
"Thy love to me was wonderful." — 2 Samuel i. 26.

COME, dear readers, let each one of us speak for himself of the wonderful love, not of Jonathan, but of Jesus. We will not relate what we have been told, but the things which we have tasted and handled — of the love of Christ. Thy love to me, O Jesus, was wonderful when I was a stranger wandering far from Thee, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Thy love restrained me from committing the sin which is unto death, and withheld me from self-destruction. Thy love held back the axe when Justice said, "Cut it down! why cumbereth it the ground?" Thy love drew me into the wilderness, stripped me there, and made me feel the guilt of my sin, and the burden of mine iniquity. Thy love spake thus comfortably to me when I was sore dismayed: "Come unto Me, and I will give thee rest." Oh, how matchless Thy love when, in a moment, Thou didst wash my sins away, and make my polluted soul, which was crimson with the blood of my nativity, and black with the grime of my transgressions, to be white as the driven snow, and pure as the finest wool. How Thou didst commend Thy love when Thou didst whisper in my ears, "I am thine and thou art Mine." Kind were those accents when Thou saidst, "The Father Himself loveth you." And sweet the moments, passing sweet, when Thou declaredst to me "the love of the Spirit." Never shall my soul forget those chambers of fellowship where Thou hast unveiled Thyself to me. Had Moses his cleft in the rock, where he saw the train, the back parts of his God? We, too, have had our clefts in the rock, where we have seen the full splendors of the Godhead in the person of Christ. Did David remember the tracks of the wild goat, the land of Jordan and the Hermonites? We, too, can remember spots to memory dear, equal to those in blessedness. Precious Lord Jesus, give us a fresh draught of Thy wondrous love to begin the month with — Amen.

"And these are ancient things." — 1 Chronicles iv. 22.

WET not so ancient as those precious things which are the delight of our souls. Let us for a moment recount them, telling them over as misers count their gold. *The sovereign choice* of the Father, by which He elected us unto eternal life, or ever the earth was, is a matter of vast antiquity, since no date can be conceived for it by the mind of man. We were chosen from before the foundations of the world. *Everlasting love* went with the choice, for it was not a bare act of divine will by which we were set apart, but the divine affections were concerned. The Father loved us in and from the beginning. Here is a theme for daily contemplation. *The eternal purpose* to redeem us from our foreseen ruin, to cleanse and sanctify us, and at last to glorify us, was of infinite antiquity, and runs side by side with immutable love and absolute sovereignty. *The covenant* is always described as being everlasting, and Jesus, the second party in it, had His goings forth of old; He struck hands in sacred suretyship long ere the first of the stars began to shine, and it was in Him that the elect were ordained unto eternal life. Thus in the divine purpose a most blessed covenant union was established between the Son of God and His elect people, which will remain as the foundation of their safety when time shall be no more. Is it not well to be conversant with these ancient things? Is it not shameful that they should be so much neglected and even rejected by the bulk of professors? If they knew more of their own sin, would they not be more ready to adore distinguishing grace? Let us both admire and adore to-night, as we sing, —

“A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood!
The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God,
And in His sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”

“Tell me . . . where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon.” — Canticles i. 7.

THESE words express the desire of the believer after Christ, and his longing for *present* communion with Him. “Where dost Thou feed Thy flock?” In *Thy house*? I will go, if I may find Thee there. In *private prayer*? Then I will pray without ceasing. In the *Word*? Then I will read it diligently. In *thine ordinances*? Then I will walk in them with all my heart. Tell me where Thou feedest, for wherever Thou standest as the Shepherd, there will I lie down as a sheep; for none but Thyself can supply my need. I cannot be satisfied to be apart from Thee. My soul hungers and thirsts for the refreshment of Thy presence. “Where dost Thou make Thy flock to rest at noon?” for whether at dawn or noon, my only rest must be where Thou art and Thy beloved flock. My soul’s rest must be a grace-given rest, and can only be found in Thee. Where is the shadow of that rock? Why should I not repose beneath it? “Why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?” Thou hast companions — why should I not be one? Satan tells me I am unworthy; but I always was unworthy, and yet Thou hast long loved me; and therefore my unworthiness cannot be a bar to my having fellowship with Thee now. It is true I am weak in faith, and prone to fall, but my very feebleness is the reason why I should always be where Thou feedest Thy flock, that I may be strengthened, and preserved in safety beside the still waters. Why should I turn aside? There is no reason why I should, but there are a thousand reasons why I should not, for Jesus beckons me to come. If He withdraw Himself a little, it is but to make me prize His presence more. Now that I am grieved and distressed at being away from Him, He will lead me yet again to that sheltered nook where the lambs of His fold are sheltered from the burning sun.

"Your refuge from the avenger of blood." — Joshua xx. 3.

IT is said that in the land of Canaan, cities of refuge were so arranged, that any man might reach one of them within half a day at the utmost. Even so the word of our salvation is near to us; Jesus is a present Saviour, and the way to Him is short; it is but a simple renunciation of our own merit, and a laying hold of Jesus, to be our all in all. With regard to the roads to the city of refuge, we are told that they were strictly preserved, every river was bridged, and every obstruction removed, so that the man who fled might find an easy passage to the city. Once a year the elders went along the roads and saw to their order, so that nothing might impede the flight of any one, and cause him, through delay, to be overtaken and slain. How graciously do the promises of the gospel remove stumbling-blocks from the way! Wherever there were by-roads and turnings, there were fixed up hand-posts, with this inscription upon them: "To the city of refuge!" This is a picture of the road to Christ Jesus. It is no roundabout road of the law; it is no obeying this, that, and the other; it is a straight road: "Believe, and live." It is a road so hard, that no self-righteous man can ever tread it; but so easy, that every sinner, who knows himself to be a sinner, may by it find his way to heaven. No sooner did the man-slayer reach the out-works of the city than he was safe; it was not necessary for him to pass far within the walls, but the suburbs themselves were sufficient protection. Learn hence, that if you do but touch the hem of Christ's garment, you shall be made whole; if you do but lay hold upon him with "faith as a grain of mustard seed," you are safe.

"A little genuine grace insures
The death of all our sins."

Only waste no time, loiter not by the way, for the avenger of blood is swift of foot; and it may be he is at your heels at this still hour of eventide.

“At that time Jesus answered.” — Matthew xi. 25.

THIS is a singular way in which to commence a verse : “At that time Jesus answered.” If you will look at the context you will not perceive that any person had asked Him a question, or that He was in conversation with any human being. Yet it is written, “Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father.” When a man answers, he answers a person who has been speaking to him. Who, then, had spoken to Christ? His Father. Yet there is no record of it; and this should teach us that Jesus had constant fellowship with His Father, and that God spake into His heart so often, so continually, that it was not a circumstance singular enough to be recorded. It was the habit and life of Jesus to talk with God. Even as Jesus was, in this world, so are we; let us, therefore, learn the lesson which this simple statement concerning Him teaches us. May we likewise have silent fellowship with the Father, so that often we may answer Him, and though the world wotteth not to whom we speak, may we be responding to that secret voice unheard of any other ear, which our own ear, opened by the Spirit of God, recognizes with joy. God has spoken to us; let us speak to God — either to set to our seal that God is true and faithful to His promise, or to confess the sin of which the Spirit of God has convinced us, or to acknowledge the mercy which God’s providence has given, or to express assent to the great truths which God the Holy Ghost has opened to our understanding. What a privilege is intimate communion with the Father of our spirits! It is a secret hidden from the world, a joy with which even the nearest friend intermeddleth not. If we would hear the whispers of God’s love, our ear must be purged and fitted to listen to His voice. This very evening may our hearts be in such a state, that when God speaks to us, we, like Jesus, may be prepared at once to answer Him.

"Pray one for another." — James v. 16.

AS an encouragement cheerfully to offer intercessory prayer, remember that *such prayer is the sweetest God ever hears*, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which our Great High Priest now puts into the golden censer, there is not a single grain for Himself. His intercession must be the most acceptable of all supplications — and the more like our prayer is to Christ's, the sweeter it will be ; thus while petitions for ourselves will be accepted, our pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, more faith, more brotherly kindness, will be, through the precious merits of Jesus, the sweetest oblation that we can offer to God, the very fat of our sacrifice. Remember, again, that *intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent*. What wonders it has wrought ! The Word of God teems with its marvellous deeds. Believer, thou hast a mighty engine in thy hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it with faith, and thou shalt surely be a benefactor to thy brethren. When thou hast the King's ear, speak to Him for the suffering members of His body. When thou art favored to draw very near to His throne, and the King saith to thee, "Ask, and I will give thee what thou wilt," let thy petitions be, not for thyself alone, but for the many who need His aid. If thou hast grace at all, and art not an intercessor, that grace must be small as a grain of mustard seed. Thou hast just enough grace to float thy soul clear from the quicksand, but thou hast no deep floods of grace, or else thou wouldst carry in thy joyous bark a weighty cargo of the wants of others, and thou wouldst bring back from thy Lord, for them, rich blessings, which but for thee they might not have obtained.

"O, let my hands forget their skill,
My tongue be silent, cold, and still,
This bounding heart forget to beat,
If I forget the mercy seat ' "

"And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither." — Revelation xi. 12.

WITHOUT considering these words in their prophetic connection, let us regard them as the invitation of our great Forerunner to His sanctified people. In due time there shall be heard "a great voice from heaven" to every believer, saying "Come up hither." This should be to the saints *the subject of joyful anticipation*. Instead of dreading the time when we shall leave this world to go unto the Father, we should be panting for the hour of our emancipation. Our song should be —

" My heart is with Him on His throne,
And ill can brook delay,
Each moment listening for the voice,
' Rise up, and come away.' "

We are not called *down* to the grave, but *up* to the skies. Our heaven-born spirits should long for their native air. Yet, should the celestial summons be *the object of patient waiting*. Our God knows best when to bid us "Come up hither." We must not wish to antedate the period of our departure. I know that strong love will make us cry,

" O Lord of Hosts, the waves divide,
And land us all in heaven, "

but patience must have her perfect work. God ordains with accurate wisdom the most fitting time for the redeemed to abide below. Surely, if there could be regrets in heaven, the saints might mourn that they did not live longer here to do more good. Oh, for more sheaves for my Lord's garner! more jewels for His crown! But how, unless there be more work? True, there is the other side of it, that, living so briefly, our sins are the fewer; but oh! when we are fully serving God, and He is giving us to scatter precious seed, and reap a hundred fold, we would even say it is well for us to abide where we are. Whether our Master shall say "go," or "stay," let us be equally well pleased, so long as He indulges us with His presence.

"He shall save His people from their sins." — Matthew i. 21.

MANY persons, if they are asked what they understand by salvation, will reply, "Being saved from hell and taken to heaven." This is one result of salvation, but it is not one tithe of what is contained in that boon. It is true our Lord Jesus Christ does redeem all His people from the wrath to come; He saves them from the fearful condemnation which their sins had brought upon them; but His triumph is far more complete than this. He saves His people "from their sins." Oh! sweet deliverance from our worst foes. Where Christ works a saving work, He casts Satan from his throne, and will not let him be master any longer. No man is a true Christian if sin reigns in his mortal body. Sin will be *in* us — it will never be utterly expelled till the spirit enters glory; but it will never have *dominion*. There will be a striving for dominion — a lusting against the new law and the new spirit which God has implanted — but sin will never get the upper hand so as to be absolute monarch of our nature. Christ will be Master of the heart, and sin must be mortified. The Lion of the tribe of Judah shall prevail, and the dragon shall be cast out. Professor! is sin subdued in you? If your *life* is unholy your *heart* is unchanged; and if your heart is unchanged you are an unsaved person. If the Saviour has not sanctified you, renewed you, given you a hatred of sin and a love of holiness, He has done nothing in you of a saving character. The grace which does not make a man better than others is a worthless counterfeit. Christ saves His people not *in* their sins, but *from* them. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." If not saved from sin, how shall we hope to be counted among His people. Lord, save me even now from all evil, and enable me to honor my Saviour.

“Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil [or the evil one].” — Luke xi. 4.

WHAT we are taught to seek or shun in prayer, we should equally pursue or avoid in action. Very earnestly, therefore, should we avoid temptation, seeking to walk so guardedly in the path of obedience, that we may never tempt the devil to tempt us. We are not to enter the thicket in search of the lion. Dearly might we pay for such presumption. This lion may cross our path, or leap upon us from the thicket, but we have nothing to do with hunting him. He that meeteth with him, even though he winneth the day, will find it a stern struggle. Let the Christian pray that he may be spared the encounter. Our Saviour, who had experience of what temptation meant, thus earnestly admonished His disciples — “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.”

But let us do as we will, we shall be tempted; hence the prayer “deliver us from evil.” God had one Son without sin; but He has no son without temptation. The natural man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards, and the Christian man is born to temptation just as certainly. We must be always on our watch against Satan, because, like a thief, he gives no intimation of his approach. Believers who have had experience of the ways of Satan, know that there are certain seasons when he will most probably make an attack, just as at certain seasons bleak winds may be expected; thus the Christian is put on a double guard by fear of danger, and the danger is averted by preparing to meet it. Prevention is better than cure: it is better to be so well armed that the devil will not attack you, than to endure the perils of the fight, even though you come off a conqueror. Pray this evening first that you may not be tempted, and next, that if temptation be permitted, you may be delivered from the evil one

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins : return unto Me ; for I have redeemed thee." —
Isaiah xliv. 22.

ATENTATIVELY observe THE INSTRUCTIVE SIMILITUDE : our sins are like *a cloud*. As clouds are of many shapes and shades, so are our transgressions. As clouds obscure the light of the sun, and darken the landscape beneath, so do our sins hide from us the light of Jehovah's face, and cause us to sit in the shadow of death. They are earth-born things, and rise from the miry places of our nature ; and when so collected that their measure is full, they threaten us with storm and tempest. Alas ! that, unlike clouds, our sins yield us no genial showers, but rather threaten to deluge us with a fiery flood of destruction. O ye black clouds of sin, how can it be fair weather with our souls while ye remain ?

Let our joyful eye dwell upon THE NOTABLE ACT of divine mercy — "blotting out." God Himself appears upon the scene, and in divine benignity, instead of manifesting His anger, reveals His grace : He at once and forever effectually removes the mischief, not by blowing away the cloud, but by blotting it out from existence once for all. Against the justified man no sin remains ; the great transaction of the cross has eternally removed His transgressions from Him. On Calvary's summit the great deed by which the sin of all the chosen was forever put away, was completely and effectually performed.

Practically let us obey THE GRACIOUS COMMAND, "*return unto me.*" Why should pardoned sinners live at a distance from their God ? If we have been forgiven all our sins, let no legal fear withhold us from the boldest access to our Lord. Let backslidings be bemoaned, but let us not persevere in them. To the greatest possible nearness of communion with the Lord, let us, in the power of the Holy Spirit, strive mightily to return. O Lord, this night restore us !

"Thou hast left thy first love." — Revelation ii. 4.

GVER to be remembered is that best and brightest of hours when first we saw the Lord, lost our burden, received the roll of promise, rejoiced in full salvation, and went on our way in peace. It was spring time in the soul; the winter was past; the mutterings of Sinai's thunders were hushed; the flashings of its lightnings were no more perceived; God was beheld as reconciled; the law threatened no vengeance, justice demanded no punishment. Then the flowers appeared in our heart; hope, love, peace, and patience sprung from the sod; the hyacinth of repentance, the snowdrop of pure holiness, the crocus of golden faith, the daffodil of early love, all decked the garden of the soul. The time of the singing of birds was come, and we rejoiced with thanksgiving; we magnified the holy name of our forgiving God, and our resolve was, "Lord, I am Thine, wholly Thine; all I am, and all I have, I would devote to Thee. Thou hast bought me with Thy blood — let me spend myself and be spent in thy service. In life and in death let me be consecrated to Thee." *How have we kept this resolve?* Our espousal love burned with a holy flame of devotedness to Jesus — is it the same *now*? Might not Jesus well say to us, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love"? Alas! it is but little we have done for our Master's glory. Our winter has lasted all too long. We are as cold as ice when we should feel a summer's glow, and bloom with sacred flowers. We give to God pence when He deserveth pounds, nay, deserveth our heart's blood to be coined in the service of His church and of His truth. But shall we continue thus? O Lord, after Thou hast so richly blessed us, shall we be ungrateful, and become indifferent to Thy good cause and work? O quicken us that we may return to our first love, and do our first works! Send us a genial spring, O Sun of Righteousness.

"He shall abide with you forever." — Psalm lxi. 7.

THE Great Father revealed Himself to believers of old before the coming of His Son, and was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the God Almighty. Then Jesus came, and the ever-blessed Son in His own proper person, was the delight of His people's eyes. At the time of the Redeemer's ascension, the Holy Spirit became the head of the present dispensation, and His power was gloriously manifested on and after Pentecost. He remains at this hour the present Immanuel — God with us, dwelling in and with His people, quickening, guiding, and ruling in their midst. Is His presence recognized as it ought to be? We cannot control His working; He is most sovereign in all His operations, but are we sufficiently anxious to obtain His help, or sufficiently watchful lest we provoke Him to withdraw His aid? Without him we can do nothing, but by His almighty energy the most extraordinary results can be produced: everything depends upon His manifesting or concealing His power. Do we always look up to Him both for our inner life and our outward service with the respectful dependence which is fitting? Do we not too often run before His call and act independently of His aid. Let us humble ourselves this evening for past neglects, and now entreat the heavenly dew to rest upon us, the sacred oil to anoint us, the celestial flame to burn within us. The Holy Ghost is no temporary gift, He abides with the saints. We have but to seek Him aright, and He will be found of us. He is jealous, but He is pitiful; if He leaves in anger, He returns in mercy. Condescending and tender, He does not weary of us, but waits to be gracious still.

 SIN has been hammering my soul
 Unto a hardness, void of love,
 Let grace work too, and on my soul
 Drop from above.

"There is therefore now no condemnation." — Romans viii. 1.

COME, my soul, think thou of this. Believing in Jesus, thou art actually and effectually cleared from guilt; thou art led out of thy prison. Thou art no more in fetters as a bond-slave; thou art delivered *now* from the bondage of the law; thou art freed from sin, and canst walk at large as a freeman; thy Saviour's blood has procured thy full discharge. Thou hast a right now to approach thy Father's throne. No flames of vengeance are there to scare thee now; no fiery sword; justice cannot smite the innocent. Thy disabilities are taken away: thou wast once unable to see thy Father's face; thou canst see it now. Thou couldst not speak with Him; but now thou hast access with boldness. Once there was a fear of hell upon thee; but thou hast no fear of it now, for how can there be punishment for the guiltless? He who believeth is not condemned, and cannot be punished. And more than all, the privileges thou mightst have enjoyed, if thou hadst never sinned, are thine now thou art justified. All the blessings which thou wouldst have had if thou hadst kept the law, and more, are thine, because Christ has kept it for thee. All the love and the acceptance which perfect obedience could have obtained of God, belong to thee, because Christ was perfectly obedient on thy behalf, and hath imputed all His merits to thy account, that thou mightst be exceeding rich through Him, who for thy sake became exceeding poor. Oh! how great the debt of love and gratitude thou owest to thy Saviour!

"A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing,
Nor fear with Thy righteousness on,
My person and offerings to bring:
The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Have all my transgressions from view."

"She was healed immediately." — Luke viii. 47.

NONE of the most touching and teaching of the Saviour's miracles is before us to-night. The woman was very ignorant. She imagined that virtue came out of Christ by a law of necessity, without His knowledge or direct will. Moreover, she was a stranger to the generosity of Jesus' character, or she would not have gone behind to steal the cure which He was so ready to bestow. Misery should always place itself right in the face of mercy. Had she known the love of Jesus' heart, she would have said, "I have but to put myself where He can see me — His omniscience will teach Him my case, and His love at once will work my cure." We admire her faith, but we marvel at her ignorance. After she had obtained the cure, she rejoiced with trembling: glad was she that the divine virtue had wrought a marvel in her; but she feared lest Christ should retract the blessing, and put a negative upon the grant of His grace: little did she comprehend the fulness of His love! We have not so clear a view of Him as we could wish; we know not the heights and depths of His love; but we know of a surety that He is too good to withdraw from a trembling soul the gift which it has been able to obtain. But here is the marvel of it: little as was her knowledge, her faith, because it was real faith, saved her, and saved her at once. There was no tedious delay — faith's miracle was instantaneous. If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, salvation is our present and eternal possession. If in the list of the Lord's children we are written as the feeblest of the family, yet, being heirs through faith, no power, human or devilish, can eject us from salvation. If we cannot clasp the Lord in our hands with Simeon, if we dare not lean our heads upon His bosom with John, yet if we can venture in the press behind Him, and touch the hem of His garment, we are made whole. Courage, timid one! thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace. "*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.*"

“Whereby they have made Thee glad.” — Psalm xlv. 8.

AND who are thus privileged to make the Saviour glad? His church — His people. But is it possible? He makes *us* glad, but how can *we* make *Him* glad? By *our* love. Ah! we think it so cold, so faint; and so, indeed, we must sorrowfully confess it to be, but it is very sweet to Christ. Hear His own eulogy of that love in the golden Canticle: “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine!” See, loving heart, how He delights in you. When you lean your head on His bosom, you not only receive, but you give Him joy; when you gaze with love upon His all-glorious face, you not only obtain comfort, but impart delight. Our *praise*, too, gives Him joy — not the song of the lips alone, but the melody of the heart’s deep gratitude. Our *gifts*, too, are very pleasant to Him; He loves to see us lay our time, our talents, our substance upon His altar, not for the value of what we give, but for the sake of the motive from which the gift springs. To Him the lowly offerings of His saints are more acceptable than thousands of gold and silver. *Holiness* is like frankincense and myrrh to Him. Forgive your enemy, and you make Christ glad; distribute of your substance to the poor, and He rejoices; be the means of saving souls, and you give Him to see of the travail of His soul; proclaim His gospel, and you are a sweet savor unto Him; go among the ignorant and lift up the cross, and you have given Him honor. It is in your power even now to break the alabaster box, and pour the precious oil of joy upon His head, as did the woman of old, whose memorial is to this day set forth wherever the gospel is preached. Will you be backward then? Will you not perfume your beloved Lord with the myrrh, and aloes, and cassia of your heart’s praise? Yes, ye ivory palaces, ye shall hear the songs of the saints!

“*Thy good Spirit.*” — Nehemiah ix. 20.

COMMON, too common is the sin of forgetting the Holy Spirit. This is folly and ingratitude. He deserves well at our hands, for He is good, supremely good. As God, He is *good essentially*. He shares in the threefold ascription of Holy, holy, holy, which ascends to the Triune Jehovah. Unmixed purity, and truth, and grace is He. He is *good benevolently*, tenderly bearing with our waywardness, striving with our rebellious wills; quickening us from our death in sin, and then training us for the skies as a loving nurse fosters her child. How generous, forgiving, and tender is this patient Spirit of God. He is *good operatively*. All His works are good in the most eminent degree: He suggests good thoughts, prompts good actions, reveals good truths, applies good promises, assists in good attainments, and leads to good results. There is no spiritual good in all the world of which He is not the author and sustainer, and heaven itself will owe the perfect character of its redeemed inhabitants to His work. He is *good officially*; whether as Comforter, Instructor, Guide, Sanctifier, Quickener, or Intercessor, He fulfils His office well, and each work is fraught with the highest good to the church of God. They who yield to His influences become good, they who obey his impulses do good, they who live under His power receive good. Let us then act towards so good a person according to the dictates of gratitude. Let us revere His person, and adore Him as God over all, blessed forever; let us own His power, and our need of Him, by waiting upon Him in all our holy enterprises; let us hourly seek His aid, and never grieve Him; and let us speak to His praise whenever occasion occurs. The church will never prosper until more reverently it believes in the Holy Ghost. He is so good and kind, that it is sad indeed that He should be grieved by slights and negligences.

"Whereas the Lord was there." — Ezekiel xxxv. 10.

GOD'S princes saw the whole country left desolate, and counted upon its easy conquest; but there was one great difficulty in their way — quite unknown to them — "*The Lord was there;*" and in His presence lay the special security of the chosen land. Whatever may be the machinations and devices of the enemies of God's people, there is still the same effectual barrier to thwart their design. *The saints* are God's heritage, and He is in the midst of them, and will protect His own. What comfort this assurance yields us in our troubles and spiritual conflicts! We are constantly opposed, and yet perpetually preserved! How often Satan shoots his arrows against our *faith*, but our faith defies the power of hell's fiery darts; they are not only turned aside, but they are quenched upon its shield, for "*the Lord is there.*" *Our good works* are the subjects of Satan's attacks. A saint never yet had a virtue or a grace which was not the target for hellish bullets: whether it was hope bright and sparkling, or love warm and fervent, or patience all-enduring, or zeal flaming like coals of fire, the old enemy of everything that is good has tried to destroy it. The only reason why anything virtuous or lovely survives in us is this, "*the Lord is there.*"

If the Lord be with us through life, we need not fear for our dying confidence; for *when we come to die*, we shall find that "*the Lord is there,*" where the billows are most tempestuous, and the water is most chill, we shall feel the bottom, and know that it is good: our feet shall stand upon the Rock of Ages when time is passing away. Beloved, from the first of a Christian's life to the last, the only reason why he does not perish is because "*the Lord is there.*" When the God of everlasting love shall change and leave His elect to perish, then may the Church of God be destroyed; but not till then, because it is written, JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, "*the Lord is there.*"

"Father, I have sinned." — Luke xv. 18.

IT is quite certain that those whom Christ has washed in His precious blood need not make a confession of sin, as culprits or criminals, before God the Judge, for Christ has forever taken away all their sins in a legal sense, so that they no longer stand where they can be condemned, but are once for all accepted in the Beloved; but having become children, and offending as children, ought they not every day to go before their heavenly Father and confess their sin, and acknowledge their iniquity in that character? Nature teaches that it is the duty of erring children to make a confession to their earthly father, and the grace of God in the heart teaches us that we, as Christians, owe the same duty to our heavenly Father. We daily offend, and ought not to rest without daily pardon. For, supposing that my trespasses against my Father are not at once taken to Him to be washed away by the cleansing power of the Lord Jesus, what will be the consequence? If I have not sought forgiveness and been washed from these offences against my Father, I shall feel at a distance from Him; I shall doubt His love to me; I shall tremble at Him: I shall be afraid to pray to Him; I shall grow like the prodigal, who, although still a child, was yet far off from his father. But if, with a child's sorrow at offending so gracious and loving a Parent, I go to Him and tell Him all, and rest not till I realize that I am forgiven, then I shall feel a holy love to my Father, and shall go through my Christian career, not only as saved, but as one enjoying present peace in God through Jesus Christ my Lord. There is a wide distinction between confessing sin as a culprit, and confessing sin as a child. The Father's bosom is the place for penitent confessions. We have been cleansed once for all, but our feet still need to be washed from the defilement of our daily walk as children of God.

"He first findeth his own brother Simon." — John i. 41.

THIS case is an excellent pattern of all cases where spiritual life is vigorous. *As soon as a man has found Christ, he begins to find others.* I will not believe that thou hast tasted of the honey of the gospel if thou canst eat it all thyself. True grace puts an end to all spiritual monopoly. Andrew *first* found his own brother Simon, and then others. *Relationship has a very strong demand upon our first individual efforts.* Andrew, thou didst well to begin with Simon. I doubt whether there are not some Christians giving away tracts at other people's houses who would do well to give away a tract at their own — whether there are not some engaged in works of usefulness abroad, who are neglecting their special sphere of usefulness at home. Thou mayst or thou mayst not be called to evangelize the people in any particular locality, but certainly thou art called to see after thine own servants, thine own kinsfolk and acquaintance. Let thy religion begin at home. Many tradesmen export their best commodities; the Christian should not. He should have all his conversation everywhere of the best savor; but let him have a care to put forth the sweetest fruit of spiritual life and testimony in his own family. When Andrew went to find his brother, he little imagined how eminent Simon would become. *Simon Peter was worth ten Andrews*, so far as we can gather from sacred history, and yet Andrew was instrumental in bringing him to Jesus. You may be very deficient in talent yourself, and yet you may be the means of drawing to Christ one who shall become eminent in grace and service. Ah! dear friend, you little know the possibilities which are in you. You may but speak a word to a child, and in that child there may be slumbering a noble heart which shall stir the Christian church in years to come. Andrew has only two talents, but he finds Peter. Go thou and do likewise.

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” — Matthew iv. 1.

A HOLY character does not avert temptation — Jesus was tempted. When Satan tempts us, his sparks fall upon tinder ; but in Christ's case, it was like striking sparks on water ; yet the enemy continued his evil work. Now if the devil goes on striking when there is no result, how much more will he do it when he knows what inflammable stuff our hearts are made of ! Though you become greatly sanctified by the Holy Ghost, expect that the great dog of hell will bark at you still. In the haunts of men we expect to be tempted, but even seclusion will not guard us from the same trial. Jesus Christ was led away from human society into the wilderness, and was tempted of the devil. Solitude has its charms and its benefits, and may be useful in checking the lust of the eye and the pride of life ; but the devil will follow us into the most lovely retreats. Do not suppose that it is only the worldly-minded who have dreadful thoughts and blasphemous temptations, for even spiritual-minded persons endure the same ; and in the holiest position we may suffer the darkest temptation. The utmost consecration of spirit will not insure you against Satanic temptation. Christ was consecrated through and through. It was His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him ; and yet He was tempted ! Your hearts may glow with a seraphic flame of love to Jesus, and yet the devil will try to bring you down to Laodicean lukewarmness. If you will tell me when God permits a Christian to lay aside his armor, I will tell you when Satan has left off temptation. Like the old knights in war time, we must sleep with helmet and breastplate buckled on, for the arch-deceiver will seize our first unguarded hour to make us his prey. The Lord keep us watchful in all seasons, and give us a final escape from the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear.

“Understandest thou what thou readest?” — Acts viii. 30.

WE should be abler teachers of others, and less liable to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, if we sought to have a more intelligent understanding of the Word of God. As the Holy Ghost, the Author of the Scriptures, is He who alone can enlighten us rightly to understand them, we should constantly ask His teaching, and His guidance into all truth. When the prophet Daniel would interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, what did he do? He set himself to earnest prayer that God would open up the vision. The apostle John, in his vision at Patmos, saw a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open, or so much as to look upon. The book was afterwards opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open it; but it is written first, “I wept much.” The tears of John, which were his liquid prayers, were, so far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened. Therefore if, for your own and others' profiting, you desire to be “filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” remember that prayer is your best means of study: like Daniel, you shall understand the dream, and the interpretation thereof, when you have sought unto God; and like John, you shall see the seven seals of precious truth unloosed, after you have wept much. Stones are not broken, except by an earnest use of the hammer; and the stone-breaker must go down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knee of prayer be exercised, and there is not a stony doctrine in Revelation which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayer. Thoughts and reasonings are like the steel wedges which give a hold upon truth; but prayer is the lever, the prise which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure hidden within.

“The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power.” — Nahum i. 3.

JEHIOVAH “*is slow to anger.*” When mercy cometh into the world she driveth winged steeds; the axles of her chariot-wheels are red hot with speed; but when wrath goeth forth, it toileth on with tardy footsteps, for God taketh no pleasure in the sinner’s death. God’s rod of mercy is ever in His hands outstretched; His sword of justice in its scabbard, held down by that pierced hand of love which bled for the sins of men. “The Lord is slow to anger,” because He is GREAT IN POWER. He is truly great in power who hath power over himself. When God’s power doth restrain Himself, then it is power indeed: the power that binds omnipotence is omnipotence surpassed. A man who has a strong mind can bear to be insulted long, and only resents the wrong when a sense of right demands his action. The weak mind is irritated at a little; the strong mind bears it like a rock which moveth not, though a thousand breakers dash upon it, and cast their pitiful malice in spray upon its summit. God marketh his enemies, and yet He bestirs not Himself, but holdeth in His anger. If He were less divine than He is, He would long ere this have sent forth the whole of His thunders, and emptied the magazines of heaven; He would long ere this have blasted the earth with the wondrous fires of its lower regions, and man would have been utterly destroyed; but the greatness of His power brings us mercy. Dear reader, what is your state this evening? Can you by humble faith look to Jesus and say, “My substitute, Thou art my rock, my trust”? Then, beloved, be not afraid of God’s power; for now that you are forgiven and accepted, now that by faith you have fled to Christ for refuge, the power of God need no more terrify you, than the shield and sword of the warrior need terrify those whom he loves. Rather rejoice that He who is “great in power” is your Father and Friend

“ *Take up the cross, and follow Me.*” — Mark x. 21.

YOU have not the making of your own cross, although unbelief is a master-carpenter at cross-making; neither are you permitted to choose your own cross, although self-will would fain be lord and master; but your cross is prepared and appointed for you by divine love, and you are cheerfully to accept it; you are to *take up* the cross as your chosen badge and burden, and not to stand cavilling at it. This night Jesus bids you submit your shoulder to His easy yoke. Do not kick at it in petulance, or trample on it in vain-glory, or fall under it in despair, or run away from it in fear, but take it up like a true follower of Jesus. Jesus was a cross-bearer; He leads the way in the path of sorrow. Surely you could not desire a better guide! And if He carries a cross, what nobler burden would you desire? The *Via Crucis* is the way of safety; fear not to tread its thorny paths.

Beloved, the cross is not made of feathers, or lined with velvet; it is heavy and galling to disobedient shoulders; but it is not an iron cross, though your fears have painted it with iron colors; it is a wooden cross, and a man can carry it, for the Man of Sorrows tried the load. Take up your cross, and by the power of the Spirit of God you will soon be so in love with it, that, like Moses, you would not exchange the reproach of Christ for all the treasures of Egypt. Remember that Jesus carried it, and it will smell sweetly; remember that it will soon be followed by the crown, and the thought of the coming weight of glory will greatly lighten the present heaviness of trouble. The Lord help you to bow your spirit in submission to the divine will ere you fall asleep this night, that waking with to-morrow's sun, you may go forth to the day's cross with the holy and submissive spirit which becomes a follower of the Crucified.

“ O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy upon Jerusalem? . . . And the Lord answered the angel . . . with good words and comfortable words.” — Zechariah i. 12, 13.

WHAT a sweet answer to an anxious inquiry! This night let us rejoice in it. O Zion, there are good things in store for thee; thy time of travail shall soon be over; thy children shall be brought forth; thy captivity shall end. Bear patiently the rod for a season, and under the darkness still trust in God, for His love burneth towards thee. God loves the church with a love too deep for human imagination: He loves her with all His infinite heart. Therefore let her sons be of good courage; she cannot be far from prosperity to whom God speaketh “good words and comfortable words.” What these comfortable words are the prophet goes on to tell us: “I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.” The Lord loves His church so much that He cannot bear that she should go astray to others; and when she has done so, He cannot endure that she should suffer too much or too heavily. He will not have his enemies afflict her: He is displeased with them because they increase her misery. When God seems most to leave His church, His heart is warm towards her. History shows us that whenever God uses a rod to chasten His servants, He always breaks it afterwards, as if He loathed the rod which gave His children pain. He feels the smart far more than His people. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” God hath not forgotten us because He smites — His blows are no evidences of want of love. If this is true of His church *collectively*, it is of necessity true also of *each individual member*. You may fear that the Lord has passed you by, but it is not so: He who counts the stars, and calls them by their names, is in no danger of forgetting His own children. He knows your case as thoroughly as if you were the only creature He ever made, or the only saint He ever loved. Approach Him and be at peace.

“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa.” — Jonah i. 3.

INSTEAD of going to Nineveh to preach the word, as God bade him, Jonah disliked the work, and went down to Joppa to escape from it. There are occasions when God's servants shrink from duty. But what is the consequence? What did Jonah lose by his conduct? *He lost the presence and comfortable enjoyment of God's love.* When we serve our Lord Jesus as believers should do, our God is with us; and though we have the whole world against us, if we have God with us, what does it matter? But the moment we start back, and seek our own inventions, we are at sea without a pilot. Then may we bitterly lament and groan out, “O my God, where hast Thou gone? How could I have been so foolish as to shun Thy service, and in this way to lose all the bright shinings of Thy face? This is a price too high. Let me return to my allegiance, that I may rejoice in Thy presence.” In the next place, Jonah *lost all peace of mind.* Sin soon destroys a believer's comfort. It is the poisonous upas tree, from whose leaves distil deadly drops which destroy the life of joy and peace. Jonah *lost everything upon which he might have drawn for comfort in any other case.* He could not plead the promise of divine protection, for he was not in God's ways; he could not say, “Lord, I meet with these difficulties in the discharge of my duty, therefore help me through them.” He was reaping his own deeds; he was filled with his own ways. Christian, do not play the Jonah, unless you wish to have all the waves and the billows rolling over your head. You will find in the long run that it is far harder to shun the work and will of God than to at once yield yourself to it. *Jonah lost his time,* for he had to go to Tarshish after all. It is hard to contend with God; let us yield ourselves at once.

"Behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague." — Lev. xiii. 13.

STRANGE enough this regulation appears, yet there was wisdom in it, for the throwing out of the disease proved that the constitution was sound. This evening it may be well for us to see the typical teaching of so singular a rule. We, too, are lepers, and may read the law of the leper as applicable to ourselves. When a man sees himself to be altogether lost and ruined, covered all over with the defilement of sin, and in no part free from pollution; when he disclaims all righteousness of his own, and pleads guilty before the Lord, then is he clean through the blood of Jesus, and the grace of God. Hidden, unfelt, unconfessed iniquity is the true leprosy; but when sin is seen and felt, it has received its death blow, and the Lord looks with eyes of mercy upon the soul afflicted with it. Nothing is more deadly than self-righteousness, or more hopeful than contrition. We must confess that we are "nothing else but sin," for no confession short of this will be the whole truth; and if the Holy Spirit be at work with us, convincing us of sin, there will be no difficulty about making such an acknowledgment — it will spring spontaneously from our lips. What comfort does the text afford to truly awakened sinners: the very circumstance which so grievously discouraged them is here turned into a sign and symptom of a hopeful state! Stripping comes before clothing; digging out the foundation is the first thing in building — and a thorough sense of sin is one of the earliest works of grace in the heart. Oh, thou poor leprous sinner, utterly destitute of a sound spot, take heart from the text, and come as thou art to Jesus —

"For let our debts be what they may, however great or small,
As soon as we have nought to pay, our Lord forgives us all.
'His perfect poverty alone that sets the soul at large
While we can call one mite our own, we have no full discharge."

"Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."
Micah v. 2.

THE Lord Jesus had goings forth for His people, as *their representative before the throne, long before they appeared upon the stage of time.* It was "from everlasting" that He signed the compact with His Father, that He would pay blood for blood, suffering for suffering, agony for agony, and death for death, in the behalf of His people; it was "from everlasting" that He gave Himself up, without a murmuring word, that from the crown of His head to the sole of His foot He might sweat great drops of blood, that He might be spit upon, pierced, mocked, rent asunder, and crushed beneath the pains of death. His goings forth as our Surety were from everlasting. Pause, my soul, and wonder! Thou hadst goings forth in the person of Jesus "from everlasting." Not only when thou wast born into the world did Christ love thee, but His delights were with the sons of men before there were any sons of men. Often did He think of them; from everlasting to everlasting He had set His affection upon them. What! my soul, has He been so long about thy salvation, and will not He accomplish it? Has He from everlasting been going forth to save me, and will He lose me now? What! has He carried me in His hand, as His precious jewel, and will He now let me slip from between His fingers? Did He choose me before the mountains were brought forth, or the channels of the deep were digged, and will he reject me now? Impossible! I am sure He would not have loved me so long if He had not been a changeless Lover. If He could grow weary of me, He would have been tired of me long before now. If He had not loved me with a love as deep as hell, and as strong as death, He would have turned from me long ago. Oh, joy above all joys, to know that I am His everlasting and inalienable inheritance, given to Him by His Father or ever the earth was! Everlasting love shall be the pillow for my head this night.

"The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah."
— 1 Kings xvii. 16.

SEE the faithfulness of divine love. You observe that this woman had *daily necessities*. She had herself and her son to feed in a time of famine; and now, in addition, the prophet Elijah was to be fed too. But though the need was threefold, yet the supply of meal wasted not, for she had *a constant supply*. Each day she made calls upon the barrel, but yet each day it remained the same. You, dear reader, have daily necessities, and because they come so frequently, you are apt to fear that the barrel of meal will one day be empty, and the cruse of oil will fail you. Rest assured that, according to the Word of God, this shall not be the case. Each day, though it bring its trouble, shall bring its help; and though you should live to outnumber the years of Methuselah, and though your needs should be as many as the sands of the sea-shore, yet shall God's grace and mercy last through all your necessities, and you shall never know a real lack. For three long years, in this widow's days, the heavens never saw a cloud, and the stars never wept a holy tear of dew upon the wicked earth: famine, and desolation, and death made the land a howling wilderness, but this woman never was hungry, but always joyful in abundance. So shall it be with you. You shall see the sinner's hope perish, for he trusts his native strength; you shall see the proud Pharisee's confidence totter, for he builds his hope upon the sand; you shall see even your own schemes blasted and withered, but you yourself shall find that your place of defence shall be the munition of rocks. "Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." Better have God for your guardian, than the Bank of England for your possession. You might spend the wealth of the Indies, but the infinite riches of God you can never exhaust.

"Now we have received . . . the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."
— 1 Corinthians ii. 12.

DEAR reader, have you received the spirit which is of God, wrought by the Holy Ghost in your soul? The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart may be clearly seen from this fact, that *all which has been done by God the Father, and by God the Son, must be ineffectual to us, unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls.* What effect does the doctrine of election have upon any man until the Spirit of God enters into him? Election is a dead letter in my consciousness until the Spirit of God calls me out of darkness into marvellous light. *Then, through my calling, I see my election, and knowing myself to be called of God, I know myself to have been chosen in the eternal purpose.* A covenant was made with the Lord Jesus Christ, by His Father; but what avails that covenant to us until the Holy Spirit brings us its blessings, and opens our hearts to receive them? There hang the blessings on the nail — Christ Jesus; but being short of stature, we cannot reach them; the Spirit of God takes them down and hands them to us, and thus they become actually ours. Covenant blessings in themselves are like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach, but the Spirit of God opens the windows of heaven, and scatters the living bread around the camp of the spiritual Israel. Christ's finished work is like wine stored in the wine-vat; through unbelief we can neither draw nor drink. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this precious wine, and then we drink; but without the Spirit we are as truly dead in sin as though the Father never had elected, and though the Son had never bought us with His blood. The Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to our well-being. Let us walk lovingly towards Him, and tremble at the thought of grieving Him.