
"Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness." — Psalm lxx. 11.

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

“ *So she gleaned in the field until even.* ” — Ruth ii. 17.

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

"But as He went." — Luke viii. 42.

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

"I smote you with blasting, and with mildew, and with hail, in all the labors of your hands." — Haggai ii. 17.

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

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

"Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?"

Numbers xxxii. 6.

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

"Let the whole earth be filled with His glory ; Amen, and Amen."
Psalm lxxii. 19.

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

"Satan hindered us." — 1 Thessalonians ii. 18.

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

"All things are possible to him that believeth." — Mark ix. 23.

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

"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils." — Mark xvi. 9.

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

"The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

Matthew ix. 6.

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

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

"Everlasting consolation." — 2 Thessalonians ii. 16.

CONSOLATION." There is music in the word: like David's harp, it charms away the evil spirit of melancholy. It was a distinguished honor to Barnabas to be called "the son of consolation;" nay, it is one of the illustrious names of a greater than Barnabas, for the Lord Jesus is "the consolation of Israel." "*Everlasting consolation*" — here is the cream of all, the "spikenard very precious," for the eternity of comfort is the crown and glory of it. This makes an estate worth the having when a man may hold its fee simple in perpetuity forever. A man works to make money, and after toiling hard he finds himself the owner of it, and it is a consolation to him, but it is not an "everlasting consolation," for he may spend or he may lose all his treasure; or he may be compelled by death to leave it — it cannot be, at the best, more than a temporary consolation. A man toils hard for knowledge, he acquires it, he becomes an eminent scholar; his name is famous; this is a consolation to him for all his toil, but it cannot last long; for when he feels the headache, or the heartache, his degrees and his diplomas cannot cheer him; or should his soul become a prey to despondency, he may turn over many a learned tome before he will find a balm for a broken heart. All earth-born consolations are in their essence fleeting, and in their existence short-lived; they are as brilliant and as evanescent as the rainbow hues of a soap-bubble; but as for the consolations which God gives to His people, they fade not, neither do they lose their freshness. They can stand all tests — the shock of trial, the flame of persecution, the lapse of years; nay, they can even endure death itself. What is this "everlasting consolation"? It includes a sense of pardoned sin. A Christian man has received in his heart the witness of the Spirit that his iniquities are put away like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud. If sin be

pardoned, is not that an everlasting consolation? Next the Lord gives his people an abiding sense of acceptance in Christ. The Christian knows that God looks upon him as standing in union with Jesus. Now, it is a sweet thing to know that God accepts us, and to be able to sing with Hart, —

“ With my Saviour’s vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One.”

Union to the risen Lord is a consolation of the most abiding order; it is, in fact, everlasting. Let sickness prostrate us, have we not seen hundreds of believers as happy in the weakness of disease as they would have been in the strength of hale and blooming health? Let death’s arrows pierce us to the heart, our comfort dies not, for have not our ears full often heard the songs of saints as they have rejoiced because the living love of God was shed abroad in their hearts in dying moments? Yes, a sense of acceptance in the Beloved is an everlasting consolation. Moreover, the Christian has a conviction of his security. God has promised to save those who trust in Christ: the Christian does trust in Christ, and he believes that God will be as good as His word, and will save him. He feels, therefore, that whatever may occur in providence, whatever onslaughts there may be of inward corruption, or of outward temptation, he is safe by virtue of his being bound up with the person and work of Jesus. Is not this a source of consolation overflowing and delightful? Why, the richest and greatest of men might freely give their eyes to know that they are saved, and their loss would be their gain. It were a cheap bargain for men to enter into life halt or maimed, if they did but enter into life at all. That we have this life, and cannot be robbed of it, is our everlasting consolation.

How now, reader, are you pining and refusing to be comforted? Is this honorable to God? Will it make others long to know Jesus? Cheer up, man! When Jesus gives eternal consolation, it is a sin to murmur.

"The bow shall be seen in the cloud." — Genesis ix. 14.

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

“ And I will remember My covenant.” — Genesis ix. 15.

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

"I know their sorrows."—Exodus iii. 7.

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

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

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

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

"And I will give you a heart of flesh." — Ezekiel xxxvi. 26.

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

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

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

"Ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit."

Romans viii. 23.

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

"This sickness is not unto death." — John xi. 4.

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

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

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

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

"And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not." — Mark xv. 23.

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

"Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for Thou art my strength." — Psalm xxxi. 4.

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

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

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

"And they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall."

Nehemiah iii. 8.

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

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

"I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain."

Isaiah xlv. 19.

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

“ *The unsearchable riches of Christ.*” — Ephesians iii. 8.

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

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."
Ephesians iii. 17.

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

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

"If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith, he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution." — Exodus xxii. 6.

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

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

"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." — Acts viii. 37.

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

"The people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him." — Mark ix. 15.

NOW great the difference between Moses and Jesus! When the prophet of Horeb had been forty days upon the mountain, he underwent a kind of transfiguration, so that his countenance shone with exceeding brightness, and he put a veil over his face, for the people could not endure to look upon his glory. Not so our Saviour. He had been transfigured with a greater glory than that of Moses, and yet it is not written that the people were blinded by the blaze of His countenance, but rather they were amazed, and running to Him they saluted Him. The glory of the law repels, but the greater glory of Jesus attracts. Though Jesus is holy and just, yet blended with His purity there is so much of truth and grace, that sinners run to Him amazed at His goodness, fascinated by His love; they salute Him, become His disciples, and take Him to be their Lord and Master. Reader, it may be that just now you are blinded by the dazzling brightness of the law of God. You feel its claims on your conscience, but you cannot keep it in your life. Not that you find fault with the law; on the contrary, it commands your profoundest esteem; still you are in no wise drawn by it to God; you are rather hardened in heart, and are verging towards desperation. Ah, poor heart! turn thine eye from Moses, with all his repelling splendor, and look to Jesus, resplendent with milder glories. Behold His flowing wounds and thorn-crowned head! He is the Son of God, and therein he is greater than Moses; but He is the Lord of love, and therein more tender than the lawgiver. He bore the wrath of God, and in His death revealed more of God's justice than Sinai on a blaze; but that justice is now vindicated, and henceforth it is the guardian of believers in Jesus. Look, sinner, to the bleeding Saviour, and as thou feelest the attraction of His love, fly to His arms, and thou shalt be saved.

"Into Thine hand I commit my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." — Psalm xxxi. 5.

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

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

*"Though Thou slay me I will trust,
Praise Thee even from the dust,
Prove, and tell it as I prove,
Thine unutterable love."*

*"Thou may'st chasten and correct,
But Thou never canst neglect,
Since the ransom price is paid,
On Thy love my hope is stayed."*

"Sing, O barren." — Isaiah liv. 1.

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

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

"All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk." — Numb. vi. 4.

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

"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed." — Jer. xvii. 14.

"I have seen his ways, and will heal him." — Isa. lvii. 18.

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

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light." — 1 John i. 7.

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