

Evening by Evening

By

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VOLUME TWO

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

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

Hosea 10:12

THIS month of April is said to derive its name from the Latin verb *aperio*, which signifies *to open*, because all the buds and blossoms are now opening, and we have arrived at the gates of the flowery year. Reader, if you are yet unsaved, may your heart, in accord with the universal awakening of nature, be opened to receive the Lord. Every blossoming flower warns you that *it is time to seek the Lord*; be not out of tune with nature, but let your heart bud and bloom with holy desires. Do you tell me that the warm blood of youth leaps in your veins? Then, I entreat you, give your vigour to the Lord. It was my unspeakable happiness to be called in early youth, and I could fain praise the Lord every day for it. Salvation is priceless, let it come when it may, but oh! an early salvation has a double value in it. Young men and maidens, since you may perish ere you reach your prime, “*It is time to seek the Lord.*” Ye who feel the first signs of decay, quicken your pace: that hollow cough, that hectic flush, are warnings which you must not trifle with; with you it is indeed time to seek the Lord. Did I observe a little grey mingled with your once luxurious tresses? Years are stealing on apace, and death is drawing nearer by hasty marches, let each return of spring arouse you to set your house in order. Dear reader, if you are now advanced in life, let me entreat and implore you to delay no longer. There is a day of grace for you now—be thankful for that, but it is a limited season and grows shorter every time that clock ticks. Here in this silent chamber, on this first night of another month, I speak to you as best I can by paper and ink, and from my inmost soul, as God’s servant, I lay before you this warning, “*It is time to seek the Lord.*” Slight not that work, it may be your last call from destruction, the final syllable from the lip of grace.

*Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief:
when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his
seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD
shall prosper in his hand.*

Isaiah 53:10

PLEAD for the speedy fulfillment of this promise, all ye who love the Lord. It is easy work to pray when we are grounded and bottomed, as to our desires, upon God's own promise. How can He that gave the word refuse to keep it? Immutable veracity cannot demean itself by a lie, and eternal faithfulness cannot degrade itself by neglect. God must bless His Son, His covenant binds Him to it. That which the Spirit prompts us to ask for Jesus, is that which God decrees to give Him. Whenever you are praying for the kingdom of Christ, let your eyes behold the dawning of the blessed day which draweth near, when the Crucified shall receive His coronation in the place where men rejected Him. Courage, you that prayerfully work and toil for Christ with success of the very smallest kind, it shall not be so always; better times are before you. Your eyes cannot see the blissful future: borrow the telescope of faith; wipe the misty breath of your doubts from the glass; look through it and behold the coming glory. Reader, let us ask, *do you* make this your constant prayer? Remember that the same Christ who tells us to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," had first given us this petition, "Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Let not your prayers be all concerning your own sins, your own wants, your own imperfections, your own trials, but let them climb the starry ladder, and get up to Christ Himself, and then, as you draw nigh to the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, offer this prayer continually, "Lord, extend the kingdom of Thy dear Son." Such a petition, fervently presented, will elevate the spirit of all your devotions. Mind that you prove the sincerity of your prayer by labouring to promote the Lord's glory.

*All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way;
and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
Isaiah 53:6*

HERE a confession of sin *common* to all the elect people of God. They have all fallen, and therefore, in common chorus, they all say, from the first who entered heaven to the last who shall enter there, “All we like sheep have gone astray.” The confession, while thus unanimous, is also *special* and particular: “We have turned every one to his own way.” There is a peculiar sinfulness about every one of the individuals; all are sinful, but each one with some special aggravation not found in his fellow. It is the mark of genuine repentance that while it naturally associates itself with other penitents, it also takes up a position of loneliness. “We have turned every one to his own way,” is a confession that each man had sinned against light peculiar to himself, or sinned with an aggravation which he could not perceive in others. This confession is *unreserved*; there is not a word to detract from its force, nor a syllable by way of excuse. The confession is *a giving up of all pleas of self-righteousness*. It is the declaration of men who are consciously guilty—guilty with aggravations, guilty without excuse: they stand with their weapons of rebellion broken in pieces, and cry, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” Yet we hear no dolorous wailings attending this confession of sin; for the next sentence makes it almost a song. “The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” It is the most grievous sentence of the three, but it overflows with comfort. Strange is it that where misery was concentrated mercy reigned; where sorrow reached her climax weary souls find rest. The Saviour bruised is the healing of bruised hearts. See how the lowliest penitence gives place to assured confidence through simply gazing at Christ on the cross!

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths:

*for out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

Isaiah 2:3

IT is exceedingly beneficial to our souls to mount above this present evil world to something nobler and better. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are apt to choke everything good within us, and we grow fretful, desponding, perhaps proud and carnal. It is well for us to cut down these thorns and briars, for heavenly seed sown among them is not likely to yield a harvest; and where shall we find a better sickle with which to cut them down than communion with God and the things of the kingdom? In the valleys of Switzerland many of the inhabitants are deformed, and all wear a sickly appearance, for the atmosphere is charged with miasma, and is close and stagnant; but up yonder, on the mountain, you find a hardy race, who breathe the clear fresh air as it blows from the virgin snows of the Alpine summits. It would be well if the dwellers in the valley could frequently leave their abodes among the marshes and the fever mists, and inhale the bracing element upon the hills. It is to such an exploit of climbing that I invite you this evening. May the Spirit of God assist us to leave the mists of fear and the fevers of anxiety, and all the ills which gather in this valley of earth, and to ascend the mountains of anticipated joy and blessedness. May God the Holy Spirit cut the cords that keep us here below, and assist us to mount! We sit too often like chained eagles fastened to the rock, only that, unlike the eagle, we begin to love our chain, and would, perhaps, if it came really to the test, be loath to have it snapped. May God now grant us grace, if we cannot escape from the chain as to our flesh, yet to do so as to our spirits; and leaving the body, like a servant, at the foot of the hill, may our soul, like Abraham, attain the top of the mountain, there to indulge in communion with the Most High.

*The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom;
and before honour is humility.*

Proverbs 15:33

HUMILIATION of soul always *brings a positive blessing with it*. If we empty our hearts of self God will fill them with His love. He who desires close communion with Christ should remember the word of the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." Stoop if you would climb to heaven. Do we not say of Jesus, "He descended that He might ascend"? so must you. You must grow downwards, that you may grow upwards; for the sweetest fellowship with heaven is to be had by humble souls, and by them alone. God will deny no blessing to a thoroughly humbled spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," with all its riches and treasures. The whole exchequer of God shall be made over by deed of gift to the soul which is humble enough to be able to receive it without growing proud because of it. God blesses us all up to the full measure and extremity of what it is safe for Him to do. If you do not get a blessing, it is because it is not safe for you to have one. If our heavenly Father were to let your unhumbled spirit win a victory in His holy war, you would pilfer the crown for yourself, and meeting with a fresh enemy you would fall a victim; so that you are kept low for your own safety. When a man is sincerely humble, and never ventures to touch so much as a grain of the praise, there is scarcely any limit to what God will do for him. Humility makes us ready to be blessed by the God of all grace, and fits us to deal efficiently with our fellow men. True humility is a flower which will adorn any garden. This is a sauce with which you may season every dish of life, and you will find an improvement in every case. Whether it be prayer or praise, whether it be work or suffering, the genuine salt of humility cannot be used in excess.

They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

Psalm 118:12

OUR Lord Jesus, by His death, did not purchase a right to a *part* of us only, but to the *entire* man. He contemplated in His passion the sanctification of us wholly, spirit, soul, and body; that in this triple kingdom He Himself might reign supreme without a rival. It is the business of the newborn nature which God has given to the regenerate to assert the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ. My soul, so far as thou art a child of God, thou must conquer all the rest of thyself which yet remains unblest; thou must subdue all thy powers and passions to the silver sceptre of Jesus' gracious reign, and thou must never be satisfied till He who is King by purchase becomes also King by gracious coronation, and reigns in thee supreme. Seeing, then, that sin has no right to any part of us, we go about a good and lawful warfare when we seek, in the name of God, to drive it out. O my body, thou art a member of Christ: shall I tolerate thy subjection to the prince of darkness? O my soul, Christ has suffered for thy sins, and redeemed thee with His most precious blood: shall I suffer thy memory to become a storehouse of evil, or thy passions to be firebrands of iniquity? Shall I surrender my judgment to be perverted by error, or my will to be led in fetters of iniquity? No, my soul, thou art Christ's, and sin hath no right to thee.

Be courageous concerning this, O Christian! be not dispirited, as though your spiritual enemies could never be destroyed. You are able to overcome them—not in your own strength—the weakest of them would be too much for you in that; but you can and shall overcome them through the blood of the Lamb. Do not ask, “How shall I dispossess them, for they are greater and mightier than I?” but go to the strong for strength, wait humbly upon God, and the mighty God of Jacob will surely come to the rescue, and you shall sing of victory through His grace.

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

Psalm 51:14

IN this SOLEMN CONFESSION, it is pleasing to observe that David plainly names his sin. He does not call it manslaughter, nor speak of it as an imprudence by which an unfortunate accident occurred to a worthy man, but he calls it by its true name, bloodguiltiness. He did not actually kill the husband of Bathsheba; but still it was planned in David's heart that Uriah should be slain, and he was before the Lord his murderer. Learn in confession to be honest with God. Do not give fair names to foul sins; call them what you will, they will smell no sweeter. What God sees them to be, that do you labour to feel them to be; and with all openness of heart acknowledge their real character. Observe, that David was evidently oppressed with the heinousness of his sin. It is easy to use words, but it is difficult to feel their meaning. The fifty-first Psalm is the photograph of a contrite spirit. Let us seek after the like brokenness of heart; for however excellent our words may be, if our heart is not conscious of the hell-deservingness of sin, we cannot expect to find forgiveness.

Our text has in it AN EARNEST PRAYER—it is addressed to the God of salvation. It is His prerogative to forgive; it is His very name and office to save those who seek His face. Better still, the text calls Him the God of my salvation. Yes, blessed be His name, while I am yet going to Him through Jesus' blood, I can rejoice in the God of my salvation.

The psalmist ends with A COMMENDABLE VOW: if God will deliver him he will sing—nay, more, he will “sing *aloud*.” Who can sing in any other style of such a mercy as this! But note the subject of the song—“**THY RIGHTEOUSNESS.**” We must sing of the finished work of a precious Saviour; and he who knows most of forgiving love will sing the loudest.

*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.
Psalm 23:4*

BEHOLD, how independent of outward circumstances the Holy Ghost can make the Christian! What a bright light may shine within us when it is all dark without! How firm, how happy, how calm, how peaceful we may be, when the world shakes to and fro, and the pillars of the earth are removed! Even death itself, with all its terrible influences, has no power to suspend the music of a Christian's heart, but rather makes that music become more sweet, more clear, more heavenly, till the last kind act which death can do is to let the earthly strain melt into the heavenly chorus, the temporal joy into the eternal bliss! Let us have confidence, then, in the blessed Spirit's power to comfort us. Dear reader, are you looking forward to poverty? Fear not; the divine Spirit can give you, in your want, a greater plenty than the rich have in their abundance. You know not what joys may be stored up for you in the cottage around which grace will plant the roses of content. Are you conscious of a growing failure of your bodily powers? Do you expect to suffer long nights of languishing and days of pain? O be not sad! That bed may become a throne to you. You little know how every pang that shoots through your body may be a refining fire to consume your dross—a beam of glory to light up the secret parts of your soul. Are the eyes growing dim? Jesus will be your light. Do the ears fail you? Jesus' name will be your soul's best music, and His person your dear delight. Socrates used to say, "Philosophers can be happy without music;" and Christians can be happier than philosophers when all outward causes of rejoicing are withdrawn. In Thee, my God, my heart shall triumph, come what may of ills without! By thy power, O blessed Spirit, my heart shall be exceeding glad, though all things should fail me here below.

Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

Psalm 18:35

THE words are capable of being translated, “Thy *goodness* hath made me great.” David gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but the goodness of God. “Thy *providence*,” is another reading; and providence is nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is the bud of which providence is the flower, or goodness is the seed of which providence is the harvest. Some render it, “Thy *help*,” which is but another word for providence; providence being the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Or again, “Thy *humility* hath made me great.” “Thy *condescension*” may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas mentioned, including that of *humility*. It is God’s making Himself little which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little, that if God should manifest His greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under His feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies, and bow to see what angels do, turns His eye yet lower, and looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. There are yet other readings, as for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, “Thy discipline”—Thy fatherly correction—“hath made me great;” while the Chaldee paraphrase reads, “Thy word hath increased me.” Still the idea is the same. David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness of his Father in heaven. May this sentiment be echoed in our hearts this evening while we cast our crowns at Jesus’ feet, and cry, “Thy gentleness hath made me great.” How marvellous has been our experience of God’s gentleness! How gentle have been His corrections! How gentle His forbearance! How gentle His teachings! How gentle His drawings! Meditate upon this theme, O believer. Let gratitude be awakened; let humility be deepened; let love be quickened ere thou fallest asleep tonight.

*For there stood by me this night the angel of God,
whose I am, and whom I serve,
Acts 27:23*

TEMPEST and long darkness, coupled with imminent risk of shipwreck, had brought the crew of the vessel into a sad case; one man alone among them remained perfectly calm, and by his word the rest were reassured. Paul was the only man who had heart enough to say, "Sirs, be of good cheer." There were veteran Roman legionaries on board, and brave old mariners, and yet their poor Jewish prisoner had more spirit than they all. He had a secret Friend who kept his courage up. The Lord Jesus despatched a heavenly messenger to whisper words of consolation in the ear of His faithful servant, therefore he wore a shining countenance and spake like a man at ease.

If we fear the Lord, we may look for timely interpositions when our case is at its worst. Angels are not kept from us by storms, or hindered by darkness. Seraphs think it no humiliation to visit the poorest of the heavenly family. If angel's visits are few and far between at ordinary times, they shall be frequent in our nights of tempest and tossing. Friends may drop from us when we are under pressure, but our intercourse with the inhabitants of the angelic world shall be more abundant; and in the strength of love-words, brought to us from the throne by the way of Jacob's ladder, we shall be strong to do exploits. Dear reader, is this an hour of distress with you? then ask for peculiar help. Jesus is the angel of the covenant, and if His presence be now earnestly sought, it will not be denied. What that presence brings in heart-cheer those remember who, like Paul, have had the angel of God standing by them in a night of storm, when anchors would no longer hold, and rocks were nigh.

"O angel of my God, be near,
Amid the darkness hush my fear;
Loud roars the wild tempestuous sea,
Thy presence, Lord, shall comfort me."

Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.

Psalm 25:18

IT is well for us when prayers about our sorrows are linked with pleas concerning our sins—when, being under God’s hand, we are not wholly taken up with our pain, but remember our offences against God. It is well, also, to take both sorrow and sin to the same place. It was to God that David carried his sorrow: it was to God that David confessed his sin. Observe, then, *we must take our sorrows to God*. Even your little sorrows you may roll upon God, for He counteth the hairs of your head; and your great sorrows you may commit to Him, for He holdeth the ocean in the hollow of His hand. Go to Him, whatever your present trouble may be, and you shall find Him able and willing to relieve you. *But we must take our sins to God too*. We must carry them to the cross, that the blood may fall upon them, to purge away their guilt, and to destroy their defiling power.

The special lesson of the text is this:—that *we are to go to the Lord with sorrows and with sins in the right spirit*. Note that all David asks concerning his sorrow is, “*Look upon mine affliction and my pain;*” but the next petition is vastly more express, definite, decided, plain—“*Forgive all my sins*” Many sufferers would have put it, “*Remove my affliction and my pain, and look at my sins.*” But David does not say so; he cries, “*Lord, as for my affliction and my pain, I will not dictate to Thy wisdom. Lord, look at them, I will leave them to Thee, I should be glad to have my pain removed, but do as Thou wilt; but as for my sins, Lord, I know what I want with them; I must have them forgiven; I cannot endure to lie under their curse for a moment.*” A Christian counts sorrow lighter in the scale than sin; he can bear that his troubles should continue, but he cannot support the burden of his transgressions.

But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David.

Nehemiah 3:15

MENTION of the king's garden by Nehemiah brings to mind the *paradise* which the King of kings prepared for Adam. Sin has utterly ruined that fair abode of all delights, and driven forth the children of men to till the ground, which yields thorns and briars unto them. My soul, remember the fall, for it was *thy* fall. Weep much because the Lord of love was so shamefully ill-treated by the head of the human race, of which thou art a member, as undeserving as any. Behold how dragons and demons dwell on this fair earth, which once was a garden of delights.

See yonder another King's garden, which the King waters with His bloody sweat—*Gethsemane*, whose bitter herbs are sweeter far to renewed souls than even Eden's luscious fruits. There the mischief of the serpent in the first garden was undone: there the curse was lifted from earth, and borne by the woman's promised seed. My soul, bethink thee much of the agony and the passion; resort to the garden of the olive-press, and view thy great Redeemer rescuing thee from thy lost estate. This is the garden of gardens indeed, wherein the soul may see the guilt of sin and the power of love, two sights which surpass all others.

Is there no other King's garden? Yes, *my heart*, thou art, or shouldst be such. How do the flowers flourish? Do any choice fruits appear? Does the King walk within, and rest in the bowers of my spirit? Let me see that the plants are trimmed and watered, and the mischievous foxes hunted out. Come, Lord, and let the heavenly wind blow at Thy coming, that the spices of Thy garden may flow abroad. Nor must I forget the King's garden of *the church*. O Lord, send prosperity unto it. Rebuild her walls, nourish her plants, ripen her fruits, and from the huge wilderness, reclaim the barren waste, and make thereof "a King's garden."

*And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering;
and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.*

Leviticus 1:4

OUR Lord's being made "sin for us" is set forth here by the very significant transfer of sin to the bullock, which was made by the elders of the people. The laying of the hand was not a mere touch of contact, for in some other places of Scripture the original word has the meaning of leaning heavily, as in the expression, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me" (Psalm 88:7). Surely this is the very essence and nature of faith, which doth not only bring us into contact with the great Substitute, but teaches us to lean upon Him with all the burden of our guilt. Jehovah made to meet upon the head of the Substitute all the offences of His covenant people, but each one of the chosen is brought personally to ratify this solemn covenant act, when by grace he is enabled by faith to lay his hand upon the head of the "Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." Believer, do you remember that rapturous day when you first realized pardon through Jesus the sin-bearer? Can you not make glad confession, and join with the writer in saying, "My soul recalls her day of deliverance with delight. Laden with guilt and full of fears, I saw my Saviour as my Substitute, and I laid my hand upon Him; oh! how timidly at first, but courage grew and confidence was confirmed until I leaned my soul entirely upon Him; and now it is my unceasing joy to know that my sins are no longer imputed to me, but laid on Him, and like the debts of the wounded traveller, Jesus, like the good Samaritan, has said of all my future sinfulness, 'Set that to My account.'" Blessed discovery! Eternal solace of a grateful heart!

"My numerous sins transferr'd to Him,
Shall never more be found,
Lost in His blood's atoning stream,
Where every crime is drown'd!"

Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.

Isaiah 3:10

I*T is well with the righteous ALWAYS.* If it had said, “Say ye to the righteous, that it is well with him in his prosperity,” we must have been thankful for so great a boon, for prosperity is an hour of peril, and it is a gift from heaven to be secured from its snares: or if it had been written, “It is well with him when under persecution,” we must have been thankful for so sustaining an assurance, for persecution is hard to bear; but when no time is mentioned, all time is included. God’s “shalls” must be understood always in their largest sense. From the beginning of the year to the end of the year, from the first gathering of evening shadows until the day-star shines, in all conditions and under all circumstances, it shall be well with the righteous. It is so well with him that we could not imagine it to be better, for he is *well fed*, he feeds upon the flesh and blood of Jesus; he is *well clothed*, he wears the imputed righteousness of Christ; he is *well housed*, he dwells in God; he is *well married*, his soul is knit in bonds of marriage union to Christ; he is *well provided for*, for the Lord is his Shepherd; he is well endowed, for heaven is his inheritance. It is well with the righteous—*well upon divine authority*; the mouth of God speaks the comforting assurance. O beloved, if God declares that all is well, ten thousand devils may declare it to be ill, but we laugh them all to scorn. Blessed be God for a faith which enables us to believe God when the creatures contradict Him. It is, says the Word, at all times well with thee, thou righteous one; then, beloved, if thou canst not see it, let God’s word stand thee instead of sight; yea, believe it on divine authority more confidently than if thine eyes and thy feelings told it to thee. Whom God blesses is blest indeed, and what His lip declares is truth most sure and steadfast.

*Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance:
feed them also, and lift them up for ever.*

Psalm 28:9

GOD'S people need lifting up. They are very heavy by nature. They have no wings, or, if they have, they are like the dove of old which lay among the pots; and they need divine grace to make them mount on wings covered with silver, and with feathers of yellow gold. By nature sparks fly upward, but the sinful souls of men fall downward. O Lord, "lift them up for ever!" David himself said, "Unto Thee, O God, do I lift up my soul," and he here feels the necessity that other men's souls should be lifted up as well as his own. When you ask this blessing for yourself, forget not to seek it for others also. There are three ways in which God's people require to be lifted up. *They require to be elevated in character.* Lift them up, O Lord; do not suffer Thy people to be like the world's people! The world lieth in the wicked one; lift them out of it! The world's people are looking after silver and gold, seeking their own pleasures, and the gratification of their lusts; but, Lord, lift Thy people up above all this; keep them from being "muck-rakers," as John Bunyan calls the man who was always scraping after gold! Set thou their hearts upon their risen Lord and the heavenly heritage! Moreover, *believers need to be prospered in conflict.* In the battle, if they seem to fall, O Lord, be pleased to give them the victory. If the foot of the foe be upon their necks for a moment, help them to grasp the sword of the Spirit, and eventually to win the battle. Lord, lift up Thy children's spirits in the day of conflict; let them not sit in the dust, mourning for ever. Suffer not the adversary to vex them sore, and make them fret; but if they have been, like Hannah, persecuted, let them sing of the mercy of a delivering God.

We may also ask our Lord to lift them up at the last! Lift them up by taking them home, lift their bodies from the tomb, and raise their souls to Thine eternal kingdom in glory.

But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Exodus 17:12

So mighty was the prayer of Moses, that all depended upon it. The petitions of Moses discomfited the enemy more than the fighting of Joshua. Yet both were needed. No, in the soul's conflict, force and fervour, decision and devotion, valour and vehemence, must join their forces, and all will be well. You must wrestle with your sin, but the major part of the wrestling must be done alone in private with God. Prayer, like Moses', holds up the token of the covenant before the Lord. The rod was the emblem of God's working with Moses, the symbol of God's government in Israel. Learn, O pleading saint, to hold up the promise and the oath of God before Him. The Lord cannot deny His own declarations. Hold up the rod of promise, and have what you will.

Moses grew weary, and then his friends assisted him. When at any time your prayer flags, let faith support one hand, and let holy hope uplift the other, and prayer seating itself upon the stone of Israel, the rock of our salvation, will persevere and prevail. Beware of faintness in devotion; if Moses felt it, who can escape? It is far easier to fight with sin in public, than to pray against it in private. It is remarked that Joshua never grew weary in the fighting, but Moses did grow weary in the praying; the more spiritual an exercise, the more difficult it is for flesh and blood to maintain it. Let us cry, then, for special strength, and may the Spirit of God, who helpeth our infirmities, as He allowed help to Moses, enable us like him to continue with our hands steady "*until the going down of the sun;*" till the evening of life is over; till we shall come to the rising of a better sun in the land where prayer is swallowed up in praise.

The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

John 12:21

EVERMORE the worldling's cry is, Who will show us any good?" He seeks satisfaction in earthly comforts, enjoyments, and riches. But the quickened sinner knows of only one good. "O that I knew where I might find HIM!" When he is truly awakened to feel his guilt, if you could pour the gold of India at his feet, he would say, "Take it away: I want to find HIM." It is a blessed thing for a man, when he has brought his desires into a focus, so that they all centre in one object. When he has fifty different desires, his heart resembles a mere of stagnant water, spread out into a marsh, breeding miasma and pestilence; but when all his desires are brought into one channel, his heart becomes like a river of pure water, running swiftly to fertilize the fields. Happy is he who hath one desire, if that one desire be set on Christ, though it may not yet have been realized. If Jesus be a soul's desire, it is a blessed sign of divine work within. Such a man will never be content with mere ordinances. He will say, "I want Christ; I *must* have Him—mere ordinances are of no use to me; I want *Himself*; do not offer me these; you offer me the empty pitcher, while I am dying of thirst; give me water, or I die. Jesus is my soul's desire. I would see Jesus!"

Is this thy condition, my reader, at this moment? Hast thou but one desire, and is that after Christ? Then thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven. Hast thou but one wish in thy heart, and that one wish that thou mayst be washed from all thy sins in Jesus' blood? Canst thou really say, "I would give all I have to be a Christian; I would give up everything I have and hope for, if I might but feel that I have an interest in Christ"? Then, despite all thy fears, be of good cheer, the Lord loveth thee, and thou shalt come out into daylight soon, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free.

And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

Genesis 32:12

WHEN Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok, and Esau was coming with armed men, he earnestly sought God's protection, and as a master reason he pleaded, "And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." Oh, the force of that plea! He was holding God to His word—"Thou saidst." The attribute of God's faithfulness is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon; but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is a yet mightier holdfast—"Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." And has *He* said, and shall He not do it? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Shall not *He* be true? Shall *He* not keep His word? Shall not every word that cometh out of His lips stand fast and be fulfilled? Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleaded with God to remember the word which He had spoken to his father David, and to bless that place. When a man gives a promissory note, his honour is engaged; he signs his hand, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It shall never be said that God dishonours His bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached, and never shall be. He is punctual to the moment: He never is before His time, but He never is behind it. Search God's word through, and compare it with the experience of God's people, and you shall find the two tally from the first to the last. Many a hoary patriarch has said with Joshua, "Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass." If you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an "if," you may urge it with certainty. The Lord meant to fulfil the promise, or He would not have given it. God does not give His words merely to quiet us, and to keep us hopeful for awhile with the intention of putting us off at last; but when He speaks, it is because He means to do as He has said.

*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write;
These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness,
the beginning of the creation of God;
Revelation 3:14*

THE word AMEN solemnly confirms that which went before; and Jesus is the great Confirmer; immutable, forever is “the Amen” in all *His promises*. *Sinner*, I would comfort thee with this reflection. Jesus Christ said, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” If you come to Him, He will say “Amen” in your soul; His promise shall be true *to you*. He said in the days of His flesh, “The bruised reed I will not break.” O thou poor, broken, bruised heart, if thou comest to Him, He will say “Amen” to thee, and that shall be true in *thy* soul as in hundreds of cases in bygone years. *Christian*, is not this very comforting to thee also, that there is not a word which has gone out of the Saviour’s lips which He has ever retracted? The words of Jesus shall stand when heaven and earth shall pass away. If thou gettest a hold of but half a promise, thou shalt find it true. Beware of him who is called “Clip-promise,” who will destroy much of the comfort of God’s word.

Jesus is Yea and Amen in all *His offices*. He was a Priest to pardon and cleanse once, He is Amen as Priest still. He was a King to rule and reign for His people, and to defend them with His mighty arm, He is an Amen King, the same still. He was a Prophet of old, to foretell good things to come, His lips are most sweet, and drop with honey still—He is an Amen Prophet. He is Amen as to the merit of His blood; He is Amen as to His righteousness. That sacred robe shall remain most fair and glorious when nature shall decay. He is Amen in every single title which He bears; your Husband, never seeking a divorce; your Friend, sticking closer than a brother; your Shepherd, with you in death’s dark vale; your Help and your Deliverer; your Castle and your High Tower; the Horn of your strength, your confidence, your joy, your all in all, and your Yea and Amen in all.

And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD'S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

1 Samuel 18:17

THE sacramental host of God's elect is warring still on earth, Jesus Christ being the Captain of their salvation. He has said, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Hark to the shouts of war! Now let the people of God stand fast in their ranks, and let no man's heart fail him. It is true that just now in England the battle is turned against us, and unless the Lord Jesus shall lift His sword, we know not what may become of the church of God in this land; but let us be of good courage, and play the man. There never was a day when Protestantism seemed to tremble more in the scales than now that a fierce effort is making to restore the Romish antichrist to his ancient seat. We greatly want a bold voice and a strong hand to preach and publish the old gospel for which martyrs bled and confessors died. The Saviour is, by His Spirit, still on earth; let this cheer us. He is ever in the midst of the fight, and therefore the battle is not doubtful. And as the conflict rages, what a sweet satisfaction it is to know that the Lord Jesus, in His office as our great Intercessor, is prevalently pleading for His people! O anxious gazer, look not so much at the battle below, for there thou shalt be enshrouded in smoke, and amazed with garments rolled in blood; but lift thine eyes yonder where the Saviour lives and pleads, for while He intercedes, the cause of God is safe. Let us fight as if it all depended upon us, but let us look up and know that all depends upon Him.

Now, by the lilies of Christian purity, and by the roses of the Saviour's atonement, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, we charge you who are lovers of Jesus, to do valiantly in the Holy War, for truth and righteousness, for the kingdom and crown jewels of your Master. Onward! "for the battle is not yours but God's."

*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.*

Romans 8:34

HE who was once despised and rejected of men, now occupies the honourable position of a beloved and honoured Son. The right hand of God is *the place of majesty and favour*. Our Lord Jesus is His people's representative. When He died for them they had rest; He rose again for them, they had liberty; when He sat down at His Father's right hand, they had favour, and honour, and dignity. The raising and elevation of Christ is the elevation, the acceptance, and enshrinement, the glorifying of all His people, for He is their head and representative. This sitting at the right hand of God, then, is to be viewed as the acceptance of the person of the Surety, the reception of the Representative, and therefore, the acceptance of *our* souls. O saint, see in this thy sure freedom from condemnation. "Who is he that condemneth?" Who shall condemn the men who are in Jesus at the right hand of God?

The right hand is *the place of power*. Christ at the right hand of God hath all power in heaven and in earth. Who shall fight against the people who have such power vested in their Captain? O my soul, what can destroy thee if Omnipotence be thy helper? If the aegis of the Almighty cover thee, what sword can smite thee? Rest thou secure. If Jesus is thine all-prevailing King, and hath trodden thine enemies beneath His feet; if sin, death, and hell are all vanquished by Him, and thou art represented in Him, by no possibility canst thou be destroyed.

"Jesu's tremendous name
Puts all our foes to flight:
Jesus, the meek, the angry Lamb,
A Lion is in fight.
"By all hell's host withstood;
We all hell's host o'erthrow;
And conquering them, through Jesu's blood
We still to conquer go."

*Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;
nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
Psalm 91:5*

WHAT is this terror? It may be the cry of fire, or the noise of thieves, or fancied appearances, or the shriek of sudden sickness or death. We live in the world of death and sorrow, we may therefore look for ills as well in the night-watches as beneath the glare of the broiling sun. Nor should this alarm us, for be the terror what it may, the promise is that the believer shall not be afraid. Why should he? Let us put it more closely, why should *we*? God our Father is here, and will be here all through the lonely hours; He is an almighty Watcher, a sleepless Guardian, a faithful Friend. Nothing can happen without His direction, for even hell itself is under His control. Darkness is not dark to Him. He has promised to be a wall of fire around His people—and who can break through such a barrier? Worldlings may well be afraid, for they have an angry God above them, a guilty conscience within them, and a yawning hell beneath them; but we who rest in Jesus are saved from all these through rich mercy. If we give way to foolish fear we shall dishonour our profession, and lead others to doubt the reality of godliness. We ought to be afraid of being afraid, lest we should vex the Holy Spirit by foolish distrust. Down, then, ye dismal forebodings and groundless apprehensions, God has not forgotten to be gracious, nor shut up His tender mercies, it may be night in the soul, but there need be no terror, for the God of love changes not. Children of light may walk in darkness, but they are not therefore cast away, nay, they are now enabled to prove their adoption by trusting in their heavenly Father as hypocrites cannot do.

“Though the night be dark and dreary,
Darkness cannot hide from Thee;
Thou art He, who, never weary,
Watchest where Thy people be.”

And 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.

Revelation 5:6

WHY should our exalted Lord appear in His wounds in glory? The wounds of Jesus are His glories, His jewels, His sacred ornaments. To the eye of the believer, Jesus is passing fair because He is “white and ruddy” white with innocence, and ruddy with His own blood. We see Him as the lily of matchless purity, and as the rose crimsoned with His own gore. Christ is lovely upon Olivet and Tabor, and by the sea, but oh! there never was such a matchless Christ as He that did hang upon the cross. There we beheld all His beauties in perfection, all His attributes developed, all His love drawn out, all His character expressed. Beloved, the wounds of Jesus are far more fair in our eyes than all the splendour and pomp of kings. The thorny crown is more than an imperial diadem. It is true that He bears not now the sceptre of reed, but there was a glory in it that never flashed from sceptre of gold. Jesus wears the appearance of a slain Lamb as His court dress in which He wooed our souls, and redeemed them by His complete atonement. Nor are these only the ornaments of Christ: they are the *trophies* of His love and of His victory. He has divided the spoil with the strong. He has redeemed for Himself a great multitude whom no man can number, and these scars are the memorials of the fight. Ah! if Christ thus loves to retain the thought of His sufferings for His people, *how precious should his wounds be to us!*

“Behold how every wound of His

A precious balm distils,

Which heals the scars that sin had made,

And cures all mortal ills.

“Those wounds are mouths that preach His grace;

The ensigns of His love;

The seals of our expected bliss

In paradise above.”

*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;
Song of Solomon 2:12*

SWEET is the season of spring: the long and dreary winter helps us to appreciate its genial warmth, and its promise of summer enhances its present delights. After periods of depression of spirit, it is delightful to behold again the light of the Sun of Righteousness; then our slumbering graces rise from their lethargy, like the crocus and the daffodil from their beds of earth; then is our heart made merry with delicious notes of gratitude, far more melodious than the warbling of birds—and the comforting assurance of peace, infinitely more delightful than the turtle's note, is heard within the soul. Now is the time for the soul to seek communion with her Beloved; now must she rise from her native sordidness, and come away from her old associations. If we do not hoist the sail when the breeze is favourable, we shall be blameworthy: times of refreshing ought not to pass over us unimproved. When Jesus Himself visits us in tenderness, and entreats us to arise, can we be so base as to refuse His request? He has Himself risen that He may draw us after Him: He now by His Holy Spirit has revived us, that we may, in newness of life, ascend into the heavenlies, and hold communion with Himself. Let our wintry state suffice us for coldness and indifference; when the Lord creates a spring within, let our sap flow with vigour, and our branch blossom with high resolve. O Lord, if it be not spring time in my chilly heart, I pray Thee make it so, for I am heartily weary of living at a distance from Thee. Oh! the long and dreary winter, when wilt Thou bring it to an end? Come, Holy Spirit, and renew my soul! quicken Thou me! restore me, and have mercy on me! This very night I would earnestly implore the Lord to take pity upon His servant, and send me a happy revival of spiritual life!

*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.
Revelation 3:20*

WHAT is your desire this evening? Is it set upon heavenly things? Do you long to enjoy the high doctrine of eternal love? Do you desire liberty in very close communion with God? Do you aspire to know the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths? Then you must draw near to Jesus; you must get a clear sight of Him in His preciousness and completeness: you must view Him in His work, in His offices, in His person. He who understands Christ, receives an anointing from the Holy One, by which He knows all things. Christ is the great master-key of all the chambers of God: there is no treasure-house of God which will not open and yield up all its wealth to the soul that lives near to Jesus. Are you saying, "O that He would dwell in my bosom"? "Would that He would make my heart His dwelling-place for ever"? Open the door, beloved, and He will come into your souls. He has long been knocking, and all with this object, that He may sup with you, and you with Him. *He sups with you* because you find the house or the heart, and *you with Him* because He brings the provision. He could not sup with you if it were not in your heart, you finding the house; nor could you sup with Him, for you have a bare cupboard, if He did not bring provision with Him. Fling wide, then, the portals of your soul. He will come with that love which you long to feel; He will come with that joy into which you cannot work your poor depressed spirit; He will bring the peace which now you have not; He will come with His flagons of wine and sweet apples of love, and cheer you till you have no other sickness but that of "love o'erpowering, love divine." Only open the door to Him, drive out His enemies, give Him the keys of your heart, and He will dwell there forever. Oh, wondrous love, that brings such a guest to dwell in such a heart!

*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth,
and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked,
and they see his shame.
Revelation 16:15*

“**WE** die daily,” said the apostle. This was the life of the early Christians; they went everywhere with their lives in their hands. We are not in this day called to pass through the same fearful persecutions: if we were, the Lord would give us grace to bear the test; but the tests of Christian life, at the present moment, though outwardly not so terrible, are yet more likely to overcome us than even those of the fiery age. We have to bear the sneer of the world—that is little; its blandishments, its soft words, its oily speeches, its fawning, its hypocrisy, are far worse. Our danger is lest we grow rich and become proud, lest we give ourselves up to the fashions of this present evil world, and lose our faith. Or if wealth be not the trial, worldly care is quite as mischievous. If we cannot be torn in pieces by the roaring lion, if we may be hugged to death by the bear, the devil little cares which it is, so long as he destroys our love to Christ, and our confidence in Him. I fear me that the Christian church is far more likely to lose her integrity in these soft and silken days than in those rougher times. We must be awake now, for we traverse the enchanted ground, and are most likely to fall asleep to our own undoing, unless our faith in Jesus be a reality, and our love to Jesus a vehement flame. Many in these days of easy profession are likely to prove tares, and not wheat; hypocrites with fair masks on their faces, but not the true-born children of the living God. Christian, do not think that these are times in which you can dispense with watchfulness or with holy ardour; you need these things more than ever, and may God the eternal Spirit display His omnipotence in you, that you may be able to say, in all these softer things, as well as in the rougher, “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

*The LORD is King for ever and ever:
the heathen are perished out of his land.
Psalm 10:16*

JESUS Christ is no despotic claimant of *divine right*, but He is really and truly the Lord's anointed! "It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." God hath given to Him all power and all authority. As the Son of man, He is now head over all things to His church, and He reigns over heaven, and earth, and hell, with the keys of life and death at His girdle. Certain princes have delighted to call themselves kings by the *popular will*, and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ is such in His church. If it could be put to the vote whether He should be King in the church, every believing heart would crown Him. O that we could crown Him more gloriously than we do! We would count no expense to be wasted that could glorify Christ. Suffering would be pleasure, and loss would be gain, if thereby we could surround His brow with brighter crowns, and make Him more glorious in the eyes of men and angels. Yes, He shall reign. Long live the King! All hail to Thee, King Jesus! Go forth, ye virgin souls who love your Lord, bow at His feet, strew His way with the lilies of your love, and the roses of your gratitude: "Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all." Moreover, our Lord Jesus is King in Zion by *right of conquest*: He has taken and carried by storm the hearts of His people, and has slain their enemies who held them in cruel bondage. In the Red Sea of His own blood, our Redeemer has drowned the Pharaoh of our sins: shall He not be King in Jeshurun? He has delivered us from the iron yoke and heavy curse of the law: shall not the Liberator be crowned? We are His portion, whom He has taken out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow: who shall snatch His conquest from His hand? All hail, King Jesus! we gladly own Thy gentle sway! Rule in our hearts forever, Thou lovely Prince of Peace.

*But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee;
for they will not hearken unto me:
for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.
Ezekiel 3:7*

ARE there no exceptions? No, not one. Even the favoured race are thus described. Are the best so bad?—then what must the worst be? Come, my heart, consider how far thou hast a share in this universal accusation, and while considering, be ready to take shame unto thyself wherein thou mayst have been guilty. The first charge is *impudence*, or hardness of forehead, a want of holy shame, an unhallowed boldness in evil. Before my conversion, I could sin and feel no compunction, hear of my guilt and yet remain unhumbled, and even confess my iniquity and manifest no inward humiliation on account of it. For a sinner to go to God's house and pretend to pray to Him and praise Him argues a brazen-facedness of the worst kind! Alas! since the day of my new birth I have doubted my Lord to His face, murmured unblushingly in His presence, worshipped before Him in a slovenly manner, and sinned without bewailing myself concerning it. If my forehead were not as an adamant, harder than flint, I should have far more holy fear, and a far deeper contrition of spirit. Woe is me, I am one of the impudent house of Israel. The second charge is *hardheartedness*, and I must not venture to plead innocent here. Once I had nothing but a heart of stone, and although through grace I now have a new and fleshy heart, much of my former obduracy remains. I am not affected by the death of Jesus as I ought to be; neither am I moved by the ruin of my fellow men, the wickedness of the times, the chastisement of my heavenly Father, and my own failures, as I should be. O that my heart would melt at the recital of my Saviour's sufferings and death. Would to God I were rid of this nether millstone within me, this hateful body of death. Blessed be the name of the Lord, the disease is not incurable, the Saviour's precious blood is the universal solvent, and me, even me, it will effectually soften, till my heart melts as wax before the fire.

*For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people:
he will beautify the meek with salvation.
Psalm 149:4*

HOW comprehensive is the love of Jesus! There is no part of His people's interests which He does not consider, and there is nothing which concerns their welfare which is not important to Him. Not merely does He think of you, believer, as an immortal being, but as a mortal being too. Do not deny it or doubt it: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in His way" It were a sad thing for us if this mantle of love did not cover all our concerns, for what mischief might be wrought to us in that part of our business which did not come under our gracious Lord's inspection! Believer, rest assured that the heart of Jesus cares about your meaner affairs. The breadth of His tender love is such that you may resort to Him in all matters; for in all your afflictions He is afflicted, and like as a father pitieth his children, so doth He pity you. The meanest interests of all His saints are all borne upon the broad bosom of the Son of God. Oh, what a heart is His, that doth not merely comprehend the persons of His people, but comprehends also the diverse and innumerable concerns of all those persons! Dost thou think, O Christian, that thou canst measure the love of Christ? Think of what His love has brought thee—justification, adoption, sanctification, eternal life! The riches of His goodness are unsearchable; thou shalt never be able to tell them out or even conceive them. Oh, the breadth of the love of Christ! Shall such a love as this have half our hearts? Shall it have a cold love in return? Shall Jesus' marvellous lovingkindness and tender care meet with but faint response and tardy acknowledgment? O my soul, tune thy harp to a glad song of thanksgiving! Go to thy rest rejoicing, for thou art no desolate wanderer, but a beloved child, watched over, cared for, supplied, and defended by thy Lord.

*How precious also are thy thoughts unto me,
O God! how great is the sum of them!
Psalm 139:17*

DIVINE omniscience affords no comfort to the ungodly mind, but to the child of God it overflows with consolation. God is always thinking upon us, never turns aside His mind from us, has us always before His eyes; and this is precisely as we would have it, for it would be dreadful to exist for a moment beyond the observation of our heavenly Father. His thoughts are always tender, loving, wise, prudent, far-reaching, and they bring to us countless benefits: hence it is a choice delight to remember them. The Lord always did think upon His people: hence their election and the covenant of grace by which their salvation is secured; He always will think upon them: hence their final perseverance by which they shall be brought safely to their final rest. In all our wanderings the watchful glance of the Eternal Watcher is evermore fixed upon us—we never roam beyond the Shepherd's eye. In our sorrows He observes us incessantly, and not a pang escapes Him; in our toils He marks all our weariness, and writes in His book all the struggles of His faithful ones. These thoughts of the Lord encompass us in all our paths, and penetrate the innermost region of our being. Not a nerve or tissue, valve or vessel, of our bodily organization is uncared for; all the littles of our little world are thought upon by the great God.

Dear reader, is this precious to you? then hold to it. Never be led astray by those philosophic fools who preach up an impersonal God, and talk of self-existent, self-governing matter. The Lord liveth and thinketh upon us, this is a truth far too precious for us to be lightly robbed of it. The notice of a nobleman is valued so highly that he who has it counts his fortune made; but what is it to be thought of by the King of kings! If the Lord thinketh upon us, all is well, and we may rejoice evermore.

I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

2 Samuel 18:23

WHATEVER there may be of beauty in the material world, Jesus Christ possesses all that in the spiritual world in a tenfold degree. Amongst flowers the rose is deemed the sweetest, but Jesus is infinitely more beautiful in the garden of the soul than the rose can in the gardens of earth. He takes the first place as the fairest among ten thousand. He is the sun, and all others are the stars; the heavens and the day are dark in comparison with Him, for *the King in His beauty transcends all*. “I am the rose of Sharon.” This was the best and rarest of roses. Jesus is not “the rose” alone, He is “the rose of Sharon,” just as He calls His righteousness “gold,” and then adds, “the gold of Ophir”—the best of the best. He is positively lovely, and superlatively the loveliest. *There is variety in His charms*. The rose is delightful to the eye, and its scent is pleasant and refreshing; so each of the senses of the soul, whether it be the taste or feeling, the hearing, the sight, or the spiritual smell, finds appropriate gratification in Jesus. *Even the recollection of His love is sweet*. Take the rose of Sharon, and pull it leaf from leaf, and lay by the leaves in the jar of memory, and you shall find each leaf fragrant long afterwards, filling the house with perfume. Christ *satisfies the highest taste* of the most educated spirit to the very full. The greatest amateur in perfumes is quite satisfied with the rose: and when the soul has arrived at her highest pitch of true taste, she shall still be content with Christ, nay, she shall be the better able to appreciate Him. Heaven itself possesses nothing which excels the rose of Sharon. What emblem can fully set forth His beauty? Human speech and earth-born things fail to tell of Him. Earth’s choicest charms commingled, feebly picture His abounding preciousness. Blessed rose, bloom in my heart for ever!

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Hebrews 11:13

BEHOOLD the epitaph of all those blessed saints who fell asleep before the coming of our Lord! It matters nothing how else they died, whether of old age, or by violent means; this one point, in which they all agree, is the most worthy of record, "they all died in faith." In faith they lived—it was their comfort, their guide, their motive and their support; and in the same spiritual grace they died, ending their life-song in the sweet strain in which they had so long continued. They did not die resting in the flesh or upon their own attainments; they made no advance from their first day of acceptance with God, but held to the way of faith to the end. Faith is as precious to die by as to live by.

Dying in faith has distinct reference to *the past*. They believed the promises which had gone before, and were assured that their sins were blotted out through the mercy of God. Dying in faith has to do with *the present*. These saints were confident of their acceptance with God, they enjoyed the beams of His love, and rested in His faithfulness. Dying in faith looks into *the future*. They fell asleep, affirming that the Messiah would surely come, and that when He would in the last days appear upon the earth, they would rise from their graves to behold Him. To them the pains of death were but the birth-pangs of a better state. Take courage, my soul, as thou readest this epitaph. Thy course, through grace, is one of faith, and sight seldom cheers thee; this has also been the pathway of the brightest and the best. Faith was the orbit in which these stars of the first magnitude moved all the time of their shining here; and happy art thou that it is thine. Look anew tonight to Jesus, the author and finisher of thy faith, and thank Him for giving thee like precious faith with souls now in glory.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1

COVENANT blessings are not meant to be looked at only, but to be appropriated. Even our Lord Jesus is given to us for our present use. Believer, thou dost not make use of Christ as thou oughtest to do. When thou art in trouble, why dost thou not tell Him all thy grief? Has He not a sympathizing heart, and can He not comfort and relieve thee? No, thou art going about to all thy friends, save thy best Friend, and telling thy tale everywhere except into the bosom of thy Lord. Art thou burdened with this day's sins? Here is a fountain filled with blood: use it, saint, use it. Has a sense of guilt returned upon thee? The pardoning grace of Jesus may be proved again and again. Come to Him at once for cleansing. Dost thou deplore thy weakness? He is thy strength: why not lean upon Him? Dost thou feel naked? Come hither, soul; put on the robe of Jesus' righteousness. Stand not looking at it, but wear it. Strip off thine own righteousness, and thine own fears too: put on the fair white linen, for it was meant to *wear*. Dost thou feel thyself sick? Pull the night-bell of prayer, and call up the Beloved Physician! He will give the cordial that will revive thee. Thou art poor, but then thou hast "a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth." What! wilt thou not go to Him, and ask Him to give thee of His abundance, when He has given thee this promise, that thou shalt be joint heir with Him, and has made over all that He is and all that He has to be thine? There is nothing Christ dislikes more than for His people to make a show-thing of Him, and not to use Him. He loves to be employed by us. The more burdens we put on His shoulders, the more precious will He be to us.

"Let us be simple with Him, then,
Not backward, stiff, or cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."

*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,
by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

1 Peter 1:23

PETER most earnestly exhorted the scattered saints to love each other “with a pure heart fervently” and he wisely fetched his argument, not from the law, from nature, or from philosophy, but from that high and divine nature which God hath implanted in His people. Just as some judicious tutor of princes might labour to beget and foster in them a kingly spirit and dignified behaviour, finding arguments in their position and descent, so, looking upon God’s people as heirs of glory, princes of the blood royal, descendants of the King of kings, earth’s truest and oldest aristocracy, Peter saith to them, “See that ye love one another, because of your noble birth, being born of incorruptible seed; because of your pedigree, being descended from God, the Creator of all things; and because of your immortal destiny, for you shall never pass away, though the glory of the flesh shall fade, and even its existence shall cease.” It would be well if, in the spirit of humility, we recognized the true dignity of our regenerated nature, and lived up to it. What is a Christian? If you compare him with a king, he adds priestly sanctity to royal dignity. The king’s royalty often lieth only in his crown, but with a Christian it is infused into his inmost nature. He is as much above his fellows through his new birth, as a man is above the beast that perisheth. Surely he ought to carry himself, in all his dealings, as one who is not of the multitude, but chosen out of the world, distinguished by sovereign grace, written among “the peculiar people” and who therefore cannot grovel in the dust as others, nor live after the manner of the world’s citizens. Let the dignity of your nature, and the brightness of your prospects, O believers in Christ, constrain you to cleave unto holiness, and to avoid the very appearance of evil.

*He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good:
and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.*

Proverbs 16:20

WISDOM is man's true strength; and, under its guidance, he best accomplishes the ends of his being. Wisely handling the matter of life gives to man the richest enjoyment, and presents the noblest occupation for his powers; hence by it he finds good in the fullest sense. Without wisdom, man is as the wild ass's colt, running hither and thither, wasting strength which might be profitably employed. Wisdom is the compass by which man is to steer across the trackless waste of life; without it he is a derelict vessel, the sport of winds and waves. A man must be prudent in such a world as this, or he will find no good, but be betrayed into unnumbered ills. The pilgrim will sorely wound his feet among the briars of the wood of life if he do not pick his steps with the utmost caution. He who is in a wilderness infested with robber bands must handle matters wisely if he would journey safely. If, trained by the Great Teacher, we follow where He leads, we shall find good, even while in this dark abode; there are celestial fruits to be gathered this side of Eden's bowers, and songs of paradise to be sung amid the groves of earth. But where shall this wisdom be found? Many have dreamed of it, but have not possessed it. Where shall we learn it? Let us listen to the voice of the Lord, for He hath declared the secret; He hath revealed to the sons of men wherein true wisdom lieth, and we have it in the text, "Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he." *The true way to handle a matter wisely is to trust in the Lord.* This is the sure clue to the most intricate labyrinths of life, follow it and find eternal bliss. He who trusts in the Lord has a diploma for wisdom granted by inspiration: happy is he now, and happier shall he be above. Lord, in this sweet eventide walk with me in the garden, and teach me the wisdom of faith.

If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

Job 14:14

A little stay on earth will make heaven more heavenly. Nothing makes rest so sweet as toil; nothing renders security so pleasant as exposure to alarms. The bitter quassia cups of earth will give a relish to the new wine which sparkles in the golden bowls of glory. Our battered armour and scarred countenances will render more illustrious our victory above, when we are welcomed to the seats of those who have overcome the world. We should not have full *fellowship with Christ* if we did not for awhile sojourn below, for He was baptized with a baptism of suffering among men, and we must be baptized with the same if we would share his kingdom. Fellowship with Christ is so honourable that the sorest sorrow is a light price by which to procure it. Another reason for our lingering here is *for the good of others*. We would not wish to enter heaven till our work is done, and it may be that we are yet ordained to minister light to souls benighted in the wilderness of sin. Our prolonged stay here is doubtless *for God's glory*. A tried saint, like a well-cut diamond, glitters much in the King's crown. Nothing reflects so much honour on a workman as a protracted and severe trial of his work, and its triumphant endurance of the ordeal without giving way in any part. We are God's workmanship, in whom He will be glorified by our afflictions. It is for the honour of Jesus that we endure the trial of our faith with sacred joy. Let each man surrender his own longings to the glory of Jesus, and feel, "If my lying in the dust would elevate my Lord by so much as an inch, let me still lie among the pots of earth. If to live on earth for ever would make my Lord more glorious, it should be my heaven to be shut out of heaven." Our time is fixed and settled by eternal decree. Let us not be anxious about it, but wait with patience till the gates of pearl shall open.

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

John 5:8

LIKE many others, the impotent man had been waiting for a wonder to be wrought, and a sign to be given. Wearily did he watch the pool, but no angel came, or came not for him; yet, thinking it to be his only chance, he waited still, and knew not that there was One near him whose word could heal him in a moment. Many are in the same plight: they are waiting for some singular emotion, remarkable impression, or celestial vision; they wait in vain and watch for nought. Even supposing that, in a few cases, remarkable signs are seen, yet these are rare, and no man has a right to look for them in his own case; no man especially who feels his impotency to avail himself of the moving of the water even if it came. It is a very sad reflection that tens of thousands are now waiting in the use of means, and ordinances, and vows, and resolutions, and have so waited time out of mind, in vain, utterly in vain. Meanwhile these poor souls forget the present Saviour, who bids them look unto Him and be saved. *He* could heal them at once, but they prefer to wait for an angel and a wonder. To trust Him is the sure way to every blessing, and He is worthy of the most implicit confidence; but unbelief makes them prefer the cold porches of Bethesda to the warm bosom of His love. O that the Lord may turn His eye upon the multitudes who are in this case tonight; may He forgive the slights which they put upon His divine power, and call them by that sweet constraining voice, to rise from the bed of despair, and in the energy of faith take up their bed and walk. O Lord, hear our prayer for all such at this calm hour of sunset, and ere the day breaketh may they look and live.

Courteous reader, is there anything in this portion for you?

Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.

Job 22:21

IF we would rightly “acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace,” we must know Him as He has revealed Himself, not only in *the unity of His essence and subsistence*, but also in *the plurality of His persons*. God said, “Let us make man in our own image”—let not man be content until he knows something of the “us” from whom his being was derived. Endeavour to know the Father; bury your head in His bosom in deep repentance, and confess that you are not worthy to be called His son; receive the kiss of His love; let the ring which is the token of His eternal faithfulness be on your finger; sit at His table and let your heart make merry in His grace. Then press forward and seek to know much of *the Son of God* who is the brightness of His Father’s glory, and yet in unspeakable condescension of grace became man for our sakes; know Him in the singular complexity of His nature: eternal God, and yet suffering, finite man; follow Him as He walks the waters with the tread of deity, and as He sits upon the well in the weariness of humanity. Be not satisfied unless you know much of Jesus Christ as your Friend, your Brother, your Husband, your all. Forget not *the Holy Spirit*; endeavour to obtain a clear view of His nature and character, His attributes, and His works. Behold that Spirit of the Lord, who first of all moved upon chaos, and brought forth order; who now visits the chaos of your soul, and creates the order of holiness. Behold Him as the Lord and giver of spiritual life, the Illuminator, the Instructor, the Comforter, and the Sanctifier. Behold Him as, like holy unction, He descends upon the head of Jesus, and then afterwards rests upon you who are as the skirts of His garments. Such an intelligent, scriptural, and experimental belief in the Trinity in Unity is yours if you truly know God; and such knowledge *brings peace indeed*.

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.

Song of Solomon 7:11,12

THE church was about to engage in earnest labour, and desired her Lord's company in it. She does not say, "I will go," but "let us go." It is blessed working when Jesus is at our side! It is the business of God's people to be trimmers of God's vines. Like our first parents, we are put into the garden of the Lord for usefulness; let us therefore go forth into the field. Observe that the church, when she is in her right mind, in all her many labours desires to enjoy communion with Christ. Some imagine that they cannot serve Christ actively, and yet have fellowship with Him: they are mistaken. Doubtless it is very easy to fritter away our inward life in outward exercises, and come to complain with the spouse, "They made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept:" but there is no reason why this should be the case except our own folly and neglect. Certain is it that a professor may do nothing, and yet grow quite as lifeless in spiritual things as those who are most busy. Mary was not praised for sitting still; but for her sitting at Jesus' feet. Even so, Christians are not to be praised for neglecting duties under the pretence of having secret fellowship with Jesus: it is not sitting, but *sitting at Jesus' feet* which is commendable. Do not think that activity is in itself an evil: it is a great blessing, and a means of grace to us. Paul called it a grace given to him to be allowed to preach; and every form of Christian service may become a personal blessing to those engaged in it. Those who have most fellowship with Christ are not recluses or hermits, who have much time to spare, but indefatigable labourers who are toiling for Jesus, and who, in their toil, have Him side by side with them, so that they are workers together with God. Let us remember then, in anything we have to do for Jesus, that we can do it, and should do it in close communion with Him.

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 1:14

BELIEVER, you can bear your testimony that Christ *is the only begotten of the Father*, as well as the first begotten from the dead. You can say, “He is divine to me, if He be human to all the world beside. He has done that for me which none but a God could do. He has subdued my stubborn will, melted a heart of adamant, opened gates of brass, and snapped bars of iron. He hath turned for me my mourning into laughter, and my desolation into joy; He hath led my captivity captive, and made my heart rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let others think as they will of Him, to me He must be the only begotten of the Father: blessed be His name. And He is *full of grace*. Ah! had He not been I should never have been saved. He drew me when I struggled to escape from His grace; and when at last I came all trembling like a condemned culprit to His mercy-seat He said, ‘Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee: be of good cheer.’ And He is *full of truth*. True have His promises been, not one has failed. I bear witness that never servant had such a master as I have; never brother such a kinsman as He has been to me; never spouse such a husband as Christ has been to my soul; never sinner a better Saviour; never mourner a better comforter than Christ hath been to my spirit. I want none beside Him. In life He is my life, and in death He shall be the death of death; in poverty Christ is my riches; in sickness He makes my bed; in darkness He is my star, and in brightness He is my sun; He is the manna of the camp in the wilderness, and He shall be the new corn of the host when they come to Canaan. Jesus is to me all grace and no wrath, all truth and no falsehood: and of truth and grace He is *full*, infinitely full. My soul, this night, bless with all thy might ‘the only Begotten.’”

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

Joshua 1:7

OUR God's tender love for His servants makes Him concerned for the state of their inward feelings. He desires them to be of good courage. Some esteem it a small thing for a believer to be vexed with doubts and fears, but God thinks not so. From this text it is plain that our Master would not have us entangled with fears. He would have us without carefulness, without doubt, without cowardice. Our Master does not think so lightly of our unbelief as we do. When we are desponding we are subject to a grievous malady, not to be trifled with, but to be carried at once to the beloved Physician. Our Lord loveth not to see our countenance sad. It was a law of Ahasuerus that no one should come into the king's court dressed in mourning: this is not the law of the King of kings, for we may come mourning as we are; but still He would have us put off the spirit of heaviness, and put on the garment of praise, for there is much reason to rejoice. The Christian man ought to be of a courageous spirit, in order that he may glorify the Lord by enduring trials in an heroic manner. If he be fearful and fainthearted, *it will dishonour his God*. Besides, *what a bad example it is*. This disease of doubtfulness and discouragement is an epidemic which soon spreads amongst the Lord's flock. One downcast believer makes twenty souls sad. Moreover, unless your courage is kept up *Satan will be too much for you*. Let your spirit be joyful in God your Saviour, the joy of the Lord shall be your strength, and no fiend of hell shall make headway against you: but cowardice throws down the banner. Moreover, *labour is light* to a man of cheerful spirit; and *success waits upon cheerfulness*. The man who toils, rejoicing in his God, believing with all his heart, has success guaranteed. He who sows in hope shall reap in joy; therefore, dear reader, "be thou strong, and very courageous."

And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

Genesis 46:3,4

JACOB must have shuddered at the thought of leaving the land of his father's sojourning, and dwelling among heathen strangers. It was *a new scene, and likely to be a trying one*: who shall venture among couriers of a foreign monarch without anxiety? Yet the way was *evidently appointed* for him, and therefore he resolved to go. This is frequently the position of believers now—they are called to perils and temptations altogether untried: at such seasons *let them imitate Jacob's example* by offering sacrifices of prayer unto God, and seeking His direction; let them not take a step until they have waited upon the Lord for His blessing: then they *will have Jacob's companion* to be their friend and helper. How blessed to feel assured that the Lord is with us in all our ways, and condescends to go down into our humiliations and banishments with us! Even beyond the ocean our Father's love beams like the sun in its strength. We cannot hesitate to go where Jehovah promises His presence; even the valley of deathshade grows bright with the radiance of this assurance. Marching onwards with faith in their God, believers *shall have Jacob's promise*. They shall be brought up again, whether it be from the troubles of life or the chambers of death. Jacob's seed came out of Egypt in due time, and so shall all the faithful pass unscathed through the tribulation of life, and the terror of death. Let us *exercise Jacob's confidence*. "Fear not," is the Lord's command and His divine encouragement to those who at His bidding are launching upon new seas; the divine presence and preservation forbid so much as one unbelieving fear. Without our God we should fear to move; but when He bids us to, it would be dangerous to tarry. Reader, go forward, and fear not.

*Thou art my portion, O LORD:
I have said that I would keep thy words.
Psalm 119:57*

LOOK at thy possessions, O believer, and compare thy portion with the lot of thy fellowmen. Some of them have their portion in the field; they are rich, and their harvests yield them a golden increase; but what are harvests compared with thy God, who is the God of harvests? What are bursting granaries compared with Him, who is the Husbandman, and feeds thee with the bread of heaven? Some have their portion in the city; their wealth is abundant, and flows to them in constant streams, until they become a very reservoir of gold; but what is gold compared with thy God? Thou couldst not live on it; thy spiritual life could not be sustained by it. Put it on a troubled conscience, and could it allay its pangs? Apply it to a desponding heart, and see if it could stay a solitary groan, or give one grief the less? But thou hast God, and in Him thou hast more than gold or riches ever could buy. Some have their portion in that which most men love—applause and fame; but ask thyself, is not thy God more to thee than that? What if a myriad clarions should be loud in thine applause, would this prepare thee to pass the Jordan, or cheer thee in prospect of judgment? No, there are griefs in life which wealth cannot alleviate; and there is the deep need of a dying hour, for which no riches can provide. But when thou hast *God* for thy portion, thou hast more than all else put together. In Him every want is met, whether in life or in death. With God for thy portion thou art rich indeed, for He will supply thy need, comfort thy heart, assuage thy grief, guide thy steps, be with thee in the dark valley, and then take thee home, to enjoy Him as thy portion for ever. “I have enough,” said Esau; this is the best thing a worldly man can say, but Jacob replies, “I have all things,” which is a note too high for carnal minds.

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.

Isaiah 40:11

WHO is He of whom such gracious words are spoken? He is **THE GOOD SHEPHERD**. *Why* doth He carry the lambs in His bosom? *Because He hath a tender heart, and any weakness at once melts His heart.* The sighs, the ignorance, the feebleness of the little ones of His flock draw forth His compassion. *It is His office,* as a faithful High Priest, to consider the weak. Besides, *He purchased them with blood, they are His property:* He must and will care for that which cost Him so dear. Then He is *responsible for each lamb,* bound by covenant engagements not to lose one. Moreover, *they are all a part of His glory and reward.*

But how may we understand the expression, “He will carry them”? Sometimes He carries them by *not permitting them to endure much trial.* Providence deals tenderly with them. Often they are “carried” by being filled with *an unusual degree of love,* so that they bear up and stand fast. Though their knowledge may not be deep, they have great sweetness in what they do know. Frequently He “carries” them by giving them *a very simple faith,* which takes the promise just as it stands, and believingly runs with every trouble straight to Jesus. The simplicity of their faith gives them an unusual degree of confidence, which carries them above the world.

“He carries the lambs *in His bosom.*” Here is *boundless affection.* Would He put them in His bosom if He did not love them much? Here is tender nearness: so near are they, that they could not possibly be nearer. Here is *hallowed familiarity:* there are precious love-passages between Christ and His weak ones. Here is *perfect safety:* in His bosom who can hurt them? They must hurt the Shepherd first. Here is *perfect rest and sweetest comfort.* Surely we are not sufficiently sensible of the infinite tenderness of Jesus!

*To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,
Hebrews 12:23*

RECOLLECT that there are two kinds of perfection which the Christian needs—the perfection of justification in the person of Jesus, and the perfection of sanctification wrought in him by the Holy Spirit. At present, corruption yet remains even in the breasts of the regenerate—experience soon teaches us this. Within us are still lusts and evil imaginations. But I rejoice to know that the day is coming when God shall finish the work which He has begun; and He shall present my soul, not only perfect in Christ, but perfect through the Spirit, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. Can it be true that this poor sinful heart of mine is to become holy even as God is holy? Can it be that this spirit, which often cries, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death?” shall get rid of sin and death—that I shall have no evil things to vex my ears, and no unholy thoughts to disturb my peace? Oh, happy hour! may it be hastened! When I cross the Jordan, the work of sanctification will be finished; but not till that moment shall I even claim perfection in myself. Then my spirit shall have its last baptism in the Holy Spirit’s fire. Methinks I long to die to receive that last and final purification which shall usher me into heaven. Not an angel more pure than I shall be, for I shall be able to say, in a double sense, “I am clean,” through Jesus’ blood, and through the Spirit’s work. Oh, how should we extol the power of the Holy Ghost in thus making us fit to stand before our Father in heaven! Yet let not the hope of perfection hereafter make us content with imperfection now. If it does this, our hope cannot be genuine; for a good hope is a purifying thing, even now. The work of grace must be *abiding in us now* or it cannot be *perfected then*. Let us pray to “be filled with the Spirit,” that we may bring forth *increasingly* the fruits of righteousness.

And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

2 Kings 3:16,17

THE armies of the three kings were famishing for want of water: God was about to send it, and in these words the prophet announced the coming blessing. Here was *a case of human helplessness*: not a drop of water could all the valiant men procure from the skies or find in the wells of earth. Thus often the people of the Lord are at their wits' end; they see the vanity of the creature, and learn experimentally where their help is to be found. Still the people were to make *a believing preparation for the divine blessing*; they were to dig the trenches in which the precious liquid would be held. The church must by her varied agencies, efforts, and prayers, make herself ready to be blessed; she must make the pools, and the Lord will fill them. This must be done in faith, in the full assurance that the blessing is about to descend. By-and-by there was *a singular bestowal of the needed boon*. Not as in Elijah's case did the shower pour from the clouds, but in a silent and mysterious manner the pools were filled. The Lord has His own sovereign modes of action: He is not tied to manner and time as we are, but doeth as He pleases among the sons of men. It is ours thankfully to receive from Him, and not to dictate to Him. We must also notice *the remarkable abundance of the supply*—there was enough for the need of all. And so it is in the gospel blessing; all the wants of the congregation and of the entire church shall be met by the divine power in answer to prayer; and above all this, victory shall be speedily given to the armies of the Lord.

What am I doing for Jesus? What trenches am I digging? O Lord, make me ready to receive the blessing which Thou art so willing to bestow.

Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

Isaiah 41:9

IF we have received the grace of God in our hearts, its practical effect has been to make us God's *servants*. We may be unfaithful servants, we certainly are unprofitable ones, but yet, blessed be His name, we are His servants, wearing His livery, feeding at His table, and obeying His commands. We were once the servants of sin, but He who made us free has now taken us into His family and taught us obedience to His will. We do not serve our Master perfectly, but we would if we could. As we hear God's voice saying unto us, "Thou art My servant," we can answer with David, "I am thy servant; Thou hast loosed my bonds." But the Lord calls us not only His *servants*, but His *chosen* ones—"I have chosen thee." We have not chosen Him first, but He hath chosen us. If we be God's servants, we were not always so; to sovereign grace the change must be ascribed. The eye of sovereignty singled us out, and the voice of unchanging grace declared, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Long ere time began or space was created God had written upon His heart the names of His elect people, had predestinated them to be conformed unto the image of His Son, and ordained them heirs of all the fulness of His love, His grace, and His glory. What comfort is here! Has the Lord loved us so long, and will He yet cast us away? He knew how stiffnecked we should be, He understood that our hearts were evil, and yet He made the choice. Ah! our Saviour is no fickle lover. He doth not feel enchanted for awhile with some gleams of beauty from His church's eye, and then afterwards cast her off because of her unfaithfulness. Nay, He married her in old eternity; and it is written of Jehovah, "He hateth putting away." The eternal choice is a bond upon *our* gratitude and upon *His* faithfulness which neither can disown.

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.

Hebrews 12:11

HOW happy are tried Christians, *afterwards*. No calm more deep than that which succeeds a storm. Who has not rejoiced in clear shinings after rain? Victorious banquets are for well-exercised soldiers. After killing the lion we eat the honey; after climbing the Hill Difficulty, we sit down in the arbour to rest; after traversing the Valley of Humiliation, after fighting with Apollyon, the shining one appears, with the healing branch from the tree of life. Our sorrows, like the passing keels of the vessels upon the sea, leave a silver line of holy light behind them “*afterwards*.” It is peace, sweet, deep peace, which follows the horrible turmoil which once reigned in our tormented, guilty souls. See, then, the happy estate of a Christian! He has his best things last, and he therefore in this world receives his worst things first. But even his worst things are “*afterward*” good things, harsh ploughings yielding joyful harvests. Even now he grows rich by his losses, he rises by his falls, he lives by dying, and becomes full by being emptied; if, then, his grievous afflictions yield him so much peaceable fruit in this life, what shall be the full vintage of joy “*afterwards*” in heaven? If his dark nights are as bright as the world’s days, what shall his days be? If even his starlight is more splendid than the sun, what must his sunlight be? If he can sing in a dungeon, how sweetly will he sing in heaven! If he can praise the Lord in the fires, how will he extol Him before the eternal throne! If evil be good to him *now*, what will the overflowing goodness of God be to him *then*? Oh, blessed “*afterward!*” Who would not be a Christian? Who would not bear the present cross for the crown which cometh afterwards? But herein is work for patience, for the rest is not for today, nor the triumph for the present, but “*afterward*.” Wait, O soul, and let patience have her perfect work.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

1 Kings 19:4

IT was a remarkable thing that the man who was never to die, for whom God had ordained an infinitely better lot, the man who should be carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, and be translated, that he should not see death—should thus pray, “Let me die, I am no better than my fathers.” We have here a memorable proof that God does not always answer prayer in kind, though He always does in effect. He gave Elias something better than that which he asked for, and thus really heard and answered him. Strange was it that the lion-hearted Elijah should be so depressed by Jezebel’s threat as to ask to die, and blessedly kind was it on the part of our heavenly Father that He did not take His desponding servant at his word. There is a limit to the doctrine of the prayer of faith. We are not to expect that God will give us everything we choose to ask for. We know that we sometimes ask, and do not receive, because we ask amiss. If we ask for that which is not promised—if we run counter to the spirit which the Lord would have us cultivate—if we ask contrary to His will, or to the decrees of His providence—if we ask merely for the gratification of our own ease, and without an eye to His glory, we must not expect that we shall receive. Yet, when we ask in faith, nothing doubting, if we receive not the precise thing asked for, we shall receive an equivalent, and more than an equivalent, for it. As one remarks, “If the Lord does not pay in silver, He will in gold; and if He does not pay in gold, He will in diamonds.” If He does not give you precisely what you ask for, He will give you that which is tantamount to it, and that which you will greatly rejoice to receive in lieu thereof. Be then, dear reader, much in prayer, and make this evening a season of earnest intercession, but take heed what you ask.

I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

Hosea 11:4

OUR heavenly Father often draws us with the cords of love; but ah! how backward we are to run towards Him! How slowly do we respond to His gentle impulses! *He draws us to exercise a more simple faith in Him*; but we have not yet attained to Abraham's confidence; we do not leave our worldly cares with God, but, like Martha, we cumber ourselves with much serving. Our meagre faith brings leanness into our souls; we do not open our mouths wide, though God has promised to fill them. Does He not this evening draw us to trust Him? Can we not hear Him say, "Come, My child, and trust Me. The veil is rent; enter into My presence, and approach boldly to the throne of My grace. I am worthy of thy fullest confidence, cast thy cares on Me. Shake thyself from the dust of thy cares, and put on thy beautiful garments of joy." But, alas! though called with tones of love to the blessed exercise of this comforting grace, we will not come. At another time *He draws us to closer communion with Himself*. We have been sitting on the doorstep of God's house, and He bids us advance into the banqueting hall and sup with Him, but we decline the honour. There are secret rooms not yet opened to us; Jesus invites us to enter them, but we hold back. Shame on our cold hearts! We are but poor lovers of our sweet Lord Jesus, not fit to be His servants, much less to be His brides, and yet He hath exalted us to be bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, married to Him by a glorious marriage-covenant. Herein is love! But it is love which *takes no denial*. If we obey not the gentle drawings of His love, He will send affliction to drive us into closer intimacy with Himself. Have us nearer He will. What foolish children we are to refuse those bands of love, and so bring upon our backs that scourge of small cords, which Jesus knows how to use!

*And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt:
get you down thither, and buy for us from thence;
that we may live, and not die.
Genesis 42:2*

FAMINE pinched all the nations, and it seemed inevitable that Jacob and his family should suffer great want; but the God of providence, who never forgets the objects of electing love, had stored a granary for His people by giving the Egyptians warning of the scarcity, and leading them to treasure up the grain of the years of plenty. Little did Jacob expect deliverance from Egypt, but there was the corn in store for him. Believer, though all things are apparently against thee, rest assured that God has made a reservation on thy behalf; in the roll of thy griefs there is a saving clause. Somehow He will deliver thee, and somewhere He will provide for thee. The quarter from which thy rescue shall arise may be a very unexpected one, but help will assuredly come in thine extremity, and thou shalt magnify the name of the Lord. If men do not feed thee, ravens shall; and if earth yield not wheat, heaven shall drop with manna. Therefore be of good courage, and rest quietly in the Lord. God can make the sun rise in the west if He pleases, and make the source of distress the channel of delight. The corn in Egypt was all in the hands of the beloved Joseph; he opened or closed the granaries at will. And so the riches of providence are all in the absolute power of our Lord Jesus, who will dispense them liberally to His people. Joseph was abundantly ready to succour his own family; and Jesus is unceasing in His faithful care for His brethren. Our business is to go after the help which is provided for us: we must not sit still in despondency, but bestir ourselves. Prayer will bear us soon into the presence of our royal Brother: once before His throne we have only to ask and have: His stores are not exhausted; there is corn still: His heart is not hard, He will give the corn to us. Lord, forgive our unbelief, and this evening constrain us to draw largely from Thy fulness and receive grace for grace.

Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.

Song of Solomon 1:16

FROM every point our Well-beloved is most fair. Our various experiences are meant by our heavenly Father to furnish fresh standpoints from which we may view the loveliness of Jesus; how amiable are our trials when they carry us aloft where we may gain clearer views of Jesus than ordinary life could afford us! We have seen Him from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, and He has shone upon us as the sun in his strength; but we have seen Him also “from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of the leopards,” and He has lost none of His loveliness. From the languishing of a sick bed, from the borders of the grave, have we turned our eyes to our soul’s spouse, and He has never been otherwise than “all fair.” Many of His saints have looked upon Him from the gloom of dungeons, and from the red flames of the stake, yet have they never uttered an ill word of Him, but have died extolling His surpassing charms. Oh, noble and pleasant employment to be for ever gazing at our sweet Lord Jesus! Is it not unspeakably delightful to view the Saviour in all His offices, and to perceive Him matchless in each?—to shift the kaleidoscope, as it were, and to find fresh combinations of peerless graces? In the manger and in eternity, on the cross and on His throne, in the garden and in His kingdom, among thieves or in the midst of cherubim, He is everywhere “altogether lovely.” Examine carefully every little act of His life, and every trait of His character, and He is as lovely in the minute as in the majestic. Judge Him as you will, you cannot censure; weigh Him as you please, and He will not be found wanting. Eternity shall not discover the shadow of a spot in our Beloved, but rather, as ages revolve, His hidden glories shall shine forth with yet more inconceivable splendour, and His unutterable loveliness shall more and more ravish all celestial minds.

*Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money,
neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices:
but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins,
thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

Isaiah 43:24

WORSHIPPERS at the temple were wont to bring presents of sweet perfumes to be burned upon the altar of God: but Israel, in the time of her backsliding, became ungenerous, and made but few votive offerings to her Lord: this was an evidence of coldness of heart towards God and His house. Reader, does this never occur with you? Might not the complaint of the text be occasionally, if not frequently, brought against you? Those who are poor in pocket, if rich in faith, will be accepted none the less because their gifts are small; but, poor reader, do you give in fair proportion to the Lord, or is the widow's mite kept back from the sacred treasury? The rich believer should be thankful for the talent entrusted to him, but should not forget his large responsibility, for where much is given much will be required; but, rich reader, are you mindful of your obligations, and rendering to the Lord according to the benefit received? Jesus gave His blood for us, what shall we give to Him? We are His, and all that we have, for He has purchased us unto Himself—can we act as if we were our own? O for more consecration! and to this end, O for more love! Blessed Jesus, how good it is of Thee to accept our sweet cane bought with money! nothing is too costly as a tribute to Thine unrivalled love, and yet Thou dost receive with favour the smallest sincere token of affection! Thou dost receive our poor forget-me-nots and love-tokens as though they were intrinsically precious, though indeed they are but as the bunch of wild flowers which the child brings to its mother. Never may we grow niggardly towards Thee, and from this hour never may we hear Thee complain of us again for withholding the gifts of our love. We will give Thee the first fruits of our increase, and pay Thee tithes of all, and then we will confess “of Thine own have we given Thee.”

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;
Philippians 1:27

THE word “conversation” does not merely mean our talk and converse with one another, but the whole course of our life and behaviour in the world. The Greek word signifies the actions and the privileges of citizenship: and thus we are commanded to let our actions, as citizens of the New Jerusalem, be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. What sort of conversation is this? In the first place, *the gospel is very simple*. So Christians should be simple and plain in their habits. There should be about our manner, our speech, our dress, our whole behaviour, that simplicity which is the very soul of beauty. The gospel is *pre-eminently true*, it is gold without dross; and the Christian’s life will be lustreless and valueless without the jewel of truth. The gospel is a very *fearless gospel*, it boldly proclaims the truth, whether men like it or not: we must be equally faithful and unflinching. But the gospel is also *very gentle*. Mark this spirit in its Founder: “a bruised reed He will not break.” Some professors are sharper than a thorn-hedge; such men are not like Jesus. Let us seek to win others by the gentleness of our words and acts. The gospel is *very loving*. It is the message of the God of love to a lost and fallen race. Christ’s last command to His disciples was, “Love one another.” O for more real, hearty union and love to all the saints; for more tender compassion towards the souls of the worst and vilest of men! We must not forget that the gospel of Christ is *holy*. It never excuses sin: it pardons it, but only through an atonement. If our life is to resemble the gospel, we must shun, not merely the grosser vices, but everything that would hinder our perfect conformity to Christ. For His sake, for our own sakes, and for the sakes of others, we must strive day by day to let our conversation be more in accordance with His gospel.

*And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem,
and found the eleven gathered together,
and them that were with them,*

*And they told what things were done in the way,
and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.*

Luke 24:33,35

WHEN the two disciples had reached Emmaus, and were refreshing themselves at the evening meal, the mysterious stranger who had so enchanted them upon the road, took bread and brake it, made Himself known to them, and then vanished out of their sight. They had constrained Him to abide with them, because the day was far spent; but now, although it was much later, their love was a lamp to their feet, yea, wings also; they forgot the darkness, their weariness was all gone, and forthwith they journeyed back the threescore furlongs to tell the gladsome news of a risen Lord, who had appeared to them by the way. They reached the Christians in Jerusalem, and were received by a burst of joyful news before they could tell their own tale. These early Christians were all on fire to speak of Christ's resurrection, and to proclaim what they knew of the Lord; they made common property of their experiences. This evening let their example impress us deeply. We too must bear our witness concerning Jesus. John's account of the sepulchre needed to be supplemented by Peter; and Mary could speak of something further still; combined, we have a full testimony from which nothing can be spared. We have each of us peculiar gifts and special manifestations; but the one object God has in view is the perfecting of the whole body of Christ. We must, therefore, bring our spiritual possessions and lay them at the apostle's feet, and make distribution unto all of what God has given to us. Keep back no part of the precious truth, but speak what you know, and testify what you have seen. Let not the toil or darkness, or possible unbelief of your friends, weigh one moment in the scale. Up, and be marching to the place of duty, and there tell what great things God has shown to your soul.

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Acts 14:22

PERSEVERANCE is the badge of true saints. The Christian life is not a *beginning* only in the ways of God, but also a *continuance* in the same as long as life lasts. It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon: he said, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." So, under God, dear brother in the Lord, conquest has made you what you are, and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, "Excelsior." He only is a true conqueror, and shall be crowned at the last, who continueth till war's trumpet is blown no more. Perseverance is, therefore, the target of all our spiritual enemies. The *world* does not object to your being a Christian for a time, if she can but tempt you to cease your pilgrimage, and settle down to buy and sell with her in Vanity Fair. The *flesh* will seek to ensnare you, and to prevent your pressing on to glory. "It is weary work being a pilgrim; come, give it up. Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me at least a furlough from this constant warfare." *Satan* will make many a fierce attack on your perseverance; it will be the mark for all his arrows. He will strive to hinder you in service: he will insinuate that you are doing no good; and that you want rest. He will endeavour to make you weary of *suffering*, he will whisper, "Curse God, and die." Or he will attack your *steadfastness*: "What is the good of being so zealous? Be quiet like the rest; sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out as the other virgins do." Or he will assail your *doctrinal sentiments*: "Why do you hold to these denominational creeds? Sensible men are getting more liberal; they are removing the old landmarks: fall in with the times." Wear your shield, Christian, therefore, close upon your armour, and cry mightily unto God, that by His Spirit you may endure to the end.

And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?

2 Samuel 9:8

IF Mephibosheth was thus humbled by David's kindness, what shall we be in the presence of our gracious Lord? The more grace we have, the less we shall think of ourselves, for grace, like light, reveals our impurity. Eminent saints have scarcely known to what to compare themselves, their sense of unworthiness has been so clear and keen. "I am," says holy Rutherford, "a dry and withered branch, a piece of dead carcass, dry bones, and not able to step over a straw." In another place he writes, "Except as to open outbreakings, I want nothing of what Judas and Cain had." The meanest objects in nature appear to the humbled mind to have a preference above itself, because they have never contracted sin: a dog may be greedy, fierce, or filthy, but it has no conscience to violate, no Holy Spirit to resist. A dog may be a worthless animal, and yet by a little kindness it is soon won to love its master, and is faithful unto death; but we forget the goodness of the Lord, and follow not at His call. The term "dead dog" is the most expressive of all terms of contempt, but it is none too strong to express the self-abhorrence of instructed believers. They do not affect mock modesty, they mean what they say, they have weighed themselves in the balances of the sanctuary, and found out the vanity of their nature. At best, we are but clay, animated dust, mere walking hillocks; but viewed as sinners, we are monsters indeed. Let it be published in heaven as a wonder, that the Lord Jesus should set His heart's love upon such as we are. Dust and ashes though we be, we must and will "magnify the exceeding greatness of His grace." Could not His heart find rest in heaven? Must He needs come to these tents of Kedar for a spouse, and choose a bride upon whom the sun had looked? O heavens and earth, break forth into a song, and give all glory to our sweet Lord Jesus.

This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

Lamentations 3:21

MEMORY is frequently the bondslave of despondency. Despairing minds call to remembrance every dark foreboding in the past, and dilate upon every gloomy feature in the present; thus memory, clothed in sackcloth, presents to the mind a cup of mingled gall and wormwood. There is, however, no necessity for this. Wisdom can readily transform memory into an angel of comfort. That same recollection which in its left hand brings so many gloomy omens, may be trained to bear in its right a wealth of hopeful signs. She need not wear a crown of iron, she may encircle her brow with a fillet of gold, all spangled with stars. Thus it was in Jeremiah's experience: in the previous verse memory had brought him to deep humiliation of soul: "My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me"; and now this same memory restored him to life and comfort. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." Like a two-edged sword, his memory first killed his pride with one edge, and then slew his despair with the other. As a general principle, if we would exercise our memories more wisely, we might, in our very darkest distress, strike a match which would instantaneously kindle the lamp of comfort. There is no need for God to create a new thing upon the earth in order to restore believers to joy; if they would prayerfully rake the ashes of the past, they would find light for the present; and if they would turn to the book of truth and the throne of grace, their candle would soon shine as aforetime. Be it ours to remember the lovingkindness of the Lord, and to rehearse His deeds of grace. Let us open the volume of recollection which is so richly illuminated with memorials of mercy, and we shall soon be happy. Thus memory may be, as Coleridge calls it, "the bosom-spring of joy," and when the Divine Comforter bends it to His service, it may be chief among earthly comforters.

And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.

Joshua 6:26

SINCE he was cursed who rebuilt Jericho, much more the man who labours to restore Popery among us. In our fathers' days the gigantic walls of Popery fell by the power of their faith, the perseverance of their efforts, and the blast of their gospel trumpets; and now there are some who would rebuild that accursed system upon its old foundation. O Lord, be pleased to thwart their unrighteous endeavours, and pull down every stone which they build. It should be a serious business with us to be thoroughly purged of every error which may have a tendency to foster the spirit of Popery, and when we have made a clean sweep at home we should seek in every way to oppose its all too rapid spread abroad in the church and in the world. This last can be done in secret by fervent prayer, and in public by decided testimony. We must warn with judicious boldness those who are inclined towards the errors of Rome; we must instruct the young in gospel truth, and tell them of the black doings of Popery in the olden times. We must aid in spreading the light more thoroughly through the land, for priests, like owls, hate daylight. Are we doing all we can for Jesus and the gospel? If not, our negligence plays into the hands of the priestcraft. What are we doing to spread the Bible, which is the Pope's bane and poison? Are we casting abroad good, sound gospel writings? Luther once said, "The devil hates goose quills" and, doubtless, he has good reason, for ready writers, by the Holy Spirit's blessing, have done his kingdom much damage. If the thousands who will read this short word this night will do all they can to hinder the rebuilding of this accursed Jericho, the Lord's glory shall speed among the sons of men. Reader, what can you do? What will you do?

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Romans 6:6

CHRISTIAN, what hast thou to do with sin? *Hath it not cost thee enough already?* Burnt child, wilt thou play with the fire? What! when thou hast already been between the jaws of the lion, wilt thou step a second time into his den? Hast thou not had enough of the old serpent? Did he not poison all thy veins once, and wilt thou play upon the hole of the asp, and put thy hand upon the cockatrice's den a second time? Oh, be not so mad! so foolish! Did sin ever yield thee real pleasure? Didst thou find solid satisfaction in it? If so, go back to thine old drudgery, and wear the chain again, if it delight thee. But inasmuch as sin did never give thee what it promised to bestow, but deluded thee with lies, be not a second time snared by the old fowler—be free, and let the remembrance of thy ancient bondage forbid thee to enter the net again! *It is contrary to the designs of eternal love*, which all have an eye to thy purity and holiness; therefore run not counter to the purposes of thy Lord. Another thought should restrain thee from sin. *Christians can never sin cheaply*; they pay a heavy price for iniquity. Transgression destroys peace of mind, obscures fellowship with Jesus, hinders prayer, brings darkness over the soul; therefore be not the serf and bondman of sin. There is yet a higher argument: each time you “serve sin” you have “*Crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame.*” Can you bear *that* thought? Oh! if you have fallen into any special sin during this day, it may be my Master has sent this admonition this evening, to bring you back before you have backslidden very far. Turn thee to Jesus anew; He has not forgotten His love to thee; His grace is still the same. With weeping and repentance, come thou to His footstool, and thou shalt be once more received into His heart; thou shalt be set upon a rock again, and thy goings shall be established.

*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;
Psalm 103:3*

HUMBLING as is the statement, yet the fact is certain, that we are all more or less suffering under the disease of sin. What a comfort to know that we have a great Physician who is both able and willing to heal us! Let us think of Him awhile tonight. His cures are very *speedy*—there is life in a look at Him; His cures are *radical*—He strikes at the centre of the disease; and hence, His cures are sure and certain. He never fails, and *the disease never returns*. There is no relapse where Christ heals; no fear that His patients should be merely patched up for a season, He makes new men of them: a new heart also does He give them, and a right spirit does He put with them. He is well skilled in all diseases. Physicians generally have some *specialite*. Although they may know a little about almost all our pains and ills, there is usually one disease which they have studied above all others; but Jesus Christ is thoroughly acquainted with the whole of human nature. He is as much at home with one sinner as with another, and never yet did He meet with an out-of-the-way case that was difficult to Him. He has had extraordinary complications of strange diseases to deal with, but He has known exactly with one glance of His eye how to treat the patient. He is the only universal doctor; and the medicine He gives is the only true catholicon, healing in every instance. Whatever our spiritual malady may be, we should apply at once to this Divine Physician. There is no brokenness of heart which Jesus cannot bind up. “His blood cleanseth from all sin.” We have but to think of the myriads who have been delivered from all sorts of diseases through the power and virtue of His touch, and we shall joyfully put ourselves in His hands. We trust Him, and sin dies; we love Him, and grace lives; we wait for Him and grace is strengthened; we see Him as he is, and grace is perfected forever.

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.

Isaiah 51:3

METHINKS, I see in vision a howling wilderness, a great and terrible desert, like to the Sahara. I perceive nothing in it to relieve the eye, all around I am wearied with a vision of hot and arid sand, strewn with ten thousand bleaching skeletons of wretched men who have expired in anguish, having lost their way in the pitiless waste. What an appalling sight! How horrible! a sea of sand without a bound, and without an oasis, a cheerless graveyard for a race forlorn! But behold and wonder! Upon a sudden, upspringing from the scorching sand I see a plant of renown; and as it grows it buds, the bud expands—it is a rose, and at its side a lily bows its modest head; and, miracle of miracles! as the fragrance of those flowers is diffused the wilderness is transformed into a fruitful field, and all around it blossoms exceedingly, the glory of Lebanon is given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. Call it not Sahara, call it Paradise. Speak not of it any longer as the valley of deathshade, for where the skeletons lay bleaching in the sun, behold a resurrection is proclaimed, and up spring the dead, a mighty army, full of life immortal. Jesus is that plant of renown, and His presence makes all things new. Nor is the wonder less in each individual's salvation. Yonder I behold you, dear reader, cast out, an infant, unswathed, unwashed, defiled with your own blood, left to be food for beasts of prey. But lo, a jewel has been thrown into your bosom by a divine hand, and for its sake you have been pitied and tended by divine providence, you are washed and cleansed from your defilement, you are adopted into heaven's family, the fair seal of love is upon your forehead, and the ring of faithfulness is on your hand—you are now a prince unto God, though once an orphan, cast away. O prize exceedingly the matchless power and grace which changes deserts into gardens, and makes the barren heart to sing for joy.

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

Matthew 19:16

IF the young man in the gospel used this title in speaking to our Lord, how much more fitly may I thus address Him! He is indeed my Master in both senses, a ruling Master and a teaching Master. I delight to run upon His errands, and to sit at His feet. I am both His servant and His disciple, and count it my highest honour to own the double character. If He should ask me why I call Him “good,” I should have a ready answer. It is true that “there is none good but one, that is, God,” but then He is God, and all the goodness of Deity shines forth in Him. In my experience, I have found Him good, so good, indeed, that all the good I have has come to me through Him. He was good to me when I was dead in sin, for He raised me by His Spirit’s power; He has been good to me in all my needs, trials, struggles, and sorrows. Never could there be a better Master, for His service is freedom, His rule is love: I wish I were one thousandth part as good a servant. When He teaches me as my Rabbi, He is unspeakably good, His doctrine is divine, His manner is condescending, His spirit is gentleness itself. No error mingles with His instruction—pure is the golden truth which He brings forth, and all His teachings lead to goodness, sanctifying as well as edifying the disciple. Angels find Him a good Master and delight to pay their homage at His footstool. The ancient saints proved Him to be a good Master, and each of them rejoiced to sing, “I am Thy servant, O Lord!” My own humble testimony must certainly be to the same effect. I will bear this witness before my friends and neighbours, for possibly they may be led by my testimony to seek my Lord Jesus as their Master. O that they would do so! They would never repent so wise a deed. If they would but take His easy yoke, they would find themselves in so royal a service that they would enlist in it forever.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:8

JESUS is the great teacher of lowliness of heart. We need daily to learn of Him. See the Master taking a towel and washing His disciples' feet! Follower of Christ, wilt thou not humble thyself? See Him as the Servant of servants, and surely thou canst not be proud! Is not this sentence the compendium of His biography, "He humbled Himself"? Was He not on earth always stripping off first one robe of honour and then another, till, naked, He was fastened to the cross, and there did He not empty out His inmost self, pouring out His life-blood, giving up for all of us, till they laid Him penniless in a borrowed grave? How low was our dear Redeemer brought! How then can we be proud? Stand at the foot of the cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed; see the thorn-crown; mark His scourged shoulders, still gushing with encrimsoned rills; see hands and feet given up to the rough iron, and His whole self to mockery and scorn; see the bitterness, and the pangs, and the throes of inward grief, showing themselves in His outward frame; hear the thrilling shriek, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And if you do not lie prostrate on the ground before that cross, you have never seen it: if you are not humbled in the presence of Jesus, you do not know Him. You were so lost that nothing could save you but the sacrifice of God's only begotten. Think of that, and as Jesus stooped for you, bow yourself in lowliness at His feet. A sense of Christ's amazing love to us has a greater tendency to humble us than even a consciousness of our own guilt. May the Lord bring us in contemplation to Calvary, then our position will no longer be that of the pompous man of pride, but we shall take the humble place of one who loves much because much has been forgiven him. Pride cannot live beneath the cross. Let us sit there and learn our lesson, and then rise and carry it into practice.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

1 Timothy 3:16

WE have seen our well-beloved Lord in the days of His flesh, humiliated and sore vexed; for He was “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” He whose brightness is as the morning, wore the sackcloth of sorrow as His daily dress: shame was His mantle, and reproach was His vesture. Yet now, inasmuch as He has triumphed over all the powers of darkness upon the bloody tree, our faith beholds our King returning with dyed garments from Edom, robed in the splendour of victory. How glorious must He have been in the eyes of seraphs, when a cloud received Him out of mortal sight, and He ascended up to heaven! Now He wears the glory which He had with God or ever the earth was, and yet another glory above all—that which He has well earned in the fight against sin, death, and hell. As victor He wears the illustrious crown. Hark how the song swells high! It is a new and sweeter song: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for He hath redeemed us unto God by His blood!” He wears the glory of an Intercessor who can never fail, of a Prince who can never be defeated, of a Conqueror who has vanquished every foe, of a Lord who has the heart’s allegiance of every subject. Jesus wears all the glory which the pomp of heaven can bestow upon Him, which ten thousand times ten thousand angels can minister to Him. You cannot with your utmost stretch of imagination conceive His exceeding greatness; yet there will be a further revelation of it when He shall descend from heaven in great power, with all the holy angels—“Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.” Oh, the splendour of that glory! It will ravish His people’s hearts. Nor is this the close, for eternity shall sound His praise, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever!” Reader, if you would joy in Christ’s glory hereafter, He must be glorious in your sight now. *Is He so?*

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

1 John 4:8

THE distinguishing mark of a Christian is his confidence in the love of Christ, and the yielding of his affections to Christ in return. First, faith sets her seal upon the man by enabling the soul to say with the apostle, "Christ loved me and gave Himself for me." Then love gives the countersign, and stamps upon the heart gratitude and love to Jesus in return. "We love Him because He first loved us." In those grand old ages, which are the heroic period of the Christian religion, this double mark was clearly to be seen in all believers in Jesus; they were men who knew the love of Christ, and rested upon it as a man leaneth upon a staff whose trustiness he has tried. The love which they felt towards the Lord was not a quiet emotion which they hid within themselves in the secret chamber of their souls, and which they only spake of in their private assemblies when they met on the first day of the week, and sang hymns in honour of Christ Jesus the crucified, but it was a passion with them of such a vehement and all-consuming energy, that it was visible in all their actions, spoke in their common talk, and looked out of their eyes even in their commonest glances. Love to Jesus was a flame which fed upon the core and heart of their being; and, therefore, from its own force burned its way into the outer man, and shone there. Zeal for the glory of King Jesus was the seal and mark of all genuine Christians. Because of their dependence upon Christ's love they *dared* much, and because of their love to Christ they did much, and it is the same now. The children of God are ruled in their inmost powers by love—the love of Christ constraineth them; they rejoice that divine love is set upon them, they feel it shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them, and then by force of gratitude they love the Saviour with a pure heart, fervently. My reader, do you love Him? Ere you sleep give an honest answer to a weighty question!

Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

2 Corinthians 11:22

WE have here A PERSONAL CLAIM, and one that *needs proof*. The apostle knew that *His* claim was indisputable, but there are many persons who have no right to the title who yet claim to belong to the Israel of God. If we are with confidence declaring, "So am I also an Israelite," let us only say it after having searched our heart as in the presence of God. But if we can give proof that we are following Jesus, if we can from the heart say, "I trust Him wholly, trust Him only, trust Him simply, trust Him now, and trust Him ever," then the position which the saints of God hold belongs to us—all their enjoyments are our possessions; we may be the very least in Israel, "less than the least of all saints," yet since the mercies of God belong to the saints AS SAINTS, and not as advanced saints, or well-taught saints, we may put in our plea, and say, "Are they Israelites? so am I; therefore the promises are mine, grace is mine, glory will be mine." The claim, rightfully made, is one which will yield untold comfort. When God's people are rejoicing that they are His, what a happiness if they can say, "So AM I!" When they speak of being pardoned, and justified, and accepted in the Beloved, how joyful to respond, "*Through the grace of God, SO AM I.*" But this claim not only has its enjoyments and privileges, but also its conditions and duties. We must share with God's people in cloud as well as in sunshine. When we hear them spoken of with contempt and ridicule for being Christians, we must come boldly forward and say, "So am I." When we see them working for Christ, giving their time, their talent, their whole heart to Jesus, we must be able to say, "So do I." O let us prove our gratitude by our devotion, and live as those who, having claimed a privilege, are willing to take the responsibility connected with it.

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore,
and repent.*

Revelation 3:19

IF you would see souls converted, if you would hear the cry that “the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord”; if you would place crowns upon the head of the Saviour, and His throne lifted high, then be filled with zeal. For, under God, the way of the world’s conversion must be by the zeal of the church. Every grace shall do exploits, but this shall be first; prudence, knowledge, patience, and courage will follow in their places, but zeal must lead the van. It is not the extent of your knowledge, though that is useful; it is not the extent of your talent, though that is not to be despised; it is your zeal that shall do great exploits. This zeal is the fruit of the Holy Spirit: it draws its vital force from *the continued operations of the Holy Ghost in the soul*. If our inner life dwindles, if our heart beats slowly before God, we shall not know zeal; but if all be strong and vigorous within, then we cannot but feel a loving anxiety to see the kingdom of Christ come, and His will done on earth, even as it is in heaven. A deep *sense of gratitude* will nourish Christian zeal. Looking to the hole of the pit whence we were digged, we find abundant reason why we should spend and be spent for God. And zeal is also stimulated by *the thought of the eternal future*. It looks with tearful eyes down to the flames of hell, and it cannot slumber: it looks up with anxious gaze to the glories of heaven, and it cannot but bestir itself. It feels that time is short compared with the work to be done, and therefore it devotes all that it has to the cause of its Lord. And it is ever strengthened by *the remembrance of Christ’s example*. He was clothed with zeal as with a cloak. How swift the chariot-wheels of duty went with Him! He knew no loitering by the way. Let us prove that we are His disciples by manifesting the same spirit of zeal.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

Numbers 11:23

GOD had made a positive promise to Moses that for the space of a whole month He would feed the vast host in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means, and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled. He looked to the creature instead of the Creator. But doth the Creator expect the creature to fulfil His promise for Him? No; He who makes the promise ever fulfils it by His own unaided omnipotence. If He speaks, it is done—done by Himself. His promises do not depend for their fulfillment upon the co-operation of the puny strength of man. We can at once perceive the mistake which Moses made. And yet how commonly we do the same! God has promised to supply our needs, and we look to the creature to do what God has promised to do; and then, because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble, we indulge in unbelief. Why look we to that quarter at all? Will you look to the north pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Verily, you would act no more foolishly if ye did this than when you look to the weak for strength, and to the creature to do the Creator's work. Let us, then, put the question on the right footing. The ground of faith is not the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise, but the all-sufficiency of the invisible God, who will most surely do as He hath said. If after clearly seeing that the onus lies with the Lord and not with the creature, we dare to indulge in mistrust, the question of God comes home mightily to us: "Has the Lord's hand waxed short?" May it happen, too, in His mercy, that with the question there may flash upon our souls that blessed declaration, "Thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life:
and they are they which testify of me.*

John 5:39

THE Greek word here rendered search signifies a strict, close, diligent, curious search, such as men make when they are seeking gold, or hunters when they are in earnest after game. We must not rest content with having given a superficial reading to a chapter or two, but with the candle of the Spirit we must deliberately seek out the hidden meaning of the word. Holy Scripture *requires searching*—much of it can only be learned by careful study. There is milk for babes, but also meat for strong men. The rabbis wisely say that a mountain of matter hangs upon every word, yea, upon every title of Scripture. Tertullian exclaims, “I adore the fullness of the Scriptures.” No man who merely skims the book of God can profit thereby; we must dig and mine until we obtain the hid treasure. The door of the word only opens to the key of diligence. The Scriptures *claim searching*. They are the writings of God, bearing the divine stamp and imprimatur—who shall dare to treat them with levity? He who despises them despises the God who wrote them. God forbid that any of us should leave our Bibles to become swift witnesses against us in the great day of account. The word of God *will repay searching*. God does not bid us sift a mountain of chaff with here and there a grain of wheat in it, but the Bible is winnowed corn—we have but to open the granary door and find it. Scripture grows upon the student. It is full of surprises. Under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to the searching eye it glows with splendour of revelation, like a vast temple paved with wrought gold, and roofed with rubies, emeralds, and all manner of gems. No merchandise is like the merchandise of Scripture truth. Lastly, *the Scriptures reveal Jesus*: “They are they which testify of Me.” No more powerful motive can be urged upon Bible readers than this: he who finds Jesus finds life, heaven, all things. Happy is he who, searching his Bible, discovers his Saviour.

*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life:
and they are they which testify of me.*

John 5:39

JESUS Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the Bible. He is the constant theme of its sacred pages; from first to last they testify of Him. At the creation we at once discern Him as one of the sacred Trinity; we catch a glimpse of Him in the promise of the woman's seed; we see Him typified in the ark of Noah; we walk with Abraham, as He sees Messiah's day; we dwell in the tents of Isaac and Jacob, feeding upon the gracious promise; we hear the venerable Israel talking of Shiloh; and in the numerous types of the law, we find the Redeemer abundantly foreshadowed. Prophets and kings, priests and preachers, all look one way—they all stand as the cherubs did over the ark, desiring to look within, and to read the mystery of God's great propitiation. Still more manifestly in the New Testament we find our Lord the one pervading subject. It is not an ingot here and there, or dust of gold thinly scattered, but here you stand upon a solid floor of gold; for the whole substance of the New Testament is Jesus crucified, and even its closing sentence is bejewelled with the Redeemer's name. We should always read Scripture in this light; we should consider the word to be as a mirror into which Christ looks down from heaven; and then we, looking into it, see His face reflected as in a glass—darkly, it is true, but still in such a way as to be a blessed preparation for seeing Him as we shall see Him face to face. This volume contains Jesus Christ's letters to us, perfumed by His love. These pages are the garments of our King, and they all smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Scripture is the royal chariot in which Jesus rides, and it is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem. The Scriptures are the swaddling bands of the holy child Jesus; unroll them and you find your Saviour. The quintessence of the word of God is Christ.

*There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword,
and the battle.*

Psalm 76:3

OUR Redeemer's glorious cry of "It is finished," was the death-knell of all the adversaries of His people, the breaking of "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." Behold the hero of Golgotha using His cross as an anvil, and His woes as a hammer, dashing to shivers bundle after bundle of our sins, those poisoned "arrows of the bow"; trampling on every indictment, and destroying every accusation. What glorious blows the mighty Breaker gives with a hammer far more ponderous than the fabled weapon of Thor! How the diabolical darts fly to fragments, and the infernal bucklers are broken like potters' vessels! Behold, He draws from its sheath of hellish workmanship the dread sword of Satanic power! He snaps it across His knee, as a man breaks the dry wood of a fagot, and casts it into the fire. Beloved, no sin of a believer can now be an arrow mortally to wound him, no condemnation can now be a sword to kill him, for the punishment of our sin was borne by Christ, a full atonement was made for all our iniquities by our blessed Substitute and Surety. Who now accuseth? Who now condemneth? Christ hath died, yea rather, hath risen again. Jesus has emptied the quivers of hell, has quenched every fiery dart, and broken off the head of every arrow of wrath; the ground is strewn with the splinters and relics of the weapons of hell's warfare, which are only visible to us to remind us of our former danger, and of our great deliverance. Sin hath no more dominion over us. Jesus has made an end of it, and put it away for ever. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end. Talk ye of all the wondrous works of the Lord, ye who make mention of His name, keep not silence, neither by day, nor when the sun goeth to his rest. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

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 Timothy 1:9

THE apostle uses the perfect tense and says, “Who *hath* saved us.” Believers in Christ Jesus are saved. They are not looked upon as persons who are in a hopeful state, and may ultimately be saved, but they *are* already saved. Salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed, and to be sung of in a future state above, but a matter to be obtained, received, promised, and enjoyed now. The Christian is perfectly saved *in God’s purpose*; God has ordained him unto salvation, and that purpose is complete. He is saved also as to the *price which has been paid for him*: “It is finished” was the cry of the Saviour ere He died. The believer is also perfectly saved *in His covenant head*, for as he fell in Adam, so he lives in Christ. This complete salvation is accompanied by a *holy calling*. Those whom the Saviour saved upon the cross are in due time effectually called by the power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness: they leave their sins; they endeavour to be like Christ; they choose holiness, not out of any compulsion, but from the stress of a new nature, which leads them to rejoice in holiness just as naturally as aforesaid they delighted in sin. God neither chose them nor called them because they were holy, but He called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them. The excellencies which we see in a believer are as much the work of God as the atonement itself. Thus is brought out very sweetly the fullness of the grace of God. Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord is the author of it: and what motive but grace could move Him to save the guilty? Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Such is the believer’s privilege—a *present salvation*; such is the evidence that he is called to it—a *holy life*.

Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

Proverbs 30:8

Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.

Psalms 38:21

HERE we have two great lessons—what to deprecate and what to supplicate. The happiest state of a Christian is the holiest state. As there is the most heat nearest to the sun, so there is the most happiness nearest to Christ. No Christian enjoys comfort when his eyes are fixed on vanity—he finds no satisfaction unless his soul is quickened in the ways of God. The world may win happiness elsewhere, but he cannot. I do not blame ungodly men for rushing to their pleasures. Why should I? Let them have their fill. That is all they have to enjoy. A converted wife who despaired of her husband was always very kind to him, for she said, “I fear that this is the only world in which he will be happy, and therefore I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can in it.” Christians must seek their delights in a higher sphere than the insipid frivolities or sinful enjoyments of the world. Vain pursuits are dangerous to renewed souls. We have heard of a philosopher who, while he looked *up* to the stars, fell into a pit; but how deeply do they fall who look *down*. Their fall is fatal. No Christian is safe when his soul is slothful, and his God is far from him. Every Christian is always safe as to the great matter of his standing in Christ, but he is not safe as regards his experience in holiness, and communion with Jesus in this life. Satan does not often attack a Christian who is living near to God. It is when the Christian departs from his God, becomes spiritually starved, and endeavours to feed on vanities, that the devil discovers his vantage hour. He may sometimes stand foot to foot with the child of God who is active in his Master’s service, but the battle is generally short: he who slips as he goes down into the Valley of Humiliation, every time he takes a false step invites Apollyon to assail him. O for grace to walk humbly with our God!

O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

Daniel 9:8

A DEEP sense and clear sight of sin, its heinousness, and the punishment which it deserves, should make us lie low before the throne. We have sinned as Christians. Alas! that it should be so. Favoured as we have been, we have yet been ungrateful: privileged beyond most, we have not brought forth fruit in proportion. Who is there, although he may long have been engaged in the Christian warfare, that will not blush when he looks back upon the past? As for our days before we were regenerated, may they be forgiven and forgotten; but since then, though we have not sinned as before, yet we have sinned against light and against love—light which has really penetrated our minds, and love in which we have rejoiced. Oh, the atrocity of the sin of a pardoned soul! An unpardoned sinner sins cheaply compared with the sin of one of God's own elect ones, who has had communion with Christ and leaned his head upon Jesus' bosom. Look at David! Many will talk of his sin, but I pray you look at his repentance, and hear his broken bones, as each one of them moans out its dolorous confession! Mark his tears, as they fall upon the ground, and the deep sighs with which he accompanies the softened music of his harp! We have erred: let us, therefore, seek the spirit of penitence. Look, again, at Peter! We speak much of Peter's denying his Master. Remember, it is written, "He wept bitterly." Have *we* no denials of our Lord to be lamented with tears? Alas! these sins of ours, before and after conversion, would consign us to the place of inextinguishable fire if it were not for the sovereign mercy which has made us to differ, snatching us like brands from the burning. My soul, bow down under a sense of thy natural sinfulness, and worship thy God. Admire the grace which saves thee—the mercy which spares thee—the love which pardons thee!

*And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;
These things saith he that is holy, he that is true,
he that hath the key of David, he that openeth,
and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;
Revelation 3:7*

JESUS is the keeper of the gates of paradise and before every believing soul He setteth an open door, which no man or devil shall be able to close against it. What joy it will be to find that faith in Him is the golden key to the everlasting doors. My soul, dost thou carry this key in thy bosom, or art thou trusting to some deceitful pick-lock, which will fail thee at last? Hear this parable of the preacher, and remember it. The great King has made a banquet, and He has proclaimed to all the world that none shall enter but those who bring with them the fairest flower that blooms. The spirits of men advance to the gate by thousands, and they bring each one the flower which he esteems the queen of the garden; but in crowds they are driven from the royal presence, and enter not into the festive halls. Some bear in their hand the deadly nightshade of superstition, or the flaunting poppies of Rome, or the hemlock of self-righteousness, but these are not dear to the King, the bearers are shut out of the pearly gates. My soul, hast thou gathered the rose of Sharon? Dost thou wear the lily of the valley in thy bosom constantly? If so, when thou comest up to the gates of heaven thou wilt know its value, for thou hast only to show this choicest of flowers, and the Porter will open: not for a moment will He deny thee admission, for to that rose the Porter openeth ever. Thou shalt find thy way with the rose of Sharon in thy hand up to the throne of God Himself, for heaven itself possesses nothing that excels its radiant beauty, and of all the flowers that bloom in paradise there is none that can rival the lily of the valley. My soul, get Calvary's blood-red rose into thy hand by faith, by love wear it, by communion preserve it, by daily watchfulness make it thine all in all, and thou shalt be blessed beyond all bliss, happy beyond a dream. Jesus, be mine forever, my God, my heaven, my all.

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

“**T**HE Lord is my light and my salvation.” Here is personal interest, “my light,” “my salvation”; the soul is assured of it, and therefore declares it boldly. Into the soul at the new birth divine light is poured as the precursor of salvation; where there is not enough light to reveal our own darkness and to make us long for the Lord Jesus, there is no evidence of salvation. After conversion our God is our joy, comfort, guide, teacher, and in every sense our light: He is light within, light around, light reflected from us, and light to be revealed to us. Note, it is not said merely that the Lord gives light, but that He is light; nor that He gives salvation, but that He is salvation; he, then, who by faith has laid hold upon God, has all covenant blessings in his possession. This being made sure as a fact, the argument drawn from it is put in the form of a question, “Whom shall I fear?” A question which is its own answer. The powers of darkness are not to be feared, for the Lord, our light, destroys them; and the damnation of hell is not to be dreaded by us, for the Lord is our salvation. This is a very different challenge from that of boastful Goliath, for it rests, not upon the conceited vigour of an arm of flesh, but upon the real power of the omnipotent I AM. “The Lord is the strength of my life.” Here is a third glowing epithet, to show that the writer’s hope was fastened with a threefold cord which could not be broken. We may well accumulate terms of praise where the Lord lavishes deeds of grace. Our life derives all its strength from God; and if He deigns to make us strong, we cannot be weakened by all the machinations of the adversary. “Of whom shall I be afraid?” The bold question looks into the future as well as the present. “If God be for us,” who can be against us, either now or in time to come?

*Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:
Numbers 21:17*

FAMOUS was the well of Beer in the wilderness, because it was *the subject of a promise*: “That is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.” The people needed water, and it was promised by their gracious God. We need fresh supplies of heavenly grace, and in the covenant the Lord has pledged Himself to give all we require. The well next became *the cause of a song*. Before the water gushed forth, cheerful faith prompted the people to sing; and as they saw the crystal fount bubbling up, the music grew yet more joyous. In like manner, we who believe the promise of God should rejoice in the prospect of divine revivals in our souls, and as we experience them our holy joy should overflow. Are we thirsting? Let us not murmur, but sing. Spiritual thirst is bitter to bear, but we need not bear it—the promise indicates a well; let us be of good heart, and look for it. Moreover, the well was *the centre of prayer*. “Spring up, O well.” What God has engaged to give, we must enquire after, or we manifest that we have neither desire nor faith. This evening let us ask that the Scripture we have read, and our devotional exercises, may not be an empty formality, but a channel of grace to our souls. O that God the Holy Spirit would work in us with all His mighty power, filling us with all the fullness of God. Lastly, the well was *the object of effort*. “The nobles of the people digged it with their staves.” The Lord would have us active in obtaining grace. Our staves are ill adapted for digging in the sand, but we must use them to the utmost of our ability. Prayer must not be neglected; the assembling of ourselves together must not be forsaken; ordinances must not be slighted. The Lord will give us His peace most plenteously, but not in a way of idleness. Let us, then, bestir ourselves to seek Him in whom are all our fresh springs.

I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

Song of Solomon 5:1

THE heart of the believer is Christ's garden. He bought it with His precious blood, and He enters it and claims it as His own. A garden *implies separation*. It is not the open common; it is not a wilderness; it is walled around, or hedged in. Would that we could see the wall of separation between the church and the world made broader and stronger. It makes one sad to hear Christians saying, "Well, there is no harm in this; there is no harm in that," thus getting as near to the world as possible. Grace is at a low ebb in that soul which can even raise the question of how far it may go in worldly conformity. A garden is *a place of beauty*, it far surpasses the wild uncultivated lands. The genuine Christian must seek to be more excellent in his life than the best moralist, because Christ's garden ought to produce the best flowers in all the world. Even the best is poor compared with Christ's deservings; let us not put Him off with withering and dwarf plants. The rarest, richest, choicest lilies and roses ought to bloom in the place which Jesus calls His own. The garden is *a place of growth*. The saints are not to remain undeveloped, always mere buds and blossoms. We should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Growth should be rapid where Jesus is the Husbandman, and the Holy Spirit the dew from above. A garden is *a place of retirement*. So the Lord Jesus Christ would have us reserve our souls as a place in which He can manifest Himself, as He doth not unto the world. O that Christians were more retired, that they kept their hearts more closely shut up for Christ! We often worry and trouble ourselves, like Martha, with much serving, so that we have not the room for Christ that Mary had, and do not sit at His feet as we should. The Lord grant the sweet showers of His grace to water His garden this day.

*My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.
Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my
beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the
mountains of Bether.*

Song of Solomon 2:16, 17

SURELY if there be a happy verse in the Bible it is this—“My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” So peaceful, so full of assurance, so overrunning with happiness and contentment is it, that it might well have been written by the same hand which penned the twenty-third Psalm. Yet though the prospect is exceeding fair and lovely—earth cannot show its superior—it is not entirely a sunlit landscape. There is a cloud in the sky which casts a shadow over the scene. Listen, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.”

There is a word, too, about the “mountains of Bether,” or, “the mountains of division,” and to our love, anything like division is bitterness. Beloved, this may be your present state of mind; you do not doubt your salvation; you know that Christ is yours, but you are not feasting with Him. You understand your vital interest in Him, so that you have no shadow of a doubt of your being His, and of His being yours, but still His left hand is not under your head, nor doth His right hand embrace you. A shade of sadness is cast over your heart, perhaps by affliction, certainly by the temporary absence of your Lord, so even while exclaiming, “I am His,” you are forced to take to your knees, and to pray, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved.”

“Where is He?” asks the soul. And the answer comes, “He feedeth among the lilies.” If we would find Christ, we must get into communion with His people, we must come to the ordinances with His saints. Oh, for an evening glimpse of Him! Oh, to sup with Him tonight!

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

Mark 1:18

WHEN they heard the call of Jesus, Simon and Andrew obeyed at once without demur. If we would always, punctually and with resolute zeal, put in practice what we hear upon the spot, or at the first fit occasion, our attendance at the means of grace, and our reading of good books, could not fail to enrich us spiritually. He will not lose his loaf who has taken care at once to eat it, neither can he be deprived of the benefit of the doctrine who has already acted upon it. Most readers and hearers become moved so far as to purpose to amend; but, alas! the proposal is a blossom which has not been knit, and therefore no fruit comes of it; they wait, they waver, and then they forget, till, like the ponds in nights of frost, when the sun shines by day, they are only thawed in time to be frozen again. That fatal *tomorrow* is blood-red with the murder of fair resolutions; it is the slaughter-house of the innocents. We are very concerned that our little book of "Evening Readings" should not be fruitless, and therefore we pray that readers may not be readers only, but doers, of the word. *The practice of truth is the most profitable reading of it.* Should the reader be impressed with any duty while perusing these pages, let him hasten to fulfil it before the holy glow has departed from his soul, and let him leave his nets, and all that he has, sooner than be found rebellious to the Master's call. Do not give place to the devil by delay! Haste while opportunity and quickening are in happy conjunction. Do not be caught in your own nets, but break the meshes of worldliness, and away where glory calls you. Happy is the writer who shall meet with readers resolved to carry out his teachings: his harvest shall be a hundredfold, and his Master shall have great honour. Would to God that such might be our reward upon these brief meditations and hurried hints. Grant it, O Lord, unto thy servant!

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

2 Timothy 2:19

THE foundation upon which our faith rests is this, that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” The great fact on which genuine faith relies is, that “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,” and that “Christ also hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God”; “Who Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree”; “For the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” In one word, the great pillar of the Christian’s hope is *substitution*. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ for the guilty, Christ being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, Christ offering up a true and proper expiatory and substitutionary sacrifice in the room, place, and stead of as many as the Father gave Him, who are known to God by name, and are recognized in their own hearts by their trusting in Jesus—this is the cardinal fact of the gospel. If this foundation were removed, what could we do? But it standeth firm as the throne of God. We know it; we rest on it; we rejoice in it; and our delight is to hold it, to meditate upon it, and to proclaim it, while we desire to be actuated and moved by gratitude for it in every part of our life and conversation. In these days a direct attack is made upon the doctrine of the atonement. Men cannot bear substitution. They gnash their teeth at the thought of the Lamb of God bearing the sin of man. But we, who know by experience the preciousness of this truth, will proclaim it in defiance of them confidently and unceasingly. We will neither dilute it nor change it, nor fritter it away in any shape or fashion. It shall still be Christ, a *positive substitute*, bearing human guilt and suffering in the stead of men. We cannot, dare not, give it up, for it is our life, and despite every controversy we feel that “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure.”

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Hebrews 12:27

WE have many things in our possession at the present moment which *can* be shaken, and it ill becomes a Christian man to set much store by them, for there is nothing stable beneath these rolling skies; change is written upon all things. Yet, we have certain “things which *cannot* be shaken,” and I invite you this evening to think of them, that if the things which can be shaken should all be taken away, you may derive real comfort from the things that cannot be shaken, which will remain. Whatever your losses have been, or may be, you enjoy *present salvation*. You are standing at the foot of His cross, trusting alone in the merit of Jesus’ precious blood, and no rise or fall of the markets can interfere with your salvation in Him; no breaking of banks, no failures and bankruptcies can touch that. Then you are *a child of God* this evening. God is your Father. No change of circumstances can ever rob you of *that*. Although by losses brought to poverty, and stripped bare, you can say, “He is my Father still. In my Father’s house are many mansions; therefore will I not be troubled.” You have another permanent blessing, namely, *the love of Jesus Christ*. He who is God and Man loves you with all the strength of His affectionate nature—nothing can affect *that*. The fig tree may not blossom, and the flocks may cease from the field, it matters not to the man who can sing, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” Our best portion and richest heritage we cannot lose. Whatever troubles come, let us play the man; let us show that we are not such little children as to be cast down by what may happen in this poor fleeting state of time. Our country is Immanuel’s land, our hope is above the sky, and therefore, calm as the summer’s ocean; we will see the wreck of everything earthborn, and yet rejoice in the God of our salvation.

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

Romans 8:23

EVEN in this world saints are God's children, but men cannot discover them to be so, except by certain moral characteristics. The adoption is not manifested, the children are not yet openly declared. Among the Romans a man might adopt a child, and keep it private for a long time: but there was a second adoption in public; when the child was brought before the constituted authorities its former garments were taken off, and the father who took it to be his child gave it raiment suitable to its new condition of life. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." We are not yet arrayed in the apparel which befits the royal family of heaven; we are wearing in this flesh and blood just what we wore as the sons of Adam; but we know that "when *He* shall appear" who is the "first-born among many brethren," we shall be like Him, we shall see Him as He is. Cannot you imagine that a child taken from the lowest ranks of society, and adopted by a Roman senator, would say to himself, "I long for the day when I shall be publicly adopted. Then I shall leave off these plebeian garments, and be robed as becomes my senatorial rank"? Happy in what he has received, for that very reason he groans to get the fullness of what is promised him. So it is with us today. We are waiting till we shall put on our proper garments, and shall be manifested as the children of God. We are young nobles, and have not yet worn our coronets. We are young brides, and the marriage day is not yet come, and by the love our Spouse bears us, we are led to long and sigh for the bridal morning. Our very happiness makes us groan after more; our joy, like a swollen spring, longs to well up like an Iceland geyser, leaping to the skies, and it heaves and groans within our spirit for want of space and room by which to manifest itself to men.

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,
answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not
careful to answer thee in this matter.*

*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve
thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

Daniel 3:16, 18

THE narrative of the manly courage and marvellous deliverance of the three holy children, or rather champions, is well calculated to excite in the minds of believers firmness and steadfastness in upholding the truth in the teeth of tyranny and in the very jaws of death. Let young Christians especially learn from their example, both in matters of faith in religion, and matters of uprightness in business, never to sacrifice their consciences. Lose all rather than lose your integrity, and when all else is gone, still hold fast a clear conscience as the rarest jewel which can adorn the bosom of a mortal. Be not guided by the will-o'-the-wisp of policy, but by the pole-star of divine authority. Follow the right at all hazards. When you see no present advantage, walk by faith and not by sight. Do God the honour to trust Him when it comes to matters of loss for the sake of principle. See whether He will be your debtor! See if He doth not even in this life prove His word that "Godliness, with contentment, is great gain," and that they who "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, shall have all these things added unto them." Should it happen that, in the providence of God, you are a loser by conscience, you shall find that if the Lord pays you not back in the silver of earthly prosperity, He will discharge His promise in the gold of spiritual joy. Remember that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of that which he possesseth. To wear a guileless spirit, to have a heart void of offence, to have the favour and smile of God, is greater riches than the mines of Ophir could yield, or the traffic of Tyre could win. "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and inward contention therewith." An ounce of heart's-ease is worth a ton of gold.

But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

Genesis 8:9

READER, can you find rest apart from the ark, Christ Jesus? Then be assured that your religion is vain. Are you satisfied with anything short of a conscious knowledge of your union and interest in Christ? Then woe unto you. If you profess to be a Christian, yet find full satisfaction in worldly pleasures and pursuits, your profession is false. If your soul can stretch herself at rest, and find the bed long enough, and the coverlet broad enough to cover her in the chambers of sin, then you are a hypocrite, and far enough from any right thoughts of Christ or perception of His preciousness. But if, on the other hand, you feel that if you could indulge in sin without punishment, yet it would be a punishment of itself; and that if you could have the whole world, and abide in it for ever, it would be quite enough misery not to be parted from it; for your God—your God—is what your soul craves after; then be of good courage, thou art a child of God. With all thy sins and imperfections, take this to thy comfort: if thy soul has no rest in sin, thou are not as the sinner is! If thou art still crying after and craving after something better, Christ has not forgotten thee, for thou hast not quite forgotten Him. The believer cannot do without his Lord; words are inadequate to express his thoughts of Him. We cannot live on the sands of the wilderness, we want the manna which drops from on high; our skin bottles of creature confidence cannot yield us a drop of moisture, but we drink of the rock which follows us, and that rock is Christ. When you feed on Him your soul can sing, “He hath satisfied my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle’s,” but if you have Him not, your bursting wine vat and well-filled barn can give you no sort of satisfaction: rather lament over them in the words of wisdom, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!”

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

2 Peter 1:4

BANISH for ever all thought of indulging the flesh if you would live in the power of your risen Lord. It were ill that a man who is alive in Christ should dwell in the corruption of sin. “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” said the angel to Magdalene. Should the living dwell in the sepulchre? Should divine life be immured in the charnel house of fleshly lust? How can we partake of the cup of the Lord and yet drink the cup of Belial? Surely, believer, from open lusts and sins you are delivered: have you also escaped from the more secret and delusive lime-twigs of the Satanic fowler? Have you come forth from the lust of pride? Have you escaped from slothfulness? Have you clean escaped from carnal security? Are you seeking day by day to live above worldliness, the pride of life, and the ensnaring vice of avarice? Remember, it is for this that you have been enriched with the treasures of God. If you be indeed the chosen of God, and beloved by Him, do not suffer all the lavish treasure of grace to be wasted upon you. Follow after holiness; it is the Christian’s crown and glory. An unholy church! it is useless to the world, and of no esteem among men. It is an abomination, hell’s laughter, heaven’s abhorrence. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world have been brought upon her by an unholy church. O Christian, the vows of God are upon you. You are God’s priest: act as such. You are God’s king: reign over your lusts. You are God’s chosen: do not associate with Belial. Heaven is your portion: live like a heavenly spirit, so shall you prove that you have true faith in Jesus, for there cannot be faith in the heart unless there be holiness in the life.

“Lord, I desire to live as one
Who bears a blood-bought name,
As one who fears but grieving Thee,
And knows no other shame.”

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

1 Corinthians 7:20

SOME persons have the foolish notion that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible women. Alas! how many would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying the Most High if this were the case. Beloved, it is not office, it is earnestness; it is not position, it is grace which will enable us to glorify God. God is most surely glorified in that cobbler's stall, where the godly worker, as he plies the awl, sings of the Saviour's love, ay, glorified far more than in many a prebendal stall where official *religiousness* performs its scanty duties. The name of Jesus is glorified by the poor unlearned carter as he drives his horse, and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow labourer by the roadside, as much as by the popular divine who, throughout the country, like Boanerges, is thundering out the gospel. God is glorified by our serving Him in our proper vocations. Take care, dear reader, that you do not forsake the path of duty by leaving your occupation, and take care you do not dishonour your profession while in it. Think little of yourselves, but do not think too little of your callings. Every lawful trade may be sanctified by the gospel to noblest ends. Turn to the Bible, and you will find the most menial forms of labour connected either with most daring deeds of faith, or with persons whose lives have been illustrious for holiness. Therefore be not discontented with your calling. Whatever God has made your position, or your work, abide in that, unless you are quite sure that he calls you to something else. Let your first care be to glorify God to the utmost of your power where you are. Fill your present sphere to His praise, and if He needs you in another He will show it you. This evening lay aside vexatious ambition, and embrace peaceful content.

For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

Exodus 7:12

THIS incident is an instructive emblem of the sure victory of the divine handiwork over all opposition. Whenever a divine principle is cast into the heart, though the devil may fashion a counterfeit, and produce swarms of opponents, as sure as ever God is in the work, it will swallow up all its foes. If God's grace takes possession of a man, the world's magicians may throw down all their rods; and every rod may be as cunning and poisonous as a serpent, but Aaron's rod will swallow up their rods. The sweet attractions of the cross will woo and win the man's heart, and he who lived only for this deceitful earth will now have an eye for the upper spheres, and a wing to mount into celestial heights. When grace has won the day the worldling seeks the world to come. The same fact is to be observed in the life of the believer. What multitudes of foes has our faith had to meet! Our old sins—the devil threw them down before us, and they turned to serpents. What hosts of them! Ah, but the cross of Jesus destroys them all. Faith in Christ makes short work of all our sins. Then the devil has launched forth another host of serpents in the form of worldly trials, temptations, unbelief; but faith in Jesus is more than a match for them, and overcomes them all. The same absorbing principle shines in the faithful service of God! With an enthusiastic love for Jesus difficulties are surmounted, sacrifices become pleasures, sufferings are honours. But if religion is thus a consuming passion in the heart, then it follows that there are many persons who profess religion but have it not; for what they have will not bear this test. Examine yourself, my reader, on this point. Aaron's rod proved its heaven-given power. Is your religion doing so? If Christ be anything He must be everything. O rest not till love and faith in Jesus be the master passions of your soul!

Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

2 Chronicles 32:31

HEZEKIAH was growing so inwardly great, and priding himself so much upon the favour of God, that self-righteousness crept in, and through his carnal security, the grace of God was for a time, in its more active operations, withdrawn. Here is quite enough to account with the Babylonians; for if the grace of God should leave the best Christian, there is enough of sin in his heart to make him the worst of transgressors. If left to yourselves, you who are warmest for Christ would cool down like Laodicea into sickening lukewarmness: you who are sound in the faith would be white with the leprosy of false doctrine; you who now walk before the Lord in excellency and integrity would reel to and fro, and stagger with a drunkenness of evil passion. Like the moon, we borrow our light; bright as we are when grace shines on us, we are darkness itself when the Sun of Righteousness withdraws Himself. *Therefore let us cry to God never to leave us.* “Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from us! Withdraw not from us Thine indwelling grace! Hast Thou not said, ‘I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day’? Lord, keep us everywhere. Keep us when in the valley, that we murmur not against Thy humbling hand; keep us when on the mountain, that we wax not giddy through being lifted up; keep us in youth, when our passions are strong; keep us in old age, when becoming conceited of our wisdom, we may therefore prove greater fools than the young and giddy; keep us when we come to die, lest, at the very last, we should deny Thee! Keep us living, keep us dying, keep us labouring, keep us suffering, keep us fighting, keep us resting, keep us everywhere, for everywhere we need Thee, O our God!”

*Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth
by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing
too hard for thee:
Jeremiah 32:17*

AT the very time when the Chaldeans surrounded Jerusalem, and when the sword, famine and pestilence had desolated the land, Jeremiah was commanded by God to purchase a field, and have the deed of transfer legally sealed and witnessed. This was a strange purchase for a rational man to make. Prudence could not justify it, for it was buying with scarcely a probability that the person purchasing could ever enjoy the possession. But it was enough for Jeremiah that his God had bidden him, for well he knew that God will be justified of all His children. He reasoned thus: "Ah, Lord God! Thou canst make this plot of ground of use to me; Thou canst rid this land of these oppressors; Thou canst make me yet sit under my vine and my fig-tree in the heritage which I have bought; for Thou didst make the heavens and the earth, and there is nothing too hard for Thee." This gave a majesty to the early saints, that they dared to do at God's command things which carnal reason would condemn. Whether it be a Noah who is to build a ship on dry land, an Abraham who is to offer up his only son, or a Moses who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a Joshua who is to besiege Jericho seven days, using no weapons but the blasts of rams' horns, they all act upon God's command, contrary to the dictates of carnal reason; and the Lord gives them a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith. Would to God we had in the religion of these modern times a more potent infusion of this heroic faith in God. If we would venture more upon the naked promise of God, we should enter a world of wonders to which as yet we are strangers. Let Jeremiah's place of confidence be ours—nothing is too hard for the God that created the heavens and the earth.

Scripture Memory Programme 2014

O taste and see that the LORD is good!

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

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

January 5 – Provision

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

January 12 – Trusting in God

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

January 19 – Praise

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

January 26 – Wise Choice

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

February 2 – God's eternal existence

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

February 9 – Security

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

February 16 – Love for Righteousness

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

February 23 – God’s Goodness

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

March 2 – God’s Help

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

March 9 – Love for God’s Word

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

March 16 – Rejoicing

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

March 23 – Divine Ownership

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

March 30 – God’s Mercy

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

April 6 – Delighting in God

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

April 13 – God’s Greatness

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

April 20 – Christ’s Resurrection

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

April 27 – Adoration

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

May 4 – Protection

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

May 11 – Cheerful Service

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

May 18 – Edifying Speech

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

May 25 – Spiritual Renewal

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

June 1 – Contrition

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

June 8 – Overcoming Fear

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

June 15 – God’s love

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

June 22 – God’s Judgment

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

June 29 – God’s Faithfulness

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

July 6 – Thanksgiving

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

July 13 – God’s Blessing

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

July 20 – Guidance

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

July 27 – Hope

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

August 3 – Prayer

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

August 10 – Worship

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

August 17 – God’s Benevolence

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

August 24 – Protection

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

August 31 – Courage

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

September 7 – Peace

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

September 14 – Forgiveness

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

September 21 – Anchoring in God’s Word

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

September 28 – Provision

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

October 5 – Praise

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

October 12 – Divine Design

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

October 19 – Overcoming Anxiety

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

October 26 – Harmony

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

November 2 – God’s Greatness

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

November 9 – Deliverance

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

November 16 – Rejoicing

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

November 23 – Protection

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

November 30 – Eternal Blessing

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

December 7 – Comfort

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

December 14 – Waiting upon God

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

December 21 – Eternal Promise

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

December 28 – Comprehensive Praise

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

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