believe that Christ died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

The promise in our text is peculiarly clear and decided. His pious friends and entertainers at Bethany were not exempted from sorrows. Jesus permitted death to enter their dwelling, and Lazarus his friend was laid in the tomb. His sisters bewailed him, and 'Jesus wept.' But he comforted them with promises of eternal life and blessedness; and ere demonstrating the truth of his promise, by recalling for a time the spirit of Lazarus, he enumerated the sublime doctrine to be thereby confirmed, 'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and he that liveth and believeth on me shall never die.'

Jesus, then, is the resurrection of the body; the beginning, first fruits, pattern, and author of the resurrection. He began the raising of the body when he arose in flesh glorified, to be the eternal dwelling-place of the Godhead; Immanuel, God manifested to the creation in a human body. He arose the first-fruits of the harvest of the last resurrection, himself the earnest and proof that the dead shall arise. He is the pattern of the latter resurrection, for to his glorious body all his risen saints shall be assimilated. He is the author of the resurrection, for as the Father raiseth the dead, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will; and the hour is coming, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.

Jesus is the life. He is the possessor, purchaser, author, and upholder of the life of the soul. 'In him was life;' the Son of God hath life in himself, eternal, self-existent, underived, unchangeable. For behoof of his people dead in sins, and condemned to eternal death, he hath purchased the right and power of giving them life. He gave his own life in exchange for ours, died that we might live, obtained a right to life under the very law that condemned us to die. He is the fountain of the water of life, in him dwelleth the Holy Spirit, without measure. Our spiritual life is derived from him, depends on him, is hid in him. Because I live ye shall live also; separate from me ye can do nothing.

Is Christ then our life? 'When he who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory.' 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' Partaking of the life of Christ, we must be also partakers of his sufferings, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution, and it is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God. 'But it is a faithful saying, if

we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.' Cheered by the promise in our text, let us rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, continue instant in prayer. And remembering that the latter resurrection is only for those who now follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; that all who love not the Lord Jesus shall be anathema maranatha, cursed when the Lord cometh; that our professed attachment to Christ is now in the course of being practically tested, and that it is only they who are faithful to death that shall inherit the crown of life, let us deny ourselves, submit to every cross or privation attendant on conscientious obedience to Christ; count not our lives dear to ourselves, and abide in near communion with the throne of grace, that from the fulness in Jesus we may be obtaining mercy, and finding grace to help in time of need. If he is now our life, if we really live by faith in Jesus, no doubt he will be our resurrection. But if we live after the flesh, we shall die. 'He that loveth his life shall lose it; but he that hateth his life, shall keep it unto life eternal.'

#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt,' Dan. xii. 2.*

IN describing the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus directed the view of his disciples forward to the end of all things, and in like manner Daniel in this place speaks not only of the restoration of Jerusalem, but of the general resurrection. Trouble is predicted. There is to be a 'time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth up for the children of thy people; and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' The predicted restoration of Israel and Judah is by Ezekiel compared to a resurrection. Michael the archangel of the church, even the Lord Jesus Christ, shall accomplish this revival. So mighty an earthquake, and so great, never has been on earth, as shall accompany the fall of the mystical Babylon, the convulsions accompanying the casting out of Satan, and the establishment of the kingdom of our God and his Christ shall be extreme. The Jews shall be brought out of the

obscurity in which so long they have slumbered, and exposed to the gaze of the world; some shall take the side of Christ, and some approve themselves infidel and antichristian.

But it is to the great and ultimate day of decision that our text chiefly refers. Then shall the many asleep, the multitudes in their graves, awake; then shall there be troubles, such as never visited earth before, and yet only the beginning of eternal woes. There have been individual and partial sufferings, now shall be universal and unmixed agony; there shall be the resurrection of damnation! 'The earth shall reel to and fro, be moved exceedingly, be utterly broken down and dissolved; the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon become as blood, and the stars of heaven fall, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind, and the heaven shall depart as a scroll when it is rolled together, being dissolved with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.' In that day when the trumpet soundeth from heaven down to the foundations of earth and the caverns of hell; when the great white throne of judgment is set and surrounded by myriads of angels; when the Judge of quick and dead commandeth the books to be opened that all may be judged, consternation and despair shall appall the wicked. They shall call to the mountains to cover them, to hide them; but from whom? from the Saviour. Fearful thought; they long turned from his love in hatred and contempt; they now flee from his wrath in terror and dismay. Adam after his sin hid himself from the voice of the Lord God amidst the trees of the garden. Adam's children would hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. Hell itself would be a refuge if it could hide them from his frown; for the great day of the wrath of the Lamb is come, and who shall be able to stand?

There shall be a discriminating resurrection. The unbelievers, with souls desolated and convulsed by malignant and devilish passions, with bodies vile and loathsome, shall arise, trembling, self-condemned, hateful, and hating one another, cursing themselves and their God, contradicting Christ, blaspheming God's dealings, an abhorring to all holy beings, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. They have rebelled, and shall be punished; have refused light, shall dwell in outer darkness; served Satan, shall be tormented by him; rejected the gift of God, and shall have the wages of sin, eternal death. 'For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would none of my counsel and despised all

my reproof; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices.'

How dreadful are the pictures of the future woe, given for our warning by him who shall say, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' He who endured infinite agony, that he might deliver sinners from going down to the pit, comparing their sufferings with his own, said, 'then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us; for if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' It is Christ himself who said, 'these shall go away into everlasting punishment.' Let all therefore who reject his proffered salvation be assured, that their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

They, seized by justice, shall be doomed  
In dark abyss to lie,  
And in the fiery burning lake  
The second death shall die.

O may we stand before the Lamb,  
When earth and seas are fled,  
And hear the Judge pronounce our name,  
With blessings on our head!

#### TWENTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness,'* Psal. xvii. 15.

DAVID experienced the extremes of earthly good and evil; had ascended the throne out of the depths of distress; he had been brought through fire and water. Seven years of affliction preceded his seven years of troubled rule over Judah; and after being established on the throne of Israel, his family distresses following on his personal sins exceedingly abounded. Being a man after God's own heart, he met with bitter hatred from men of the world. Saul, and Doeg, and Joab, and Absalom, all afflicted him. But his darkest hours had the glimmering star of hope, his sharpest trials were soothed by the blessedness in prospect. He knew in his youth, that for him was reserved the throne of Israel, and in age and youth he anticipated being with the shepherd of Israel, the King over Zion, to see his face, and dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

One thing I of the Lord desired,  
And will seek to obtain,  
That all days of my life I may  
Within God's house remain.

That I the beauty of the Lord  
Behold may and admire,  
And that I in his holy place  
May reverently enquire.

Upheld by the comfortable hope, that his desire to see and dwell with the Lord would be satisfied,—‘Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.’ He endured, as seeing him who is invisible. David was a type of Christ. ‘For the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame.’ The experience of Christ is depicted in this psalm under the type of David, and the strength, encouragement, and consolation ministered to him amidst temporal afflictions, from the prospect of beholding the face of his Father, and being satisfied with his likeness, are accomplished more or less in all his people, who now suffering with Christ, shall partake of his blessedness. Having fulfilled all righteousness, Jesus entered into the most holy place, accepted of the Father, and most blessed for evermore. ‘Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.’

Clothed in the righteousness of Christ, the believer also anticipates the perfect vision of God. ‘They shall see his face,’ and ever contemplate with growing admiration and love the glories of the Father, the excellences hidden, and ever-evolving from the profound recesses of the Godhead. The smiles of paternal love and everlasting kindness, shall fill their hearts with endless felicity. Here beholding by faith, in the glass of the word, the reflection of his face, the loveliness of his perfections, the beams of his glory shining forth in Christ, the believer is gradually changed into the like image; but there seeing him as he is, we shall be made like to him! Holiness shall be perfected in our souls; bathed in the river clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb, the souls of the saints shall be as unsullied mirrors, to reflect for ever the likeness of Christ. ‘Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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.’ Ineffable glory, inconceivable exaltation! to be like Christ, as he is like the Father; to be on his throne, as he is on the Father’s; to be holy as the holy One of Israel!

For as the heaven in its height,  
The earth surmounteth far;  
So great to those that do him fear  
His tender mercies are.

To be completely freed from sin, never again to grieve the Spirit, never to dishonour the Saviour, never to move the Father’s displeasure, but eternally to do his will and celebrate his praise, blessedness beyond expression! Surely at thy

right hand there are pleasures for ever more, for holiness alone can abide with thee; before thy face there is fulness of joy, for nothing that is evil can dwell or once come nigh to thee. God is light. Our rational faculties shall be fully exercised and satisfied in contemplating the brightness of his infinite beauty, truth, and excellency. God is love. Our moral powers shall be supremely blessed in partaking of the communications of boundless holiness, faithfulness, and love. To dwell in heavenly palaces, to travel over and survey the works and wonders of universal creation, to associate with angels and archangels, to join in the worship of the cherubim, to be kings and priests unto God, and to be ranked amongst the royal family of heaven; all this, even ‘what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man to conceive,’ may believers anticipate amidst the glory reserved for them. But all personal benefits are undervalued by the saints compared with seeing, resembling, and enjoying God in Christ. ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee, and on earth there is none that I desire besides thee. ‘God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.’ All the glories of creation without Christ, would be to the believer as a world without the sun, ‘Thou art a sun and shield, thou givest grace and glory.’ ‘As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God, to see thy power and thy glory.’ Happy soul that thirsteth for God; to see, resemble, and have fellowship with him. He satisfieth the longing soul with his goodness; ‘Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be where I am, that they may behold my glory.’

Ah, why should we not aim so high? why do our souls so cleave to the dust? why do we not with the apostle count all things but lost, compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, that we may win him, and know him, and have his righteousness, and be conformed to him, that we may attain the better resurrection and the prize of our high calling.

#### TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—MORNING.

‘So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory,’ 1 Cor. xv. 54.

THE wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall blossom as the rose. Ere

the substance of this earth shall be cast away or annihilated, as having fulfilled all its purposes, we have reason to expect that it shall pass through transformations great and glorious. The curse shall not always rest on it as now. The winter shall be past, the flowers shall appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds be come, and the voice of the turtle heard in our land. During the long reign of millennial light, holiness, and blessedness, when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, may we not look for a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The physical as well as moral evils that now prevail, shall be diminished, if not entirely removed. Satan shall be bound for a thousand years; the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent's meat; they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.

At that time the prophecy in our text shall have a partial fulfilment. Israel and Judah being then gathered, revived, and restored, will become blessings to the whole earth. The prophecy of Hosea shall be fulfilled, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help; I will be thy king, I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction,' Hosea xiii. 9, 14. Then, the mountain of the Lord's house being exalted, and Christ's kingdom established on earth, shall be fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy quoted in our text, by Paul, 'And he will destroy in this mountain the veil that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth,' Isa. xxv. 7, 8. Spiritual death and blindness, and consequent sorrow and suffering, shall then be greatly removed; and even temporal death shall have less sway. 'The child shall then die an hundred years old;' 'for as the days of a tree, are the days of my people,' Isa. lxv. 20, 22.

But it is to the heavenly, and not the earthly; the eternal, and not the millennial fulfilment of this promise that the apostle looks in our text. When death shall be commanded to yield up his charge,—when all that are in their graves, and in the sea, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall arise to judgment; then in regard to the righteous, the reign and power of death shall terminate wholly and for ever. Their souls returning from the beatific presence, from the holy rest of paradise, shall not be unequally yoked with corrupt and mortal bodies. There

shall be a change in the whole man, after the image of Christ. From the root of a corrupt corpse shall grow up the glorious flower of a spiritual and immortal body. As the chrysalis changes into the beautiful butterfly,—as the egg gives birth to the resplendent bird of paradise, or to the melodious nightingale,—as coal changes into flaming fire, and is of the nature of the precious diamond, so will it be at the resurrection. The Lord that day will make up his jewels. A multitude that no man can number, shall be added to his shining ones, each shining forth like the sun in the kingdom of our Father. Each soul and body of the redeemed shall be lighted up with the spiritual and material glory of Christ himself. It shall be a change glorious and sublime, sudden as when Gideon's army at midnight broke each man his earthen pitcher, and dazzled the enemy with their flaming torches. 'Behold, I show you a mystery,—we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed: for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. The body is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.'

The change shall be once and for ever. Immortal purity, the vigour of eternal youth, the vast powers and capacities of a spiritual and heavenly body, shall take the place of decrepitude, decay, and death. All the promises shall then be fulfilled. The evils of the fall shall not only be removed, but the blessings of the original Eden far transcended. Instead of the earthly Eden, shall be the heavenly paradise; for the beasts of the earth, coming at Adam's call, shall be ministering spirits, ministering to the heirs of salvation; for the dominion of the world shall be the thrones of heaven, to live and reign there with Emmanuel for ever; for the tree of life in the midst of the garden, shall be the Lamb in the midst of the throne, ministering never-failing supplies of eternal life and blessedness; for a conditional promise of life on earth shall be an absolute and irrevocable gift of life in heaven and glory. The victory over Satan with sin and death, his ministers, shall be complete. The counsel of Ahithophel shall be turned into foolishness. Man degraded from being God's earthly image and vicegerent below, shall by the Son of man be exalted to be the collective image and vicegerent of God in heavenly places. The head of the serpent shall be bruised; the poor shall be

taken from the dust, and the beggar exalted to the throne of glory, whence the mighty have been cast down. And all the praise shall be to the riches of free grace, 'Thou hast loved us,' &c.

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 TWENTY-SECOND DAY.—EVENING.

*'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.*

THE triumph shall not be delayed until the battle be ended. Assured of final victory, the soldiers of Christ may even now exult in their triumphant Head. What eye shall see, when Christ, at the head of the redeemed host, triumphantly ascends to heaven, faith now anticipates; and as Abraham saw by faith the day of Christ and was glad, so now children of Abraham, strong in faith, behold the resurrection afar off, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The law is holy, just, and good, and heaven and earth shall pass away; but one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled. It is unchangeable and supreme, the expression of infinite holiness and power. Sin is the transgression of the law. Death is the penalty of transgression. The law has strength to enforce its penalty, for omnipotence is under the direction of holiness; where the law of the king is, there is his power.

But not only is holy omnipotence engaged to render the law effectual, and to enforce its penalty, death,—the whole power of evil tends to the same end. The devil is the executioner of justice on sinners. It is he that has the power of death; he is the avenger, to execute wrath on them that do evil. His delight is in death, in deceiving, slaying, tormenting man, made in the image of God. Himself eternally undone, he seeks to drag down others to share his ruin, and to minister fuel to his ever-burning malice. Man having wilfully given himself to Satan at the fall, is justly consigned to him as jailor, executioner, tormentor. Sin sets the law against the transgressor, and places him in the power of the enemy, accuser, and destroyer. The sting of death is sin, and the prison house of death is the grave. And the grave of the sinner opens only towards the bottomless pit.

Who can break the bars of the grave, set the prisoners free, wrest his weapon from the adversary, and deprive him of the royal decree, that cannot be changed, consigning to his power

all that have sinned? Who can still the enemy and the avenger? who is able to redeem the imprisoned debtors, to pay their countless debts, buy back their inheritance, and deliver them from the hands of the terrible? Who is able to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? No man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. Let us rejoice that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

As the second Adam, representative of his spiritual posterity, the Lord Jesus Christ, hath obeyed the law, and suffered its penalty, has magnified and made it honourable; having suffered the sentence in room of his people, the warrant against them is recalled; it has no force; under it Satan has no authority to detain or slay them. The law no longer gives strength to sin, or authority to Satan to put to death the people of Christ. The sting of death is taken away. Death is not destroyed yet; he still separates soul from body, but his mortal sting is away, he cannot separate believers from Christ. Their dust indeed returns to dust; but each particle is still united to Christ, is known, and will be gathered together by his power, and raised in glory. When we believe in Jesus, all our sins are blotted out of the record of judgment, all our debts to justice cancelled, and we are instantly delivered from the sentence of condemnation. Satan's legal rights over us cease and determine. Christ is engaged to deliver us from his power and wiles, his dominion and malice; and at death, to introduce us into the joys of our Lord, to the inheritance redeemed by his precious blood.

Well may the soldier of Christ triumph over all his enemies. When David had cut off the head of the giant, when the 'champion was dead, the men of Israel and of Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines till thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron.' Our King hath bruised the head of the serpent; he has broken the yoke of his burden, the rod of the oppressor, as in the day of Midian. Let us joy before him, then, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! The foot shall tread him down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.' Let the poor in spirit rejoice in the holy One of Israel, who hath made them more than conquerors. Your chains are broken, your prison open, your ser-

of death changed to a patent of royalty; your enemy, disarmed and disabled, shall soon be trodden under your feet: resist him and he will flee from you; all his efforts now turn to his confusion, and to your salvation, through prayer, and supply of the Spirit of Jesus. 'The Lord hath overcome,—the strength of the enemy is dashed in pieces; he shall sink as lead in the mighty waters. Sing to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his benefits.'

How glorious and happy is the triumph of the believer over Satan, sin, and death; ransomed for ever from wrath and hell; made an heir of glory and blessedness. What can we render to the Lord for all his benefits, for having hushed the thunders of the law, quenched the flames of Sinai, bought us with his blood, and brought us to his and our God? Let us ever exalt the Lamb that hath been slain. Let us pay to him the grateful devotion, the ardent affection, the admiring love of renewed hearts. Let us, for his sake, count no duty too arduous, no affliction too painful, no dishonour too humiliating, no loss too severe; and trusting in him, let us fear no evil, yield to no temptation, go straight forward in the narrow way, never swerve from truth and a good conscience, keep his commandments, cost us what it may; and in face of every enemy, press on under his banner, until shouts of victory from attendant angels accompany our triumphant progress from the gates of heaven to the foot of the throne.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—MORNING.

*'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,'* Heb. ix. 27.

ALL flesh is grass. The scythe of death mows down the generations of men. We are born to die. Youth cannot secure reprieve, gold cannot buy deliverance, no created wisdom can find a way of escape from the sentence of death. 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.' But it is once, and only once, that we must die. No traveller to the land of spirits returns to tell his discoveries, and again to undergo the pain of leaving his earthly tabernacle and weeping friends. The pangs of dissolution are not to be repeated. When once the soul has taken wing from earth, after the tender ties of kindred and affection have been broken; after the eye has taken its last look of the sun, and the ear has heard the parting

wailings of the death-bed, the bitterness is past. There is no second bitterness of temporal death. 'The silver cord has been loosed, the golden bowl broken, the pitcher broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern; then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return to God who gave it.'

But if the bitterness of temporal death be past, so also is the opportunity of escaping the bitterness of the second death. The past cannot be changed or recalled, and the future eternity takes its complexion from the past. As we sow, so shall we reap. Even omnipotence brought back only the shadow on the dial fifteen degrees; it did not bring back the life of Hezekiah fifteen years. His death was delayed, his former years of life were not to be lived over again. Yesterday is as irrevocable as the years before the flood. Death once and for ever cuts the thread of life, and plunges the soul that hung on it into the gulph of eternity.

What an awful point then is the moment of death. There the stream of eternity flows out from the broken cistern of life; if the fountain be corrupt, so shall be the stream; the earthy, bitter, and dark water of the one shall flow for ever in the other; as the tree falleth, so shall it lie; as death leaves us, so shall judgment find us. If unpardoned at death, redemption ceaseth for ever; sin bound on the soul at dissolution, shall not be loosed through eternity. The master whom we serve at death, whether Christ, or Belial, is he whose property we are for ever. 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be,' Rev. xxii. 11, 12. Two eternities seem concentrated in the one moment of death; all the effects of the past are compressed, and all the prospects of the future may be summed up in it. The past election or reprobation, the future glory or damnation, the past acceptance or rejection of Christ, the future acknowledgment or denial by Christ, are fixed and determined at death.

Death does not change the state or character of the soul, only its place; the state, whether one of nature or of grace; the character, whether holy or unholy, are fixed down for ever by death. Death, the officer of judgment, calls the soul out of the body; the summons is peremptory. The labourer leaves his work and goes to get his reward; the criminal is dragged from his wickedness to hear his doom. 'The spirit returns to God who gave

it.' Angels who have been ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, convey them to the presence of him to whom God hath committed all judgment, and receive authority to carry them to the resting-place of Abraham; as Israel and his household, having been conveyed by waggons to Joseph, were by him sent to Goshen as their temporary resting-place, until the rest promised was fully prepared. Devils who have tempted, and possessed, and led in willing captivity the slaves of lust and sin, drag them before the averted face of the Judge, as Haman, with his face covered, was hurried from the banquet, and hung on the gallows which he had prepared. 'To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me,' said the apparition from the dead to Saul, the day before the fatal battle of Gilboa. 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise,' said the Judge to one of his companions in crucifixion, implying that immediate sentence to happiness was to follow his death, and by consequence that immediate sentence to misery was to follow the death of the other. 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee,' was the word of God to the rich worldling. The judgment after death but declares the condition of the soul at death.

How unspeakably important then, to die the death of the righteous, so that our latter end, our eternal existence, may be like his. Let us then live the life of the righteous. Guilty and depraved as by nature and practice we are, let us embrace the gift of the gospel. The righteous One hath lived and died. The merit of his holy life and death is freely offered to us. Let us now and ever accept and rest thereon. The merit of his life will entitle us to glory; the merit of his death will rescue us from misery. And if we have his merit imputed, we will have his Spirit imparted. His law will be written on our hearts, and his service will be our delight. If we have suffered all the evils of death in and with him as our representative and accepted surety, then for his sake we shall inherit all the good to which death, as the messenger of God's judgment, can introduce us. 'We shall be for ever with the Lord.'

#### TWENTY-THIRD DAY.—EVENING.

*'For it is written. As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God,'* Rom. xiv. 11, 12.

THE Lord reigneth. Creation sprung into being at his word, and derives its continuance from his

power. All other beings but himself owe their existence to him, and are therefore his absolute property, to be employed according to his sovereign pleasure. The acknowledgment of this sovereignty of the Creator forms the substance of the oath of allegiance, the homage paid by the hosts of heaven before the throne. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Every tongue in heaven confesses the supremacy of the Lord; every knee there bows before the throne; the angels that excel in strength do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.

But on earth there are tongues that deny God the glory due to his name, and knees that refuse to do him homage. Were this the crime of a solitary individual, the madness of his wickedness would cause him to be the pity and horror of rational and holy beings. But it is a world that has rebelled. Mankind have conspired to deny the supremacy and break the yoke of the Almighty Creator. They have done their utmost to pluck the crown from his head, overturn his throne, to blot out his name, and destroy his existence. Ineffable wickedness! How wondrous the divine patience, which has not cast the whole race into the lake of fire. Instead of this, God has sent his Son to offer peace and pardon, and to display the unutterable holiness and love of God in bearing the punishment of our rebellion, that we might have the reward of his obedience. A few in every age have revered the Son, and returned to their allegiance to the Father. But the overwhelming majority neither bow nor confess, but deny God in word and deed; live without God in the world. 'And shall not God visit them for this; shall not his soul be avenged on such a people?' The Lord knoweth that their day is coming. The day of vengeance shall as surely arrive as the day of grace has arrived. The oath of God is interposed for the one, as well as the other. Has he said, 'As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' He has also said, 'As I live, saith the Lord, surely with fury poured out shall I rule over you.' As Joseph's brethren, who hated him and ridiculed his dream of their bowing down to him, were compelled to confess their wickedness, and bow down before him with their faces to the earth, so shall all the enemies of Christ be dealt

with. When the Son of man shall be seated on the throne of judgment, 'every tongue shall confess;' all nations shall be gathered before him, 'and every knee shall bow.' 'Behold he cometh in clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.'

But let us look to ourselves; every one of us shall give account of himself to God, for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. When the nobleman returns from a far country, having received the kingdom, he shall call his servants and take account of the use of their talents. When evening arrives, the labourers in the vineyard shall be called to the lord's presence, to receive each man his wages. When the King comes in to see his guests, every one not having a marriage garment shall be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. When the net shall be drawn to shore, the good shall be gathered into vessels, and the bad thrown away. The wheat shall be gathered into the garner, and the tares, bound in bundles, shall be cast into the fire. Having such a day before us, when Omniscience shall declare our past character, and Omnipotence fix our eternal condition, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. Professing yourself a Christian, you will be tried as to the reality of your attachment to Christ. By their fruits ye shall know them. Every tree is known by its fruits. '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.'

All shall be judged by their works. Try thyself now then, professing Christian. If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. Hast thou saving knowledge of God? 'Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.' 'To depart from evil is understanding.' Hast thou repentance? If so, you bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Hast thou living faith? Then 'by works' your faith is shown not to be dead, James ii. 21—24. Dost thou accept and close with Christ? Then you have abandoned every idol and every lust, and have given him the throne of your heart. Do you trust in Christ? Then confiding in his promise, you venture your all in time and eternity, in a dependence on his sufficiency and truth, and are ready, if called, to suffer the loss of all for

his sake. Do you love Christ? This is the love, that you keep his commandments; and they are not grievous to the soul that loveth Christ. 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man. O that my ways were directed to keep thy commandments.' 'The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day.' Then let us frequently search and try ourselves by this unerring standard. The trader that would avoid final bankruptcy, takes account of his gains and losses. The shipmaster that would escape shipwreck, and reach his haven, looks at the compass, and the soundings, and the stars.

If our own hearts, taught and directed by the word of God, condemn us not, then have we confidence before him, and shall not be ashamed at his coming. How blessed is the man that is ready and prepared to meet the Judge; who knows in whom he has believed, and is assured, on scriptural evidence, that for him is reserved a crown of righteousness! Such a soul is raised above the cares, and sorrows, the assaults, and temptations of this life. He has cast anchor within the veil, and rides secure amidst the storms and billows of time. But seeing the danger, and extreme prevalence of false hopes, let us daily commune with our hearts, and watch the progress of our souls: observe the results of the tests and trials to which the providence of God brings us. These are sent for the purpose of showing to us whether we are dross or gold,—they are for *our* information not for *his*. Let us derive our information from them. The surest way to know our gold is to examine it in God's furnace, where he tries it for that very end that we may see what it is.

The days of visitation show who will stand in the day of judgment. When men's interest, and credit, and ease, draw them one way; and the commandments, interest, and honour of Christ another, which way do you go? which master do you serve. When we must actually part with what is dearest of a worldly nature, or with our duty, then is 'the fiery trial that is to try you.' Then the predominant interest must appear, it can be concealed no longer. The good Lord grant us to be found faithful, and to come out of the furnace as gold fit for the Master's use,—that we may give account of ourselves with joy, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

## TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth,'*  
Ps. lviii. 11.

THIS is the reflection which is forced from any one who meditates aright on the divine dealings with the righteous and the wicked, respectively.

The righteous are not naturally so, any more than others. They are, like all other men, by nature children of wrath. But they are rendered righteous in two ways. They have the righteousness of Christ upon them, and are thus made righteous by his obedience imputed to them by God, and embraced by faith on their part; so that they are arrayed in his merits, as their surety and substitute, and are accepted in the Beloved. At the same time, by the Spirit of Christ dwelling and working in them, they are rendered personally righteous, and made to advance in personal righteousness day by day. Their hearts are right with God. They endeavour to 'do all to his glory.' They are 'not conformed to this world.' They 'set their affections on things above.'

'Verily there is a reward for them,' even here. They are cheered by a sense of God's pardoning love, and 'walk in the light of his countenance.' 'Their rejoicing is this, the testimony of their conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have their conversation in the world.' A heavenly tranquillity pervades their minds. 'Great peace have they that love thy law;' all tumults within are hushed,—and they live above the dark and stormy regions of this sinful and wretched world. Within them dwells and works the Holy Spirit, as their habitual source of light and holiness, of strength and comfort. The divine blessing rests on their temporal circumstances; so that, in poverty, they are sustained by the promise that 'their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure;' and they have also that contentment which keeps them composed and comfortable, and which renders 'the little that they have better than the riches of many wicked;' while in prosperity, they are enabled to cherish and exemplify such humble and thankful feelings as are really greater blessings, and more evident tokens of God's love to them, than all the temporal abundance which they possess. In seasons of affliction, they are preserved from, or supported under trials, beneath which the wicked sink; and softened and sanctified, exercised and perfected in faith and patience, and prepared for the presence of God, by visita-

tions of his hand, which harden the wicked, and drive them to despair. With regard again to the treatment experienced by God's people from the wicked, God restrains their enmity, or delivers his people from its effects, or causes their humility and faithfulness to force the world's respect and confidence; or removes them in mercy, or their enemies in judgment, or 'strengthens them with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness.' Throughout their life, they are also animated and upheld by that hope which is full of immortality. At death, they 'depart in peace,' leaving behind them a good name, which is held in respectful and sweet remembrance, and which proves that 'the memory of the just is blessed.' 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous,' even on earth; and 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'

Not less evident is it that there is a curse upon the wicked. God, indeed, 'bears long with them.' 'He has no pleasure in their death,' and therefore 'judgment is not speedily executed against their evil works.' And yet, not only does he 'reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished,' but even now, he both plainly declares their character in his word, and manifests his anger against them in his providence.

According to this psalm, 'they are estranged from the womb,' estranged by nature, as well as by practice, from God's love and service. They 'go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies;' their whole character and conduct being destitute of that truth which is the very soul of all real excellence. They devise mischief against the righteous, slander their motives and actions, and deliberately, malignantly, and obstinately oppress them; for 'in heart they work wickedness; they neither 'speak righteousness,' nor 'judge uprightly;' they 'weigh the violence of their hands in the earth; their poison is like the poison of a serpent, and they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely.' The believer's piety, meekness, benevolence, and purity, only rouse their suspicions, their reproaches, their slanders, their obstinate enmity, their cruel hatred.

Such are the wicked. And although they often prosper outwardly for a time, still even on earth God shows his anger against them in many ways. They are tormented by an accusing conscience, or given up to a darkened mind, or to a depraved and hardened heart. In prosperity, they are lifted up with pride, and prepared for destruction. In seasons of adversity and trouble, they murmur against God, and let out their passions against

all around them. The good are constrained to shun them. They distrust, and are distrusted by their own associates. They are far from God, and he is far from them. Their worldly schemes, like those of Pharaoh, and Haman, and the Assyrian invader, are wonderfully frustrated. They are overtaken by judgments that remarkably correspond to their sins. They sow to the flesh, and reap corruption. Cain kills his brother, and becomes a vagabond. Lamech slays a young man, and becomes a restless sinner, frightened at his own shadow. Ham is guilty of shocking filial impiety to his father Noah, and Ham's descendants are the most debased and wretched portion of the human family. Joseph's brethren, to prevent their having to honour him according to his dream, meditate his death, and at length have to crouch to him for their own life. Sodom burns with unnatural lusts, and is burned with fire from heaven. Lot's wife hesitates between her flight from Sodom and her return to it, and forthwith, by being turned into a pillar of salt, her flight and her return become alike impossible. Judas gives up his Master's life, and in despair is driven to take his own. The wicked are caught in their own snares. Their boasted wisdom is confounded, their boasted strength is broken. Their pride is humbled. Their gains are scattered. They lie, and are suspected. They become loathsome through sensuality. They show no mercy, and receive none. They strive to perpetuate their name and memory on the earth, and God 'puts out their memory for ever.' They dream of safety, and sudden destruction comes upon them which they cannot escape. Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth. Let atheists be confounded, for the Lord reigneth. Let the impenitent tremble, for they cannot escape his judgments. Let the righteous be glad; for 'with a pleasant countenance, the Lord beholdeth the upright.'

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 TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air: for it repenteth me that I have made them.'* Gen. vi. 5—7.

MAN, being made in the image of God, was placed in the garden of Eden, where 'grew every tree

that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food,' with a full right to its abundance; and with no other prohibition laid upon him, than that he should, on pain of death, abstain from tasting of one particular tree. Tempted, however, by Satan to question the truth and goodness of God in respect of this prohibition, man violated the divine command, and at once exchanged his innocence and happiness, for guilt, pollution, shame, and woe. The children and posterity of Adam were like himself, fallen and corrupt, and soon manifested that impiety, impurity, and all unrighteousness were natural to them. They even became speedily so wicked, as to provoke God to sweep them all from the earth by a deluge.

I. Observe what is said of man. 1. Of his outward conduct. 'The wickedness of man was great in the earth.' Men offered all manner of dishonour and of insults to God, inflicted all manner of injuries and of violence upon one another, and indulged in all manner of depraved and brutish passions and lusts. Their 'wickedness' in these respects 'was great,' had risen to such a height, that it could no longer be tolerated even by the long-suffering patience of God. Their 'wickedness' in these respects 'was great in the earth,' was not confined to this or that portion of the earth, but was manifested in every part of it, where any of the children of men were found. Under this wickedness the earth was defiled, and rendered so offensive in the eyes of its Maker, that he could no longer bear to look even on the very world, which was so polluted by the sin of its inhabitants. 2. Of his inward state, 'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' Men had become thoroughly corrupt in all their thoughts, desires, and purposes. There might have been some hope, had they been, while outwardly wicked, to some extent sound within. But the tree itself was, like the fruit, utterly corrupt. There was nothing good at all, in any one of their thoughts, desires, and deliberations. These were all evil, unmingled evil, and evil all the day. Their whole nature, in short, was a thoroughly polluted fountain, from which nothing but streams of pollution in their life could flow. A race thus utterly and hopelessly corrupt, was fit only for the destruction by which it was immediately overtaken.

II. Observe what is said of God. 1. What he saw. He saw that man was thus outwardly and inwardly, and altogether wicked. He saw this, who sees things exactly as they are; and therefore, there could be no mistake as to this being the real condition of man. He saw it, he looked on men in this condition, not as an indif-

ferent spectator, but as one who was deeply interested in the state of men, and determined to deal with them accordingly. 2. What God felt. 'He repented that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart.' God is not subject to such passions as agitate our hearts, although he is said to repent and be grieved; just as he is not a partaker of bodily parts like us, although he is said to have hands and eyes. Language like this is taken from facts regarding us, with which we are familiar, and applied to God, in accommodation to our weakness, and to give us some faint ideas of his character and dealings. When it is said that he repented, and was grieved that he had made man, the meaning is, that men had utterly failed to answer the end of their being, and that their sinfulness rendered them so offensive to their Maker, and so hurtful to the universe, as to require that God should act toward them as if it would have been better that they had never existed; or, in other words, that he should dash them in pieces. 3. What God resolved; viz., to destroy man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air. Men polluted the earth by their presence; and God cleansed it by washing them from its surface. He blotted them out from the earth, 'as those lines are blotted out from a book which displease the Author; or as the name of a citizen is blotted out from the rolls of freemen, when he is dead or disfranchised.' The inferior creatures shared in the consequences of human depravity. They were made subject to vanity, and overwhelmed with ruin from their connection with man, just as his redemption is to be the signal and the means of their deliverance from the bondage of corruption, and their admission to a share in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Nay, the very earth shared in this destruction, and sunk for a time beneath the waters of the flood. And so great were the changes produced upon its surface by that event, that it has ever since been covered with the monuments of the tremendous judgment that then overtook and overwhelmed it, and all that lived and breathed upon it.

III. Lessons taught by this event. We see the fearful consequences of sin in the universal ruin which it brought upon the world. We see the inveterate character of sin in the malignant obstinacy with which mankind persisted in their evil courses, in contempt of the amazing patience that spared them for above an hundred years after they were solemnly warned of the issue of their conduct, and in abuse of the goodness that sought, day by day, during all that period, to bring them to repentance. We see the righteousness

of God displayed in rewarding sinners according to their works. We see the absolute certainty with which pent up vengeance will at length burst forth, and overwhelm utterly all the impenitent workers of iniquity. By the tremendous power with which the waters of earth and sky were employed to annihilate all living creatures on the earth, and submerge the world, we are reminded of that still more powerful agency of fire which the Lord shall by and by employ to burn up the earth, and all its works; and of the unquenchable fire into which the wicked shall be thrown, as their everlasting portion. Finally, the resources of the Almighty for the punishment of his adversaries, are here seen to be so awful, as to impress with terrible emphasis upon our minds this great truth, that it is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—MORNING.

'There shall come in the last days scoffers,' 2 Pet. iii. 3.

THE predictions that Christ is coming to judge mankind, and destroy the world by fire, are denied and ridiculed by wicked men. Let us attend to the following things regarding these 'scoffers.'

I. The time when they are to make their appearance. 'There shall come in the last days scoffers.' These last days are just the days on which our lot has fallen; and none but men who are altogether ignorant of the state of society, and of the events that are occurring around us, or who are wilfully shutting their eyes and ears against the truth, will question the unusual prevalence and boldness of scepticism and infidelity at the present time. The very distance to which we are removed from the times of old, in which such a solemn visitation as the deluge came upon the earth, to serve as the type and forerunner of a still more awful visitation, is employed as an encouragement to this scepticism and infidelity. The very length of time that God has in wonderful patience spared the world, and allowed it to proceed in its usual course, is perverted into a reason for imagining that that course is never to be disturbed at all, by such startling events as those which scripture declares to be about to burst upon the world. The scoffers seem foolishly to reason, as if the reality and certainty of past events were actually diminished by the time that has elapsed since they occurred, and as if we were entitled, on account of the interval that has passed away since they took place, to

disregard the lessons which they were intended to teach, and the warnings of future events, which they were intended to give. Yet these scoffers do prove one important point. Their very existence and their language furnish a proof that the solemn events against which they direct their mockery, are hastening on. The bible forewarns us that these scoffers shall make their appearance in the last days, when the events at which they scoff are drawing nigh, and that they shall become bolder and bolder in their contemptuous unbelief, and open blasphemies, in proportion as these events are nearer and nearer their occurrence. The very attempts that are making to discredit the announcements of scripture, respecting the coming judgment, thus prove 'that it is near, even at the doors.'

II. The language which the scoffers should be found employing. 1. They deny the truth of the promise, that Christ shall at length come visibly to judgment. 'Where is the promise of his coming?' It was by denying the truth of God's declaration to them, that our first parents fell; and it is by still denying his word, that sinners justify and expect to secure themselves, in their iniquity. 2. These scoffers deny not only what is yet to happen, but also what has already taken place. They deny the fact that the flood came upon the world, as well as the fact that it is yet to be destroyed by fire. 'Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' They are at least consistent with themselves in denying both facts. For were they to admit such an event as the deluge, they could scarcely question, or fail to fear, the final destruction of the earth, and the wicked. We need not then be much surprised to find unusual pretenders to learning, striving to explain away the scripture account of the deluge, and the more unthinking and brutish portion of sinners catching at any objection to its truth, on which they might build their vain hopes of safety in sin. 3. They abuse the very patience of God into a reason for imagining, that they may safely persist in provoking him. 'Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were.' They appeal to the long settled order, and regular and tranquil movements of nature, as proof that the peace and safety, which mankind have enjoyed for ages past, shall never be broken. They delude themselves with the idea, either that the earth and its inhabitants shall continue in this state of quietness for ever, or that if any fatal change comes over it, they themselves shall somehow quietly slip out of existence altogether, or at all events, shall never have to encounter and

pass through such terrors as the word of God predicts.

III. The state of heart and life which the mockery of such scoffers can be traced. 1. They are 'willingly ignorant' of the truth. For conclusive evidence of it abounds. The word of God declares it. The state of the earth visibly confirms it. The whole character and history of the righteous are divinely transformed by it. And the natural conscience of man, unless seared as with a hot iron, responds to, and anticipates it. Therefore if scoffers are ignorant of it, they are wilfully and inexcusably so. They receive not the love of the truth, and are therefore given over to believe a lie. The reason of their wilful ignorance is found in, 2. The course of their lives. They walk after their own lusts. Those best acquainted with the life of infidels, know that moral depravity, and not the upright pursuit of truth, is the source of their infidelity. What we find in fact, is here predicted. They are bent on indulging their passions, and therefore hate every truth or event that would terminate their indulgences or subject them to the punishment due to their sin. And so against all scripture, observation, and reason, they are led to question, deny, and scoff at those announcements of coming judgment, which would disturb them in their career, while 'walking after their own lusts.'

IV. The vanity of their infidel and impious expectations. 1. They cannot arrest the course of time, set aside the purposes of God, baffle his wisdom, or resist his power. 2. As certainly as God overwhelmed the old world by a deluge, so certainly will he burn up the earth, and its works, with fire. In that day, the thoughts of scoffers shall finally perish. And all shall be forced to exclaim, 'how terrible art thou in all thy works.' 3. Then assuredly 'the perdition of the ungodly' will be accomplished. There can be no escape. 4. Now alone is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. For as death leaves us, judgment shall find us. To-day, therefore, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, but hearken to the voice of him who offers still to be your Saviour, but is coming speedily to be your Judge.

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TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night,'* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

I. OBSERVE the nature and design of this day. It is 'the great day,' the day on which more

important and eventful matters are to be transacted, than have occurred on any other day since the beginning of time. It is 'the day of the Lord,' the day when he shall rend the heavens, and come down, revealed in flaming fire, and surrounded and waited on by his mighty angels; when he shall raise the dead, and sitting on the great white throne, summon both small and great before him, and separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; the day on which, the heavens and the earth, being dissolved by fire, shall fly away from his presence, and no place shall be longer found for them, and in their room shall immediately appear 'the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;' and finally, the day on which, amid these mighty and awful changes in the visible creation, the Lord shall be heard and seen welcoming the righteous to the everlasting kingdom that now stands forth to view prepared for their reception, and dooming the wicked, and driving them from his presence, to take up their abode in 'the blackness of darkness for ever,' amid the unquenchable fires of hell.

II. The certainty of the coming of this day. Scoffers take occasion from the delay of the Lord's coming, to deny it altogether, and to ridicule the believer's prospect of it. There is, however, no wavering in the mind of God, although there may be what we reckon delay in the execution of his purposes. He is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. The final consummation is constantly present to him. All his present dealings are preparing for it. And at length with unerring and resistless aim, and with perfect ease, he shall bring about the day of reckoning, with all its decisive and endless consequences. Whatever delay is now taking place, arises from the enduring mercy of God to this guilty world. 'He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.'

III. The manner of the coming of that day. 1. It will come suddenly. The thief gives no warning of his approach, but advances quietly in the dark, and has grasped and carried off his prey before his presence is known. With similar suddenness will the day of the Lord come. No sensible intimations of its immediate approach will be given. The day of judgment will be as peaceful in its dawn as any other day, or as was the dawning of that day on which all at once the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah. 2. It will come unexpectedly. Few will be found watching and ready. The

wise as well as the foolish will be found slumbering and sleeping. It will therefore take them by surprise, like the visit of a thief at midnight to a dwelling, when the deepest sleep has fallen on its inmates. 'The Lord will come in a day when men look not for him,' and most of them will be utterly unprepared. 'As in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.'

3. It will come terribly. There is something peculiarly fearful to a family in being suddenly roused from their slumber by the thief who has already entered their habitation. A sense of imminent danger instantly takes possession of their minds, while the darkness serves to aggravate their terror by concealing the amount of their peril. And instead of attempting resistance, they are ready for the time to yield to the power of their enemy, and to feel themselves entirely in his hands. But far more terrible to multitudes shall be the coming of the Lord. 'When they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.' The terrors of that day will not in any degree arise from uncertainties in their condition, or from their mere disturbed imagination. Nor will their sense of danger arise in any measure, from misapprehending and overrating the evil of their actual circumstances and prospects. Alas! no! the reality of their state will be clearly seen to surpass in horror all that language can express, or heart imagine. Utter, remediless, infinite misery and woe, will envelope them on that day. And they will sink down, crushed, helpless, and in despair, beneath its intolerable weight, as those who feel that theirs is the fearful lot of having fallen into the hands of the living God, and found him a consuming fire.

IV. Our duty with reference to the coming of that day. 1. Believers ought daily to anticipate and make ready for it. The bible enjoins the duty. 'Watch therefore,' and 'be ye ready also, for at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.' Believers have all along practised the duty, 'our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour.' It is the special business of faith to give a substantial existence in the minds of believers to things still future and distant, so that they have the same power over believers as if they were at hand. Their faith should thus realise the day of the Lord, as if it were already come, and make them live as if, like the ancient Christian, they daily

heard the words sounding in their ears, 'Come away to judgment.' 2. All ought instantly to prepare for it. Before it actually arrives, your destiny may be fatally determined. There is but a step between you and death. This night your soul may be required of you. And there is no repentance in the grave, no offers of mercy, no work of grace, no change in your moral condition, after death. Nay, even while life continues, your abused privileges and means of grace may be taken from you. Or while they are still continued, the Holy Spirit, who alone can render them effectual, may for ever cease to strive with you; and in that case, you may, even while going about on earth, be as irreversibly sealed to condemnation, as if you were already publicly sentenced, and actually in the world of perdition.

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 TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,'* 2 Pet. iii. 11.

THE world was once overflowed with water. Then every living creature in it was destroyed. Its whole surface seems to have undergone the mightiest changes. And every where are still to be seen the lasting monuments of that great catastrophe. The Lord has given his promise, and the rainbow in the heavens, as the seal of his promise, that he will never again bring a deluge of that nature upon the earth. But at the same time, we are not less plainly taught, that at the end of time, a still more terrible visitation shall overtake our world. Then it shall be consumed with fire.

Fire was often employed by God as the symbol of his presence, and the means of executing his purposes both of judgment and of mercy. When he came down on Sinai, he descended in fire, and the mountain beneath him was altogether on a smoke. Paul declares that 'the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God.'

When the Lord visibly comes to judge the quick and the dead, the fire that then goes out before him, shall seize upon and consume the heavens and the earth. A great noise, an awful sound, as of continuous thunder, shall be heard filling the universe, amidst which, the visible heavens, and the earth, shall be seen beginning to pass away from the face of him that sitteth on the throne. But the visible creation shall not be allowed to pass away untouched. The flames that issue from the presence of the Judge,

shall kindle the whole atmosphere, as with the suddenness and glare of the lightning's flash, and surround the world 'with a vast concave of fire,' so that 'the elements shall melt with fervent heat.' Nor shall the world itself escape. For 'the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.' When 'the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground;' so that 'Abraham beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace;' a faint illustration was thus given of the final conflagration of the world. By that final conflagration 'all the works of man, his palaces, towers, and temples,—his villages, towns, and cities,—his wonderful displays of art, his haughty piles of grandeur, and his vast labours of defence and dominion, will be lighted up in a single blaze, and vanish from the creation.' Even the works of God upon the earth shall be burned up. The loveliness spread over the face of nature shall be shrivelled and effaced by the spreading flames. The mighty forests shall perish like crackling thorns. The everlasting hills shall melt like wax. The ocean itself shall be consumed. The smoke of the whole earth, like the smoke of the land of Sodom, will go up as the smoke of a furnace. Nay, it would seem that the fire which has taken hold upon the earth, shall penetrate to its very centre, and melt it into one mass of burning matter. So that the visible heavens and the earth shall wholly become like an heated, a red-hot oven, in the day of the Lord's anger. In this way, their present form and appearance shall then quickly and finally vanish. At the same time, a different destiny awaits what of the earth is man's work, and what of it is the work of God. The works of men upon the earth shall then be utterly destroyed. But the earth, and the visible heavens, as the work of God, shall only be purified from sin, by this terrible ordeal; and shall come out of it, in a new, more beautiful, and more enduring form. Like the gold, which, being melted in the crucible, comes out of it entire, in a purer state, and ready to take on a brighter lustre than before; so the elements of nature, when thus reduced to a mass of liquid fire, shall be only thereby purified from the presence of sin, and then re-formed into the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Learn from this,

1. The folly of setting our affections on earthly things. The interests, pleasures, and honours of time shall have vanished, and the earth itself

shall be bound up, when we are but entering on our everlasting state.

2. The hatefulness of sin. So defiled and abhorrent to God is the earth becoming through sin, that he will ere long wrap it in devouring fire. By this fearful process alone will it be purged from corruption, and rise out of the final conflagration a bright and blessed dwelling-place for the redeemed. Surely then our contemplation of the havoc which sin is making of this otherwise fair world of ours, ought to fill us with a daily, deepening hatred of this abominable and destructive thing. The more ought we to strive, and even agonize after the deliverance of our own nature, from the power, the presence, and the very being of sin within us. When we consider that all men, in whom sin is found in any shape unsubdued, shall be seized upon by the fires of the last day, not to come out of them, like the earth, purified from sin, but rather to be swept away by that fiery tempest, which is kindled in God's anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell.

3. The duty of striving after universal holiness, in prospect of that pure and happy abode by which the present world is to be succeeded. Into it nothing defiled shall enter. Only they who have done the commandments of the Lord, shall enter in through the gates into that sacred city. Eyes turned from viewing vanity, ears that hearken to the word of life, faces directed heavenward, feet that run in wisdom's ways, hearts that are right with God, and steadfast in his covenant; affections set on things above, bodies turned into, and kept as, living temples of the Holy Ghost, souls that are daily gathering on them the Redeemer's likeness, lives spent in showing forth his praises; and, in short, all heavenliness of conversation, and all godliness of heart and life, and the constant endeavour to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, ought surely to characterise the daily history of those, who are expecting and preparing to inhabit the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

#### TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil,'* Eccl. xii. 14.

TERRIBLE as will be the appearance of a dissolving world, on the great day of the Lord, mankind will have to encounter what will be far more trying to them, than even such a sight.

Their hearts and lives, their thoughts, words, and actions, throughout the whole of their earthly history, will be subjected to a most searching examination and trial, and to the unerring sentence of the infinitely righteous Judge. 'Every man's work shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.'

The conduct of *every* man shall be brought into judgment. None are too great to be subjected to this scrutiny. None are so insignificant as to be overlooked. 'Small and great shall stand before God,' and shall be 'judged, without respect of persons, according to every man's work.'

The *whole* character and conduct of every man shall be judged. His *actions*. 'God will bring every work into judgment.' His *words*. 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.' His *thoughts*. 'God will bring into judgment every secret thing.' 'In the day when God will judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ.' 'He will make manifest the counsels of the heart.'

This judgment shall begin at the house of God. The good and the evil in the character of the righteous, shall be brought into judgment. It shall then be seen, what unprofitable servants and miserable offenders the best of the saints have been in this world, what constant proneness to evil remained within them, what deceitfulness and grievous infirmity of heart, what manifold shortcomings and sins of conversation and of conduct, really cleaved to them all the days of their life. The evil, however, of the character and life of believers, will not be brought into judgment, that God may reckon with them for it, but only so far as is necessary to magnify the mercy of God, and the preciousness of that blood by which their sin has all been finally forgiven, and the riches of that grace, which has triumphed over all their unworthiness, and made them heirs of eternal life.

The good also that believers have cherished in their hearts, and exhibited in their life, will be publicly owned and accepted. No work of faith, and no labour of love, will be forgotten. Not even the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of Christ, will be overlooked. Every word spoken in season, for the glory of God, or the good of man, shall be declared and recompensed. Every spiritual desire, and every holy thought, every penitential tear, and every secret sigh, every approach to God in solitude, and, in short, every thing of a gracious nature that has entered into the daily

meditations and endeavours of each believer, shall then be openly acknowledged and rewarded. This acknowledgment and reward of believers, moreover, shall not be designed, or actually tend, to represent them, or make them feel, as having any thing of their own, of which to boast; but rather, shall merely serve to lead themselves, and all, to magnify the grace of God in them, to glorify the Lord Jesus in his saints, and to admire Him, in them that believe, and that reflect His likeness. Their character and works are good, only in so far as they are made good, by the Holy Spirit dwelling and working in them; and they are accepted as good, not on their own account, but for the sake of the merits of Christ. It is His work that renders them well-pleasing to God. His righteousness covers them, as a spotless robe. They 'abide in Christ,' and therefore 'appear with him in glory.'

The seeming good, and the real evil, that characterise the wicked, shall also be brought into judgment. Whatever has been outwardly good, but inwardly evil, in them, shall be dealt with, not as if it was either bad in form, or good in principle, but simply as being what it is, good in appearance, but bad in the motive from which it sprung. Again, the evil that they have done, or cherished in them, shall not be reckoned greater or less than it really is. Less and more heinous sins shall be retributed with the several measures of severity that are exactly due. Let not any imagine, however, that therefore the punishment inflicted in any case, will be supportable. Alas! the retribution required by truth and justice, will in every instance be terrible beyond conception. To the wicked especially, who have gone on in their wickedness amid the light of the gospel, that day will indeed be a day of terror. It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for them. What a fearful prospect for Christ's enemies is presented by the coming judgment. Then all their secret as well as all their open wickedness will be brought into full view. 'The Lord shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness.' How would it cover any man with confusion, to have not only all his actions and words, but even his very thoughts and most secret lustings, exposed to public gaze? Yet this very exposure will be made at last, before an assembled universe. That which is now covered, shall then be made known. That which is spoken in darkness, shall then be heard in the light. That which is spoken in the ear in closets, shall then be heard on the house-tops. The hope of the hypocrite, who is now deceiving others, and even himself, shall then finally perish.

And of the many who sleep in the dust of the earth, a fearful proportion 'shall awake' only 'to shame and everlasting contempt.'

Prepare then for your account. 'All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom you have to do.' He constantly inspects us, with a view to the final reckoning. 'Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways.' Ye, then, that are still enemies of God, 'agree with your adversary quickly, while in the way with him.' As death leaves you, judgment will find you. 'He that is filthy, shall be filthy still.' If you die wicked, you will be 'reserved to the day of judgment, to be brought forth to the day of wrath.' Then no wailing of yours will move the Judge from his unalterable purpose, to give you according to your works. Nor will your present infatuated unpreparedness, arrest the approach of your day of doom. As in the days of Noah, so still you will eat and drink, till the judgment comes and sweeps you all away. Nor will mere professions then avail. Although saying, Lord, Lord, you will be driven away as workers of iniquity. Rest not, then, till you are in Christ, having on you, not your own righteousness, but His; having in you, not the carnal, but the spiritual, mind. And let your daily course be unceasingly connected with the account to which you are hastening. When employed in privacy, remember that you will be judged for every secret thing. When engaged in conversation, remember that you will have to account for every idle word. When busy with your calling, remember that you will have to answer for every work. When enjoying mercies, seek to use them in a holy manner, by remembering, that to whom much is given, of them the more shall be required. When in trouble, be patient, as knowing that the Lord's coming draweth nigh. When persecuted, be sustained by hoping for 'rest when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven.' When your faith is most severely tried, show it to be much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, that your faith may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Strive, in short, to have 'your hearts established unblameable in holiness, before the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming,' that you may 'receive the crown of righteousness' which is laid up for all them that love His appearing.

## TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works,'*  
Matt. xvi. 27.

THE Lord Jesus is coming again, not to veil his glory, but to display it; not in the fashion of a servant, but in the form of God; not with signs of weakness, but with tokens of infinite power; not to suffer, but to triumph; not to yield himself up into the hands of his enemies, but to crush them under his feet; not to be despised by wicked men, or tempted and harassed by wicked spirits, but to make them, one and all, quail before him; not to call his people to farther labours and sufferings, but to welcome them to the joint participation with himself of glory everlasting. As the Judge of all, he will come with all the marks of divine glory, with the clouds surrounding him, and the fire going out before him, and the tempest and the whirlwind as his chariot, and the angels attending him, and the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God warning the earth of his approach, and summoning its inhabitants before him. He will come, clothed with glory, and girded with power, to show himself unspotted in holiness, and inflexible in justice, as well as unfailing in his love and faithfulness.

What a contrast shall the glory of his appearance then present to the meanness and ignominy of his former manifestation, in the days of his flesh! And what an appropriate and righteous reward shall he have for his humiliation, and obedience unto death, in the overpowering splendours of his second coming! He appeared on earth in utter poverty; then he shall be seen coming in the clouds of heaven, with power, and great glory. The earth was unmoved by his presence when he dwelt upon it; but his second coming shall surprise and rouse its senseless millions, and leave them without a refuge. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets; then he shall come with the great sound of a trumpet that shall raise the dead. His attendants were a few humble illiterate fishermen; then his retinue shall be the countless hosts of heaven. Most men turned a deaf ear to his messages, and slighted them all; then he shall compel them to listen, when revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son. He allowed his visage to be more marred than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men; then his person will be seen invested with over-

powering brightness. He had not where to lay his head; then he shall be seen as God over all, blessed for ever. His eyes were a fountain of tears, that flowed day and night, for the sins and wretchedness of men; then his eyes shall be as flames of fire, striking terror and despair into his enemies, and enkindling love in his people's hearts. He was here a man of sorrows: then in his presence there will be fulness of joy. He was tempted and harassed by enemies, earthly and infernal: then he shall put them all under his feet. He hid not his face from shame and spitting: then his countenance shall be as the sun shining in its strength. He was rejected and despised of men: then he shall be followed and served by the hosts of heaven. Men crowned him with thorns, and smote him on the head: then he shall be seen wearing many golden crowns. They put on him mock robes of royalty; and he shall then be seen clothed with light, as with a garment. They placed the form of a sceptre in his hands; but then he shall really wield the sceptre of unlimited dominion, and rule the nations with a rod of iron. They bowed the knee in mockery before him; but then at his name, every knee shall be forced to bow. They laughed him to scorn, and he shall then laugh at their calamities, and mock when their fear cometh. He stood as a criminal at the bar of human judgment, forsaken by all, and became the victim of reproachful and bloody men; then he shall fill the great white throne of final judgment; and with the aid of his angels, shall gather all nations before him, and separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Wicked men condemned him to death; but he shall then pass sentence on the whole world. He submitted to die; but he shall then prove himself to be the author of life and death, by awarding eternal death to all his enemies, and everlasting life to all his servants. He died in the face of his own creation; but creation then shall die before his face. 'From whose face, the heavens and the earth fled away. The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from their courses, the heavens shall depart as a scroll, passing away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth with all its works shall be burned up. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty man, and every bondman, and every freeman, shall hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and shall say to the mountains and the 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.'

Christ's coming will thus be full of terror to his despisers. Do the great and powerful as well as the mass of meaner men set themselves against the Lord? Then they shall one and all feel alike unable to escape from his presence, and to abide his anger. Every eye shall see him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Are many still trifling with the Saviour? Their hearts cannot endure, nor their hands be made strong in that day, when he shall deal with them. Do any take their place among his followers and friends, while yet they openly walk as enemies of his cross? His eye shall then find them out, and he shall cause them to be taken, and bound hand and foot, and flung into that furnace of fire, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. The most plausible dissemblers shall then be exposed, and driven from him, as workers of iniquity. The slothful and faithless will be overwhelmed with shame. Such as have been ashamed of him before men, shall be denied by him at last. Every heart that has hardened itself against his will, shall die with terror. Shame and confusion of face will overwhelm all his secret as well as his open foes.

His coming shall at the same time be fraught with joy to all his people. Such as serve him faithfully now, shall then have an abundant recompence. Their works of faith and labours of love shall not be forgotten by him. The heart of such as suffer patiently now, shall then rejoice with a joy that no man can take from them. The believer who has often been ready to faint by the way, but still pursued his journey, shall lift up his head in triumph. The Christian who is now sorely harassed by temptation, shall then experience a glorious liberty, and be glad before the Lord with exceeding joy. Such as have been treated as the filth of the world, shall then bear their Lord's own bright and dazzling image. To all that now look for, and love his appearing, he shall then dispense unfading crowns of righteousness and glory. See then that ye abide in him, that you may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

— TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.—EVENING.

'And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? and he was speechless,' Matt. xxii. 12.

THE union of believers to Christ, is likened to a *marriage*, to denote its closeness, its loving nature,

its joyfulness, and its duration. First, its *closeness*. Having become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, he was made sin for his people, though he knew no sin, and they are now made the righteousness of God in him. He and they are one in relation to God, and are identified in all their interests, sorrows, and joys. Second, its *loving* nature. When they were sunk in pollution, he came to them in love, and raised them out of their debasement into partners of his righteousness and glory. For this purpose, he who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, took our nature in its meanest and most suffering form, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and so redeemed his people by his precious blood. And now as their Intercessor within the veil, and as their heavenly King, he secures their interest above, while he sends into them his Holy Spirit to secure their sanctification here. Thus his love for them shall work till it has redeemed them from all evil. Again, in their love to him they give themselves up in soul, body, and spirit, to his service, in a covenant which shall never be broken. And now, nothing lies so near their heart, as what concerns the manifestations of his glory, the doing of his will, the success of his gospel, the welfare of his church, and the salvation of souls through his blood. They reverence his excellencies, and count all things but loss, for their saving interest in his grace, and their relation to his person. They hang on him for every blessing, study conformity to his will and image, and daily show forth his praise. Third, its *joyfulness*. The Lord their God in the midst of them is mighty; he rejoices over them with joy; he rests in his love, and joys over them with singing. And they rejoice in him. Him having not seen, they love; in him, though now they see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Fourth, its *duration*. While this union to Christ lasts through life, it is not destroyed, but rather perfected even by death. All farther interruption to the full experience of this union, then finally ceases. And through eternity itself, a constantly increasing glory shall result from this wonderful union and oneness of believers with Christ, and with God in him.

The *celebration* of this union, is here likened to a marriage feast. This union is celebrated every time that the believer draws nigh to God in adoration, and in thanksgiving; at those sweet and solemn seasons of communion which believers enjoy, in the supper, and at the table, of their

Lord; and at the occasional periods of special public covenanting on the part of the followers of Christ, when their united vowing of fidelity in his service, amid the hazards that surround them, is accompanied by the cheering tokens of his gracious presence, and 'all Judah rejoices at the oath.' In the coming millennium of the church, this union shall be realised and commemorated amidst displays of spiritual glory, and with a fulness of delight which have been hitherto unknown upon the earth. But the chief celebration of it, and the one that may be considered as most particularly referred to in this passage, shall begin at the final coming of the Lord, and continue henceforth, and for ever, to form the unceasing employment and happiness of the redeemed.

The acceptable guests at this marriage feast, are such as have on the wedding garment. The literal allusion here is to the eastern practice of the entertainer furnishing each of his guests with the outer garment, that qualified them for appearing at the feast, to which they had been invited. The spiritual allusion is to that state and character in which alone any can acceptably commemorate their own and each other's union to Christ. There seems, however, to be no necessity for attempting to fix down the precise meaning of the phrase—the wedding garment. It may mean the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers, and as it were, thrown around them, without which man has nothing to justify him, or to secure his acceptance with God. Or it may mean that personal righteousness, which is wrought in the heart and life by the Holy Spirit, and which is said in Revelations, to 'array the saints' as 'in fine linen,' and so make them 'ready for the marriage of the Lamb.' Without the Spirit of Christ, a man has no interest in Christ, and is none of his. Without holiness, no man shall stand in God's sight. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without humility, man is abhorred by God. Therefore the parties alone entitled to celebrate this union, are real Christians, true believers, the justified, regenerated, and devoted followers of the Lamb. Their original character and former habits, may have been very various. But they are all washed in the same blood, clothed in the same righteousness, baptized with the same Spirit, filled with the same faith, and love, and hope; renewed in the same image, cast in the same mould, adorned with the same beauties of holiness, identified in their interests, children of the same family, and heirs together of the same inheritance. Others, all who hear the gospel, whatever be their guilt,

or depravity, as they need salvation, so they are invited to partake of it. But none who do not first come to Christ, and receive and rest on him for salvation, have a right to place themselves among his followers, when they meet to celebrate the union between Christ and his redeemed.

These words also, and especially, set forth the doom of intruders at this marriage feast, at the celebration of the church's union to her Saviour. In spite of all the care that is, or can be exercised, in admitting to the communion of the church, tares will spring up among the wheat; bad fishes will be found among the good, in the gospel net; foolish virgins will be found among the wise; mere professors will creep in among true believers. We can never say of the most solemn assembly of the saints on earth, All here are certainly of the church of God; the sinners are left without. For as there are sinners in the world to be brought into the church, so there are sinners in the church to be cast out of it, and perish with the world. There are not a few thoughtless, and unhumiliated, and even profane, as well as unsanctified, professors in the church, whom a fearful destiny awaits. First; there shall be a public final reckoning with all. 'The King came in to see the guests.' Second; no intruder shall then escape detection. 'He saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment.' Every unsound professor shall be infallibly singled out. Third; a fearful exposure shall then be made of him. 'Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment.' He shall be treated, not only as an enemy, but as one who marked his hostility beneath professions of friendship; who often kissed the Redeemer, saying, 'Hail, Master,' yet habitually betrayed his cause. He will not perish merely as an enemy, who was never taken for anything but an enemy. He must be taken out from among the righteous, into whose society he has crept, passing himself off for one of their number. His exposure will then draw upon him the loathing of the righteous, the cruel mockings of the wicked, the malignant scorn of the devil and his angels, and the withering frowns of God. Fourth; this exposure will utterly confound him. 'He was speechless.' When the concealments practised now, no longer avail dissemblers, when the mask is torn from their face, and the hidden things of darkness are brought to light, and the counsels of all hearts are revealed, then 'fearfulness will surprise the hypocrites.' Fifth; their confusion and alarm will be followed by everlasting destruction. They shall be taken, and bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where are weeping and gnashing of teeth.

See to it then, that you are not only among the many who were called, but among the few who are chosen. See that you are united to Christ, and found in him by faith, having on his righteousness, receiving grace out of his fulness, living in loving fellowship with him and with his saints, and ready to enter with him to the marriage, before the door is for ever shut.

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 TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal,'* Mat. xxv. 46.

'God hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.' The unerring, impartial sentence of that day will widely differ from, and utterly confound, men's previous opinions. Character will rise and sink in direct opposition to the ideas that at present prevail.

I. An actual separation shall then be made of all mankind into two classes. Endlessly varied as are the characters and circumstances of men, they belong to one or other of these two classes even now. These are even at present only the tares and the wheat, the wise and the foolish virgins, the children of light and the children of darkness, the believing and the unbelieving, the penitent and the impenitent, the pure and the unclean, the upright and the crooked, the servants of God, and the workers of iniquity, the righteous and the wicked, the heirs of heaven and the heirs of hell. But at present they cannot be perfectly and thoroughly distinguished. Then, however, 'He shall gather all nations before him, and separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.' No righteous man shall remain among the wicked. No wicked man shall be allowed to remain longer among the righteous.

II. This separation shall be made on grounds of the plainest justice and propriety. The ground of separation shall be, their possession or their want of Christian benevolence. The righteous, from love to their Lord, are kind to their fellow-men, especially to their brethren in Christ; are concerned for their temporal, but still more for their spiritual welfare; seek out, instead of shunning, opportunities of doing them good; abridge their own ease for the benefit of others; share in the afflictions with which others are visited;

acknowledge as fellow-servants and brethren in Christ, those whom the world despise, and persecute; and count no sacrifice too great, that may manifest their love to the Lord, by their love to the Lord's people. On the other hand, the wicked feel little for the bodily distresses of men, and nothing at all for their spiritual wants and woes; have no sympathy for the condition of awakened, tempted, and doubting souls; administer opiates to deaden the pangs of conscience, and to reduce it to its fatal sleep again; labour to quench, instead of fostering any spark of heavenly life that is enkindled in the hearts of others; strive that God and eternity may be banished from the remembrance of all around them, and nothing done to disturb the reign of spiritual death; subordinate the glory of God and the universal good, to the gratification of their own selfish and sensual passions; are strangers to the constraining power of Jesus' love, and the indwelling of his Holy Spirit; and, being destitute of that holy love which animates and unites together the blessed God and his happy family, are fit only for being driven from the divine presence, and the society of the redeemed, and formed into that doleful company, each of whom, having in life, pursued his own interest apart, shall be left for ever to endure alone the weight of his own woe. In short, in that day all men will be put among the righteous or the wicked, according as they have or have not, from love to Christ, ministered to the necessities, temporal and spiritual, of their brethren. This test, indeed, will apply most emphatically to such only as have heard the gospel. How far the heathen may be held bound to brotherly love by what they have experienced of God's love to them in creation, we know not; but they are in the hands of the righteous Judge. Our business is chiefly with ourselves, and with the fact, that the above test shall be applied with decisive effect to all similarly situated with us. Other sins, indeed, beside selfishness, will exclude from heaven. Other graces, beside holy benevolence, will evidence the believer's title to it. Any vice, in fact, predominating in the character, will lead to ruin. Any virtue, predominating, will lead to heaven. Moreover, the holy practical love to men, which will in that day be thus accepted, cannot exist in any man side by side with any prevalent sin; otherwise that man would be sure both of heaven and hell! Hence it follows, that the kindness of a wicked man is not the benevolence then to be accepted. On the contrary, every one possessed of this holy love to others, will be found exercising all the

other gracious affections of the renewed soul. And his holy benevolence will spring in him from faith, from that dependence on Christ for salvation, which works by love, by love to Jesus, and by love to others for Jesus' sake. Some may be apt to think that faith itself, or love to Christ directly would be a better test of character in the great day. And yet there is no better test of both faith in, and love to Christ, than practical Christian benevolence to the bodies, and especially to the souls of men; for all are in circumstances to exhibit this brotherly love. The widow can give her mite; any one may give a cup of cold water; or if some cannot do that, there are none but may by their words, or at least their looks of sympathy, prove that they 'love mercy.' At the same time, by this practical love to His saints, and to sinners, in His name, the servants of Christ show their love to himself. Not only so, but they also thus manifest most effectually their sense of their own need of redeeming love, and their interest in, dependence on and obligations to it. And further still, they thus become meet for heaven, the world of friendship, and of mutual disinterested love. Hence, according as this holy love is, or is not present in his character, every man will have his place assigned him among the righteous or among the wicked.

III. The separation then made shall be final. The wicked shall be sentenced to 'depart,' and then 'cast, into everlasting fire.' The righteous shall go away into eternal life, into 'the kingdom that cannot be moved,' where they are 'ever with the Lord.'

IV. Practical lessons. 1st, Let the believer make his calling and election sure, that he may go on his way rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. 2nd, Let him incessantly labour to pluck sinners as brands from the burning, by being instrumental in bringing them to repentance, before they are in that place where God has forgotten to be gracious. 3rd, Let him especially strive in his prayers to God, and in his endeavours, for the conversion and salvation of the near and dear friends that he has, and that are still living in ungodliness, ere he and they are finally separated; when, in answer to their imploring cries for a drop of water to cool their parched tongues, he shall be obliged to say, 'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.' 4th, Let every Christless sinner agree with his adversary quickly while yet in the way with him, and even agonise to

enter in at the strait gate, lest he be hurried into that prison from which he shall no more come out, until he has paid the uttermost farthing.

#### TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God,'* Psal. ix. 17.

I. OBSERVE the future state of the wicked. They are 'turned into hell.' There they are for ever deprived of God's blessed presence, of the light of his countenance. He hath forgotten to be gracious, and will be favourable no more. There they are shut out from the society, the employments, and the joys of the redeemed. They lift up their eyes in hell, and see the redeemed afar off, in the regions of light and blessedness, feel that they have excluded themselves from that blessed world, and now behold an impassable gulph fixed between them and it, so that they cannot go where the saints are enjoying their everlasting rest. There remaineth no more sacrifice for their sins, and there is to be no forgiveness of them. Their sin has ended in the second death, and it is now impossible to renew them to repentance. Their accepted time, their day of salvation is finally gone, and the things belonging to their peace, are hidden from their eyes. The door of mercy, the gate of heaven, the way to life is finally shut against them. The throne of grace is for ever taken down. The throne of judgment occupies its place. The Spirit of light and life no longer visits their hardened wretched hearts. No sympathy, pity, or love, is felt for them by others. They are loathed and abandoned by the holy inhabitants of heaven, and despised, scorned, and mocked by one another. Amidst this universal and everlasting contempt, they are cut asunder and receive their portion with the hypocrites. They are distracted by lusts which rage ungratified, for the sentence is now gone forth against them, 'he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is unjust, let him be unjust still,' and they have 'perished utterly in their own corruption.' They are tortured by a guilty and accusing conscience, subject to the gnawings of this undying worm, to the consuming power of this unquenchable fire. God now deals out to them 'judgment without mercy,' treats them as vessels of wrath made to dishonour, fitted to destruction, takes them as chaff, gathers them as tares in bundles, collects them together as briars and thorns, and casts them into that fearful furnace, in which he devours them as his adversaries, with his fiery indignation. And

this is their final state. They come no more out of that prison. They sink for ever in that bottomless pit. All hope has forsaken their breasts. They are in the blackness of darkness for ever. Nothing is heard from them but the wailings of despair. Nothing is seen but the smoke of their torment ascending for ever and ever.

II. The persons destined for that world of woe, are 'the wicked' and all 'who forget God.' Gross sinners are evidently preparing for hell. The scriptures are so express on this subject as to leave no room, or at least no excuse, for mistake. They expressly mention idolaters, or worshippers of false gods; the covetous, or worshippers of the world; fornicators, adulterers, and whoremongers, the lascivious, unclean, and abominable; drunkards and revellers; thieves and extortioners; such as live in hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, and envyings; promoters of sedition in the state, or of heresies in the church: revilers, railers, and all liars; and other open enemies of the cross of Christ: and of one and all of these, the scriptures expressly and emphatically declare, that their end is destruction, that they shall not inherit, and never enter the heavenly kingdom, that they shall be turned into hell. But it is not less truly declared in scripture and not less certain in fact, that many other characters besides the grossest sinners of the human race, are turned into hell. All the unbelieving, who do not live by faith in the Son of God; all the fearful, who have not courage daily to confess the name of Jesus before his enemies; all the unconverted, who have never been taught to lay aside their guilty pride and worldly ambition, and with the simplicity and teachableness of little children, sit at the feet of Jesus, to receive daily from him his word and Spirit, to dwell within them; all the unregenerate who have not experienced the second birth, the renewing of the Holy Ghost shed on them abundantly through Jesus Christ; and all who, in the absence of this divine change, are mere formalists, nominal Christians, fruitless branches in the church, are really just as certain as the grossest sinners on earth, to be turned into hell. This is directly and unequivocally revealed in the word of truth, and indeed it is evident from the words, they 'that forget God.' All that live in willing habitual forgetfulness of God, are turned into hell. All who deny his being, or question any of his perfections; all who do not understand or seek after him; all who think him such a one as themselves; all who have 'him not in all their thoughts;' all who like not to retain him in their knowledge; all who worship and serve the creature more than

the Creator; all who make neither his law their rule, nor his glory their end in their habitual conduct; all who have no fear of him before their eyes; all who have not their eyes ever toward the Lord in faith and hope; all who have no love in their hearts to him as their God and portion; and in short, all who have not frequent and heart affecting thoughts of God; all such do live forgetting him, and shall be turned into hell. How fearfully evident is it from this, that instead of only a few sinners of more openly abandoned character being sent to hell, multitudes more, yea whole nations of those who forget God, shall have their place in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone! How proper is it that this should be the portion of all that forget God! His holiness forbids that evil should dwell with him or fools stand in his sight. His justice requires that all be rewarded according to their works. His mercy requires that the redeemed and holy creation be freed and kept free from what is defiled and defiling. His law requires that transgressors fall under its curse. His glory requires that he honour himself upon all by whom the homage is refused which is his due. How erroneously they judge of God, who think that to turn the wicked into hell, would be inconsistent with his character as the greatest and the best of beings! Why he would not be such a being if he did not thus dispose of all who forget him. It therefore certainly is alike agreeable to his nature, according to his purpose, and within his ability, thus to sweep into ruin all his enemies. How foolish then is it for sinners to hope for safety in their multitude. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished. He will turn into hell whole nations that forget him. They cannot resist his power any more than elude his eye. And he can well afford to sacrifice them all; for out of the stones of the field he can, if he please, raise any number of children to himself. Moreover, it is vain to expect that hell will be rendered more tolerable to each by the multitudes that are turned into it. Alas! each of the condemned will have his own torments only heightened by the horrors around him. Surely then, O sinner, too much cannot be done or suffered by you, to escape that place of torment. All that you have to do, is to fly from the wrath to come, by flying to Christ for refuge, as the hope set before you in the gospel. Even that you refuse to do. You will not come to Christ that you may have life. Be assured that the words will be found true, 'he that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

## TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—MORNING.

*'His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord, Matt. xxv. 21.*

JESUS having finished his work on earth, has gone to receive and enjoy the glorious reward of it in heaven. And he will continue in his present state of glory and dominion, until the end of the world, when he will come again, in like manner as he was seen ascending to heaven. Meantime his servants are left behind him in the world. And, 1. Certain talents are committed to them, to be improved with care, against the time when he will call them to give in their account. Their faculties and powers of mind and body, their time, their worldly employments, their temporal substance, their opportunities of personal improvement, their means of influencing and being useful to others, their access to the word of God, and the sanctuary, and all ordinances; their sabbaths, the offered fellowship of God's people, the privileges of domestic life, and the occasions afforded to them of doing good not only to their neighbourhood, and the land in which they dwell, but to the whole world, are the talents with which the Lord has entrusted them. 2. These talents are committed to them in different proportions. Some have ten talents, some five, some two, some only one. Some are blessed with great understanding, others with little, some with great energy of character, others with small. Some are vigorous, others are weakly in their constitution. Some are highly favoured in youth with means of instruction, others have not a tithe of these advantages. Some live to old age, others are cut down early. Some are raised in the world, others are left in obscurity. Some have abundant means of grace, others live where there is a comparative famine of the bread of life. Some have it in their power to be signally useful in many ways in the church and the world, others have much more limited spheres and means of usefulness. 3. The distribution of these talents in such diverse measures, manifests the perfections of God; his sovereignty in doing what he will with his own; his goodness, in that whatever gifts any possess, they receive only from his overflowing bounty, and without any personal claim or merit; his wisdom, in that the opportunities thus given to men of doing good to themselves and others, are perfectly adapted to their respective situations and responsibilities. He gives to every man according to his several

ability. 4. The good and faithful servant, is he who seeking grace, receives it, to enable him daily to devote his talents to the glory of his Saviour, and the advancement of his own, and others' welfare, in time, and for eternity. No man can serve two masters, and therefore he renounces all other masters for Christ. All other bonds are broken, that he may be under Jesus' yoke alone. Other lords have no longer dominion over him. He has surrendered himself in solemn covenant to the Lord, and daily says, 'O Lord, truly I am thy servant,...thou hast loosed my bonds.' He yields himself up to God, as alive from the dead. His earnest study is to know, that he may do, the Redeemer's will. 'I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.' His whole heart is set upon the work assigned to him by his Lord, for the law of the Lord is put in his heart, and he delights in it after the inward man. Being thus heartily devoted to the service of Jesus, his conduct is marked by such features of faithfulness as the following. He does not choose between this and that part of the divine will, but has 'respect to all God's commandments.' He does not long for talents not conferred upon him, or murmur at his want of them; but contented with, and thankful for, what he has, seeks to improve the talents which he *does* possess; and instead of 'wandering from his place, as a bird wandereth from her nest,' he minds the work of his own station, and abides in the calling wherein he is called.' He is not slothful, but diligent in his work. Those parts of his duty are most delightful to him in which he has least to do with the world, and is brought nearest to God. He shrinks from no sacrifice, however costly, from no hazard, however great, to which fidelity to his Lord subjects him. Instead of grudging that fellow-servants are less exposed to danger than he, the more he has to be conformed to his suffering Lord, the higher is his honour, and his gratitude. Whatever he does or endures, however, instead of being thereby lifted up, he feels after he has done all, that he is but an unprofitable servant. He laments misspent time, and labours to redeem it. He strives to approve himself daily to the eye of his great Master. He values supremely the tokens of his Lord's favour at present. And he trusts his Redeemer for his final reward. 5. Observe the rule by which he is finally tried, and according to which, he is pronounced faithful. He is dealt with according to the number of his talents, and the improvement which he has made of them. There being first a willing mind, his service is accepted

according to what he has, and not according to what he has not. If his two talents have been improved, he is equally acceptable in the sight of the Judge, with the man that has received and improved a greater number. 6. Great and greatly to be praised are the divine mercy and grace in thus turning servants of sin into faithful servants of God, and in assuring the humblest of them all, of final acceptance, and an abundant recompence.

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 TWENTY-NINTH DAY.—EVENING.

*'His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord,'* Matt. xxv. 21.

THESE words affectingly set forth the recompence of the faithful servant. Two errors must be avoided with reference to this subject. First, It is not a recompence of debt, but of grace, which awaits, and is bestowed upon, the faithful servants of Christ. They do not deserve it. They deserve nothing but wrath. They are less than the least of all God's mercies. All the works which they perform are wrought in them by the grace of Jesus. Without him they can do nothing. Through him strengthening them, they do all things. By the grace of God they are what they are. And as the very works which they perform, are thus not so much their works as works of the Spirit, so the reward that is connected with these works, is in like manner entirely of grace. Secondly, Christ's faithful servants are not all admitted to the same measure of reward and of blessedness. As they have various capacities, so they have various degrees of glory in heaven. They are like the stars of the firmament, which differ from one another in magnitude and glory. Still all are blessed, and all are perfectly satisfied in the full enjoying of God. Keeping these things in view, observe what is said of their final recompence. 1. They have their Lord's approbation, 'Well done, good and faithful servants.' The approbation of creatures like themselves, is very gratifying. But sometimes from ignorance, and at other times from prejudice and partiality, men approve, when God condemns. Even when human approbation is most deservedly bestowed, there is great danger in being satisfied with it, as nothing is more apt to engender pride, and to render man slothfully contented with what he has accomplished. It is the approbation of Christ the

Judge, on which the eye of his servants ought continually to be fixed. When that approbation is pronounced, the feelings of happiness that thrill their hearts shall be an abundant recompence for all their previous labours and sufferings in his service. 2. They are raised to great honour in the eternal kingdom. 'Be thou ruler over many things.' They are made kings as well as priests unto God, for ever. They not only see the glory of Christ, but sit down with him on his throne, and share his glory. 3. They are raised to unmingled and everlasting happiness. 'Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.' (1.) This joy is felt by their Lord himself. 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty;... He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.' (2.) This joy is felt by them. They participate in their Lord's own joy. They are in fact joint-heirs with Christ, of all his glory, and of all his blessedness. They are where He is, not only to behold, but also to share in the honour and the happiness which he possesses. (3.) This joy is awakened and maintained in them by Christ. He puts into them all the gladness which they experience. His power perfects the holiness of their souls, raises their bodies in glory, and then renders them perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God through all eternity. (4.) This joy is found by them *in* the Lord. In the clear light of heaven, they are brought to behold with unutterable satisfaction the beauty and glory of the Saviour's person, and drawn into delightful acquaintance and converse with the holy and gracious God himself. They enjoy the glorious image of the Lord, as instamped upon their own nature. They find themselves become perfect temples of the living God, in which he dwells and walks, and so they enjoy the tokens of his presence in themselves. The holy affections that now animate them are enjoyed as rays from the source of light, reflections of the Lord's own glorious brightness, streams from the infinite fountain. They rejoice, like the Lord himself, in all his works, as they behold in them the manifestations of his presence and agency, of his power, wisdom, and goodness. In a special manner they enjoy eternally the wonderful displays which are given of God's majesty and mercy, in the work of redemption, and in the unutterable, inconceivable grandeur of its effects; and find continually increasing pleasure in ascribing salvation to God that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb. The Lord is still more immediately and sensibly enjoyed in heaven by his faithful servants. For there they see him face to

face, and talk with him as a man talketh with his friend. No cloud ever hides from them the light of his countenance. In his presence they have fulness of joy. And with transports of delight they continually exclaim, 'This God is our God for ever and ever.' (5.) This joy is abundant and enduring. It does not enter into them as if they could contain it all. They enter into it as into an ocean of blessedness, that is unfathomable and boundless. And having entered into it, they never leave it, nor are forsaken by it again. At God's right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Blessed indeed, is every good and faithful servant of the Lord! Light and momentary, and wisely appointed, indeed, are the heaviest and most protracted afflictions of the follower of Christ, which work out for him such an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And well may he go forward in his Master's service rejoicing, with the prospect before him of such a great recompence of reward.

#### THIRTIETH DAY.—MORNING.

*'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,'* Matt. v. 8.

By the blood of Jesus divinely applied to their souls, and by his Holy Spirit working in them, the pure in heart are saved not only from the burden of guilt that lay upon their consciences, but also from the power and presence of those indwelling, out-bursting lusts and passions, by which their hearts were distracted and defiled, and by reason of which their lives were among the unclean. By the word and grace of Jesus dwelling and working in them, their minds are purified from ignorance and error, their wills from perverseness, their affections from the carnality by which they were polluted and debased. Their souls are stripped of their loathsome pride, and clothed with humility, delivered from wrathfulness, and adorned with a meek and quiet frame and temper, emptied of their restless ambition, and filled with calm and sweet contentment, healed of their wasting sensual desires, and full of spiritual life and health. The pure in heart are thus delivered from the love of sinful and earthly objects, not to remain henceforth empty of every thing good and bad, but that they may present themselves to God as living temples, consecrated to his service, and ready to receive his abiding presence. Of course, their purity of heart is shown by purity of life. Their conversation becomes the gospel. They become living

epistles of Christ, that are known and read of all men. Their light is made to shine before men, so that others seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven.

The pure in heart see God. They not only are blessed with clear soul-satisfying views of the divine character, and of divine things, but are brought into a close vital union to God, become accustomed to familiar communion with him, and are freely admitted into his blessed presence, like the friends and familiars of a king. The pure in heart have fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit. The glory of God's power and love surround them as their refuge and defence. To them all things are full of God.

On earth, the pure in heart see God in many ways. They see him in his works of creation and of providence, spreading out the heavens as a curtain, and treading on the waves of the sea; making the day and night, the summer and winter, seed-time and harvest; upholding all things by the word of his power, and doing according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth. They see him in his providential dealings with themselves; giving them air to breathe, food to eat, and raiment to put on; setting them up, or pulling them down, sending them health, or affliction; numbering the hairs of their heads; and disposing of them daily according to his pleasure. They see him in his ordinances. In the word, as in a glass, they behold his glory. In prayer, they see lifted on them the light of his reconciled countenance. On sabbath, they come to him as the rest of their souls. In the sacrament he makes himself known to them in another manner than he doth unto the world.

In heaven, the pure in heart see God more perfectly. Sin no longer perverts their notions, bedims their perceptions, or limits their knowledge of God. They behold his face in righteousness, and talk with him as a man talketh with his friend. Here they see through a glass darkly; there they see face to face. Here they know but in part; there they know even as they are known. Here spiritual objects are brought down by means of earthly illustrations to their senses; there their senses are refined and raised to the level of spiritual things. Here they have comparatively imperfect glimpses of the divine perfections and works; there they have clear and near visions of God. Here they are often perplexed by his dealings; there they see them to have been all full of wisdom, and of love. Here they are in a world full of the ravages of sin; there they are in a world of light and glory, stored with all

lofty and beautiful things that are full of God. Here the creatures with whom they mingle are too generally like their father the devil; there all the myriads of angels and men reflect without a stain, the lovely and glorious image of God. Here the pure in heart but faintly realize the excellence of Christ; there they see him as the King in his beauty, reflecting from his person, all the perfections of the Godhead, and receiving from the universe the honour due to him for his obedience unto death. Here God is comparatively unknown even to the pure in heart; there they come into his immediate presence, join in the praises offered at his throne, and approach near to him as the fountain of living waters. He himself so fills their minds with light, their hearts with love, their whole souls with joy unspeakable, as to transform their whole nature into his own likeness, draw them into mysterious union with him, and make them full of God. These beatific visions become more and more bright and overpowering for ever, and so continue to draw from them, through all the ages of eternity, unceasing ascriptions of praise to the King eternal, immortal, and invisible.

There is a blessed connection of a twofold nature between purity of heart, and seeing God. Believers must be pure in heart *in order to* their seeing him. And then *by* seeing him, by the sight which they obtain of God, they are rendered more and more pure, or their perfect purity takes on a brighter and brighter lustre. Hence the words, 'we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Let then all the children of God, with the promises of this blessedness to live upon, be now continually cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And let all the impure cry to God to create in them a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within them; for 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'

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#### THIRTIETH DAY.—EVENING.

'Unto him that loved us,' Rev. i. 5.

THE love of Jesus passeth knowledge. It fills immensity and eternity at once. It is the theme of the universe. The saints on earth live upon it. The redeemed on high proclaim its wonders. The cherubim labour to penetrate and lay open more and more its unfathomable depths. It feeds the fervours of the seraphim. It forms the object of infinite delight to God himself. This love of Christ is the love not of a mere man, or

even of an angel, or archangel, but of a divine person, of one who is the same in substance with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory. And it is love manifested not to illustrious and holy creatures, not even to such creatures as our first parents, when as yet they bore the image of God in paradise, but to fallen, rebellious, miserable creatures, who deserved no mercy, who merited nothing but wrath.

The history of the love of this glorious and gracious Redeemer to such unworthy objects is a wonderful history indeed. In the depths of the eternity that is past, the Son of God having entered into a covenant with the Father, in behalf of ruined sinners, in the view of what he would do for them in the fulness of time, rejoiced from everlasting in the habitable parts of the earth, and had his delight with the sons of men. When our first parents fell, and full of conscious guilt and fear, tried to hide themselves from the presence of Christ, he came to the trembling culprits, in the garden, and declared himself their Saviour. After that, he often appeared in the most gracious manner to the patriarchs, often in a human form, an intimation that he was at the appointed season actually to become God manifested in the flesh, and to dwell in very deed with men upon the earth. He also continued in the midst of his ancient people, from the time of their deliverance out of Egypt, onward through all the successive ages of their history. In his love and in his pity, he redeemed them, and carried them all the days of old. And many were the attractive manifestations which he made of himself, to familiarize them with his favourable presence, and fill them with holy confidence in his grace and truth. At length this high and holy one, after being long predicted, and typified, and looked for, was born into the world. And then to make his love the more striking, he not only veiled his boundless glory in our nature, but took our nature in its meanest and most afflicted form. He descended, so far as that was possible, into the very lowest depths of our suffering and wretchedness, that he might raise out of these depths even the chief of sinners. His life on earth, was out of love to us, spent in incessant dangers, labours, and sufferings. He went about continually doing good. He daily felt it more blessed to give than to receive. He gave his time, his thoughts, his very life, for sinners. He wrought miracles of mercy on their bodies. He laboured to infuse peace into their souls. He sought out the vilest places for his ministry, and lingered in pity over the vilest sinners, and let them hear almost nothing but words of peace. He invited

the labouring and heavy laden to come to him for rest. He loved the most repulsive sinners with a matchless love; and while they penitently and gratefully washed his feet with their tears, he washed them from their sins in his blood.

He stood on earth, he lived, he taught, he obeyed, he suffered, he died as our surety. For us he suffered all the effects of sin. His life commenced, and was worn out, in meanness and endurance, amid privations and pain, reproach and violence, sorrow and sighing. He was wounded and stunned by the ingratitude, contempt, and blasphemies, which assailed him on every side. He was afflicted by the conduct of his followers, by their ignorance, prejudices, carnality, fickleness, and treachery, as well as by their circumstances of discomfort and danger. He also bore the hostility of Satan and his angels, and foiled their most formidable assaults, and shrunk not from his conflict with these powers of darkness, until he had utterly vanquished them, and dragged them captive at his chariot wheels. And more than all, and to crown all, he bore the immediate wrath of God, due to us for sin, until he sunk beneath the agony of his abandonment, and was brought to the dust of death. Even then his love did not die. Even in the grave, he left the indelible marks of his love, by sanctifying that gloomy prison into a cheerful resting-place for his people's dust. And then he rose triumphant, and went to heaven, and took possession of the inheritance which he had purchased for himself and for his people. There he is preparing mansions for them, into which he is gradually gathering them from this lower world. There too he intercedes for them. From thence also he sends the Spirit to intercede within them. Thus he saves them to the uttermost, and makes all things labour together for their good. Every past age has witnessed the actual fruits of his work as a Saviour, in sinners saved from sin and death and hell, and brought to glory. At this moment, there are on earth not a few who are living monuments of his grace and power, who are washed from their sins in his blood, quickened by his Spirit, and who shall live together with him. Increasing numbers in every succeeding age, shall be made to realise and know his redeeming love, until the whole church, not one member wanting, is sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word, and presented to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. And then shall begin eternal ascriptions by the redeemed of glory and dominion to Jesus, for having loved them and washed them from their sins in his

blood, and made them kings and priests unto God.

Impenitent sinners, who continue to despise this love of Christ, must soon feel 'the wrath of the Lamb.' Desponding inquirers after Christ, may well cast themselves upon the love of him who is thus alike able and willing to save them to the uttermost. Believers ought to seek from him a divinely enlightened mind, and a divinely renewed heart, and walk in his commandments and ordinances blameless, as they would know more and more the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

#### THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—MORNING.

*'And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away,'* Isa. xxxv. 10.

BELIEVERS, once, like other sinners, were taken captive by the god of this world, deprived of all intercourse with heaven their proper home, with holy creatures, their intended associates and friends, and with God their only satisfying portion. Yea, they had ceased to think of heaven, or to long for re-union to its happy family, or for that blessed presence, which constitutes the joy of heaven. They allowed themselves to be led captive by the devil at his will. They were once, also, the slaves of sin. Separated from God and from communion with his saints, with every power of their mind, and every member of their body, enslaved by sin, they toiled on in its service. And although they reaped nothing but misery from sin, and were offered deliverance from both sin and misery, they long cleaved to their very bondage, drew more closely around them the fetters of corruption, and shrunk from the liberty wherewith Christ was ready to make them free. Believers, further, once lay under a sentence of condemnation to death, the execution of which would have driven them from the divine presence, shut them out of the society of angels and redeemed men, excluded them from heaven, the abode of blessedness and peace, and banished them into the accursed place, to endure the torment of unbridled yet ungratified lusts, the horrid companionship of devils, and the fierceness of the wrath of God.

In this captive, enslaved, and condemned state, the voice of the Redeemer has been heard by them, summoning them forth to liberty. The Lord Jesus has set them free from the power of

Satan, and the bondage of their own passions, and has washed them in the fountain of his own blood from all their sin, and has made their oppressing fear of divine wrath to give way before the peaceful sense of pardoning mercy. They now behold God making himself over to them in Christ, covenanting to bless them with continued pardon, and with spiritual liberty and joy without end, and opening up to them the ordinances of grace, that they may refresh themselves at the wells of salvation, in their way to heaven. And now they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, built up on Christ Jesus for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Even on earth the redeemed are, as compared with others, a happy people. The darkness has passed away from them, and they are become light in the Lord. He speaks to them no longer in anger, but in mercy. They look upward, and are gladdened by the light of his countenance. They look inward, and the peace which passeth understanding possesses their heart and mind. They look into the past, and their life of sin is covered up from the sight of God by the atoning blood of Jesus. They consider the present, and contentment is its blessed attendant. They look into the future, and the prospect brightens on them, until it loses itself in the unclouded effulgence of eternal day. In trouble, Christ is their present help. In the fire of persecution he is at their side to preserve them unhurt. He subdues their corruptions while they fight with them, and bruises Satan under their feet. They come up through the wilderness leaning on his arm. In the dark valley and shadow of death, he is at hand to comfort and sustain them. And they shut their eyes in death, and open them in eternity, only to be satisfied with his likeness.

Still many are the afflictions of the redeemed in this world. The enmity of the world, the earthliness of their hearts, their body of sin and death, and their disappointments, crosses, and afflictions, will make them now to sow in tears, that they may afterwards reap in joy.

It is in heaven that the happiness of the redeemed is absolutely perfect. Their souls are made perfect in holiness. Their bodies are raised from the grave, spiritual, incorruptible, glorious, immortal. And then they go to enjoy a blessedness at present inconceivable. They are made like to Christ, they claim God for their portion, they dwell in his house and presence, they behold the glory of their Lord, they serve him day and night, and they feel no more weariness or sorrow, want, or pain. When thus redeemed wholly

and for ever from the sin and misery which accompanied them to the very gates of heaven, the ransomed of the Lord will indeed come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. When the peculiarly separate and holy life which they led in this world, is followed by glory so singularly desirable; when their present fellowship of prayers and fastings, and frequent communings, of faith and patience, is followed by such a fellowship of consolations and triumphs; when wearied out with a wicked world, and utterly tired of their own sins and sorrows, they are brought to a place of rest, so seasonable, uninterrupted, and enduring; and above all, when they reflect that out of sin and condemnation they are raised to those seats of glory, as purchased for them by the blood of the Son of God, do you not see that unutterable gladness shall pervade the minds, and alleluiahs of glory shall burst from the lips, of the ransomed throng, around the throne of God, and of the Lamb.

Then sorrow and sighing fly away. They are now no more troubled with doubts of God's mercy, or fears for their own safety. Satan no longer ensnares them by his wiles, or assails them with his violence. The temptations that now constantly harrass them are all gone. They no longer lament over divisions among brethren, for all are united in love; nor weep with weeping friends, for all that they now know as friends have taken up their harps to sing the songs of Zion. No more are their bodies wasted with suffering, or their minds with sorrow; for suffering and sorrow, and all the causes of them, have fled away for ever.

Ye ransomed of the Lord, seek continually to be saved from sin, that ye may thus ere long be saved from all its consequences. Ye licentious, covetous, hateful, and hating sinners, expect in your present state, only infamy and ruin. And seek, ere it be too late, that the grace of God which brings salvation, may redeem you from iniquity, that you may yet have your lot among the ransomed of the Lord.

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#### THIRTY-FIRST DAY.—EVENING.

*'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever,' Rev. v. 13.*

THE final arrangements of the eternal world are made. The members of the elect and of the wicked, are respectively completed. Christ, the Judge, has come and assigned to them their final destinies. The new heavens and new earth have

become the dwelling-place of God's family. Creation is a temple. In the midst of it is beheld the everlasting throne. On that throne God dwells in light that is unapproachable. In the midst of the throne is seen the once crucified, but now exalted Redeemer. Around him are gathered his ransomed people. Hosts of angels encircle the redeemed. The face of redeemed and renovated nature stretches away on every side. God's purposes are accomplished. Christ's work is completed. All created and holy intelligencies are assembled to magnify the blessed One, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And so the universal song begins. The saints lead the way. Angels follow. The whole creation joins in concert. And each burst of praise is concluded by the Amen of the redeemed. The redeemed humbly fall down before the Lamb, and adore him as their God and Saviour. 'Thou art worthy.' 'Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood.' Thou didst suffer the wrath and curse due to us, cancel our sentence, pacify our consciences, redeem us from sin and Satan, and the world, and bring us to this happy home, where sin and sorrow are unknown. With heavy hearts we travelled the vale of tears; but thou hast attuned our hearts to praise thee, and put into our hands these golden harps. We had many a sore struggle with spiritual foes: but thou hast made us more than conquerors, and given us these palms of victory. We were slaves of sin; but thou hast purged our sin away, put on us these robes of white, given us these golden censers to bear before the throne, and made us priests to the Eternal; yea, fitted us to wear these golden crowns, and made us kings to God. Countless as are our numbers, and varied as are our histories, we are met in thy presence, to extol the love that has saved us

from sin, and presented us faultless before the presence of thy glory. Myriads of angels join in this song of praise, for sinners raised into sons of God, and also for the benefit which they themselves, though angels, have received from Christ. They indeed are not redeemed, for they never sinned. But still they derive more knowledge and enjoyment of God, from the work of redemption, than from any other source; and therefore praise the Saviour, on account of what he has done even for themselves, on account of the peculiarly glorious display that is made of the divine perfections, in his person and finished work. Yea, as the happy effects of redeeming love shall be for ever felt throughout the boundless and eternal kingdom of Jehovah, the praises of 'God in Christ,' shall be heard proceeding not only from myriads of angels and redeemed men, but also from all those millions of orders of created and holy beings that fill the universe of worlds. Nay, the unconscious creation itself shall join in the general chorus. As its purity, and order, and loveliness, will be seen to be the work of Christ's hand, as well as the fruit of his redeeming love, so it shall in all its parts reflect the glory, and own the hand of him that made it, by the share which it gladly takes in this universal work of praise. It ought to gladden us to think, that however God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is still dishonoured, the period is fast approaching when his immense and eternal kingdom shall be filled with his praises. May he send his Spirit so to sanctify all who read these words, by the manifestations of his holy love, that they shall be found henceforth daily employed, so long as they live on earth, in that work of praise that is to occupy the universe throughout eternity.