
"Thou hast made summer and winter." — Psalm lxxiv. 17.

MY soul, begin this wintry month with thy God. The cold snows and the piercing winds all remind thee that He keeps His covenant with day and night, and tend to assure thee that He will also keep that glorious covenant which He has made with thee in the person of Jesus Christ. He who is true to His Word in the revolutions of the seasons of this poor sin-polluted world, will not prove unfaithful in His dealings with His own well-beloved Son.

Winter in the soul is by no means a comfortable season, and if it be upon thee just now, it will be very painful to thee: but there is this comfort, namely, that *the Lord* makes it. He sends the sharp blasts of adversity to nip the buds of expectation; He scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes over the once verdant meadows of our joy; He casteth forth His ice like morsels, freezing the streams of our delight. He does it all; He is the great Winter King, and rules in the realms of frost, and therefore thou canst not murmur. Losses, crosses, heaviness, sickness, poverty, and a thousand other ills, are of the Lord's sending, and come to us with wise design. Frosts kill noxious insects, and put a bound to raging diseases; they break up the clods, and sweeten the soil. O that such good results would always follow our winters of affliction! — How we prize the fire just now! How pleasant is its cheerful glow! Let us in the same manner prize our Lord, who is the constant source of warmth and comfort in every time of trouble. Let us draw nigh to Him, and in Him find joy and peace in believing. Let us wrap ourselves in the warm garments of His promises, and go forth to labors which befit the season; for it were ill to be as the sluggard, who will not plough, by reason of the cold; for he shall beg in summer, and have nothing.

"Thou art all fair, my love." — Solomon's Song iv. 7.

THE Lord's admiration of His Church is very wonderful, and His description of her beauty is very glowing. She is not merely *fair*, but "*all fair*." He views her in Himself, washed in His sin-atoning blood, and clothed in His meritorious righteousness, and He considers her to be full of comeliness and beauty. No wonder that such is the case, since it is but His own perfect excellency that He admires, for the holiness, glory, and perfection of His Church are His own glorious garments on the back of His own well-beloved spouse. She is not simply pure, or well-proportioned; she is positively lovely and fair! She has actual merit! Her deformities of sin are removed; but more, she has through her Lord obtained a meritorious righteousness, by which an actual beauty is conferred upon her. Believers have a positive righteousness given to them when they become "accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. i. 6.) Nor is the Church barely lovely; she is *superlatively* so. Her Lord styles her, "Thou fairest among women." She has a real worth and excellence, which cannot be rivalled by all the nobility and royalty of the world. If Jesus could exchange His elect bride for all the queens and empresses of earth, or even for the angels in heaven, He would not, for He puts her first and foremost — "fairest among women." Like the moon, she far outshines the stars. Nor is this an opinion which He is ashamed of, for He invites all men to hear it. He sets a "behold" before it, a special note of exclamation, inviting and arresting attention. "*Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair.*" (Sol. Song iv. 1.) His opinion He publishes abroad even now, and one day, from the throne of His glory, He will avow the truth of it before the assembled universe. "Come, ye blessed of my Father," (Matt. xxv. 34,) will be His solemn affirmation of the loveliness of His elect.

"There is no spot in thee." — Solomon's Song iv. 7.

HAVING pronounced His Church positively full of beauty, our Lord confirms His praise by a precious negative: "There is no spot in thee." As if the thought occurred to the Bridegroom that the carping world would insinuate that He had only mentioned her comely parts, and had purposely omitted those features which were deformed or defiled, He sums up all by declaring her universally and entirely fair, and utterly devoid of stain. A spot may soon be removed, and is the very least thing that can disfigure beauty; but even from this little blemish the believer is delivered in his Lord's sight. If He had said there is no hideous scar, no horrible deformity, no deadly ulcer, we might even then have marvelled; but when He testifies that she is free from the slightest spot, all these other forms of defilement are included, and the depth of wonder is increased. If He had but promised to remove all spots by-and-by, we should have had eternal reason for joy; but when He speaks of it as already done, who can restrain the most intense emotions of satisfaction and delight? O my soul, here is marrow and fatness for thee; eat thy full, and be satisfied with royal dainties. Christ Jesus has no quarrel with His spouse. She often wanders from Him, and grieves His Holy Spirit, but He does not allow Her faults to affect His love. He sometimes chides, but it is always in the tenderest manner, with the kindest intentions: it is "my love," even then. There is no remembrance of our follies; He does not cherish ill thoughts of us, but He pardons, and loves as well after the offence as before it. It is well for us it is so, for if Jesus were as mindful of injuries as we are, how could He commune with us? Many a time a believer will put himself out of humor with the Lord for some slight turn in providence, but our precious Husband knows our silly hearts too well to take any offence at our ill manners.

"I have much people in this city."—Acts xviii. 10.

THIS should be a great encouragement to try to do good, since God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken, an elect people who *must* be saved. When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to be the messenger of life to their souls, and *they must* receive it, for so the decree of predestination runs. They are as much redeemed by blood as the saints before the eternal throne. They are Christ's property; and yet perhaps they are lovers of the ale-house and haters of holiness; but if Jesus Christ purchased them He will have them. God is not unfaithful, to forget the price which His Son has paid. He will not suffer His substitution to be in any case an ineffectual, dead thing. Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet, but regenerated they must be; and this is our comfort when we go forth to them with the quickening Word of God. Nay, more, these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the throne. "Neither pray I for these alone," saith the great Intercessor; "but for *them also which shall believe on Me through their word.*" Poor, ignorant souls, they know nothing about prayer for themselves, but Jesus prays for them. Their names are on his breastplate, and ere long they must bow their stubborn knee, breathing the penitential sigh before the throne of grace. "The time of figs is not yet." The predestinated moment has not struck; but, when it comes, *they shall obey*, for God will have His own; *they must*, for the Spirit is not to be withstood when He cometh forth with fulness of power—*they must* become the willing servants of the living God. "My people shall be willing in the day of My power." "He shall justify many." "He shall see of the travail of His soul." "I will divide him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong."

“Ask, and it shall be given you.” — Matthew vii. 7.

WE know of a place in England, still existing; where a dole of bread is served to every passer-by who chooses to ask for it. Whoever the traveller may be, he has but to knock at the door of St. Cross Hospital, and there is the dole of bread for him. Jesus Christ so loveth sinners that He has built a St. Cross Hospital, so that whenever a sinner is hungry, he has but to knock and have his wants supplied. Nay, He has done better; He has attached to this Hospital of the Cross a bath; and whenever a soul is black and filthy, it has but to go there and be washed. The fountain is always full, always efficacious. No sinner ever went into it and found that it could not wash away his stains. Sins which were scarlet and crimson have all disappeared, and the sinner has been whiter than snow. As if this were not enough, there is attached to this Hospital of the Cross a wardrobe, and a sinner, making application simply as a sinner, may be clothed from head to foot; and if he wishes to be a soldier, he may not merely have a garment for ordinary wear, but armor which shall cover him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. If he asks for a sword, he shall have that given to him, and a shield too. Nothing that is good for him shall be denied him. He shall have spending money so long as he lives; and he shall have an eternal heritage of glorious treasure when he enters into the joy of his Lord. — If all these things are to be had by merely knocking at mercy's door, O my soul, knock hard this morning, and ask large things of thy generous Lord. Leave not the throne of grace till all thy wants have been spread before the Lord, and until by faith thou hast a comfortable prospect that they shall be all supplied. No bashfulness need retard when Jesus invites. No unbelief should hinder when Jesus promises. No cold-heartedness should restrain, when such blessings are to be obtained.

"As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."

1 Corinthians xv. 48.

THE head and members are of one nature, and not like that monstrous image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. The head was of fine gold, but the belly and thighs were of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet, part of iron and part of clay. Christ's mystical body is no absurd combination of opposites; the members were mortal, and therefore Jesus died; the glorified head is immortal, and therefore the body is immortal too, for thus the record stands: "Because I live, ye shall live also." As is our loving head, such is the body, and every member in particular. A chosen Head, and chosen members; an accepted Head, and accepted members; a living Head, and living members. If the head be pure gold, all the parts of the body are of pure gold also. Thus is there a double union of nature as a basis for the closest communion. Pause here, devout reader, and see if thou canst, without ecstatic amazement, contemplate the infinite condescension of the Son of God in thus exalting thy wretchedness into blessed union with His glory. Thou art so mean that, in remembrance of thy mortality, thou mayst say to corruption, "Thou art my father," and to the worm, "Thou art my sister;" and yet in Christ thou art so honored that thou canst say to the Almighty, "Abba, Father," and to the Incarnate God, "Thou art my brother and my husband." Surely if relationships to ancient and noble families make men think highly of themselves, we have whereof to glory over the heads of them all. Let the poorest and most despised believer lay hold upon this privilege; let not a senseless indolence make him negligent to trace his pedigree, and let him suffer no foolish attachment to present vanities to occupy his thoughts to the exclusion of this glorious, this heavenly honor of union with Christ.

"Base things of the world hath God chosen."—1 Cor. i. 28.

WALK the streets by moonlight, if you dare, and you will see sinners then. Watch when the night is dark, and the wind is howling, and the picklock is grating in the door, and you will see sinners then. Go to yon jail, and walk through the wards, and mark the men with heavy, over-hanging brows, men whom you would not like to meet at night, and there are sinners there. Go to the reformatories, and note those who have betrayed a rampant juvenile depravity, and you will see sinners there. Go across the seas to a place where a man will gnaw a bone upon which is reeking human flesh, and there is a sinner there. Go where you will, you need not ransack earth to find sinners, for they are common enough; you may find them in every lane and street of every city, and town, and village, and hamlet. It is for such that Jesus died. If you will select me the grossest specimen of humanity, if he be but born of woman, I will have hope of him yet, because Jesus Christ is come to seek and to save sinners. Electing love has selected some of the worst to be made the best. Pebbles of the brook grace turns into jewels for the crown-royal. Worthless dross He transforms into pure gold. Redeeming love has set apart many of the worst of mankind to be the reward of the Saviour's passion. Effectual grace calls forth many of the vilest of the vile to sit at the table of mercy, and therefore let none despair.

Reader, by that love looking out of Jesus' tearful eyes; by that love streaming from those bleeding wounds; by that faithful love, that strong love, that pure, disinterested, and abiding love; by the heart and by the bowels of the Saviour's compassion, we conjure you, turn not away as though it were nothing to you; but believe on Him, and you shall be saved. Trust your soul with Him, and He will bring you to His Father's right hand in glory everlasting.

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” — Revelation iii. 4.

WE may understand this to refer to *justification*. “They shall walk in white;” that is, they shall enjoy a constant sense of their own justification by faith; they shall understand that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them; that they have all been washed and made whiter than the newly-fallen snow.

Again, it refers to *joy and gladness*; for white robes were holiday dresses among the Jews. They who have not defiled their garments shall have their faces always bright; they shall understand what Solomon meant when He said, “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. Let thy garments be always white, for God hath accepted thy works.” He who is accepted of God shall wear white garments of joy and gladness, while he walks in sweet communion with the Lord Jesus. Whence so many doubts, so much misery and mourning? It is because so many believers defile their garments with sin and error; and hence they lose the joy of their salvation, and the comfortable fellowship of the Lord Jesus; they do not here below walk in white.

The promise also refers to *walking in white before the throne of God*. Those who have not defiled their garments here, shall most certainly walk in white up yonder, where the white-robed hosts sing perpetual hallelujahs to the Most High. They shall possess joys inconceivable, happiness beyond a dream, bliss which imagination knoweth not, blessedness which even the stretch of desire hath not reached. The “undefiled in the way” shall have all this — not of merit, nor of works, but of grace. They shall walk with Christ in white, for He has made them “worthy.” In His sweet company they shall drink of the living fountains of waters.

“Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you.”
Isaiah xxx. 18.

GOD often DELAYS IN ANSWERING PRAYER. We have several instances of this in sacred Scripture. Jacob did not get the blessing from the angel until near the dawn of day—he had to wrestle all night for it. The poor woman of Syrophenicia was answered not a word for a long while. Paul besought the Lord *thrice* that “the thorn in the flesh” might be taken from him, and he received no assurance that it should be taken away, but instead thereof a promise that God’s grace should be sufficient for him. If thou hast been knocking at the gate of mercy, and hast received no answer, shall I tell thee why the mighty Maker hath not opened the door and let thee in? Our Father has reasons peculiar to Himself for thus keeping us waiting. Sometimes it is to show His power, and His sovereignty, that men may know that Jehovah has a right to give or to withhold. More frequently the delay is for our profit. Thou art perhaps kept waiting in order that thy desires may be more fervent. God knows that delay will quicken and increase desire, and that if He keeps thee waiting thou wilt see thy necessity more clearly, and wilt seek more earnestly; and that thou wilt prize the mercy all the more for its long tarrying. There may also be something wrong in thee which has need to be removed, before the joy of the Lord is given. Perhaps thy views of the Gospel plan are confused, or thou mayst be placing some little reliance on thyself, instead of trusting simply and entirely to the Lord Jesus. Or, God makes thee tarry awhile that He may the more fully display the riches of His grace to thee at last. Thy prayers are all filed in heaven, and if not immediately answered, they are certainly not forgotten, but in a little while shall be fulfilled to thy delight and satisfaction. Let not despair make thee silent, but continue instant in earnest supplication.

"So shall we ever be with the Lord." — 1 Thess. iv. 17.

GIVEN the sweetest visits from Christ, how short they are — and how transitory ! One moment our eyes see Him, and we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but again a little time and we do not see Him, for our Beloved withdraws Himself from us ; like a roe or a young hart he leaps over the mountains of division ; He is gone to the land of spices, and feeds no more among the lilies.

"If to-day He deigns to bless us
With a sense of pardoned sin,
He to-morrow may distress us,
Make us feel the plague within."

Oh, how sweet the prospect of the time when we shall not behold Him at a distance, but see Him face to face ! when He shall not be as a wayfaring man tarrying but for a night, but shall eternally enfold us in the bosom of His glory ! We shall not see Him for a little season, but

"Millions of years our wondering eyes
Shall o'er our Saviour's beauties rove,
And myriad ages we'll adore
The wonders of His love."

In heaven there shall be no interruptions from care or sin ; no weeping shall dim our eyes ; no earthly business shall distract our happy thoughts ; we shall have nothing to hinder us from gazing forever on the Sun of Righteousness with unwearied eyes. Oh, if it be so sweet to see Him now and then, how sweet to gaze on that blessed face for aye, and never have a cloud rolling between, and never have to turn one's eyes away to look on a world of weariness and woe ! Blest day, when wilt thou dawn ? Rise, O unsetting sun ! The joys of sense may leave us as soon as they will, for this shall make glorious amends. If to die is but to enter into uninterrupted communion with Jesus, then death is indeed gain, and the black drop is swallowed up in a sea of victory.

“Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.”

1 Thessalonians v. 24.

HEAVEN is a place where we shall never sin ; where we shall cease our constant watch against an indefatigable enemy, because there will be no tempter to insnare our feet. There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Heaven is the “undefiled inheritance ;” it is the land of perfect holiness, and therefore of complete security. But do not the saints even on earth sometimes taste the joys of blissful security ? The doctrine of God’s word is, that all who are in union with the Lamb are safe ; that all the righteous shall hold on their way ; that those who have committed their souls to the keeping of Christ shall find Him a faithful and immutable preserver. Sustained by such a doctrine, we can enjoy security even on earth ; not that high and glorious security which renders us free from every slip, but that holy security which arises from the sure promise of Jesus that none who believe in Him shall ever perish, but shall be with Him where He is. Believer, let us often reflect with joy on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, and honor the faithfulness of our God by a holy confidence in Him.


May our God bring home to you a sense of your safety in Christ Jesus. May He assure you that your name is graven on His hand, and whisper in your ear the promise, “Fear not, I am with thee.” Look upon Him, the great Surety of the covenant, as faithful and true, and, therefore, bound and engaged to present you, the weakest of the family, with all the chosen race, before the throne of God ; and in such a sweet contemplation you will drink the juice of the spiced wine of the Lord’s pomegranate, and taste the dainty fruits of Paradise. You will have an antepast of the enjoyments which ravish the souls of the perfect saints above, if you can believe with unstaggering faith that “faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.”

"His ways are everlasting." — Habakkuk iii. 5.

WHAT He hath done at one time, He will do yet again. Man's ways are variable, but God's ways are everlasting. There are many reasons for this most comforting truth : among them are the following — the Lord's ways are *the result of wise deliberation* ; He ordereth all things according to the counsel of His own will. Human action is frequently the hasty result of passion or fear, and is followed by regret and alteration ; but nothing can take the Almighty by surprise, or happen otherwise than He has foreseen. His ways are *the outgrowth of an immutable character*, and in them the fixed and settled attributes of God are clearly to be seen. Unless the Eternal One Himself can undergo change, His ways, which are Himself in action, must remain forever the same. Is He eternally just, gracious, faithful, wise, tender ? — then His ways must ever be distinguished for the same excellences. Beings act according to their nature : when those natures change, their conduct varies also ; but since God cannot know the shadow of a turning, His ways will abide everlastingly the same. Moreover there is no reason from without which could reverse the divine ways, since they are *the embodiment of irresistible might*. The earth is said, by the prophet, to be cleft with rivers, mountains tremble, the deep lifts up its hands, and sun and moon stand still, when Jehovah marches forth for the salvation of His people. Who can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou ? But it is not might alone which gives stability ; God's way are *the manifestations of the eternal principles of right*, and therefore can never pass away. Wrong breeds decay and involves ruin, but the true and the good have about them a vitality which ages cannot diminish.

This morning let us go to our heavenly Father with confidence, remembering that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, and in Him the Lord is ever gracious to His people.

"Salt, without prescribing how much." — Ezra vii. 22.

ALT was used in every offering made by fire unto the Lord, and from its preserving and purifying properties it was the grateful emblem of divine grace in the soul. It is worthy of our attentive regard that, when Artaxerxes gave salt to Ezra the priest, he set no limit to the quantity; and we may be quite certain that when the King of kings distributes grace among His royal priesthood, the supply is not cut short by *Him*. Often are we straitened in ourselves, but never in the Lord. He who chooses to gather much manna will find that he may have as much as he desires. There is no such famine in Jerusalem that the citizens should eat their bread by weight and drink their water by measure. Some things in the economy of grace are measured; for instance, our vinegar and gall are given us with such exactness that we never have a single drop too much, but of the salt of grace no stint is made: "Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be given unto thee." Parents need to lock up the fruit cupboard, and the sweet jars, but there is no need to keep the salt-box under lock and key, for few children will eat too greedily from that. A man may have too much money, or too much honor, but he cannot have too much grace. When Jeshurun waxed fat in the flesh, he kicked against God; but there is no fear of a man's becoming too full of grace; a *plethora* of grace is impossible. More wealth brings more care, but more grace brings more joy. Increased wisdom is increased sorrow, but abundance of the Spirit is fulness of joy. Believer, go to the throne for a large supply of heavenly salt. It will season thine afflictions, which are unsavory without salt; it will preserve thy heart, which corrupts if salt be absent; and it will kill thy sins even as salt kills reptiles. Thou needest much; seek much, and have much.

“They go from strength to strength.” — Psalm lxxxiv. 7.

THEY go from strength to strength. There are various renderings of these words, but all of them contain the idea of progress.

Our own good translation of the authorized version is enough for us this morning. “They go from strength to strength.” That is, they grow stronger and stronger. Usually, if we are walking, we go from strength to weakness; we start fresh and in good order for our journey; but by and by the road is rough, and the sun is hot; we sit down by the wayside, and then again painfully pursue our weary way. But the Christian pilgrim, having obtained fresh supplies of grace, is as vigorous after years of toilsome travel and struggle as when he first set out. He may not be quite so elate and buoyant, nor perhaps quite so hot and hasty in his zeal, as he once was; but he is much stronger, in all that constitutes real power, and travels, if more slowly, far more surely. Some gray-haired veterans have been as firm in their grasp of truth, and as zealous in diffusing it, as they were in their younger days; but, alas, it must be confessed it is often otherwise, for the love of many waxes cold, and iniquity abounds; but this is their own sin, and not the fault of the promise, which still holds good: “The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.” Fretful spirits sit down and trouble themselves about the future. “Alas,” say they, “we go from affliction to affliction.” Very true, O thou of little faith, but then thou goest from strength to strength also. Thou shalt never find a bundle of affliction which has not bound up in the midst of it sufficient grace. God will give the strength of ripe manhood with the burden allotted to full-grown shoulders.

“ Orpah kissed her mother-in-law ; but Ruth clave unto her.”

Ruth i. 14.

BOTH of them had an affection for Naomi, and therefore set out with her upon her return to the land of Judah. But the hour of test came ; Naomi most unselfishly set before each of them the trials which awaited them, and bade them, if they cared for ease and comfort, to return to their Moabitish friends. At first both of them declared that they would cast in their lot with the Lord's people ; but, upon still further consideration, Orpah, with much grief and a respectful kiss, left her mother-in-law, and her people, and her God, and went back to her idolatrous friends, while Ruth, with all her heart, gave herself up to the God of her mother-in-law. It is one thing to love the ways of the Lord when all is fair, and quite another to cleave to them under all discouragements and difficulties. The kiss of outward profession is very cheap and easy, but the practical cleaving to the Lord which must show itself in holy decision for truth and holiness, is not so small a matter. How stands the case with us ? is our heart fixed upon Jesus ? is the sacrifice bound with cords to the horns of the altar ? Have we counted the cost, and are we solemnly ready to suffer all worldly loss for the Master's sake ? The after gain will be an abundant recompense, for Egypt's treasures are not to be compared with the glory to be revealed. Orpah is heard of no more ; in glorious ease and idolatrous pleasure, her life melts into the gloom of death ; but Ruth lives in history and in heaven, for grace has placed her in the noble line whence sprung the King of kings. Blessed among women shall those be who for Christ's sake can renounce all ; but forgotten, and worse than forgotten, shall those be, who, in the hour of temptation, do violence to conscience, and turn back unto the world. O that this morning we may not be content with the form of devotion, which may be no better than Orpah's kiss ! but may the Holy Spirit work in us a cleaving of our whole heart to our Lord Jesus.

"Come unto Me." — Matthew xi. 28.

THE cry of the Christian religion is the gentle word, "Come." The Jewish law harshly said, "Go, take heed unto thy steps as to the path in which thou shalt walk. Break the commandments, and thou shalt perish; keep them, and thou shalt live." The law was a dispensation of terror, which drove men before it as with a scourge; the gospel draws with bands of love. Jesus is the good Shepherd going before His sheep, bidding them follow Him, and ever leading them onwards with the sweet word, "Come." The law repels; the gospel attracts. The law shows the distance which there is between God and man; the gospel bridges that awful chasm, and brings the sinner across it.

From the first moment of your spiritual life until you are ushered into glory, the language of Christ to you will be, "*Come, come unto Me.*" As a mother puts out her finger to her little child, and woos it to walk by saying, "Come," even so does Jesus. He will always be ahead of you, bidding you follow Him as the soldier follows his captain. He will always go before you to pave your way, and clear your path, and you shall hear His animating voice calling you after Him all through life; while in the solemn hour of death, His sweet words with which He shall usher you into the heavenly world shall be — "*Come, ye blessed of my Father.*"

Nay, further, this is not only Christ's cry to you, but, if you be a believer, this is your cry to Christ — "*Come! come!*" You will be longing for His second advent; you will be saying, "*Come quickly; even so, come, Lord Jesus.*" You will be panting for nearer and closer communion with Him. As His voice to you is, "Come," your response to Him will be, "*Come, Lord, and abide with me. Come, and occupy alone the throne of my heart; reign there without a rival, and consecrate me entirely to Thy service.*"

"I remember thee." — Jeremiah ii. 2.

LET us note that Christ delights to think upon His Church, and to look upon her beauty. As the bird returneth often to its nest, and as the wayfarer hastens to his home, so doth the mind continually pursue the object of its choice. We cannot look too often upon that face which we love; we desire always to have our precious things in our sight. It is even so with our Lord Jesus. From all eternity, "His delights were with the sons of men;" His thoughts rolled onward to the time when His elect should be born into the world; He viewed them in the mirror of His foreknowledge. "In Thy book," he says, "all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." (Ps. cxxxix. 16.) When the world was set upon its pillars, He was there, and He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. Many a time before His incarnation, He descended to this lower earth in the similitude of a man; on the plains of Mamre (Gen. xviii.), by the brook of Jabbok (Gen. xxxii. 24–30), beneath the walls of Jericho (Josh. v. 13), and in the fiery furnace of Babylon (Dan. iii. 19–25), the Son of man visited His people. Because His soul delighted in them, He could not rest away from them, for His heart longed after them. Never were they absent from His heart, for He had written their names upon His hands, and graven them upon His side. As the breastplate containing the names of the tribes of Israel was the most brilliant ornament worn by the high priest, so the names of Christ's elect were His most precious jewels, and glittered on His heart. We may often forget to meditate upon the perfections of our Lord, but He never ceases to remember us. Let us chide ourselves for past forgetfulness, and pray for grace ever to bear Him in fondest remembrance. Lord, paint upon the eyeballs of my soul the image of Thy Son.

"Rend your heart, and not your garments."—Joel ii. 13.

GARMENT-RENDING, and other outward signs of religious emotion, are *easily manifested*, and are *frequently hypocritical*: but to feel true repentance is far more difficult, and consequently far less common. Men will attend to the most multiplied and minute ceremonial regulations, — for such things are *pleasing to the flesh*, — but true religion is too humbling, too heart-searching, too thorough for the tastes of carnal men; they prefer something more ostentatious, flimsy, and worldly. Outward observances are *temporarily comfortable*; eye and ear are pleased; self-conceit is fed, and self-righteousness is puffed up: but they are *ultimately delusive*, for in the article of death, and at the day of judgment, the soul needs something more substantial than ceremonies and rituals to lean upon. Apart from vital godliness, all religion is *utterly vain*; offered without a sincere heart, every form of worship is a solemn sham and an impudent mockery of the majesty of heaven. — HEART-RENDING is *divinely wrought* and *solemnly felt*. It is a secret grief which is *personally experienced*, not in mere form, but as a deep, soul-moving work of the Holy Spirit upon the inmost heart of each believer. It is not a matter to be merely talked of and believed in, but keenly and sensitively felt in every living child of the living God. It is *powerfully humiliating*, and *completely sin-purging*; but then it is *sweetly preparative* for those gracious consolations which proud, unhumiliated spirits are unable to receive; and it is *distinctly discriminating*, for it belongs to the elect of God, and to them alone. The text commands us to rend our hearts, but they are naturally hard as marble: how, then, can this be done? We must take them to Calvary: a dying Saviour's voice rent the rocks once, and it is as powerful now. O blessed Spirit, let us hear the death-cries of Jesus, and our hearts shall be rent even as men rend their vestures in the day of lamentation.

“The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” — Proverbs xvi. 33.

IF the disposal of the lot is the Lord's, whose is the arrangement of our whole life? If the simple casting of a lot is guided by Him, how much more the events of our entire life — especially when we are told by our blessed Saviour, “The very hairs of your head are all numbered: not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father.” It would bring a holy calm over your mind, dear friend, if you were always to remember this. It would so relieve your mind from anxiety, that you would be the better able to walk in patience, quiet, and cheerfulness, as a Christian should. When a man is anxious, he cannot pray with faith; when he is troubled about the world, he cannot serve his Master; his thoughts are serving himself. If you would “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” all things would then be added unto you. You are meddling with Christ's business, and neglecting your own, when you fret about your lot and circumstances. You have been trying “providing” work, and forgetting that it is yours to obey. Be wise, and attend to the obeying, and let Christ manage the providing. Come and survey your Father's storehouse, and ask whether He will let you starve while He has laid up so great an abundance in His garner. Look at His heart of mercy; see if that can ever prove unkind! Look at His inscrutable wisdom; see if that will ever be at fault. Above all, look up to Jesus Christ, your Intercessor, and ask yourself, while He pleads, can your Father deal ungraciously with you? If He remembers even sparrows, will He forget one of the least of His poor children? “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

“My soul, rest happy in thy low estate,
Nor hope nor wish to be esteemed or great;
To take the impress of the Will Divine,
Be that thy glory, and those riches thine.

“Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” — Jer. xxxi. 3.

SOMETIMES the Lord Jesus tells His Church His love thoughts. “He does not think it enough behind her back to tell it, but, in her very presence, He says, ‘Thou art all fair, my love.’ It is true, this is not His ordinary method; He is a wise lover, and knows when to keep back the intimation of love, and when to let it out; but there are times when He will make no secret of it; times when he will put it beyond all dispute in the souls of his people.” * The Holy Spirit is often pleased, in a most gracious manner, to witness with our spirits of the love of Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them unto us. No voice is heard from the clouds, and no vision is seen in the night, but we have a testimony more sure than either of these. If an angel should fly from heaven, and inform the saint personally of the Saviour’s love to him, the evidence would not be one whit more satisfactory than that which is borne in the heart by the Holy Ghost. Ask those of the Lord’s people who have lived the nearest to the gates of heaven, and they will tell you that they have had seasons when the love of Christ towards them has been a fact so clear and sure, that they could no more doubt it than they could question their own existence. Yes, beloved believer, you and I have had times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and then our faith has mounted to the topmost heights of assurance. We have had confidence to lean our heads upon the bosom of our Lord, and we have no more questioned our Master’s affection to us than John did when in that blessed posture: nay, nor so much; for the dark question, “Lord, is it I that shall betray thee?” has been put far from us. He has kissed us with the kisses of His mouth, and killed our doubts by the closeness of His embrace. His love has been sweeter than wine to our souls.

“ Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant.”

2 Samuel xxiii. 5.

HIS covenant is *divine in its origin*. “HE hath made with me an everlasting covenant.” Oh, that great word HE! Stop, my soul. God, the everlasting Father, has positively made a covenant with thee; yes, that God who spake the world into existence by a word; He, stooping from His majesty, takes hold of thy hand and makes a covenant with thee. Is it not a deed, the stupendous condescension of which might ravish our hearts forever if we could really understand it? “HE hath made with me a covenant.” A king has not made a covenant with me — that were somewhat; but the Prince of the kings of the earth, Shaddai, the Lord All-sufficient, the Jehovah of ages, the everlasting Elohim, “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant.” But notice, *it is particular in its application*. “Yet hath He made with ME an everlasting covenant.” Here lies the sweetness of it to each believer. It is nought for me that He made peace for the world; I want to know whether He made peace for *me*! It is little that He hath made a covenant; I want to know whether He has made a covenant *with me*. Blessed is the assurance that He hath made a covenant with me! If God the Holy Ghost gives me assurance of this, then His salvation is mine, His heart is mine, He himself is mine — *He is my God*.

This covenant is *everlasting in its duration*. An everlasting covenant means a covenant which had no beginning, and which shall never, never end. How sweet, amidst all the uncertainties of life, to know that “the foundation of the Lord standeth sure,” and to have God’s own promise, “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.” Like dying David, I will sing of this, even though my house be not so with God as my heart desireth.

"I will strengthen thee." — Isaiah xli. 10.

GOD has a strong reserve with which to discharge this engagement, for He is able to do all things! Believer, till thou canst drain dry the ocean of omnipotence, till thou canst break into pieces the towering mountains of almighty strength, thou never needest to fear. Think not that the strength of man shall ever be able to overcome the power of God. Whilst the earth's huge pillars stand, thou hast enough reason to abide firm in thy faith. The same God who directs the earth in its orbit, who feeds the burning furnace of the sun, and trims the lamps of heaven, has promised to supply thee with daily strength. While He is able to uphold the universe, dream not that He will prove unable to fulfil His own promises. Remember what He did in the days of old, in the former generations. Remember how He spake and it was done; how He commanded, and it stood fast. Shall He that created the world grow weary? He hangeth the world upon nothing; shall He who doth this be unable to support His children? Shall He be unfaithful to His word for want of power? Who is it that restrains the tempest? Doth not He ride upon the wings of the wind, and make the clouds His chariots, and hold the ocean in the hollow of His hand? How can He fail thee? When He has put such a faithful promise as this on record, wilt thou for a moment indulge the thought that He has out-promised himself, and gone beyond His power to fulfil? Ah! no! Thou canst doubt no longer.

O Thou who art my God and my strength, I can believe that this promise shall be fulfilled, for the boundless reservoir of Thy grace can never be exhausted, and the overflowing storehouse of Thy strength can never be emptied by Thy friends or rifled by Thine enemies.

*"Now let the feeble all be strong,
And make Jehovah's arm their song."*

"Friend, go up higher." — Luke xiv. 10.

WHEN first the life of grace begins in the soul, we do indeed draw near to God, but it is with great fear and trembling. The soul, conscious of guilt, and humbled thereby, is overawed with the solemnity of its position; it is cast to the earth by a sense of the grandeur of Jehovah, in whose presence it stands. With unfeigned bashfulness it takes the lowest room.

But, in after life, as the Christian grows in grace, although he will never forget the solemnity of his position, and will never lose that holy awe which must encompass a gracious man when he is in the presence of the God who can create or can destroy, yet his fear has all its terror taken out of it; it becomes a holy reverence, and no more an overshadowing dread. He is called up higher, to greater access to God in Christ Jesus. Then the man of God, walking amid the splendors of Deity, and veiling his face, like the glorious cherubim, with those twin wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, will, reverent and bowed in spirit, approach the throne; and seeing there a God of love, of goodness, and of mercy, he will realize rather the covenant character of God than His absolute Deity. He will see in God rather His goodness than His greatness, and more of His love than of His majesty. Then will the soul, bowing still as humbly as aforesaid, enjoy a more sacred liberty of intercession; for, while prostrate before the glory of the Infinite God, it will be sustained by the refreshing consciousness of being in the presence of boundless mercy and infinite love, and by the realization of acceptance "in the Beloved." Thus the believer is bidden to come up higher, and is enabled to exercise the privilege of rejoicing in God, and drawing near to Him in holy confidence, saying, "Abba, Father."

"So may we go from strength to strength,
And daily grow in grace,
Till, in Thine image raised at length,
We see Thee face to face."

“For your sakes He became poor.” — 2 Corinthians viii. 9.

THE Lord Jesus Christ was eternally *rich*, glorious, and exalted; but “though *He was rich*, yet for your sakes He became poor.” As the rich saint cannot be true in his communion with his poor brethren, unless of his substance he ministers to their necessities, so (the same rule holding with the head as between the members) it is impossible that our Divine Lord could have had fellowship with us unless He had imparted to us of His own abounding wealth, and had become poor to make us rich. Had He remained upon His throne of glory, and had we continued in the ruins of the fall without receiving His salvation, communion would have been impossible on both sides. Our position by the fall, apart from the covenant of grace, made it as impossible for fallen man to communicate with God as it is for Belial to be in concord with Christ. In order, therefore, that communion might be compassed, it was necessary that the rich Kinsman should bestow his estate upon his poor relatives; that the righteous Saviour should give to His sinning brethren of His own perfection, and that we, the poor and guilty, should receive of His fulness grace for grace; that thus in giving and receiving, the one might descend from the heights, and the others ascend from the depths, and so be able to embrace each other in true and hearty fellowship. Poverty must be enriched by Him in whom are infinite treasures before it can venture to commune; and guilt must lose itself in imputed and imparted righteousness ere the soul can walk in fellowship with purity. Jesus must clothe His people in His own garments, or He cannot admit them into His palace of glory; and He must wash them in His own blood, or else they will be too defiled for the embrace of His fellowship.

O believer, herein is love! For *your sake* the Lord Jesus “became poor,” that He might lift you up into communion with Himself.

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” — Isaiah vii. 14.

LET us to-day go down to Bethlehem, and, in company with wondering shepherds and adoring Magi, let us see Him who was born King of the Jews, for we by faith can claim an interest in Him, and can sing, *“Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given.”* Jesus is Jehovah incarnate, our Lord and our God, and yet our brother and friend; let us adore and admire. Let us notice at the very first glance *His miraculous conception*. It was a thing unheard of before, and unparalleled since, that a virgin should conceive and bear a son. *“The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth; a woman shall compass a man.”* The first promise ran thus: *“The seed of the woman,”* not the offspring of the man. Since venturous woman led the way in the sin which brought forth Paradise lost, she, and she alone, ushers in the Regainer of Paradise. Our Saviour, although truly man, was, as to His human nature, the Holy One of God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the virgin without the taint of original sin which appertains to all those who are born of the flesh. Let us reverently bow before the Holy Child whose innocence restores to manhood its ancient glory; and let us pray that He may be formed in us, the hope of glory. Fail not to note *His humble parentage*. His mother our morning's portion describes simply as *“a virgin,”* not a princess or prophetess, nor a matron of large estate. True, her lineage was not to be despised, for the blood of kings ran in her veins; nor was her mind a weak and untaught one, for she could sing most sweetly a song of praise; but yet how humble her position, how poor the man to whom she stood affianced, and how miserable the accommodation afforded to the new-born King! Thus has poverty become consecrated, and men of low estate are exalted to honor. Every believer is a portrait of Christ, but a poor saint is the

same well-drawn picture hung in the selfsame frame of poverty which surrounds the Master's image.

We esteem every day alike, but still, as the season and the general custom suggest thoughts of Jesus, let us joyfully remember our dear Redeemer's *glorious birth*. Every day should be the birthday of the Saviour to a renewed soul. Amid all that is humiliating, there is much that is honorable in the circumstances of the birth of our Immanuel. Whose birth was ever ushered in by a long train of prophecy, or longed for by such a multitude of hearts? Who but He can boast of a forerunner who marked Him as the coming Man? When did angels indulge in midnight songs, or did God ever hang a new star in the sky before? To whose cradle did rich and poor make so willing a pilgrimage, and offer such hearty and unsought oblations? Well may earth rejoice; well may all men cease their labor to celebrate "the great birthday" of Jesus. O Bethlehem, house of bread, we see in thee our hopes forever gratified. 'Tis He, the Saviour, long foretold, to usher in the age of gold. Let gladness rule the hour; let holy song and sweet heart-music accompany our soul in its raptures of delight.

The *golden name*, *Immanuel*, is inexpressibly delightful. It is a word fit for the lips of cherubim for its majesty, but, because of its marvellous condescension, none but men can utter it. He is not so with seraphs as He is *with us*. God with us in our nature, in our sorrow, in our lifework, in our punishment, in our grave, and now with us, or rather we with Him, in resurrection, ascension, triumph, and second advent splendor. The babe of Bethlehem appears to be manifestly with us in weakness and in poverty; let us not forget that He is equally near us in His glory and honor. Faith clasps the child, and love kisses Him with the kisses of her lips. O for true spiritual fellowship with Immanuel all this day!

"The last Adam."—1 Corinthians xv. 45.

JESUS is the federal head of his elect. As in Adam every heir of flesh and blood has a personal interest, because he is the covenant head and representative of the race, as considered under the law of works, so, under the law of grace, every redeemed soul is one with the Lord from heaven, since He is the Second Adam, the Sponsor and Substitute of the elect in the new covenant of love. The apostle Paul declares that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchizedek met him: it is a certain truth that the believer was in the loins of Jesus Christ, the Mediator, when in old eternity the covenant settlements of grace were decreed, ratified, and made sure forever. Thus, whatever Christ hath done, He hath wrought for the whole body of His Church. We were crucified in Him, and buried with Him (read Col. ii. 10–13), and, to make it still more wonderful, we are risen with Him, and even ascended with Him to the seats on high. (Eph. ii. 6.) It is thus that the Church has fulfilled the law, and is "accepted in *the Beloved*." It is thus that she is regarded with complacency by the just Jehovah, for He views her in Jesus, and does not look upon her as separate from her covenant head. As the anointed Redeemer of Israel, Christ Jesus has nothing distinct from His Church, but all that He has He holds for her. Adam's righteousness was ours so long as he maintained it, and his sin was ours the moment that he committed it; and, in the same manner, all that the Second Adam is or does is ours as well as His, seeing that He is our representative. Here is the foundation of the covenant of grace. This gracious system of representation and substitution, which moved Justin Martyr to cry out, "O blessed change! O sweet permutation!" this is the very groundwork of the gospel of our salvation, and is to be received with strong faith and rapturous joy.

"Can the rush grow up without mire?" — Job viii. 11.

THE rush is spongy and hollow, and even so is a hypocrite; there is no substance or stability in him. It is shaken to and fro in every wind, just as formalists yield to every influence; for this reason the rush is not broken by the tempest, neither are hypocrites troubled with persecution. I would not willingly be a deceiver, or be deceived; perhaps the text for this day may help me to try myself, whether I be a hypocrite or no. The rush by nature lives in water, and owes its very existence to the mire and moisture wherein it has taken root; let the mire become dry, and the rush withers very quickly. Its greenness is absolutely dependent upon circumstances; a present abundance of water makes it flourish, and a drought destroys it at once. Is this my case? Do I only serve God when I am in good company, or when religion is profitable and respectable? Do I love the Lord only when temporal comforts are received from His hands? If so, I am a base hypocrite, and, like the withering rush, I shall perish when death deprives me of outward joys. But can I honestly assert that, when bodily comforts have been few, and my surroundings have been rather adverse to grace than at all helpful to it, I have still held fast my integrity? — then have I hope that there is genuine vital godliness in me. The rush cannot grow without mire, but plants of the Lord's right hand planting can and do flourish even in the year of drought. A goddly man often grows best when his worldly circumstances decay. He who follows Christ for his bag is a Judas; they who follow for loaves and fishes are children of the devil; but they who attend Him out of love to Himself are his own beloved ones. Lord, let me find my life in *Thee*, and not in the mire of this world's favor or gain.

“ The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” — Galatians ii. 20.

WHEN the Lord in mercy passed by and saw us in our blood, He first of all said, “ Live ; ” and this He did *first*, because life is one of the absolutely essential things in spiritual matters, and until it be bestowed we are incapable of partaking in the things of the kingdom. Now the life which grace confers upon the saints at the moment of their quickening is none other than the life of Christ, which, like the sap from the stem, runs into us, the branches, and establishes a living connection between our souls and Jesus. Faith is the grace which perceives this union, having proceeded from it as its first-fruit. It is the neck which joins the body of the Church to its all-glorious Head.

“ *O Faith !* thou bond of union with the Lord,
Is not this office thine ? and thy fit name,
In the economy of gospel types,
And symbols apposite — the Church’s neck ;
Identifying her in will and work
With Him ascended ? ”

Faith lays hold upon the Lord Jesus with a firm and determined grasp. She knows His excellence and worth, and no temptation can induce her to repose her trust elsewhere ; and Christ Jesus is so delighted with this heavenly grace, that He never ceases to strengthen and sustain her by the loving embrace and all-sufficient support of His eternal arms. Here, then, is established a living, sensible, and delightful union which casts forth streams of love, confidence, sympathy, complacency, and joy, whereof both the bride and bridegroom love to drink. When the soul can evidently perceive this oneness between itself and Christ, the pulse may be felt as beating for both, and the one blood as flowing through the veins of each. Then is the heart as near heaven as it can be on earth, and is prepared for the enjoyment of the most sublime and spiritual kind of fellowship.

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." — 1 Samuel vii. 12.

THE word "hitherto" seems like a hand pointing in the direction of the *past*. Twenty years or seventy, and yet "hitherto the Lord hath helped"! Through poverty, through wealth, through sickness, through health, at home, abroad, on the land, on the sea, in honor, in dishonor, in perplexity, in joy, in trial, in triumph, in prayer, in temptation, "hitherto the Lord hath helped us"!

We delight to look down a long avenue of trees. It is delightful to gaze from end to end of the long vista, a sort of verdant temple, with its branching pillars and its arches of leaves; even so look down the long aisles of your years, at the green boughs of mercy overhead, and the strong pillars of loving kindness and faithfulness which bear up your joys? Are there no birds in yonder branches singing? Surely, there must be many, and they all sing of mercy received "hitherto."

But the word also points *forward*. For when a man gets up to a certain mark, and writes "hitherto," he is not yet at the end; there is still a distance to be traversed. More trials, more joys; more temptations, more triumphs; more prayers, more answers; more toils, more strength; more fights, more victories; and then come sickness, old age, disease, death. Is it over now? No! there is more yet — awakening in Jesus' likeness, thrones, harps, songs, psalms, white raiment, the face of Jesus, the society of saints, the glory of God, the fulness of eternity, the infinity of bliss. O, be of good courage, believer, and with grateful confidence raise thy "Ebenezer," for —

He who hath helped thee hitherto
Will help thee all thy journey through.

When read in heaven's light, how glorious and marvellous a prospect will thy "hitherto" unfold to thy grateful eye!

"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

Ecclesiastes vii. 8.

LOOK at David's Lord and Master; see His beginning. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Would you see the end? He sits at His Father's right hand, expecting until His enemies be made His footstool. "As He is, so are we also in this world." You must bear the cross, or you shall never wear the crown; you must wade through the mire, or you shall never walk the golden pavement. Cheer up, then, poor Christian. "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." See that creeping worm; how contemptible its appearance! It is the beginning of a thing. Mark that insect with gorgeous wings, playing in the sunbeams, sipping at the flower bells, full of happiness and life; that is the end thereof. That caterpillar is yourself, until you are wrapped up in the chrysalis of death; but when Christ shall appear you shall be like Him, for you shall see Him as He is. Be content to be like Him, a worm and no man, that like Him you may be satisfied when you wake up in His likeness. That rough-looking diamond is put upon the wheel of the lapidary. He cuts it on all sides. It loses much — much that seemed costly to itself. The king is crowned; the diadem is put upon the monarch's head with trumpet's joyful sound. A glittering ray flashes from that coronet, and it beams from that very diamond which was just now so sorely vexed by the lapidary. You may venture to compare yourself to such a diamond, for you are one of God's people; and this is the time of the cutting process. Let faith and patience have their perfect work, for in the day when the crown shall be set upon the head of the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, one ray of glory shall stream from you. "They shall be Mine," saith the Lord, "in the day when I make up My jewels." "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."
— John vii. 37.

PATIENCE *had her perfect work* in the Lord Jesus, and until the last day of the feast He pleaded with the Jews, even as on this last day of the year He pleads with us, and waits to be gracious to us. Admirable indeed is the long-suffering of the Saviour in bearing with some of us year after year, notwithstanding our provocations, rebellions, and resistance of His Holy Spirit. Wonder of wonders that we are still in the land of mercy.

Pity expressed herself most plainly, for Jesus *cried*, which implies not only the loudness of His voice, but the tenderness of His tones. He entreats us to be reconciled. "We pray you," says the Apostle, "as though God did beseech you by us." What earnest, pathetic terms are these! How deep must be the love which makes the Lord weep over sinners, and like a mother woo His children to His bosom. Surely at the call of such a cry our willing hearts will come.

Provision is made most plenteously; all is provided that man can need to quench his soul's thirst. To his conscience the atonement brings peace; to his understanding the gospel brings the richest instruction; to his heart the person of Jesus is the noblest object of affection; to the whole man the truth as it is in Jesus supplies the purest nutriment. Thirst is terrible, but Jesus can remove it. Though the soul were utterly famished, Jesus could restore it.

Proclamation is made, most freely, that every thirsty one is welcome. No other distinction is made but that of thirst. Whether it be the thirst of avarice, ambition, pleasure, knowledge, or rest, he who suffers from it is invited. The thirst may be bad in itself, and be no sign of grace, but rather a mark of inordinate sin longing to be gratified with deeper draughts of lust; but it is not goodness in the creature

which brings him the invitation, the Lord Jesus sends it freely, and without respect of persons.

Personality is declared most fully. The sinner must come to *Jesus*, not to works, ordinances, or doctrines, but to a personal Redeemer, who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The bleeding, dying, rising Saviour is the only star of hope to a sinner. O for grace to come now and drink, ere the sun sets upon the year's last day!

No waiting or preparation is so much as hinted at. Drinking represents a reception for which no fitness is required. A fool, a thief, a harlot can drink; and so sinfulness of character is no bar to the invitation to believe in Jesus. We want no golden cup, no bejewelled chalice, in which to convey the water to the thirsty, the mouth of poverty is welcome to stoop down and quaff the flowing flood. Blistered, leprous, filthy lips may touch the stream of divine love; they cannot pollute it, but shall themselves be purified. Jesus is the fount of hope. Dear reader, hear the dear Redeemer's loving voice as He cries to each of us, "**IF ANY MAN THIRST, LET HIM COME UNTO ME AND DRINK.**"