
"He will give grace and glory." — Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

BOUNTIFUL is Jehovah in His nature; to give is His delight. His gifts are beyond measure precious, and are as freely given as the light of the sun. He gives grace to His elect because He wills it, to His redeemed because of His covenant, to the called because of His promise, to believers because they seek it, to sinners because they need it. He gives grace abundantly, seasonably, constantly, readily, sovereignly; doubly enhancing the value of the boon by the manner of its bestowal. Grace in all its forms He freely renders to His people: comforting, preserving, sanctifying, directing, instructing, assisting grace He generously pours into their souls without ceasing, and He always will do so, whatever may occur. Sickness may befall, but the Lord will give grace; poverty may happen to us, but grace will surely be afforded; death must come, but grace will light a candle at the darkest hour. Reader, how blessed it is, as years roll round, and the leaves begin again to fall, to enjoy such an unfading promise as this: "The Lord will give grace."

The little conjunction *and*, in this verse, is a diamond rivet binding the present with the future: grace and glory always go together. God has married them, and none can divorce them. The Lord will never deny a soul glory to whom He has freely given to live upon His grace; indeed, glory is nothing more than grace in its Sabbath dress, grace in full bloom, grace like autumn fruit, mellow and perfected. How soon we may have glory none can tell! It may be before this month of October has run out we shall see the Holy City; but be the interval longer or shorter, we shall be glorified ere long. Glory, the glory of heaven, the glory of eternity, the glory of Jesus, the glory of the Father, the Lord will surely give to His chosen. Oh, rare promise of a faithful God!

Two golden links of one celestial chain:
Who owneth grace shall surely glory gain.

"A man greatly beloved." — Daniel x. 11.

CHILD of God, do you hesitate to appropriate this title? Ah! has your unbelief made you forget that you are greatly beloved too? Must you not have been greatly beloved to have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot? When God smote His only begotten Son for you, what was this but being greatly beloved? You lived in sin, and rioted in it; must you not have been greatly beloved for God to have borne so patiently with you? You were called by grace, and led to a Saviour, and made a child of God and an heir of heaven. All this proves, does it not, a very great and superabounding love? Since that time, whether your path has been rough with troubles, or smooth with mercies, it has been full of proofs that you are a man greatly beloved. If the Lord has chastened you, yet not in anger; if He has made you poor, yet in grace you have been rich. The more unworthy you feel yourself to be, the more evidence have you that nothing but unspeakable love could have led the Lord Jesus to save such a soul as yours. The more demerit you feel, the clearer is the display of the abounding love of God in having chosen you, and called you, and made you an heir of bliss. Now, if there be such love between God and us, let us live in the influence and sweetness of it, and use the privilege of our position. Do not let us approach our Lord as though we were strangers, or as though He were unwilling to hear us — for we are greatly beloved by our loving Father. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Come boldly, O believer, for despite the whisperings of Satan and the doubtings of thine own heart, thou art greatly beloved. Meditate on the exceeding greatness and faithfulness of divine love this evening, and so go to thy bed in peace.

"He Himself hath suffered being tempted." — Hebrews ii. 18.

IT is a commonplace thought, and yet it tastes like nectar to the weary heart — Jesus was tempted as I am. You have heard that truth many times : have you grasped it ? He was tempted to the very same sins into which we fall. Do not dissociate Jesus from our common manhood. It is a dark room which you are going through, but Jesus went through it before. It is a sharp fight which you are waging, but Jesus has stood foot to foot with the same enemy. Let us be of good cheer — Christ has borne the load before us, and the blood-stained footsteps of the King of glory may be seen along the road which we traverse at this hour. There is something sweeter yet — Jesus was tempted, but Jesus never sinned. Then, my soul, it is not needful for thee to sin, for Jesus was a man, and if one man endured these temptations and sinned not, then in His power His members may also cease from sin. Some beginners in the divine life think that they cannot be tempted without sinning, but they mistake ; there is no sin in *being tempted*, but there is sin in *yielding to temptation*. Herein is comfort for the sorely-tempted ones. There is still more to encourage them if they reflect that the Lord Jesus, though tempted, gloriously triumphed, and as He overcame, so surely shall His followers also, for Jesus is the representative man for His people ; the Head has triumphed, and the members share in the victory. Fears are needless, for Christ is with us, armed for our defence. Our place of safety is the bosom of the Saviour. Perhaps we are tempted just now, in order to drive us nearer to Him. Blessed be any wind that blows us into the port of our Saviour's love ! Happy wounds, which make us seek the beloved Physician. Ye tempted ones, come to your tempted Saviour, for He can be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, and will succor every tried and tempted one.

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” — 1 John ii. 1.

IF any man sin, we *have* an advocate.” Yes, though we sin, we have Him still. John does not say, “If any man sin, he has forfeited his advocate,” but “we *have* an advocate,” sinners though we are. All the sin that a believer ever did or can be allowed to commit, cannot destroy his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ as his advocate. The name here given to the Lord is suggestive — “*Jesus*.” Ah! then He is an advocate such as we need, for Jesus is the name of one whose business and delight it is to save. They shall call His name Jesus, for *He shall save* His people from their sins;” His sweetest name implies His success. Next, it is “*Jesus Christ*” — Christos, the anointed. This shows *His authority* to plead. The Christ has a right to plead, for He is the Father’s own appointed advocate and elected priest. If He were of our choosing He might fail, but if God hath laid help upon one that is mighty, we may safely lay our trouble where God has laid His help. He is Christ, and therefore authorized; He is Christ, and therefore *qualified*, for the anointing has fully fitted Him for His work. He can plead so as to move the heart of God and prevail. What words of tenderness, what sentences of persuasion, will the anointed use when He stands up to plead for me! One more letter of His name remains — “*Jesus Christ the righteous*.” This is not only His character, BUT His plea. It is His character, and if the Righteous One be my advocate, then my cause is good, or He would not have espoused it. It is His plea, for He meets the charge of unrighteousness against me by the plea that *He is righteous*. He declares Himself my substitute, and puts His obedience to my account. My soul, thou hast a friend well fitted to be thine advocate; He cannot but succeed; leave thyself entirely in His hands.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." — Mark xvi. 16.

MR. MACDONALD asked the inhabitants of the island of St. Kilda how a man must be saved. An old man replied, "We shall be saved if we repent, and forsake our sins, and turn to God." "Yes," said a middle-aged female, "and with a true heart too." "Ay," rejoined a third, "and with prayer;" and added a fourth, "It must be the prayer of the heart." "And we must be diligent too," said a fifth, "in keeping the commandments." Thus, each having contributed his mite, feeling that a very decent creed had been made up, they all looked and listened for the preacher's approbation, but they had aroused his deepest pity. The carnal mind always maps out for itself a way in which self can work and become great, but the Lord's way is quite the reverse. Believing and being baptized are no matters of merit to be gloried in — they are so simple that boasting is excluded, and free grace bears the palm. It may be that the reader is unsaved — what is the reason? Do you think the way of salvation as laid down in the text to be dubious? How can that be when God has pledged His own word for its certainty? Do you think it too easy? Why then do you not attend to it? Its ease leaves those without excuse who neglect it. To believe is simply to trust, to depend, to rely upon Christ Jesus. To be baptized is to submit to the ordinance which our Lord fulfilled at Jordan, to which the converted ones submitted at Pentecost, to which the jailer yielded obedience the very night of his conversion. The outward sign saves not, but it sets forth to us our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus, and like the Lord's Supper, is not to be neglected. Reader, do you believe in Jesus? Then, dear friend, dismiss your fears; you shall be saved. Are you still an unbeliever? then remember there is but one door, and if you will not enter by it you will perish in your sins.

"He had married an Ethiopian woman." — Numbers xii. 1.



STRANGE choice of Moses, but how much more strange the choice of Him who is a prophet like unto Moses, and greater than he! Our Lord, who is fair as the lily, has entered into marriage union with one who confesses herself to be black, because the sun has looked upon her. It is the wonder of angels that the love of Jesus should be set upon poor, lost, guilty men. Each believer must, when filled with a sense of Jesus' love, be also overwhelmed with astonishment that such love should be lavished on an object so utterly unworthy of it. Knowing as we do our secret guiltiness, unfaithfulness, and black-heartedness, we are dissolved in grateful admiration of the matchless freeness and sovereignty of grace. Jesus must have found the cause of His love in His own heart; He could not have found it in us, for it is not there. Even since our conversion we have been black, though grace has made us comely. Holy Rutherford said of himself what we must each subscribe to, "His relation to me is, that I am sick, and He is the Physician of whom I stand in need. Alas! how often play I fast and loose with Christ! He bindeth, I loose; He buildeth, I cast down; I quarrel with Christ, and He agreeth with me twenty times a day!" Most tender and faithful Husband of our souls, pursue Thy gracious work of conforming us to Thine image, till Thou shalt present even us poor Ethiops unto Thyself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Moses met with opposition because of his marriage, and both himself and his spouse were the subjects of an evil eye. Can we wonder if this vain world opposes Jesus and His spouse, and especially when great sinners are converted? for this is ever the Pharisee's ground of objection, "This man receiveth sinners." Still is the old cause of quarrel revived, "Because he had married an Ethiopian woman."

“*Now on whom dost thou trust.*” — Isaiah xxxvi. 5.

READER, this is an important question. Listen to the Christian's answer, and see if it is yours. “On whom dost thou trust?” “I trust,” says the Christian, “in a triune God. I trust *the Father*, believing that He has chosen me from before the foundations of the world; I trust Him to provide for me in providence, to teach me, to guide me, to correct me if need be, and to bring me home to His own house, where the many mansions are. I trust *the Son*. Very God of very God is He — the man Christ Jesus. I trust in Him to take away all my sins by His own sacrifice, and to adorn me with His perfect righteousness. I trust Him to be my Intercessor, to present my prayers and desires before His Father's throne, and I trust Him to be my Advocate at the last great day, to plead my cause, and to justify me. I trust Him for what He is, for what He has done, and for what He has promised yet to do. And I trust *the Holy Spirit* — He has begun to save me from my inbred sins; I trust Him to drive them all out; I trust Him to curb my temper, to subdue my will, to enlighten my understanding, to check my passions, to comfort my despondency, to help my weakness, to illuminate my darkness; I trust Him to dwell in me as my life, to reign in me as my King, to sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul, and body, and then to take me up to dwell with the saints in light forever.”

Oh, blessed trust! To trust Him whose power will never be exhausted, whose love will never wane, whose kindness will never change, whose faithfulness will never fail, whose wisdom will never be nonplussed, and whose perfect goodness can never know a diminution! Happy art thou, reader, if this trust is thine! So trusting, thou shalt enjoy sweet peace now, and glory hereafter, and the foundation of thy trust shall never be removed.

“*Praying in the Holy Ghost.*” — Jude 20.

MARK the grand characteristic of true prayer — “*In the Holy Ghost.*” The seed of acceptable devotion must come from heaven’s storehouse. Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God. We must shoot the Lord’s arrows back to Him. That desire which He writes upon our heart will move His heart and bring down a blessing, but the desires of the flesh have no power with Him.

Praying in the Holy Ghost is praying in *fervency*. Cold prayers ask the Lord not to hear them. Those who do not plead with fervency, plead not at all. As well speak of lukewarm fire as of lukewarm prayer — it is essential that it be red-hot. It is praying *perseveringly*. The true suppliant gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent when God delays to answer. The longer the gate is closed, the more vehemently does he use the knocker, and the longer the angel lingers, the more resolved is he that he will never let him go without the blessing. Beautiful in God’s sight is tearful, agonizing, unconquerable importunity. It means praying *humbly*, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. It is His office to convince of sin, and so to bow us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We shall never sing *Gloria in excelsis* except we pray to God *De profundis*: out of the depths must we cry, or we shall never behold glory in the highest. It is *loving* prayer. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love — love to our fellow-saints, and love to Christ. Moreover, it must be a prayer full of *faith*. A man prevails only as he believes. The Holy Spirit is the author of faith, and strengthens it so that we pray believing God’s promise. Oh that this blessed combination of excellent graces, priceless, and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Ghost is in our hearts! Most blessed Comforter, exert thy mighty power within us, helping our infirmities in prayer.

"But He answered her not a word." — Matthew xv. 23.

GENUINE seekers, who as yet have not obtained the blessing, may take comfort from the story before us. The Saviour did not at once bestow the blessing, even though the woman had great faith in Him. He intended to give it, but He waited a while. "He answered her not a word." Were not her prayers good? Never better in the world. Was not her case needy? Sorrowfully needy. Did she not *feel* her need sufficiently? She felt it overwhelmingly. Was she not earnest enough? She was intensely so. Had she no faith? She had such a high degree of it that even Jesus wondered, and said, "O woman, great is thy faith." See then, although it is true that faith brings peace, yet it does not always bring it instantaneously. There may be certain reasons calling for the trial of faith, rather than the reward of faith. Genuine faith may be in the soul like a hidden seed, but as yet it may not have budded and blossomed into joy and peace. A painful silence from the Saviour is the grievous trial of many a seeking soul, but heavier still is the affliction of a harsh, cutting reply such as this: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." Many in waiting upon the Lord find immediate delight, but this is not the case with all. Some, like the jailer, are in a moment turned from darkness to light, but others are plants of slower growth. A deeper sense of sin may be given to you instead of a sense of pardon, and in such a case you will have need of patience to bear the heavy blow. Ah! poor heart, though Christ beat and bruise thee, or even slay thee, trust Him; though He should give thee an angry word, believe in the love of His heart. Do not, I beseech thee, give up seeking or trusting my Master because thou hast not yet obtained the conscious joy which thou longest for. Cast thyself on Him, and perseveringly depend even where thou canst not rejoicingly hope.

"And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible." — Jer. xv. 21.

NOTE the glorious personality of the promise — *I will, I will.* The Lord Jehovah himself interposes to deliver and redeem His people. He pledges himself personally to rescue them. His own arm shall do it, that He may have the glory. Here is not a word said of any effort of our own which may be needed to assist the Lord. Neither our strength nor our weakness is taken into the account, but the lone *I*, like the sun in the heavens, shines out resplendent in all-sufficiency. Why then do we calculate our forces, and consult with flesh and blood to our grievous wounding? Jehovah has power enough without borrowing from our puny arm. Peace, ye unbelieving thoughts, be still, and know that the Lord reigneth. Nor is there a hint concerning secondary means and causes. The Lord says nothing of friends and helpers: He undertakes the work alone, and feels no need of human arms to aid Him. Vain are all our lookings around to companions and relatives; they are broken reeds if we lean upon them — often unwilling when able, and unable when they are willing. Since the promise comes alone from God, it would be well to wait only upon Him; and when we do so, our expectation never fails us. Who are the wicked, that we should fear them? The Lord will utterly consume them; they are to be pitied rather than feared. As for terrible ones, they are only terrors to those who have no God to fly to, for when the Lord is on our side, whom shall we fear? If we run into sin to please the wicked, we have cause to be alarmed, but if we hold fast our integrity, the rage of tyrants shall be overruled for our good. When the fish swallowed Jonah, he found him a morsel which he could not digest; and when the world devours the church, it is glad to be rid of it again. In all times of fiery trial, in patience let us possess our souls.

“Whom He did predestinate, them He also called.”

Romans viii. 30.

IN the second epistle to Timothy, first chapter and ninth verse, are these words — “Who hath saved us, and called us with a *holy* calling.” Now, here is a touchstone by which we may try our calling. It is “a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace.” This calling forbids all trust in our own doings, and conducts us to Christ alone for salvation, but it afterwards purges us from dead works to serve the living and true God. As He that hath called you is holy, so must you be holy. If you are living in sin you are not called, but if you are truly Christ’s you can say, “Nothing pains me so much as sin; I desire to be rid of it; Lord, help me to be holy.” Is this the panting of thy heart? Is this the tenor of thy life towards God, and his divine will? Again, in Philippians iii. 13, 14, we are told of “the *high* calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Is, then, your calling a high calling? Has it ennobled your heart, and set it upon heavenly things? Has it elevated your hopes, your tastes, your desires? Has it upraised the constant tenor of your life, so that you spend it with God and for God? Another test we find in Hebrews iii. 1 — “partakers of the *heavenly* calling.” Heavenly calling means a call *from* heaven. If man alone call thee, thou art uncalled. Is thy calling of God? Is it a call *to* heaven as well as from heaven? Unless thou art a stranger here, and heaven thy home, thou hast not been called with a heavenly calling: for those who have been so called, declare that they look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and they themselves are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. Is thy calling thus holy, high, heavenly? Then, beloved, thou hast been called of God, for such is the calling wherewith God doth call His people.

“*The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.*” — John xiv. 26.

THIS age is peculiarly the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in which Jesus cheers us not by His personal presence, as He shall do by and by, but by the indwelling and constant abiding of the Holy Ghost, who is evermore the Comforter of the church. It is His office to console the hearts of God's people. He convinces of sin; He illuminates and instructs; but still the main part of His work lies in making glad the hearts of the renewed, in confirming the weak, and lifting up all those that be bowed down. He does this by revealing Jesus to them. The Holy Spirit consoles, but Christ *is the consolation*. If we may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician, but Jesus is the medicine. *He* heals the wound, but it is by applying the holy ointment of Christ's name and grace. He takes not of his own things, but of the things of Christ. So, if we give to the Holy Spirit the Greek name of *Paraclete*, as we sometimes do, then our heart confers on our blessed Lord Jesus the title of the *Paraclesis*. If the one be the Comforter, the other is the Comfort. Now, with such rich provision for his need, why should the Christian be sad and desponding? The Holy Spirit has graciously engaged to be thy Comforter: dost thou imagine, O thou weak and trembling believer, that He will be negligent of His sacred trust? Canst thou suppose that He has undertaken what He cannot or will not perform? If it be His especial work to strengthen thee, and to comfort thee, dost thou suppose He has forgotten His business, or that He will fail in the loving office which He sustains towards thee? Nay, think not so hardly of the tender and blessed Spirit whose name is “the Comforter.” He delights to give the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Trust thou in Him, and He will surely comfort thee till the house of mourning is closed forever, and the marriage feast has begun.

"Love is strong as death." — Solomon's Song viii. 6.

WHOSE love can this be which is as mighty as the conqueror of monarchs, the destroyer of the human race? Would it not sound like satire if it were applied to my poor, weak, and scarcely living love to Jesus my Lord? I do love Him, and perhaps, by His grace, I could even die for Him, but as for my love in itself, it can scarcely endure a scoffing jest, much less a cruel death. Surely it is my Beloved's love which is here spoken of — the love of Jesus, the matchless lover of souls. His love was indeed stronger than the most terrible death, for it endured the trial of the cross triumphantly. It was a lingering death, but love survived the torment; a shameful death, but love despised the shame; a penal death, but love bore our iniquities; a forsaken, lonely death, from which the eternal Father hid His face, but love endured the curse, and gloried over all. Never such love, never such death. It was a desperate duel, but love bore the palm. What then, my heart? Hast thou no emotions excited within thee at the contemplation of such heavenly affection? Yes, my Lord, I long, I pant to feel Thy love flaming like a furnace within me. Come Thou Thyself and excite the ardor of my spirit.

" For every drop of crimson blood
Thus shed to make me live,
Oh, wherefore, wherefore have not I
A thousand lives to give? "

Why should I despair of loving Jesus with a love as strong as death? He deserves it: I desire it. The martyrs felt such love, and they were but flesh and blood; then why not I? They mourned their weakness, and yet out of weakness were made strong. Grace gave them all their unflinching constancy — there is the same grace for me. Jesus, lover of my soul, shed abroad such love, even Thy love in my heart, this evening.

"And be not conformed to this world." — Romans xii. 2.

IF a Christian can by possibility be saved while he conforms to this world, at any rate it must be so as by fire. Such a bare salvation is almost as much to be dreaded as desired. Reader, would you wish to leave this world in the darkness of a desponding death bed, and enter heaven as a shipwrecked mariner climbs the rocks of his native country? then be worldly; be mixed up with Mammonites, and refuse to go without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. But would you have a heaven below as well as a heaven above? Would you comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? Would you receive an abundant entrance into the joy of your Lord? Then come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Would you attain the full assurance of faith? you cannot gain it while you commune with sinners. Would you flame with vehement love? your love will be damped by the drenchings of godless society. You cannot become a great Christian — you may be a babe in grace, but you never can be a perfect man in Christ Jesus while you yield yourself to the worldly maxims and modes of business of men of the world. It is ill for an heir of heaven to be a great friend with the heirs of hell. It has a bad look when a courtier is too intimate with his king's enemies. Even small inconsistencies are dangerous. Little thorns make great blisters, little moths destroy fine garments, and little frivolities and little rogueries will rob religion of a thousand joys. O professor, too little separated from sinners, you know not what you lose by your conformity to the world. It cuts the tendons of your strength, and makes you creep where you ought to run. Then, for your own comfort's sake, and for the sake of your growth in grace, if you be a Christian, be a Christian, and be a marked and distinct one.

"But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck." — Exodus xxxiv. 20.

EVERY first-born creature must be the Lord's, but since the ass was unclean, it could not be presented in sacrifice. What then? Should it be allowed to go free from the universal law? By no means. God admits of no exceptions. The ass is His due, but He will not accept it; He will not abate the claim, but yet He cannot be pleased with the victim. No way of escape remained but redemption — the creature must be saved by the substitution of a lamb in its place; or, if not redeemed, it must die. My soul, here is a lesson for thee. That unclean animal is thyself; thou art justly the property of the Lord, who made thee and preserves thee, but thou art so sinful that God will not, cannot, accept thee: and it has come to this, the Lamb of God must stand in thy stead, or thou must die eternally. Let all the world know of thy gratitude to that spotless Lamb who has already bled for thee, and so redeemed thee from the fatal curse of the law. Must it not sometimes have been a question with the Israelite which should die, the ass or the lamb? Would not the good man pause to estimate and compare? Assuredly there was no comparison between the value of the soul of man and the life of the Lord Jesus, and yet the Lamb dies, and man the ass is spared. My soul, admire the boundless love of God to thee and others of the human race. Worms are bought with the blood of the Son of the Highest! Dust and ashes redeemed with a price far above silver and gold! What a doom had been mine had not plenteous redemption been found! The breaking of the neck of the ass was but a momentary penalty, but who shall measure the wrath to come to which no limit can be imagined? Inestimably dear is the glorious Lamb who has redeemed us from such a doom.

"With Thee is the fountain of life." — Psalm xxxvi. 9.

THERE are times in our spiritual experience when human counsel or sympathy, or religious ordinances, fail to comfort or help us. Why does our gracious God permit this? Perhaps it is because we have been living too much without Him, and He therefore takes away everything upon which we have been in the habit of depending, that He may drive us to Himself. It is a blessed thing to live at the fountain head. While our skin-bottles are full, we are content, like Hagar and Ishmael, to go into the wilderness; but when those are dry, nothing will serve us but "Thou God seest me." We are like the prodigal, we love the swine-troughs and forget our Father's house. Remember, we can make swine-troughs and husks even out of the forms of religion; they are blessed things, but we may put them in God's place, and then they are of no value. Anything becomes an idol when it keeps us away from God: even the brazen serpent is to be despised as "Nehushtan," if we worship it instead of God. The prodigal was never safer than when he was driven to his father's bosom, because he could find sustenance nowhere else. Our Lord favors us with a famine in the land that it may make us seek after Himself the more. The best position for a Christian is living wholly and directly on God's grace — still abiding where he stood at first — "having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Let us never for a moment think that our standing is in our sanctification, our mortification, our graces, or our feelings, but know that because Christ offered a full atonement, therefore we are saved; for we are complete in Him. Having nothing of our own to trust to, but resting upon the merits of Jesus — His passion and holy life furnish us with the only sure ground of confidence. Beloved, when we are brought to a thirsting condition, we are sure to turn to the fountain of life with eagerness.

"He shall gather the lambs with His arm." — Isaiah xl. 11.

OUR good Shepherd has in His flock a variety of experiences; some are strong in the Lord, and others are weak in faith; but He is impartial in His care for all His sheep, and the weakest lamb is as dear to Him as the most advanced of the flock. Lambs are wont to lag behind, prone to wander, and apt to grow weary; but from all the danger of these infirmities the Shepherd protects them with His arm of power. He finds new-born souls, like young lambs, ready to perish — He nourishes them till life becomes vigorous; He finds weak minds ready to faint and die — He consoles them and renews their strength. All the little ones He gathers, for it is not the will of our heavenly Father that one of them should perish. What a quick eye He must have to see them all! What a tender heart to care for them all! What a far-reaching and potent arm to gather them all! In his lifetime on earth He was a great gatherer of the weaker sort, and now that He dwells in heaven, His loving heart yearns towards the meek and contrite, the timid and feeble, the fearful and fainting here below. How gently did He gather me to Himself, to His truth, to His blood, to His love, to His church! With what effectual grace did He compel me to come to Himself! Since my first conversion, how frequently has He restored me from my wanderings, and once again folded me within the circle of His everlasting arm! The best of all is, that He does it all Himself personally, not delegating the task of love, but condescending Himself to rescue and preserve His most unworthy servant. How shall I love Him enough or serve Him worthily? I would fain make His name great unto the ends of the earth, but what can my feebleness do for Him? Great Shepherd, add to Thy mercies this one other — a heart to love Thee more truly as I ought.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." — 1 Samuel xv. 22.

SAUL had been commanded to slay utterly all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so, he preserved the king, and suffered his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this, he declared that he did it with a view of offering sacrifice to God; but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion. The sentence before us is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and to be hung up before the eyes of the present idolatrous generation, who are very fond of the fineries of will-worship, but utterly neglect the laws of God. Be it ever in your remembrance, that to keep strictly in the path of your Saviour's command is better than any outward form of religion; and to hearken to His precept with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams, or any other precious thing, to lay upon His altar. If you are failing to keep the least of Christ's commands to His disciples, I pray you be disobedient no longer. All the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master, and all the devout actions which you may perform, are no recompense for disobedience. "To obey," even in the slightest and smallest thing, "is better than sacrifice," however pompous. Talk not of Gregorian chants, sumptuous robes, incense, and banners; the first thing which God requires of His child is obedience; and though you should give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor, yet if you do not hearken to the Lord's precepts, all your formalities shall profit you nothing. It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, but it is a much more blessed thing, when one has been taught the lesson, to carry it out to the letter. How many adorn their temples and decorate their priests, but refuse to obey the word of the Lord! My soul, come not thou into their secret.

"God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night." — Job xxxv. 10.

NY man can sing in the day. When the cup is full, man draws inspiration from it. When wealth rolls in abundance around him, any man can praise the God who gives a plenteous harvest, or sends home a loaded argosy. It is easy enough for an Æolian harp to whisper music when the winds blow — the difficulty is for music to swell forth when no wind is stirring. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but he is skilful who sings when there is not a ray of light to read by — who sings from his heart. No man can make a song in the night of himself; he may attempt it, but he will find that a song in the night must be divinely inspired. Let all things go well, I can weave songs, fashioning them wherever I go out of the flowers that grow upon my path; but put me in a desert, where no green thing grows, and wherewith shall I frame a hymn of praise to God? How shall a mortal man make a crown for the Lord where no jewels are? Let but this voice be clear, and this body full of health, and I can sing God's praise: silence my tongue, lay me upon the bed of languishing, and how shall I then chant God's high praises, unless He Himself give me the song? No, it is not in man's power to sing when all is adverse, unless an altar-coal shall touch his lip. It was a divine song, which Habakkuk sang, when in the night he said, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Then, since our Maker gives *songs in the night*, let us wait upon Him for the music. O Thou chief musician, let us not remain songless because affliction is upon us, tune Thou our lips to the melody of thanksgiving.

"Keep not back." — Isaiah xliii. 6.

ALTHOUGH this message was sent to the south, and referred to the seed of Israel, it may profitably be a summons to ourselves. Backward we are naturally to all good things, and it is a lesson of grace to learn to go forward in the ways of God. Reader, are you unconverted, but do you desire to trust in the Lord Jesus? Then *keep not back*. Love invites you, the promises secure you success, the precious blood prepares the way. Let not sins or fears hinder you, but come to Jesus just as you are. Do you long to pray? Would you pour out your heart before the Lord? *Keep not back*. The mercy-seat is prepared for such as need mercy; a sinner's cries will prevail with God. You are invited, nay, you are commanded to pray; come therefore with boldness to the throne of grace.

Dear friend, are you already saved? Then *keep not back* from union with the Lord's people. Neglect not the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. You may be of a timid disposition, but you must strive against it, lest it lead you into disobedience. There is a sweet promise made to those who confess Christ — by no means miss it, lest you come under the condemnation of those who deny Him. If you have talents, *keep not back* from using them. Hoard not your wealth, waste not your time; let not your abilities rust or your influence be unused. Jesus kept not back; imitate Him by being foremost in self-denials and self-sacrifices. *Keep not back* from close communion with God, from boldly appropriating covenant blessings, from advancing in the divine life, from prying into the precious mysteries of the love of Christ. Neither, beloved friend, be guilty of keeping others back by your coldness, harshness, or suspicions. For Jesus' sake go forward yourself, and encourage others to do the like. Hell and the leaguered bands of superstition and infidelity are forward to the fight. O soldiers of the cross, *keep not back*.

"Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?"
Luke xxiv. 38.

WHY sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" The Lord cares for all things, and the meanest creatures share in His universal providence, but His particular providence is over His saints. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." "Precious shall their blood be in His sight." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." Let the fact that, while He is the Saviour of all men, He is specially the Saviour of them that believe, cheer and comfort you. You are His peculiar care; His regal treasure which He guards as the apple of His eye; His vineyard over which He watches day and night. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Let the thought of His special love to *you* be a spiritual pain-killer, a dear quietus to your woe: "I will never leave *thee*, nor forsake *thee*." God says that as much to you as to any saint of old. "Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." We lose much consolation by the habit of reading His promises for the whole church, instead of taking them directly home to ourselves. Believer, grasp the divine word with a personal, appropriating faith. Think that you hear Jesus say, "I have prayed for *thee* that thy faith fail not." Think you see Him walking on the waters of thy trouble, for He is there, and He is saying, "Fear not, it is I; be not afraid." Oh, those sweet words of Christ! May the Holy Ghost make you feel them as spoken to *you*; forget others for a while — accept the voice of Jesus as addressed to you, and say, "Jesus whispers consolation; I cannot refuse it; I will sit under His shadow with great delight."

"He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."—John xvi. 15.

THERE are times when all the promises and doctrines of the Bible are of no avail, unless a gracious hand shall apply them to us. We are thirsty, but too faint to crawl to the water-brook. When a soldier is wounded in battle, it is of little use for him to know that there are those at the hospital who can bind up his wounds, and medicines there to ease all the pains which he now suffers: what he needs is to be carried thither, and to have the remedies applied. It is thus with our souls, and to meet this need there is one, even the Spirit of truth, who takes of the things of Jesus, and applies them to us. Think not that Christ hath placed His joys on heavenly shelves that we may climb up to them for ourselves, but He draws near, and sheds His peace abroad in our hearts. O Christian, if thou art to-night laboring under deep distresses, thy Father does not give thee promises and then leave thee to draw them up from the word like buckets from a well, but the promises He has written in the word He will write anew on your heart. He will manifest His love to you, and, by His blessed Spirit, dispel your cares and troubles. Be it known unto thee, O mourner, that it is God's prerogative to wipe every tear from the eye of His people. The good Samaritan did not say, "Here is the wine, and here is the oil for you;" he actually poured in the oil and the wine. So Jesus not only gives you the sweet wine of the promise, but holds the golden chalice to your lips, and pours the life-blood into your mouth. The poor, sick, way-worn pilgrim is not merely strengthened to walk, but he is borne on eagles' wings. Glorious gospel! which provides everything for the helpless, which draws nigh to us when we cannot reach after it—brings us grace before we seek for grace! Here is as much glory in the giving as in the gift. Happy people who have the Holy Ghost to bring Jesus to them.

“Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”
Luke xxii. 46.

WHEN is the Christian most liable to sleep? Is it not *when his temporal circumstances are prosperous?* Have you not found it so? When you had daily troubles to take to the throne of grace, were you not more wakeful than you are now? Easy roads make sleepy travelers. Another dangerous time is *when all goes pleasantly in spiritual matters.* Christian went not to sleep when lions were in the way, or when he was wading through the river, or when fighting with Apollyon, but when he had climbed half way up the Hill Difficulty, and came to a delightful arbor, he sat down, and forthwith fell asleep, to his great sorrow and loss. The enchanted ground is a place of balmy breezes, laden with fragrant odors and soft influences, all tending to lull pilgrims to sleep. Remember Bunyan's description; “Then they came to an arbor, warm, and promising much refreshing to the weary pilgrims; for it was finely wrought above head, beautified with greens, and furnished with benches and settles. It had also in it a soft couch, where the weary might lean.” “The arbor was called the Slothful's Friend, and was made on purpose to allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims to take up their rest there when weary.” Depend upon it, it is in easy places that men shut their eyes and wander into the dreamy land of forgetfulness. Old Erskine wisely remarked, “I like a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil.” There is no temptation half so dangerous as not being tempted. The distressed soul does not sleep; it is after we enter into peaceful confidence and full assurance that we are in danger of slumbering. The disciples fell asleep after they had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountain top. Take heed, joyous Christian — good frames are near neighbors to temptations: be as happy as you will, only be watchful.

"He began to wash the disciples' feet." — John xiii. 5.

THE Lord Jesus loves his people so much, that every day He is still doing for them much that is analogous to washing their soiled feet. Their poorest actions He accepts; their deepest sorrow He feels; their slenderest wish He hears, and their every transgression He forgives. He is still their servant as well as their Friend and Master. He not only performs majestic deeds for them, as wearing the mitre on His brow, and the precious jewels glittering on His breastplate, and standing up to plead for them, but humbly, patiently, He yet goes about among His people with the basin and the towel. He does this when He puts away from us day by day our constant infirmities and sins. Last night, when you bowed the knee, you mournfully confessed that much of your conduct was not worthy of your profession; and even to-night you must mourn afresh that you have fallen again into the selfsame folly and sin from which special grace delivered you long ago; and yet Jesus will have great patience with you; He will hear your confession of sin; He will say, "I will, be thou clean;" He will again apply the blood of sprinkling, and speak peace to your conscience, and remove every spot. It is a great act of eternal love when Christ once for all absolves the sinner, and puts him into the family of God; but what condescending patience there is when the Saviour with much long-suffering bears the oft recurring follies of His wayward disciple; day by day, and hour by hour, washing away the multiplied transgressions of His erring but yet beloved child! To dry up a flood of rebellion is something marvellous, but to endure the constant dropping of repeated offences—to bear with a perpetual trying of patience, this is divine indeed! While we find comfort and peace in our Lord's daily cleansing, its legitimate influence upon us will be to increase our watchfulness, and quicken our desire for holiness. *Is it so?*

"She gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech." — Ruth ii. 3.

HER hap was. Yes, it seemed nothing but an accident, but how divinely was it overruled! Ruth had gone forth with her mother's blessing, under the care of her mother's God, to humble but honorable toil, and the providence of God was guiding her every step. Little did she know that amid the sheaves she would find a husband, that he should make her the joint owner of all those broad acres, and that she, a poor foreigner, should become one of the progenitors of the great Messiah. God is very good to those who trust in Him, and often surprises them with unlooked-for blessings. Little do we know what may happen to us to-morrow, but this sweet fact may cheer us, that no good thing shall be withheld. Chance is banished from the faith of Christians, for they see the hand of God in everything. The trivial events of to-day or to-morrow may involve consequences of the highest importance. O Lord, deal as graciously with Thy servants as Thou didst with Ruth.

How blessed would it be, if, in wandering in the field of meditation to-night, our hap should be to light upon the place where our next Kinsman will reveal Himself to us! O Spirit of God, guide us to Him. We would sooner glean in His field than bear away the whole harvest from any other. O for the footsteps of His flock, which may conduct us to the green pastures where He dwells! This is a weary world when Jesus is away — we could better do without sun and moon than without Him — but how divinely fair all things become in the glory of His presence! Our souls know the virtue which dwells in Jesus, and can never be content without Him. We will wait in prayer this night until our hap shall be to light on a part of the field belonging to Jesus, wherein He will manifest Himself to us.

"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."
— Ecclesiastes i. 7.

EVERYTHING sublunary is on the move; time knows nothing of rest. The solid earth is a rolling ball, and the great sun himself a star obediently fulfilling its course around some greater luminary. Tides move the sea, winds stir the airy ocean, friction wears the rock: change and death rule everywhere. The sea is not a miser's storehouse for a wealth of waters, for as by one force the waters flow into it, by another they are lifted from it. Men are born but to die: everything is hurry, worry, and vexation of spirit. Friend of the unchanging Jesus, what a joy it is to reflect upon thy changeless heritage! thy sea of bliss which will be forever full, since God Himself shall pour eternal rivers of pleasure into it. We seek an abiding city beyond the skies, and we shall not be disappointed.

The passage before us may well teach us gratitude. Father Ocean is a great receiver, but he is a generous distributor. What the rivers bring him he returns to the earth in the form of clouds and rain. That man is out of joint with the universe who takes all, but makes no return. To give to others is but sowing seed for ourselves. He who is so good a steward as to be willing to use his substance for his Lord, shall be intrusted with more. Friend of Jesus, art thou rendering to Him according to the benefit received? Much has been given thee — what is thy fruit? Hast thou done all? Canst thou not do more? To be selfish is to be wicked. Suppose the ocean gave up none of its watery treasure, it would bring ruin upon our race. God forbid that any of us should follow the ungenerous and destructive policy of living unto ourselves. Jesus pleased not Himself. All fulness dwells in Him, but of His fulness have all we received. O for Jesu's spirit, that henceforth we may live not unto ourselves!

"We are all as an unclean thing." — Isaiah lxiv. 6.

THE believer is a new creature ; he belongs to a holy generation and a peculiar people — the Spirit of God is in him, and in all respects he is far removed from the natural man ; but for all that the Christian is a sinner still. He is so from the imperfection of his nature, and will continue so to the end of his earthly life. The black fingers of sin leave smuts upon our fairest robes. Sin mars our repentance, ere the great Potter has finished it, upon the wheel. Selfishness defiles our tears, and unbelief tampers with our faith. The best thing we ever did, apart from the merit of Jesus, only swelled the number of our sins ; for when we have been most pure in our own sight, yet, like the heavens, we are not pure in God's sight ; and, as He charged His angels with folly, much more must He charge us with it, even in our most angelic frames of mind. The song which thrills to heaven, and seeks to emulate seraphic strains, hath human discords in it. The prayer which moves the arm of God is still a bruised and battered prayer, and only moves that arm because the sinless One, the great Mediator, has stepped in to take away the sin of our supplication. The most golden faith or the purest degree of sanctification to which a Christian ever attained on earth, has still so much alloy in it as to be only worthy of the flames, in itself considered. Every night we look in the glass we see a sinner, and had need confess, " We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Oh, how precious the blood of Christ to such hearts as ours ! How priceless a gift is His perfect righteousness ! And how bright the hope of perfect holiness hereafter ! Even now, though sin dwells in us, *its power is broken*. It has no dominion ; it is a broken-backed snake ; we are in bitter conflict with it, but it is with a vanquished foe that we have to deal. Yet a little while and we shall enter victoriously into the city where nothing defileth.

"His head is as the most fine gold, His locks are bushy, and black as a raven." — Solomon's Song v. 11.

COMPARISONS all fail to set forth the Lord Jesus, but the spouse uses the best within her reach. By *the head* of Jesus we may understand His deity, "for the head of Christ is God;" and then the ingot of purest gold is the best conceivable metaphor, but all too poor to describe one so precious, so pure, so dear, so glorious. Jesus is not a grain of gold, but a vast globe of it, a priceless mass of treasure such as earth and heaven cannot excel. The creatures are mere iron and clay; they all shall perish like wood, hay, and stubble; but the ever-living Head of the creation of God shall shine on forever and ever. In Him is no mixture, nor smallest taint of alloy. He is forever infinitely holy and altogether divine. *The bushy locks* depict His manly vigor. There is nothing effeminate in our Beloved. He is the manliest of men. Bold as a lion, laborious as an ox, swift as an eagle. Every conceivable and inconceivable beauty is to be found in Him, though once He was despised and rejected of men.

"His head the finest gold;
With secret sweet perfume,
His curl'd locks hang all as black
As any raven's plume." *

The glory of His head is not shorn away; He is eternally crowned with peerless majesty. *The black hair* indicates youthful freshness, for Jesus has the dew of His youth upon Him. Others grow languid with age, but He is forever a Priest as was Melchisedek; others come and go, but He abides as God upon His throne, world without end. We will behold Him to-night and adore Him. Angels are gazing upon Him — His redeemed must not turn away their eyes from Him. Where else is there such a Beloved? Oh for an hour's fellowship with Him! Away, ye intruding cares! Jesus draws me, and I run after Him.

"But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him."

Luke xxiv. 16.

THE disciples ought to have known Jesus; they had heard His voice so often, and gazed upon that marred face so frequently, that it is wonderful they did not discover Him. Yet is it not so with you also? You have not seen Jesus lately. You have been to His table, and you have not met Him there. You are in a dark trouble this evening, and though He plainly says, "It is I, be not afraid," yet you cannot discern Him. Alas! our eyes are holden. We know His voice; we have looked into His face; we have leaned our head upon His bosom, and yet, though Christ is very near us, we are saying, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" We should know Jesus, for we have the Scriptures to reflect His image; and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious book and have no glimpse of the Well-beloved! Dear child of God, are you in that state? Jesus feedeth among the lilies of the word, and you walk among those lilies, and yet you behold Him not. He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture, and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the garden of Scripture, but cannot see Him, though He is always there. And why do we not see Him? It must be ascribed in our case, as in the disciples', to unbelief. They evidently did not expect to see Jesus, and therefore they did not know Him. To a great extent in spiritual things we get what we expect of the Lord. Faith alone can bring us to see Jesus. Make it your prayer, "Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may see my Saviour present with me." It is a blessed thing to *want* to see Him; but oh! it is better far to gaze upon Him. To those who seek Him He is kind; but to those who find Him, beyond expression is He dear!

"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to Thy voice : cause me to hear it." — Solomon's Song viii. 13.

MY sweet Lord Jesus remembers well the garden of Gethsemane, and although He has left that garden, He now dwells in the garden of His church : there He unbosoms Himself to those who keep His blessed company. That voice of love with which He speaks to His beloved is more musical than the harps of heaven. There is a depth of melodious love within it which leaves all human music far behind. Tens of thousands on earth, and millions above, are indulged with its harmonious accents. Some whom I well know, and whom I greatly envy, are at this moment hearkening to the beloved voice. Oh that I were a partaker of their joys ! It is true some of these are poor, others bedridden, and some near the gates of death ; but O my Lord, I would cheerfully starve with them, pine with them, or die with them, if I might but hear Thy voice. Once I did hear it often, but I have grieved Thy Spirit. Return unto me in compassion, and once again say unto me, "I am thy salvation." No other voice can content me ; I know Thy voice, and cannot be deceived by another ; let me hear it, I pray Thee. I know not what Thou wilt say, neither do I make any condition. O my Beloved, do but let me hear Thee speak, and if it be a rebuke I will bless Thee for it. Perhaps to cleanse my dull ear may need an operation very grievous to the flesh, but, let it cost what it may, I turn not from the one consuming desire — cause me to hear Thy voice. Bore my ear afresh ; pierce my ear with Thy harshest notes, only do not permit me to continue deaf to Thy calls. To-night, Lord, grant Thine unworthy one his desire, for I am Thine, and Thou hast bought me with Thy blood. Thou hast opened mine eye to see Thee, and the sight has saved me. Lord, open Thou mine ear. I have read Thy heart, now let me hear Thy lips.

"I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought."

Hosea xiii. 5.

WHES, Lord, Thou didst indeed know me in my *fallen* state, and Thou didst even then choose me for Thyself. When I was loathsome and self-aborred, Thou didst receive me as Thy child, and Thou didst satisfy my craving wants. Blessed forever be Thy name for this free, rich, abounding mercy. Since then, *my inward experience* has often been a wilderness; but Thou hast owned me still as Thy beloved, and poured streams of love and grace into me to gladden me, and make me fruitful. Yea, when my *outward circumstances* have been at the worst, and I have wandered in a land of drought, Thy sweet presence has solaced me. Men have not known me when scorn has awaited me, but Thou hast known my soul in adversities, for no affliction dims the lustre of Thy love. Most gracious Lord, I magnify Thee for all Thy faithfulness to me in trying circumstances, and I deplore that I should at any time have forgotten Thee and been exalted in heart, when I have owed all to Thy gentleness and love. Have mercy upon Thy servant in this thing!

My soul, if Jesus thus acknowledged thee in thy low estate, be sure that thou own both Himself and His cause now that thou art in thy prosperity. Be not lifted up by thy worldly successes so as to be ashamed of the truth or of the poor church with which thou hast been associated. Follow Jesus into the wilderness: bear the cross with Him when the heat of persecution grows hot. He owned thee, O my soul, in thy poverty and shame — never be so treacherous as to be ashamed of Him. Oh for more shame at the thought of being ashamed of my best Beloved! Jesus, my soul cleaveth to Thee.

"I'll turn to Thee in days of light,
As well as nights of care,
Thou brightest amid all that's bright '
Thou fairest of the fair!"