
"Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn." — Ruth ii. 2.

DOWNCAST and troubled Christian, come and glean to-day in the broad field of promise. Here are abundance of precious promises, which exactly meet thy wants. Take this one : "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." Doth not that suit thy case ? A reed, helpless, insignificant, and weak ; a bruised reed, out of which no music can come ; weaker than weakness itself ; a reed, and that reed bruised, yet He will not break thee ; but, on the contrary, will restore and strengthen thee. Thou art like the smoking flax : no light, no warmth can come from thee ; but He will not quench thee ; He will blow with His sweet breath of mercy till He fans thee to a flame. Wouldst thou glean another ear ? "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What soft words ! Thy heart is tender, and the Master knows it, and therefore He speaketh so gently to thee. Wilt thou not obey Him, and come to Him even now ? Take another ear of corn : "Fear not, thou worm Jacob ; I will help thee, saith the Lord and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." How canst thou fear with such a wonderful assurance as this ? Thou mayst gather ten thousand such golden ears as these : "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgressions." Or this : "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Or this : "The Spirit and the Bride say come ; and let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Our Master's field is very rich ; behold the handfuls ! See, there they lie before thee, poor timid believer ! Gather them up, make them thine own, for Jesus bids thee take them. Be not afraid, only believe ! Grasp these sweet promises, thresh them out by meditation, and feed on them with joy.


"Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."
Ephesians i. 12.

OUR belief in God's wisdom supposes and necessitates that He has a settled purpose and plan in the work of salvation. What would *creation* have been without His design? Is there a fish in the sea or a fowl in the air which was left to chance for its formation? Nay, in every bone, joint, and muscle, sinew, gland, and blood-vessel, you mark the presence of a God working everything according to the design of infinite wisdom. And shall God be present in creation, ruling over all, and not in *grace*? Shall the new creation have the fickle genius of free will to preside over it when divine counsel rules the old creation? Look at *Providence*! Who knoweth not that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. God weighs the mountains of our grief in scales, and the hills of our tribulation in balances. And shall there be a God in providence, and not in grace? Shall the shell be ordained by wisdom, and the kernel be left to blind chance? No; He knows the end from the beginning. He sees in its appointed place, not merely the corner-stone which He has laid in fair colors, in the blood of His dear Son, but He beholds in their ordained position each of the chosen stones taken out of the quarry of nature, and polished by His grace; He sees the whole from corner to cornice, from base to roof, from foundation to pinnacle. He hath in His mind a clear knowledge of every stone which shall be laid in its prepared space, and how vast the edifice shall be, and when the top-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings of, "Grace! Grace! unto it." At the last it shall be clearly seen that in every chosen vessel of mercy, Jehovah did as He willed with His own; and that in every part of the work of grace He accomplished His purpose, and glorified His own name.

"The Lamb is the light thereof." — Revelation xxi. 23.

QUIETLY contemplate the Lamb as the light of heaven. Light in Scripture is the emblem of *joy*. The joy of the saints in heaven is comprised in this: *Jesus* chose us, loved us, bought us, cleansed us, robed us, kept us, glorified us; we are here entirely through the Lord Jesus. Each one of these thoughts shall be to them like a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol. Light is also the cause of *beauty*. Nought of beauty is left when light is gone. Without light no radiance flashes from the sapphire, no peaceful ray proceedeth from the pearl; and thus all the beauty of the saints above comes from Jesus. As planets, they reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness; they live as beams proceeding from the central orb. If He withdrew, they must die; if His glory were veiled, their glory must expire. Light is also the emblem of *knowledge*. In heaven our knowledge will be perfect, but the Lord Jesus Himself will be the fountain of it. Dark providences, never understood before, will then be clearly seen; and all that puzzles us now will become plain to us in the light of the Lamb. Oh, what unfoldings there will be, and what glorifying of the God of love! Light also means *manifestation*. Light manifests. In this world it doth not yet appear what we shall be. God's people are a hidden people; but when Christ receives His people into heaven, He will touch them with the wand of His own love, and change them into the image of His manifested glory. They were poor and wretched, but what a transformation! They were stained with sin, but one touch of His finger, and they are bright as the sun and clear as crystal. Oh, what a manifestation! All this proceeds from the exalted Lamb. Whatever there may be of effulgent splendor, Jesus shall be the centre and soul of it all. Oh, to be present and to see Him in His own light, the King of kings and Lord of lords!

“The people that do know their God shall be strong.” — Dan. xi. 32.

VERY believer understands that to know God is the highest and best form of knowledge; and this spiritual knowledge is a source of strength to the Christian. It strengthens his *faith*. Believers are constantly spoken of in the Scriptures as being persons who are enlightened and taught of the Lord; they are said to “have an unction from the Holy One,” and it is the Spirit’s peculiar office to lead them into all truth; and all this for the increase and the fostering of their faith. Knowledge strengthens *love*, as well as faith. Knowledge opens the door, and then through that door we see our Saviour. Or, to use another similitude, knowledge paints the portrait of Jesus; and when we see that portrait, then we love Him; we cannot love a Christ whom we do not know, at least in some degree. If we know but little of the excellences of Jesus, what He has done for us, and what He is doing now, we cannot love Him much; but the more we know Him, the more we shall love Him. Knowledge also strengthens *hope*. How can we hope for a thing if we do not know of its existence? Hope may be the telescope; but till we receive instruction, our ignorance stands in the front of the glass, and we can see nothing whatever. Knowledge removes the interposing object; and when we look through the bright optic-glass we discern the glory to be revealed, and anticipate it with joyous confidence. Knowledge supplies us reasons for *patience*. How shall we have patience unless we know something of the sympathy of Christ, and understand the good which is to come out of the correction which our heavenly Father sends us? Nor is there one single grace of the Christian which, under God, will not be fostered and brought to perfection by holy knowledge. How important, then, is it that we should grow not only in grace, but in the “knowledge” of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." — Romans viii. 28.

UPON some points a believer is absolutely sure. He knows, for instance, that God sits in the stern-sheets of the vessel when it rocks most. He believes that an invisible hand is always on the world's tiller, and that, wherever providence may drift, Jehovah steers it. That reassuring knowledge prepares him for everything. He looks over the raging waters, and sees the spirit of Jesus treading the billows, and he hears a voice saying, "It is I; be not afraid." He knows, too, that God is always wise, and, knowing this, he is confident that there can be no accidents, no mistakes; that nothing can occur which ought not to arise. He can say, "If I should lose all I have, it is better that I should lose than have, if God so wills: the worst calamity is the wisest and the kindest thing that could befall to me if God ordains it." "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." The Christian does not merely hold this as a theory, but *he knows it as a matter of fact*. Everything *has* worked for good as yet; the poisonous drugs, mixed in fit proportions, have worked the cure; the sharp cuts of the lancet have cleansed out the proud flesh, and facilitated the healing. Every event as yet has worked out the most divinely blessed results; and so, believing that God rules all, that He governs wisely, that He brings good out of evil, the believer's heart is assured, and he is enabled calmly to meet each trial as it comes. The believer can, in the spirit of true resignation, pray, "Send me what thou wilt, my God, so long as it comes from Thee; never came there an ill portion from Thy table to any of Thy children."

"Say not, my soul, 'From whence can God relieve my care?'
Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere.
His method is sublime, His heart profoundly kind;
God never is before His time, and never is behind."

"Watchman, what of the night?" — Isaiah xxi. 11.

WHAT enemies are abroad? Errors are a numerous horde, and new ones appear every hour: against what heresy am I to be on my guard? Sins creep from their lurking-places when the darkness reigns: I must myself mount the watch-tower, and watch unto prayer. Our heavenly Protector foresees all the attacks which are about to be made upon us, and, when as yet the evil designed us is but in the desire of Satan, He prays for us that our faith fail not when we are sifted as wheat. Continue, O gracious Watchman, to forewarn us of our foes, and for Zion's sake hold not Thy peace.

"Watchman, what of the night?" *What weather is coming for the Church?* Are the clouds lowering, or is it all clear and fair overhead? We must care for the Church of God with anxious love; and now that Popery and infidelity are both threatening, let us observe the signs of the times, and prepare for conflict.

"Watchman, what of the night?" *What stars are visible?* What precious promises suit our present case? You sound the alarm; give us the consolation also. Christ, the pole-star, is ever fixed in His place, and all the stars are secure in the right hand of their Lord.

But, watchman, *when comes the morning?* The Bridegroom tarries. Are there no signs of His coming forth as the Sun of Righteousness? Has not the morning star arisen as the pledge of day? When will the day dawn, and the shadows flee away? O Jesus, if Thou come not in person to thy waiting Church this day, yet come in Spirit to my sighing heart, and make it sing for joy.

"Now all the earth is bright and glad

With the fresh morn;

But all my heart is cold, and dark, and sad:

Sun of the soul, let me behold thy dawn!


Come, Jesus, Lord,

O quickly come, according to Thy word."

"The upright love Thee." — Canticles i. 4.

BELIEVERS love Jesus with a deeper affection than they dare to give to any other being. They would sooner lose father and mother than part with Christ. They hold all earthly comforts with a loose hand, but they carry Him fast locked in their bosoms. They voluntarily deny themselves for His sake, but they are not to be driven to deny *Him*. It is scant love which the fire of persecution can dry up; the true believer's love is a deeper stream than this. Men have labored to divide the faithful from their Master, but their attempts have been fruitless in every age. Neither crowns of honor, nor frowns of anger, have untied this more than gordian knot. This is no every-day attachment which the world's power may at length dissolve. Neither man nor devil has found a key which opens this lock. Never has the craft of Satan been more at fault than when he has exercised it in seeking to rend in sunder this union of two divinely welded hearts. It is written, and nothing can blot out the sentence, "*The upright love Thee.*" The intensity of the love of the upright, however, is not so much to be judged by what it appears as by what the upright long for. It is our daily lament that we cannot love enough. Would that our hearts were capable of holding more and reaching farther. Like Samuel Rutherford, we sigh and cry, "O for as much love as would go round about the earth, and over heaven — yea, the heaven of heavens, and ten thousand worlds — that I might let all out upon fair, fair, only fair Christ"! Alas! our longest reach is but a span of love, and our affection is but as a drop of a bucket, compared with His deserts. Measure our love by our intentions, and it is high indeed; 'tis thus, we trust, our Lord doth judge of it. O that we could give all the love in all hearts in one great mass, a gathering together of all loves to Him who is altogether lovely!

"They weave the spider's web." — Isaiah lix. 5.

EE the spider's web, and behold in it a most suggestive picture of the hypocrite's religion. *It is meant to catch his prey*: the spider fattens himself on flies, and the Pharisee has his reward. Foolish persons are easily entrapped by the loud professions of pretenders, and even the more judicious cannot always escape. Philip baptized Simon Magus, whose guileful declaration of faith was so soon exploded by the stern rebuke of Peter. Custom, reputation, praise, advancement, and other flies, are the small game which hypocrites take in their nets. A spider's web is a *marvel of skill*: look at it, and admire the cunning hunter's wiles. Is not a deceiver's religion equally wonderful? How does he make so barefaced a lie appear to be a truth? How can he make his tinsel answer so well the purpose of gold? A spider's web comes all from the creature's own bowels. The bee gathers her wax from flowers; the spider sucks no flowers, and yet she spins out her material to any length. Even so hypocrites find their trust and hope within themselves; their anchor was forged on their own anvil, and their cable twisted by their own hands. They lay their own foundation, and hew out the pillars of their own house, disdaining to be debtors to the sovereign grace of God. But a spider's web is *very frail*. It is curiously wrought, but not enduringly manufactured. It is no match for the servant's broom, or the traveller's staff. The hypocrite needs no battery of Armstrongs to blow his hope to pieces: a mere puff of wind will do it. Hypocritical cobwebs will soon come down when the besom of destruction begins its purifying work. Which reminds us of one more thought, viz., that such cobwebs are *not to be endured in the Lord's house*: He will see to it that they and those who spin them shall be destroyed forever. O my soul, be thou resting on something better than a spider's web. Be the Lord Jesus thine eternal hiding-place.

"The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." — Revelation xxi. 23.

WONDER, in the better world, the inhabitants are independent of all creature comforts. They have no need of raiment; their white robes never wear out, neither shall they ever be defiled. They need no medicine to heal diseases, "for the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." They need no sleep to recruit their frames — they rest not day nor night, but unweariedly praise Him in His temple. They need no social relationship to minister comfort, and whatever happiness they may derive from association with their fellows, is not essential to their bliss, for their Lord's society is enough for their largest desires. They need no teachers there; they doubtless commune with one another concerning the things of God, but they do not require this by way of instruction; they shall all be taught of the Lord. Ours are the alms at the king's gate, but they feast at the table itself. Here we lean upon the friendly arm, but there they lean upon their Beloved, and upon Him alone. Here we must have the help of our companions, but there they find all they want in Christ Jesus. Here we look to the meat which perisheth, and to the raiment which decays before the moth, but there they find everything in God. We use the bucket to fetch us water from the well, but there they drink from the fountain head, and put their lips down to the living water. Here the angels bring us blessings, but we shall want no messengers from heaven then. They shall need no Gabriels there to bring their love-notes from God, for there they shall see *Him* face to face. Oh, what a blessed time shall that be, when we shall have mounted above every second cause, and shall rest upon the bare arm of God! What a glorious hour when God, and not His creatures, — the Lord, and not His works, — shall be our daily joy! Our souls shall then have attained the perfection of bliss.

"Christ, who is our life." — Colossians iii. 4.

PAUL'S marvellously rich expression indicates, that Christ is the *source* of our life. "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." That same voice which brought Lazarus out of the tomb, raised us to newness of life. He is now the *substance* of our spiritual life. It is by His life that we live; He is in us, the hope of glory, the spring of our actions, the central thought which moves every other thought. *Christ is the sustenance of our life.* What can the Christian feed upon but Jesus' flesh and blood? "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." O way-worn pilgrims in this wilderness of sin, you never get a morsel to satisfy the hunger of your spirits, except ye find it in Him! *Christ is the solace of our life.* All our true joys come from Him; and in times of trouble, His presence is our consolation. There is nothing worth living for but Him; and His loving-kindness is better than life! *Christ is the object of our life.* As speeds the ship towards the port, so hastes the believer towards the haven of his Saviour's bosom. As flies the arrow to its goal, so flies the Christian towards the perfecting of his fellowship with Christ Jesus. As the soldier fights for his captain, and is crowned in his captain's victory, so the believer contends for Christ, and gets his triumph out of the triumphs of his Master. "For him to live is Christ." *Christ is the exemplar of our life.* Where there is the same life within, there will, there must be, to a great extent, the same developments without; and if we live in near fellowship with the Lord Jesus, we shall grow like Him. We shall set Him before us as our Divine copy, and we shall seek to tread in His footsteps, until He shall become *the crown of our life* in glory. Oh! how safe, how honored, how happy is the Christian, since Christ is our life!

“*O that I were as in months past!*” — Job xxix. 2.

NUMBERS of Christians can view the past with pleasure, but regard the present with dissatisfaction; they look back upon the days which they have passed in communing with the Lord, as being the sweetest and the best they have ever known; but as to the present, it is clad in a sable garb of gloom and dreariness. Once they lived near to Jesus, but now they feel that they have wandered from Him, and they say, “*O that I were as in months past!*” They complain that they have lost their evidences, or that they have not present peace of mind, or that they have no enjoyment in the means of grace, or that conscience is not so tender, or that they have not so much zeal for God’s glory. The causes of this mournful state of things are manifold. It may arise through a comparative *neglect of prayer*, for a neglected closet is the beginning of all spiritual decline. Or it may be the result of *idolatry*. The heart has been occupied with something else, more than with God; the affections have been set on the things of earth, instead of the things of heaven. A jealous God will not be content with a divided heart; He must be loved first and best. He will withdraw the sunshine of his presence from a cold, wandering heart. Or the cause may be found in *self-confidence* and *self-righteousness*. Pride is busy in the heart, and self is exalted instead of lying low at the foot of the cross. Christian, if you are not now as you “*were in months past,*” do not rest satisfied with *wishing* for a return of former happiness, but go at once to seek your Maker, and tell Him your sad state. Ask His grace and strength to help you to walk more closely with Him; humble yourself before Him, and He will lift you up, and give you yet again to enjoy the light of His countenance. Do not sit down to sigh and lament; while the beloved Physician lives there is hope; nay, there is a certainty of recovery for the worst cases.

"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." — Psalm xcvi. 1.

CAUSES for disquietude there are none so long as this blessed sentence is true. *On earth* the Lord's power as readily controls the rage of the wicked as the rage of the sea; His love as easily refreshes the poor with mercy as the earth with showers. Majesty gleams in flashes of fire amid the tempest's horrors, and the glory of the Lord is seen in its grandeur in the fall of empires, and the crash of thrones. In all our conflicts and tribulations, we may behold the hand of the divine King.

"God is God: He sees and hears
All our troubles, all our tears.
Soul, forget not, 'mid thy pains,
God o'er all forever reigns."

In hell, evil spirits own, with misery, His undoubted supremacy. When permitted to roam abroad, it is with a chain at their heel; the bit is in the mouth of behemoth, and the hook in the jaws of leviathan. Death's darts are under the Lord's lock, and the grave's prisons have divine power as their warder. The terrible vengeance of the Judge of all the earth makes fiends cower down and tremble, even as dogs in the kennel fear the hunter's whip.

"Fear not death, nor Satan's thrusts,
God defends who in Him trusts;
Soul, remember, in thy pains,
God o'er all forever reigns."


In heaven, none doubt the sovereignty of the King Eternal, but all fall on their faces to do Him homage. Angels are His courtiers, the redeemed His favorites, and all delight to serve Him day and night. May we soon reach the city of the great King.

"For this life's long night of sadness
He will give us peace and gladness.
Soul, remember, in thy pains,
God o'er all forever reigns."

"The cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted." — Psalm civ. 16.

LEBANON'S cedars are emblematic of the Christian, in that *they owe their planting entirely to the Lord*. This is quite true of every child of God. He is not man-planted, nor self-planted, but God-planted. The mysterious hand of the divine Spirit dropped the living seed into a heart which He had Himself prepared for its reception. Every true heir of heaven owns the great Husbandman as his planter. Moreover, the cedars of Lebanon *are not dependent upon man for their watering*; they stand on the lofty rock, unmoistened by human irrigation; and yet our heavenly Father supplieth them. Thus it is with the Christian who has learned to live by faith. He is independent of man, even in temporal things; for his continued maintenance he looks to the Lord his God, and to Him alone. The dew of heaven is his portion, and the God of heaven is his fountain. Again, the cedars of Lebanon *are not protected by any mortal power*. They owe nothing to man for their preservation from stormy wind and tempest. They are God's trees, kept and preserved by Him, and by Him alone. It is precisely the same with the Christian. He is not a hot-house plant, sheltered from temptation; he stands in the most exposed position; he has no shelter, no protection, except this, that the broad wings of the eternal God always cover the cedars which He Himself has planted. Like cedars, believers *are full of sap*, having vitality enough to be ever green, even amid winter's snows. Lastly, the flourishing and majestic condition of the cedar is *to the praise of God only*. The Lord, even the Lord alone, hath been everything unto the cedars, and, therefore, David very sweetly puts it in one of the psalms, "Praise ye the Lord, fruitful trees and all cedars." In the believer there is nothing that can magnify man; He is planted, nourished, and protected by the Lord's own hand, and to Him let all the glory be ascribed.

"Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work." — Ps. xcii. 4.

 O you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them? Then what a joyful Christian *you ought to be!* How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, can it matter what happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven; if Thou hast but forgiven me, smite as hard as Thou wilt;" and in a similar spirit you may say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, persecution, what Thou wilt, *Thou hast forgiven me*, and my soul is glad. Christian, if thou art thus saved, whilst thou art glad, *be grateful and loving*. Cling to that cross which took thy sin away; serve thou Him who served thee. "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let not your zeal evaporate in some little ebullition of song. Show your love in expressive tokens. Love the brethren of Him who loved you. If there be a Mephibosheth anywhere who is lame or halt, help him for Jonathan's sake. If there be a poor tried believer, weep with him, and bear his cross for the sake of Him who wept for thee and carried thy sins. Since thou art thus forgiven freely for Christ's sake, go and tell to others the joyful news of pardoning mercy. Be not contented with this unspeakable blessing for thyself alone, but publish abroad the story of the cross. Holy gladness and holy boldness will make you a good preacher, and all the world will be a pulpit for you to preach in. Cheerful holiness is the most forcible of sermons, but the Lord must give it you. Seek it this morning before you go into the world. When it is the Lord's work in which we rejoice, we need not be afraid of being too glad.

"Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide."

Genesis xxiv. 63.

VERY admirable was his occupation. If those who spend so many hours in idle company, light reading, and useless pastimes, could learn wisdom, they would find more profitable society and more interesting engagements in meditation than in the vanities which now have such charms for them. We should all know more, live nearer to God, and grow in grace, if we were more alone. Meditation chews the cud and extracts the real nutriment from the mental food gathered elsewhere. When Jesus is the theme, meditation is sweet indeed. Isaac found Rebecca while engaged in private musings; many others have found their best beloved there.

Very admirable was the choice of place. In the field we have a study hung round with texts for thought. From the cedar to the hyssop, from the soaring eagle down to the chirping grasshopper, from the blue expanse of heaven to a drop of dew, all things are full of teaching; and when the eye is divinely opened, that teaching flashes upon the mind far more vividly than from written books. Our little rooms are neither so healthy, so suggestive, so agreeable, nor so inspiring as the fields. Let us count nothing common or unclean, but feel that all created things point to their Maker, and the field will at once be hallowed.

Very admirable was the season. The season of sunset, as it draws a veil over the day, befits that repose of the soul when earth-born cares yield to the joys of heavenly communion. The glory of the setting sun excites our wonder, and the solemnity of approaching night awakens our awe. If the business of this day will permit it, it will be well, dear reader, if you can spare an hour to walk in the field at eventide; but if not, the Lord is in the town, too, and will meet with thee in thy chamber or in the crowded street. Let thy heart go forth to meet Him.

"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name." — Ps. xxix. 2.

GOD'S glory is the result of His nature and acts. He is glorious in His character, for there is such a store of everything that is holy, and good, and lovely in God, that He must be glorious. The actions which flow from His character are also glorious; but while He intends that they should manifest to His creatures His goodness, and mercy, and justice, He is equally concerned that the glory associated with them should be given only to Himself. Nor is there aught in ourselves in which we may glory; for who maketh us to differ from another? And what have we that we did not receive from the God of all grace? Then how careful ought we to be *to walk humbly before the Lord!* The moment we glorify ourselves, since there is room for one glory only in the universe, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High. Shall the insect of an hour glorify itself against the sun which warmed it into life? Shall the potsherd exalt itself above the man who fashioned it upon the wheel? Shall the dust of the desert strive with the whirlwind? or the drops of the ocean struggle with the tempest? Give unto the Lord, all ye righteous, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto Him the honor that is due unto His name. Yet it is, perhaps, one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence — "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be glory." It is a lesson which God is ever teaching us, and teaching us sometimes by most painful discipline. Let a Christian begin to boast, "I can do all things," without adding, "through Christ which strengtheneth me," and before long he will have to groan, "I can do nothing," and bemoan himself in the dust. When we do anything for the Lord, and He is pleased to accept of our doings, let us lay our crown at His feet, and exclaim, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me!"

“ *The mercy of God.* ” — Psalm lii. 8.

MEDITATE a little on this mercy of the Lord. It is *tender mercy*. With gentle, loving touch, He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He is as gracious in the manner of His mercy as in the matter of it. It is *great mercy*. There is nothing little in God ; His mercy is like Himself—it is infinite. You cannot measure it. His mercy is so great that it forgives great sins to great sinners, after great lengths of time, and then gives great favors and great privileges, and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great heaven of the great God. It is *undeserved mercy*, as indeed all true mercy must be, for deserved mercy is only a misnomer for justice. There was no right on the sinner's part to the kind consideration of the Most High ; had the rebel been doomed at once to eternal fire, he would have richly merited the doom ; and if delivered from wrath, sovereign love alone has found a cause, for there was none in the sinner himself. It is *rich mercy*. Some things are great, but have little efficacy in them ; but this mercy is a cordial to your drooping spirits ; a golden ointment to your bleeding wounds ; a heavenly bandage to your broken bones ; a royal chariot for your weary feet ; a bosom of love for your trembling heart. It is *manifold mercy*. As Bunyan says, “ All the flowers in God's garden are double.” There is no single mercy. You may think you have but one mercy, but you shall find it to be a whole cluster of mercies. It is *abounding mercy*. Millions have received it ; yet far from its being exhausted, it is as fresh, as full, and as free as ever. It is *unfailing mercy*. It will never leave thee. If mercy be thy friend, mercy will be with thee in temptation to keep thee from yielding ; with thee in trouble, to prevent thee from sinking ; with thee living, to be the light and life of thy countenance ; and with thee dying, to be the joy of thy soul when earthly comfort is ebbing fast.

"Strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the Lord's house."
Jeremiah li. 51.

ON this account the faces of the Lord's people were covered with shame, for it was a terrible thing that men should intrude into the Holy Place reserved for the priests alone. Everywhere about us we see like cause for sorrow. How many ungodly men are now educating with the view of entering into the ministry! What a crying sin is that solemn lie by which our whole population is nominally comprehended in a National Church! How fearful it is that ordinances should be pressed upon the unconverted, and that among the more enlightened churches of our land there should be such laxity of discipline. If the thousands who will read this portion shall all take this matter before the Lord Jesus this day, He will interfere and avert the evil which else will come upon His Church. To adulterate the Church is to pollute a well, to pour water upon fire, to sow a fertile field with stones. May we all have grace to maintain in our own proper way the purity of the Church, as being an assembly of believers, and not a nation, an unsaved community of unconverted men.

Our zeal must, however, begin at home. Let us examine *ourselves* as to our right to eat at the Lord's table. Let us see to it that we have on our wedding garment, lest we ourselves be intruders in the Lord's sanctuaries. Many are called, but few are chosen; the way is narrow, and the gate is strait. O for grace to come to Jesus aright, with the faith of God's elect! He who smote Uzzah for touching the ark is very jealous of His two ordinances; as a true believer I may approach them freely; as an alien I must not touch them lest I die. Heart-searching is the duty of all who are baptized or come to the Lord's table. "Search me, O God, and know my way; try me, and know my heart."

"He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord." — Micah v. 4.

CHRIST'S reign in His Church is that of a *shepherd-king*. He has supremacy, but it is the superiority of a wise and tender shepherd over his needy and loving flock; He commands and receives obedience, but it is the willing obedience of the well-cared-for sheep, rendered joyfully to their beloved Shepherd, whose voice they know so well. He rules by the force of love and the energy of goodness. — His reign is *practical in its character*. It is said, "He shall stand *and feed*." The great Head of the Church is actively engaged in providing for His people. He does not sit down upon the throne in empty state, or hold a sceptre without wielding it in government. No; He stands and feeds. The expression "feed," in the original, is like an analogous one in the Greek, which means to shepherdize, to do every thing expected of a shepherd; to guide, to watch, to preserve, to restore, to tend, as well as to feed. — His reign is *continual in its duration*. It is said, "*He shall stand and feed*;" not, "He shall feed now and then, and leave His position;" not, "He shall one day grant a revival, and then next day leave His Church to barrenness." His eyes never slumber, and His hands never rest; His heart never ceases to beat with love, and His shoulders are never weary of carrying His people's burdens. — His reign is *effectually powerful in its action*; "He shall feed in the strength of Jehovah." Wherever Christ is, there is God; and whatever Christ does is the act of the Most High. Oh! it is a joyful truth to consider that He who stands to-day representing the interests of His people is very God of very God, to whom every knee shall bow. Happy are we who belong to such a shepherd, whose humanity communes with us, and whose divinity protects us. Let us worship and bow down before Him as the people of His pasture.


"The sweet psalmist of Israel." — 2 Samuel xxiü. 1.

AMONG all the saints whose lives are recorded in Holy Writ, David possesses an experience of the most striking, varied, and instructive character. In his history, we meet with trials and temptations not to be discovered, as a whole, in other saints of ancient times, and hence he is all the more suggestive a type of our Lord. David knew the trials of all ranks and conditions of men. Kings have their troubles, and David wore a crown: the peasant has his cares, and David handled a shepherd's crook: the wanderer has many hardships, and David abode in the caves of Engedi: the captain has his difficulties, and David found the sons of Zeruiah too hard for him. The psalmist was also tried in his friends; his counsellor Ahithophel forsook him. "He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me." His worst foes were they of his own household: his children were his greatest affliction. The temptations of poverty and wealth, of honor and reproach, of health and weakness, all tried their power upon him. He had temptations from without to disturb his peace, and from within to mar his joy. David no sooner escaped from one trial than he fell into another; no sooner emerged from one season of despondency and alarm, than he was again brought into the lowest depths, and all God's waves and billows rolled over him. It is probably from this cause that David's psalms are so universally the delight of experienced Christians. Whatever our frame of mind, whether ecstasy or depression, David has exactly described our emotions. He was an able master of the human heart, because he had been tutored in the best of all schools — the school of heart-felt, personal experience. As we are instructed in the same school, as we grow matured in grace and in years, we increasingly appreciate David's psalms, and find them to be "green pastures." My soul, let David's experience cheer and counsel thee this day.

"He that watereth shall be watered also himself." — Prov. xi. 25.

WE are here taught the great lesson, that to get, we must give; that to accumulate, we must scatter; that to make ourselves happy, we must make others happy; and that in order to become spiritually vigorous, we must seek the spiritual good of others. In watering others, we are ourselves watered. How? Our efforts to be useful *bring out our powers for usefulness*. We have latent talents and dormant faculties, which are brought to light by exercise. Our strength for labor is hidden even from ourselves, until we venture forth to fight the Lord's battles, or to climb the mountains of difficulty. We do not know what tender sympathies we possess, until we try to dry the widow's tears, and soothe the orphan's grief. We often find, in attempting to teach others, that we *gain instruction for ourselves*. Oh, what gracious lessons some of us have learned at sick beds! We went to teach the Scriptures; we came away blushing that we knew so little of them. In our converse with poor saints, we are taught the way of God more perfectly for ourselves, and get a deeper insight into divine truth. So that watering others *makes us humble*. We discover how much grace there is where we had not looked for it, and how much the poor saint may outstrip us in knowledge. Our own *comfort is also increased* by our working for others. We endeavor to cheer them, and the consolation gladdens our own heart. Like the two men in the snow: one chafed the other's limbs to keep him from dying, and in so doing kept his own blood in circulation, and saved his own life. The poor widow of Sarepta gave from her scanty store a supply for the prophet's wants, and from that day she never again knew what want was. Give, then, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and running over.

"I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell Him that I am sick of love." — Solomon's Song v. 8.

UCH is the language of the believer panting after present fellowship with Jesus: *he is sick for his Lord.* Gracious souls are never perfectly at ease except they are in a state of nearness to Christ; for when they are away from Him they lose their peace. The nearer to Him, the nearer to the perfect calm of heaven; the nearer to Him, the fuller the heart is, not only of peace, but of life, and vigor, and joy, for these all depend on constant intercourse with Jesus. What the sun is to the day, what the moon is to the night, what the dew is to the flower, such is Jesus Christ to us. What bread is to the hungry, clothing to the naked, the shadow of a great rock to the traveller in a weary land, such is Jesus Christ to us; and therefore, if we are not consciously one with Him, little marvel if our spirit cries in the word of the Song, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell Him that I am sick of love." *This earnest longing after Jesus has a blessing attending it:* "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness;" and therefore supremely blessed are they who thirst after the Righteous One. Blessed is that hunger, since it comes from God. If I may not have the full-blown blessedness of being filled, I would seek the same blessedness in its sweet bud-pining in emptiness and eagerness till I am filled with Christ. If I may not feed on Jesus, it shall be next door to heaven to hunger and thirst after Him. There is a hallowedness about that hunger, since it sparkles among the beatitudes of our Lord. But the blessing involves a promise. Such hungry ones "*shall be filled*" with what they are desiring. If Christ thus causes us to long after Himself, He will certainly satisfy those longings; and when He does come to us, as come He will, *oh, how sweet it will be!*

“The voice of weeping shall be no more heard.” — Isaiah lxx. 19.

THE glorified weep no more, for *all outward causes of grief are gone*. There are no broken friendships, nor blighted prospects, in heaven. Poverty, famine, peril, persecution, and slander, are unknown there. No pain distresses, no thought of death or bereavement saddens. They weep no more, for *they are perfectly sanctified*. No “evil heart of unbelief” prompts them to depart from the living God; they are without fault before His throne, and are fully conformed to His image. Well may they cease to mourn who have ceased to sin. They weep no more, because *all fear of change is past*. They know that they are eternally secure. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed; they bask in a sun which shall never set; they drink of a river which shall never dry; they pluck fruit from a tree which shall never wither. Countless cycles may revolve, but eternity shall not be exhausted, and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They are forever with the Lord. They weep no more, because *every desire is fulfilled*. They cannot wish for anything which they have not in possession. Eye and ear, heart and hand, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will, all the faculties, are completely satisfied; and imperfect as our present ideas are of the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, that the saints above are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fulness of delight, is in them. They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shoreless sea of infinite beatitude. That same joyful rest remains for us. It may not be far distant. Ere long the weeping willow shall be exchanged for the palm-branch of victory, and sorrow’s dewdrops will be transformed into the pearls of everlasting bliss. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

"The breaker is come up before them." — Micah ii. 13.

INASMUCH as Jesus has gone before us, things remain not as they would have been had He never passed that way. He has *conquered every foe* that obstructed the way. Cheer up now, thou faint-hearted warrior. Not only has Christ travelled the road, but He has slain thine enemies. Dost thou dread sin? He has nailed it to His cross. Dost thou fear death? He has been the death of Death. Art thou afraid of hell? He has barred it against the advent of any of His children; they shall never see the gulf of perdition. Whatever foes may be before the Christian, they are all overcome. There are lions, but their teeth are broken; there are serpents, but their fangs are extracted; there are rivers, but they are bridged or fordable; there are flames, but we wear that matchless garment which renders us invulnerable to fire. The sword that has been forged against us is already blunted; the instruments of war which the enemy is preparing have already lost their point. God has taken away in the person of Christ all the power that anything can have to hurt us. Well then, the army may safely march on, and you may go joyously along your journey, for all your enemies are conquered beforehand. What shall you do but march on to take the prey? They are beaten; they are vanquished; all you have to do is to divide the spoil. You shall, it is true, often engage in combat; but your fight shall be with a vanquished foe. His head is broken; he may attempt to injure you, but his strength shall not be sufficient for his malicious design. Your victory shall be easy, and your treasure shall be beyond all count.

"Proclaim aloud the Saviour's fame,
Who bears *the Breaker's* wondrous name;
Sweet name; and it becomes Him well,
Who breaks down earth, sin, death, and hell."

"His fruit was sweet to my taste." — Canticles ii. 3.

FAITH, in the Scripture, is spoken of under the emblem of all the senses. It is *sight*. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved." It is *hearing*. "Hear, and your soul shall live." Faith is *smelling*. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia;" "Thy name is ointment poured forth." Faith is spiritual *touch*. By this faith the woman came behind and touched the hem of Christ's garment, and by this we handle the things of the good word of life. Faith is equally the spirit's *taste*. "How sweet are Thy words to my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my lips." "Except a man eat my flesh," saith Christ, "and drink my blood, there is no life in him."

This "*taste*" is faith in one of its highest operations. One of the first performances of faith is *hearing*. We hear the voice of God, not with the outward ear alone, but with the inward ear; we hear it as God's Word, and we believe it to be so; that is the "*hearing*" of faith. Then our mind *looketh* upon the truth as it is presented to us; that is to say, we understand it; we perceive its meaning; that is the "*seeing*" of faith. Next we discover its preciousness; we begin to admire it, and find how fragrant it is; that is faith in its "*smell*." Then we appropriate the mercies which are prepared for us in Christ; that is faith in its "*touch*." Hence follow the enjoyments, peace, delight, communion; which are faith in its "*taste*." Any one of these acts of faith is saving. To hear Christ's voice as the sure voice of God in the soul will save us; but that which gives true enjoyment is the aspect of faith wherein Christ, by holy taste, is received into us, and made, by inward and spiritual apprehension of His sweetness and preciousness, to be the food of our souls. It is then we sit "under His shadow with great delight," and find His fruit sweet to our taste.

"He hath commanded His covenant forever." — Psalm cxi. 9.

THE Lord's people delight in the covenant itself. It is an unfailing source of consolation to them so often as the Holy Spirit leads them into its banqueting-house, and waves its banner of love. They delight to contemplate *the antiquity* of that covenant, remembering that before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round, the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus. It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember *the sureness* of the covenant, while meditating upon "the sure mercies of David." They delight to celebrate it as "signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well." It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its *immutability*, as a covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, shall ever be able to violate — a covenant as old as eternity, and as everlasting as the Rock of ages. They rejoice also to feast upon *the fulness* of this covenant, for they see in it all things provided for them. God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their Comforter, earth their lodge, and heaven their home. They see in it an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul possessing an interest in its ancient and eternal deed of gift. Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a treasure-trove in the Bible; but, oh, how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their divine kinsman, that it was bequeathed to them! More especially it is the pleasure of God's people to contemplate *the graciousness* of this covenant. They see that the law was made void, because it was a covenant of works, and depended upon merit; but this they perceive to be enduring, because grace is the basis, grace the condition, grace the strain, grace the bulwark, grace the foundation, grace the top-stone. The covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a storehouse of salvation, a charter of peace, and a haven of joy.

"How long will it be ere they believe Me?" — Numbers xiv. 11.

STRIVE, with all diligence, to keep out that monster unbelief. It so dishonors Christ, that He will withdraw His visible presence if we insult Him by indulging it. It is true it is a weed the seeds of which we can never entirely extract from the soil, but we must aim at its root with zeal and perseverance. Among hateful things it is the most to be abhorred. Its injurious nature is so venomous that he that exerciseth it, and he upon whom it is exercised, are both hurt thereby. In thy case, O believer, it is most wicked, for the mercies of thy Lord in the past increase thy guilt in doubting Him now. When thou dost distrust the Lord Jesus, He may well cry out, "Behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." This is crowning His head with thorns of the sharpest kind. It is very cruel for a well-beloved wife to mistrust a kind and faithful husband. The sin is needless, foolish, and unwarranted. Jesus has never given the slightest ground for suspicion, and it is hard to be doubted by those to whom our conduct is uniformly affectionate and true. Jesus is the Son of the Highest, and has unbounded wealth; it is shameful to doubt Omnipotence and distrust all-sufficiency. The cattle on a thousand hills will suffice for our most hungry feeding, and the granaries of heaven are not likely to be emptied by our eating. If Christ were only a cistern, we might soon exhaust His fulness; but who can drain a fountain? Myriads of spirits have drawn their supplies from Him, and not one of them has murmured at the scantiness of His resources. Away, then, with this lying traitor unbelief, for his only errand is to cut the bonds of communion and make us mourn an absent Saviour. Bunyan tells us that unbelief has "as many lives as a cat;" if so, let us kill one life now, and continue the work till the whole nine are gone. Down with thee, thou traitor; my heart abhors thee.

"Oil for the light." — Exodus xxv. 6.

Y soul, how much thou needest this! for thy lamp will not long continue to burn without it. Thy snuff will smoke and become an offence if light be gone, and gone it will be if oil be absent. Thou hast no oil well springing up in thy human nature, and therefore thou must go to them that sell, and buy for thyself, or, like the foolish virgins, thou wilt have to cry, "My lamp is gone out." Even the consecrated lamps could not give light without oil; though they shone in the tabernacle they needed to be fed, though no rough winds blew upon them they required to be trimmed, and thy need is equally as great. Under the most happy circumstances thou canst not give light for another hour unless fresh oil of grace be given thee.

It was not every oil that might be used in the Lord's service; neither the petroleum which exudes so plentifully from the earth, nor the produce of fishes, nor that extracted from nuts, would be accepted; one oil only was selected, and that the best olive oil. Pretended grace from natural goodness, fancied grace from priestly hands, or imaginary grace from outward ceremonies, will never serve the true saint of God. He knows that the Lord would not be pleased with rivers of such oil. He goes to the olive-press of Gethsemane, and draws his supplies from Him who was crushed therein. The oil of gospel grace is pure and free from lees and dregs, and hence the light which is fed thereon is clear and bright. Our churches are the Saviour's golden candelabra, and if they are to be lights in this dark world, they must have much holy oil. Let us pray for ourselves, our ministers, and our churches, that they may never lack oil for the light. Truth, holiness, joy, knowledge, love, these are all beams of the sacred light; but we cannot give them forth unless in private we receive oil from God the Holy Ghost.

"Have mercy upon me, O God." — Psalm li. 1.

WHEN Dr. Carey was suffering from a dangerous illness, the inquiry was made, "If this sickness should prove fatal, what passage would you select as the text for your funeral sermon?" He replied, "O, I feel that such a poor sinful creature is unworthy to have anything said about him; but, if a funeral sermon must be preached, let it be from the words, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.'" In the same spirit of humility, he directed in his will that the following inscription, and nothing more, should be cut on his gravestone: —

WILLIAM CAREY, BORN AUGUST 17th, 1761;
DIED —.

"A wretched, poor, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall."

Only on the footing of free grace can the most experienced and most honored of the saints approach their God. The best of men are conscious, above all others, that they are men at the best. Empty boats float high, but heavily-laden vessels are low in the water; mere professors can boast, but true children of God cry for mercy upon their unprofitableness. We have need that the Lord should have mercy upon our good works, our prayers, our preachings, our alms-givings, and our holiest things. The blood was not only sprinkled upon the door-posts of Israel's dwelling-houses, but upon the sanctuary, the mercy-seat, and the altar, because, as sin intrudes into our holiest things, the blood of Jesus is needed to purify them from defilement. If mercy be needed to be exercised towards our duties, what shall be said of our sins? How sweet the remembrance that inexhaustible mercy is waiting to be gracious to us, to restore our backslidings, and make our broken bones rejoice!

“*Wait on the Lord.*” — Psalm xxvii. 14.

IT may seem an easy thing to *wait*, but it is one of the postures which a Christian soldier learns not without years of teaching. Marching and quick-marching are much easier to God's warriors than standing still. There are hours of perplexity when the most willing spirit, anxiously desirous to serve the Lord, knows not what part to take. Then what shall it do? Vex itself by despair? Fly back in cowardice, turn to the right hand in fear, or rush forward in presumption? No, but simply wait. *Wait in prayer*, however. Call upon God, and spread the case before Him; tell Him your difficulty, and plead His promise of aid. In dilemmas between one duty and another, it is sweet to be humble as a child, and *wait with simplicity of soul* upon the Lord. It is sure to be well with us when we feel and know our own folly, and are heartily willing to be guided by the will of God. But *wait in faith*. Express your unstaggering confidence in Him; for unfaithful, untrusting waiting is but an insult to the Lord. Believe that if He keep you tarrying even till midnight, yet He will come at the right time; the vision shall come, and shall not tarry. *Wait in quiet patience*, not rebelling because you are under the affliction, but blessing your God for it. Never murmur against the second cause, as the children of Israel did against Moses; never wish you could go back to the world again, but accept the case as it is, and put it as it stands simply and with your whole heart, without any self-will, into the hand of your covenant God, saying, “Now, Lord, not my will, but Thine be done. I know not what to do; I am brought to extremities; but I will wait until Thou shalt cleave the floods, or drive back my foes. I will wait, if Thou keep me many a day, for my heart is fixed upon Thee alone, O God, and my spirit waiteth for Thee in the full conviction that Thou wilt yet be my joy and my salvation, my refuge and my strong tower.”

"On mine arm shall they trust." — Isaiah li. 5.

IN seasons of severe trial, the Christian has nothing on earth that he can trust to, and is therefore compelled to cast himself on his God alone. When his vessel is on its beam-ends, and no human deliverance can avail, he must simply and entirely trust himself to the providence and care of God. Happy storm that wrecks a man on such a rock as this! O blessed hurricane that drives the soul to God, and God alone! There is no getting at our God sometimes because of the multitude of our friends; but when a man is so poor, so friendless, so helpless, that he has nowhere else to turn, he flies into his Father's arms, and is blessedly clasped therein! When he is burdened with troubles, so pressing and so peculiar that he cannot tell them to any but his God, he may be thankful for them; for he will learn more of his Lord then than at any other time. Oh, tempest-tossed believer, it is a happy trouble that drives thee to thy Father! Now that thou hast only thy God to trust to, see that thou puttest thy full confidence in Him. Dishonor not thy Lord and Master by unworthy doubts and fears; but be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Show the world that thy God is worth ten thousand worlds to thee. Show rich men how rich thou art in thy poverty when the Lord God is thy helper. Show the strong man how strong thou art in thy weakness when underneath thee are the everlasting arms. Now is the time for feats of faith and valiant exploits. Be strong and very courageous, and the Lord thy God shall certainly, as surely as he built the heavens and the earth, glorify Himself in thy weakness, and magnify His might in the midst of thy distress. The grandeur of the arch of heaven would be spoiled if the sky were supported by a single visible column, and your faith would lose its glory if it rested on anything discernible by the carnal eye. May the Holy Spirit give you to rest in Jesus this closing day of the month.