
"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." — Canticles iv. 16.

NOTHING is better than the dead calm of indifference. Our souls may wisely desire the north wind of trouble if that alone can be sanctified to the drawing forth of the perfume of our graces. So long as it cannot be said, "The Lord was not in the wind," we will not shrink from the most wintry blast that ever blew upon plants of grace. Did not the spouse in this verse humbly submit herself to the reproofs of her Beloved; only entreating Him to send forth His grace in some form, and making no stipulation as to the peculiar manner in which it should come? Did not she, like ourselves, become so utterly weary of deadness and unholy calm that she sighed for any visitation which would brace her to action? Yet she desires the warm south wind of comfort, too, the smiles of divine love, the joy of the Redeemer's presence; these are often mightily effectual to arouse our sluggish life. She desires either one or the other, or both; so that she may but be able to delight her Beloved with the spices of her garden. She cannot endure to be unprofitable, nor can we. How cheering a thought that Jesus can find comfort in our poor feeble graces! Can it be? It seems far too good to be true. Well may we court trial, or even death itself, if we shall thereby be aided to make glad Immanuel's heart. O that our heart were crushed to atoms, if only by such bruising our sweet Lord Jesus could be glorified! Graces unexercised are as sweet perfumes slumbering in the cups of the flowers: the wisdom of the great Husbandman overrules diverse and opposite causes to produce the one desired result, and makes both affliction and consolation draw forth the grateful odors of faith, love, patience, hope, resignation, joy, and the other fair flowers of the garden. May we know by sweet experience what this means!

"But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his colter, and his axe, and his mattock." — 1 Samuel xiii. 20.

WE are engaged in a great war with the Philistines of evil. *Every weapon within our reach must be used.* Preaching, teaching, praying, giving, all must be brought into action, and talents which have been thought too mean for service must now be employed. Colter, and axe, and mattock, may all be useful in slaying Philistines: rough tools may deal hard blows, and killing need not be elegantly done, so long as it is done effectually. Each moment of time, in season or out of season; each fragment of ability, educated or untutored; each opportunity, favorable or unfavorable, must be used, for our foes are many and our force but slender.

Most of our tools want sharpening; we need quickness of perception, tact, energy, promptness; in a word, complete adaptation for the Lord's work. Practical common sense is a very scarce thing among the conductors of Christian enterprises. We might learn from our enemies if we would, and so *make the Philistines sharpen our weapons.* This morning let us note enough to sharpen our zeal during this day by the aid of the Holy Spirit. See the energy of the Papists, how they compass sea and land to make one proselyte! are they to monopolize all the earnestness? Mark the heathen devotees, what tortures they endure in the service of their idols! are they alone to exhibit patience and self-sacrifice? Observe the prince of darkness, how persevering in his endeavors, how unabashed in his attempts, how daring in his plans, how thoughtful in his plots, how energetic in all! The devils are united as one man in their infamous rebellion, while we believers in Jesus are divided in our service of God, and scarcely ever work with unanimity. O that from Satan's infernal industry we may learn to go about like good Samaritans, seeking whom we may bless!

"I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." — Is. xlviii. 10.

COMFORT thyself, tried believer, with this thought: God saith, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Does not the word come like a soft shower, assuaging the fury of the flame? Yea, is it not an asbestos armor, against which the heat hath no power? Let affliction come — God has chosen me. Poverty, thou mayst stride in at my door, but God is in the house already, and He has chosen me. Sickness, thou mayst intrude, but I have a balsam ready — God has chosen me. Whatever befalls me in this vale of tears, I know that He has "chosen" me. If, believer, thou requirest still greater comfort, remember *that you have the Son of Man with you in the furnace.* In that silent chamber of yours, there sitteth by your side One whom thou hast not seen, but whom thou lovest; and oftentimes when thou knowest it not, He makes all thy bed in thy affliction, and smooths thy pillow for thee. Thou art in poverty; but in that lonely house of thine the Lord of life and glory is a frequent visitor. He loves to come into these desolate places, that He may visit thee. Thy friend sticks closely to thee. Thou canst not see Him, but thou mayst feel the pressure of His hands. Dost thou not hear His voice? Even in the valley of the shadow of death He says, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." Remember that noble speech of Cæsar: "Fear not, thou carriest Cæsar and all his fortune." Fear not, Christian; Jesus is with thee. In all thy fiery trials, His presence is both thy comfort and safety. He will never leave one whom He has chosen for His own. "Fear not, for I am with thee," is His sure word of promise to His chosen ones in the "furnace of affliction." Wilt thou not, then, take fast hold of Christ, and say, —

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where he goes"?

"My grace is sufficient for thee." — 2 Corinthians xii. 9.

IF none of God's saints were poor and tried, we should not know half so well the consolations of divine grace. When we find the wanderer who has not where to lay his head, who yet can say, "Still will I trust in the Lord;" when we see the pauper starving on bread and water, who still glories in Jesus; when we see the bereaved widow overwhelmed in affliction, and yet having faith in Christ, oh, what honor it reflects on the gospel! God's grace is illustrated and magnified in the poverty and trials of believers. Saints bear up under every discouragement, believing that all things work together for their good, and that out of apparent evils a real blessing shall ultimately spring — that their God will either work a deliverance for them speedily, or most assuredly support them in the trouble, as long as He is pleased to keep them in it. This patience of the saints proves the power of divine grace. There is a lighthouse out at sea: it is a calm night — I cannot tell whether the edifice is firm; the tempests must rage about it, and then I shall know whether it will stand. So with the Spirit's work: if it were not on many occasions surrounded with tempestuous waters, we should not know that it was true and strong; if the winds did not blow upon it, we should not know how firm and secure it was. The master-works of God are those men who stand in the midst of difficulties, steadfast, unmovable, —

"Calm 'mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory."

He who would glorify his God must set his account upon meeting with many trials. No man can be illustrious before the Lord unless his conflicts be many. If, then, yours be a much-tried path, rejoice in it, because you will the better show forth the all-sufficient grace of God. As for His failing you, never dream of it — hate the thought. The God who has been sufficient until now should be trusted to the end.

“Let us not sleep, as do others.” — 1 Thessalonians v. 6.

THERE are many ways of promoting Christian wakefulness. Among the rest, let me strongly advise Christians to converse together concerning the ways of the Lord. Christian and Hopeful, as they journeyed towards the Celestial City, said to themselves, “To prevent drowsiness in this place, let us fall into good discourse.” Christian inquired, “Brother, where shall we begin?” And Hopeful answered, “Where God began with us.” Then Christian sang this song —


“When saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither,
And hear how these two pilgrims talk together;
Yea, let them learn of them, in any wise,
Thus to keep ope their drowsy, slumbering eyes.
Saints’ fellowship, if it be managed well,
Keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell.”

Christians who isolate themselves and walk alone, are very liable to grow drowsy. Hold Christian company, and you will be kept wakeful by it, and refreshed and encouraged to make quicker progress in the road to heaven. But as you thus take “sweet counsel” with others in the ways of God, take care that the theme of your converse is your Lord Jesus. Let the eye of faith be constantly looking unto Him; let your heart be full of Him; let your lips speak of His worth. Friend, live near to the cross, and thou wilt not sleep. *Labor to impress thyself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which thou art going.* If thou rememberest that thou art going to heaven, thou wilt not sleep on the road. If thou thinkest that hell is behind thee, and the devil pursuing thee, thou wilt not loiter. Would the manslayer sleep with the avenger of blood behind him, and the city of refuge before him? Christian, wilt thou sleep whilst the pearly gates are open — the songs of angels waiting for thee to join them — a crown of gold ready for thy brow? Ah! no; in holy fellowship continue to watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

“*Ye must be born again.*” — John iii. 7.

REGENERATION is a subject which lies at the very basis of salvation, and we should be very diligent to take heed that we really are “born again,” for there are many who fancy they are, who are not. Be assured that the name of a Christian is not the nature of a Christian; and that being born in a Christian land, and being recognized as professing the Christian religion, is of no avail whatever, unless there be something more added to it — the being “born again” by the power of the Holy Spirit. To be “born again,” is a matter so *mysterious*, that human words cannot describe it. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Nevertheless, it is a change which is *known and felt*; known by works of holiness, and felt by a gracious experience. This great work is *supernatural*. It is not an operation which a man performs for himself: a new principle is infused, which works in the heart, renews the soul, and affects the entire man. It is not a change of my name, but a renewal of my nature, so that I am not the man I used to be, but a new man in Christ Jesus. To wash and dress a corpse is a far different thing from making it alive: man can do the one, God alone can do the other. If you have, then, been “born again,” your acknowledgment will be, “O Lord Jesus, the everlasting Father, Thou art my spiritual Parent; unless Thy Spirit had breathed into me the breath of a new, holy, and spiritual life, I had been to this day ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’ My heavenly life is wholly derived from Thee, to Thee I ascribe it. ‘My life is hid with Christ in God.’ It is no longer I who live, but Christ who liveth in me.” May the Lord enable us to be well assured on this vital point, for to be unregenerate is to be unsaved, unpardoned, without God, and without hope.

"Have faith in God."—Mark xi. 22.

AITH is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly; but faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well; and without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot, and we drag heavily. With faith I can do all things; without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. If you would find the men who serve God the best, you must look for the men of the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things for God. Poor little faith could not have fought "Apollyon;" it needed "Christian" to do that. Poor little faith could not have slain "Giant Despair;" it required "Great-heart's" arm to knock that monster down. Little faith will go to heaven most certainly, but it often has to hide itself in a nut-shell, and it frequently loses all but its jewels. Little faith says, "It is a rough road, beset with sharp thorns, and full of dangers; I am afraid to go; but great faith remembers the promise, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; as thy days, so shall thy strength be:" and so she boldly ventures. Little faith stands desponding, mingling her tears with the flood; but great faith sings, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:" and she fords the stream at once. Would you be comfortable and happy? Would you enjoy religion? Would you have the religion of cheerfulness, and not that of gloom? Then "have faith in God." If you love darkness, and are satisfied to dwell in gloom and misery, then be content with little faith; but if you love the sunshine, and would sing songs of rejoicing, covet earnestly this best gift, "great faith."

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." — Acts xiv. 22.

GOD'S people have their trials. It was never designed by God, when He chose His people, that they should be an untried people. They were chosen in the furnace of affliction; they were never chosen to worldly peace and earthly joy. Freedom from sickness and the pains of mortality was never promised them; but when their Lord drew up the charter of privileges, He included chastisements amongst the things to which they should inevitably be heirs. Trials are a part of our lot; they were predestinated for us in God's solemn decrees, and bequeathed us in Christ's last legacy. So surely as the stars are fashioned by His hands, and their orbits fixed by Him, so surely are our trials allotted to us; He has ordained their season and their place, their intensity, and the effect they shall have upon us. Good men must never expect to escape troubles; if they do, they will be disappointed, for none of their predecessors have been without them. Mark the patience of Job; remember Abraham, for he had his trials, and by his faith under them, he became the "Father of the faithful." Note well the biographies of all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and you shall discover none of those whom God made vessels of mercy, who were not made to pass through the fire of affliction. It is ordained of old, that the cross of trouble should be engraven on every vessel of mercy, as the royal mark whereby the King's vessels of honor are distinguished. But although tribulation is thus the path of God's children, they have the comfort of knowing that their Master has traversed it before them; they have His presence and sympathy to cheer them, His grace to support them, and His example to teach them how to endure; and when they reach "the kingdom," it will more than make amends for the "much tribulation" through which they passed to enter it.

“Yea, He is altogether lovely.” — Solomon’s Song v. 16.

THE superlative beauty of Jesus is all-attracting ; it is not so much to be admired as to be loved. He is more than pleasant and fair, He is LOVELY. Surely the people of God can fully justify the use of this golden word, for He is the object of their warmest love, a love founded on the intrinsic excellence of His person, the complete perfection of His charms. Look, O disciples of Jesus, to your Master’s lips, and say, are they not most sweet? Do not His words cause your hearts to burn within you as He talks with you by the way? Ye worshippers of Immanuel, look up to His head of much fine gold, and tell me, are not His thoughts precious unto you? Is not your adoration sweetened with affection as ye humbly bow before that countenance which is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars? Is there not a charm in His every feature, and is not His whole person fragrant with such a savor of His good ointments, that therefore the virgins love Him? Is there one member of His glorious body which is not attractive? — one portion of His person which is not a fresh loadstone to our souls? — one office which is not a strong cord to bind your heart? Our love is not as a seal set upon His heart of love alone ; it is fastened upon His arm of power also ; nor is there a single part of Him upon which it does not fix itself. We anoint His whole person with the sweet spike-nard of our fervent love. His whole life we would imitate ; His whole character we would transcribe. In all other beings we see some lack, in Him there is all perfection. The best even of His favored saints have had blots upon their garments and wrinkles upon their brows ; He is nothing but loveliness. All earthly suns have their spots ; the fair world itself hath its wilderness ; we cannot love the whole of the most lovely thing ; but Christ Jesus is gold without alloy — light without darkness — glory without cloud — “Yea, He is *altogether* lovely.”

"In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved."

Psalm xxx. 6.

MOAB is settled on his lees, he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel. Give a man wealth; let his ships bring home continually rich freights; let the winds and waves appear to be his servants to bear his vessels across the bosom of the mighty deep; let his lands yield abundantly; let the weather be propitious to his crops; let uninterrupted success attend him; let him stand among men as a successful merchant; let him enjoy continued health; allow him with braced nerve and brilliant eye to march through the world and live happily; give him the buoyant spirit; let him have the song perpetually on his lips; let his eye be ever sparkling with joy — and the natural consequence of such an easy state to any man, let him be the best Christian who ever breathed, will be *presumption*; even David said, "I shall never be moved;" and we are not better than David, nor half so good. Brother, beware of the smooth places of the way, if you are treading them; or if the way be rough, thank God for it. If God should always rock us in the cradle of prosperity; if we were always dandled on the knees of fortune; if we had not some stain on the alabaster pillar; if there were not a few clouds in the sky; if we had not some bitter drops in the wine of this life, we should become intoxicated with pleasure; we should dream "we stand;" and stand we should, but it would be upon a pinnacle; like the man asleep upon the mast, each moment we should be in jeopardy. We bless God, then, for our afflictions; we thank Him for our changes; we extol His name for losses of property; for we feel that had He not chastened us thus, we might have become too secure. Continued worldly prosperity is a fiery trial.

"Afflictions, though they seem severe,
In mercy oft are sent."


"Sin . . . exceeding sinful." — Romans vii. 13.

BEWARE of light thoughts of sin. At the time of conversion, the conscience is so tender that we are afraid of the slightest sin. Young converts have a holy timidity, a godly fear, lest they should offend against God. But alas ! very soon the fine bloom upon these first ripe fruits is removed by the rough handling of the surrounding world ; the sensitive plant of young piety turns into a willow in after life, too pliant, too easily yielding. It is sadly true, that even a Christian may grow by degrees so callous, that the sin which once startled him, does not alarm him in the least. By degrees men get familiar with sin. The ear in which the cannon has been booming, will not notice slight sounds. At first a little sin startles us ; but soon we say, " Is it not a little one ? " Then there comes another, larger, and then another, until by degrees we begin to regard sin as but a little ill ; and then follows an unholy presumption : " We have not fallen into open sin. True, we tripped a little, but we stood upright in the main. We may have uttered one unholy word, but as for the most of our conversation, it has been consistent." So we palliate sin ; we throw a cloak over it ; we call it by dainty names. Christian, beware how thou thinkest lightly of sin. Take heed lest thou fall by little and little. Sin, a *little* thing ? Is it not a poison ? Who knows its deadliness ? Sin, a little thing ? Do not the little foxes spoil the grapes ? Doth not the tiny coral insect build a rock which wrecks a navy ? Do not little strokes fell lofty oaks ? Will not continual droppings wear away stones ? Sin, a little thing ? It girded the Redeemer's head with thorns, and pierced His heart ! It made *Him* suffer anguish, bitterness, and woe. Could you weigh the least sin in the scales of eternity, you would fly from it as from a serpent, and abhor *the least appearance of evil*. Look upon all sin as that which crucified the Saviour, and you will see it to be " exceeding sinful."

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor." — Matthew v. 43.

LOVE thy neighbor. Perhaps he rolls in riches, and thou art poor, and living in thy little cot side by side with his lordly mansion; thou seest every day his estates, his fine linen, and his sumptuous banquets; God has given him these gifts; covet not his wealth, and think no hard thoughts concerning him. Be content with thine own lot, if thou canst not better it; but do not look upon thy neighbor, and wish that he were as thyself. Love him, and then thou wilt not envy him. Mayhap, on the other hand, thou art rich, and near thee reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbors. Own that thou art bound to love them. The world calls them thy inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are far more thine equals than thine inferiors, for "God hath made of one blood all people that dwell upon the face of the earth." It is thy coat which is better than theirs, but thou art by no means better than they. They are men, and what art thou more than that? Take heed that thou love thy neighbor even though he be in rags, or sunken in the depths of poverty. But, perhaps, you say, "I cannot love my neighbors, because for all I do they return ingratitude and contempt." So much the more room for the heroism of love. Wouldst thou be a feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? He who dares the most, shall win the most; and if rough be thy path of love, tread it boldly, still loving thy neighbors through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads; and if they be hard to please, seek not to please *them*, but to please *thy Master*; and remember, if *they* spurn thy love, thy Master hath not spurned it, and thy deed is as acceptable to Him as if it had been acceptable to them. Love thy neighbor, for in so doing thou art following in the footsteps of Christ.

“Why sit we here until we die?” — 2 Kings vii. 3.

EAR reader, this little book was mainly intended for the edification of believers; but if you are yet unsaved, our heart yearns over you; and we would fain say a word which may be blessed to you. Open your Bible, and read the story of the lepers, and mark their position, which was much the same as yours. If you remain where you are you must perish; if you go to Jesus you can but die. “Nothing venture, nothing win,” is the old proverb, and in your case the venture is no great one. If you sit still in sullen despair, no one can pity you when your ruin comes; but if you die with mercy sought, if such a thing were possible, you would be the object of universal sympathy. None escape who refuse to look to Jesus; but you know that, at any rate, some are saved who believe in Him, for certain of your own acquaintances have received mercy: then why not you? The Ninevites said, “Who can tell?” Act upon the same hope, and try the Lord’s mercy. To perish is so awful, that if there were but a straw to catch at, the instinct of self-preservation should lead you to stretch out your hand. We have thus been talking to you on your own unbelieving ground; we would now assure you, as from the Lord, that if you seek Him He will be found of you. Jesus casts out none who come unto Him. You shall not perish if you trust Him; on the contrary, you shall find treasure far richer than the poor lepers gathered in Syria’s deserted camp. May the Holy Spirit embolden you to go at once, and you shall not believe in vain. When you are saved yourself, publish the good news to others. Hold not your peace; tell the king’s household first, and unite with them in fellowship; let the porter of the city, the minister, be informed of your discovery, and then proclaim the good news in every place. The Lord save thee ere the sun goes down this day.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

1 Corinthians x. 12.

IT is a curious fact, that there is such a thing as being proud of grace. A man says, "I have great faith; I shall not fall; poor little faith may, but I never shall." "I have fervent love," says another; "I can stand; there is no danger of my going astray." He who boasts of grace has little grace to boast of. Some who do this imagine that their graces can keep them, knowing not that the stream must flow constantly from the fountain head, or else the brook will soon be dry. If a continuous stream of oil comes not to the lamp, though it burn brightly to-day, it will smoke to-morrow, and noxious will be its scent. Take heed that thou gloriest not in thy graces, but let all thy glorying and confidence be in Christ and His strength, for only so canst thou be kept from falling. Be much more in prayer. Spend longer time in holy adoration. Read the Scriptures more earnestly and constantly. Watch your lives more carefully. Live nearer to God. Take the best examples for your pattern. Let your conversation be redolent of heaven. Let your hearts be perfumed with affection for men's souls. So live that men may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him; and when that happy day shall come, when He whom you love shall say, "Come up higher," may it be your happiness to hear Him say, "Thou hast fought a good fight, thou hast finished thy course, and henceforth there is laid up for thee a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away." On, Christian, with care and caution! On, with holy fear and trembling! On, with faith and confidence in Jesus alone, and let your constant petition be, "Uphold me according to Thy word." He is able, and He alone, "to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

“ Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” — 2 Tim. ii. 1.

CHRIST has grace without measure in Himself, but He hath not retained it for Himself. As the reservoir empties itself into the pipes, so hath Christ emptied out His grace for His people. “ Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” He seems only to have, in order to dispense to us. He stands like the fountain, always flowing, but only running in order to supply the empty pitchers and the thirsty lips which draw nigh unto it. Like a tree, He bears sweet fruit, not to hang on boughs, but to be gathered by those who need. Grace, whether its work be to pardon, to cleanse, to preserve, to strengthen, to enlighten, to quicken, or to restore, is ever to be had from Him freely and without price; nor is there one form of the work of grace which He has not bestowed upon His people. As the blood of the body, though flowing from the heart, belongs equally to every member, so the influences of grace are the inheritance of every saint united to the Lamb; and herein there is a sweet communion between Christ and His Church, inasmuch as they both receive the same grace. Christ is the head upon which the oil is first poured; but the same oil runs to the very skirts of the garments, so that the meanest saint has an unction of the same costly moisture as that which fell upon the head. This is true communion when the sap of grace flows from the stem to the branch, and when it is perceived that the stem itself is sustained by the very nourishment which feeds the branch. As we day by day receive grace from Jesus, and more constantly recognize it as coming from Him, we shall behold Him in communion with us, and enjoy the felicity of communion with Him. Let us make daily use of our riches, and ever repair to Him as our own Lord in covenant, taking from Him the supply of all we need with as much boldness as men take money from their own purse.

"I am a stranger with thee." — Psalm xxxix. 12.

YES, O Lord, *with Thee*, but not *to Thee*. All my natural alienation from Thee, Thy grace has effectually removed; and now, in fellowship with Thyself, I walk through this sinful world as a pilgrim in a foreign country. *Thou* art a stranger in Thine own world. Man forgets Thee, dishonors Thee, sets up new laws and alien customs, and knows Thee not. When Thy dear Son came unto His own, His own received Him not. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. Never was foreigner so speckled a bird among the denizens of any land, as Thy beloved Son among His mother's brethren. It is no marvel, then, if I, who live the life of Jesus, should be unknown and a stranger here below. Lord, I would not be a citizen where Jesus was an alien. His pierced hand has loosened the cords which once bound my soul to earth, and now I find myself a stranger in the land. My speech seems to these Babylonians among whom I dwell, an outlandish tongue; my manners are singular, and my actions are strange. A Tartar would be more at home in Cheapside than I could ever be in the haunts of sinners. But here is the sweetness of my lot; I am a stranger *with Thee*. Thou art my fellow-sufferer, my fellow-pilgrim. Oh! what joy to wander in such blessed society! My heart burns within me by the way when thou dost speak to me, and though I be a sojourner, I am far more blessed than those who sit on thrones, and far more at home than those who dwell in their ceiled houses.

"To me remains nor place, nor time:
My country is in every clime;
I can be calm and free from care
On any shore, since God is there.

While place we seek, or place we shun,
The soul finds happiness in none:
But with a God to guide our way,
'Tis equal joy to go or stay."

“Remember the poor.” — Galatians ii. 10.

WHY does God allow so many of His children to be poor? He could make them all rich if he pleased; He could lay bags of gold at their doors; He could send them a large annual income; or He could scatter round their houses abundance of provisions, as once He made the quails lie in heaps round the camp of Israel, and rained bread out of heaven to feed them. There is no necessity that they should be poor, except that He sees it to be best. “The cattle upon a thousand hills are His” — He could supply them; He could make the richest, the greatest, and the mightiest bring all their power and riches to the feet of His children, for the hearts of all men are in His control. But He does not choose to do so; He allows them to suffer want, He allows them to pine in penury and obscurity. Why is this? There are many reasons: one is, *to give us, who are favored with enough, an opportunity of showing our love to Jesus.* We show our love to Christ when we sing of Him, and when we pray to Him; but if there were no sons of need in the world, we should lose the sweet privilege of evidencing our love, by ministering, in alms-giving, to His poorer brethren; He has ordained that thus we should prove that our love standeth not in word only, but in deed and in truth. If we truly love Christ, we shall care for those who are loved by Him. Those who are dear to Him will be dear to us. Let us then look upon it not as a duty, but as a privilege, to relieve the poor of the Lord’s flock — remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Surely this assurance is sweet enough, and this motive strong enough, to lead us to help others with a willing hand and a loving heart — recollecting that all we do for His people is graciously accepted by Christ as done to Himself.

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."
Gal. iii. 26.

THE fatherhood of God is common to all His children. Ah! Little-faith, you have often said, "O that I had the courage of Great-heart, that I could wield His sword and be as valiant as He! But, alas, I stumble at every straw, and a shadow makes me afraid." List thee, Little-faith. Great-heart is God's child, and you are God's child too; and Great-heart is not one whit more God's child than you are. Peter and Paul, the highly-favored apostles, were of the family of the Most High; and so are you also; the weak Christian is as much a child of God as the strong one.

"This covenant stands secure,
Though earth's old pillars bow;
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now."

All the names are in the same family register. One may have more grace than another, but God, our heavenly Father, has the same tender heart towards all. One may do more mighty works, and may bring more glory to his Father, but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of heaven is as much the child of God as he who stands among the king's mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, "Our Father."

Yet, while we are comforted by knowing this, let us not rest contented with weak faith, but ask, like the Apostles, to have it increased. However feeble our faith may be, if it be real faith in Christ, we shall reach heaven at last, but we shall not honor our Master much on our pilgrimage, neither shall we abound in joy and peace. If, then, you would live to Christ's glory, and be happy in His service, seek to be filled with the spirit of adoption more and more completely, till perfect love shall cast out fear.

"Strong in faith." — Romans iv. 20.

CHRISTIAN, take good care of thy faith ; for recollect *faith is the only way whereby thou canst obtain blessings.* If we want blessings from God, nothing can fetch them down but faith. Prayer cannot draw down answers from God's throne except it be the earnest prayer of the man who believes. Faith is the angelic messenger between the soul and the Lord Jesus in glory. Let that angel be withdrawn, we can neither send up prayer, nor receive the answers. Faith is the telegraphic wire which links earth and heaven — on which God's messages of love fly so fast, that before we call He answers, and while we are yet speaking He hears us. But if that telegraphic wire of faith be snapped, how can we receive the promise? Am I in trouble? — I can obtain help for trouble by faith. Am I beaten about by the enemy? — my soul on her dear Refuge leans by faith. But take faith away — in vain I call to God. There is no road betwixt my soul and heaven. In the deepest winter-time faith is a road on which the horses of prayer may travel — ay, and all the better for the biting frost ; but blockade the road, and how can we communicate with the Great King? Faith links me with divinity. Faith clothes me with the power of God. Faith engages on my side the omnipotence of Jehovah. Faith insures every attribute of God in my defence. It helps me defy the hosts of hell. It makes me march triumphant over the necks of my enemies. But without faith how can I receive anything of the Lord? Let not him that wavereth — who is like a wave of the sea — expect that he will receive anything of God! O, then, Christian, watch well thy faith ; for with it thou canst win all things, however poor thou art, but without it thou canst obtain nothing. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

"My beloved." — Canticles ii. 8.

HIS was a golden name which the ancient Church in her most joyous moments was wont to give to the Anointed of the Lord. When the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in her land, *her* love-note was sweeter than either, as she sung, "*My beloved* is mine, and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies." Ever in her song of songs doth she call Him by that delightful name, "*My beloved!*" Even in the long winter, when idolatry had withered the garden of the Lord, her prophets found space to lay aside the burden of the Lord for a little season, and to say, as Esaias did, "Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching His vineyard." Though the saints had never seen His face, though as yet He was not made flesh, nor had dwelt among us, nor had man beheld His glory, yet He was the consolation of Israel, the hope and joy of all the chosen, the "*beloved*" of all those who were upright before the Most High. We, in the summer days of the Church, are also wont to speak of Christ as the best beloved of our soul, and to feel that He is very precious, the "*chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.*" So true is it that the Church loves Jesus, and claims Him as her beloved, that the apostle dares to defy the whole universe to separate her from the love of Christ, and declares that neither persecutions, distress, affliction, peril, or the sword have been able to do it; nay, he joyously boasts, "*In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.*"

O that we knew more of Thee, Thou ever precious One!

"My sole possession is Thy love;
In earth beneath, or heaven above,
I have no other store;
And though with fervent suit I pray,
And importune Thee day by day,
I ask Thee nothing more."

"Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." — John xvi. 32.

HEW had fellowship with the sorrows of Gethsemane. The majority of the disciples were not sufficiently advanced in grace to be admitted to behold the mysteries of "the agony." Occupied with the passover feast at their own houses, they represent the many who live upon the letter, but are mere babes as to the spirit of the gospel. To twelve, nay, to eleven only, was the privilege given to enter Gethsemane and see "this great sight." Out of the eleven, eight were left at a distance; they had fellowship, but not of that intimate sort to which men greatly beloved are admitted. Only three highly favored ones could approach the veil of our Lord's mysterious sorrow; within that veil even these must not intrude; a stone's-cast distance must be left between. He must tread the wine-press *alone*, and of the people there must be none with Him. Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, represent the few eminent, experienced saints, who may be written down as "Fathers;" these having done business on great waters, can in some degree measure the huge Atlantic waves of their Redeemer's passion. To some selected spirits it is given, for the good of others, and to strengthen them for future, special, and tremendous conflict, to enter the inner circle and hear the pleadings of the suffering High Priest; they have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and are made conformable unto His death. Yet even these cannot penetrate the secret places of the Saviour's woe. "Thine unknown sufferings," is the remarkable expression of the Greek liturgy: there was an inner chamber in our Master's grief, shut out from human knowledge and fellowship. There Jesus is "*left alone*." Here Jesus was more than ever an "unspeakable gift." Is not Watts right when he sings —

"And all the unknown joys he gives
Were bought with agonies unknown" ?

“And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed.”
Matthew xxvi. 39.

THERE are several instructive features in our Saviour's prayer in His hour of trial. It was *lonely prayer*. He withdrew even from His three favored disciples. Believer, be much in solitary prayer, especially in times of trial. Family prayer, social prayer, prayer in the Church, will not suffice; these are very precious, but the best beaten spice will smoke in your censer in your private devotions, where no ear hears but God's.

It was *humble prayer*. Luke says He knelt; but another evangelist says He “fell on His face.” Where, then, must be **THY** place, thou humble servant of the great Master? What dust and ashes should cover *thy* head! Humility gives us good foot-hold in prayer. There is no hope of prevalence with God unless we abase ourselves that He may exalt us in due time.

It was *filial prayer*. “Abba, Father.” You will find it a stronghold in the day of trial to plead your adoption. You have no rights as a subject, you have forfeited them by your treason; but nothing can forfeit a child's right to a father's protection. Be not afraid to say, “My Father, hear my cry.”

Observe that it was *persevering prayer*. He prayed three times. Cease not until you prevail. Be as the importunate widow, whose continual coming earned what her first supplication could not win. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Lastly, it was *the prayer of resignation*. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Yield, and God yields. Let it be as God wills, and God will determine for the best. Be thou content to leave thy prayer in His hands, who knows when to give, and how to give, and what to give, and what to withhold. So pleading, earnestly, importunately, yet with humility and resignation, thou shalt surely prevail.

"His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." — Luke xxii. 44.

THE mental pressure arising from our Lord's struggle with temptation, so forced His frame to an unnatural excitement, that His pores sent forth great drops of blood which fell down to the ground.. This proves *how tremendous must have been the weight of sin* when it was able to crush the Saviour so that He distilled great drops of blood! This demonstrates *the mighty power of His love*. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphor-tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the cross; but see, it giveth forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound. This sets forth *the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings*, since without a lance the blood flowed freely. No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife; it flows spontaneously. No need for the rulers to cry, "Spring up, O well;" of itself it flows in crimson torrents. If men suffer great pain of mind apparently the blood rushes to the heart. The cheeks are pale; a fainting fit comes on; the blood has gone inward, as if to nourish the inner man while passing through its trial. But see our Saviour in His agony; He is so utterly oblivious of self, that instead of His agony driving His blood to the heart to nourish Himself, it drives it outward to bedew the earth. The agony of Christ, inasmuch as it pours Him out upon the ground, pictures the fulness of the offering which He made for men.

Do we not perceive how intense must have been the wrestling through which He passed, and will we not hear its voice to us? "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Behold the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, and sweat even to blood rather than yield to the great tempter of your souls.

"He was heard in that he feared." — Hebrews v. 7.

WOULD this fear arise from the infernal suggestion *that He was utterly forsaken?* There may be sterner trials than this, but surely it is *one* of the worst to be utterly forsaken. "See," said Satan, "thou hast a friend nowhere! Thy Father hath shut up the bowels of His compassion against thee. Not an angel in His courts will stretch out his hand to help Thee. All heaven is alienated from Thee. Thou art left alone. See the companions with whom Thou hast taken sweet counsel; what are they worth? Son of Mary, see there Thy brother James, see there Thy loved disciple John, and Thy bold apostle Peter: how the cowards sleep when Thou art in Thy sufferings! Lo! Thou hast no friend left in heaven or earth. All hell is against Thee. I have stirred up mine infernal den. I have sent my missives throughout all regions, summoning every prince of darkness to set upon Thee this night, and we will spare no arrows, we will use all our infernal might to overwhelm Thee; and what wilt Thou do, Thou solitary one?" It may be, this was the temptation; we think it was, because the appearance of an angel unto Him, strengthening Him, removed that fear. He was heard in that He feared; He was no more alone, but heaven was with Him. It may be that this is the reason of His coming three times to His disciples — as Hart puts it —

"Backwards and forwards thrice He ran,
As if He sought some help from man."

He would see for Himself whether it were really true that all men had forsaken Him; He found them all asleep; but perhaps He gained some faint comfort from the thought that they were sleeping, not from treachery, but from sorrow; the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak. At any rate He was heard in that He feared. Jesus was heard in His deepest woe; my soul, thou shalt be heard also.

"Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" — Luke xxii. 48.

THE kisses of an enemy are deceitful. Let me be on my guard when the world puts on a loving face, for it will, if possible, betray me, as it did my Master, with a kiss. Whenever a man is about to stab religion, he usually professes very great reverence for it. Let me beware of the sleek-faced hypocrisy which is armor-bearer to heresy and infidelity. Knowing the deceivableness of unrighteousness, let me be wise as a serpent to detect and avoid the designs of the enemy. The young man, void of understanding, was led astray by the kiss of the strange woman: may my soul be so graciously instructed all this day, that "the much fair speech" of the world may have no effect upon me! Holy Spirit, let me not, a poor frail son of man, be betrayed with a kiss!

But what if I should be guilty of the same accursed sin as Judas, that son of perdition? I have been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus; I am a member of His visible Church; I sit at the communion table: all these are so many kisses of my lips. Am I sincere in them? If not, I am a base traitor. Do I live in the world as carelessly as others do, and yet make a profession of being a follower of Jesus? Then I must expose religion to ridicule, and lead men to speak evil of the holy name by which I am called. Surely if I act thus inconsistently, I am a Judas, and it were better for me that I had never been born. Dare I hope that I am clear in this matter? Then, O Lord, keep me so. O Lord, make me sincere and true. Preserve me from every false way. Never let me betray my Saviour. I do love Thee, Jesus, and though I often grieve Thee, yet I would desire to abide faithful even unto death. O God, forbid that I should be a high-soaring professor, and then fall at last into the lake of fire, because I betrayed my Master with a kiss.

"Jesus said unto them, If ye seek Me, let these go their way." —
John xviii. 8.

MARK, my soul, the care which Jesus manifested, even in His hour of trial, towards the sheep of His hand! The ruling passion is strong in death. He resigns Himself to the enemy, but He interposes a word of power to set His disciples free. As to Himself, like a sheep before her shearers, He is dumb, and openeth not His mouth, but for His disciples' sake He speaks with Almighty energy. Herein is love, constant, self-forgetting, faithful love. But is there not far more here than is to be found upon the surface? Have we not the very soul and spirit of the atonement in these words? The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep, and pleads that they must therefore go free. The Surety is bound, and justice demands that those for whom He stands a substitute should go their way. In the midst of Egypt's bondage, that voice rings as a word of power, *"Let these go their way."* Out of the slavery of sin and Satan the redeemed must come. In every cell of the dungeons of Despair, the sound is echoed, *"Let these go their way,"* and forth come Despondency and Much-afraid. Satan hears the well-known voice, and lifts his foot from the neck of the fallen; and Death hears it, and the grave opens her gates to let the dead arise. *Their way* is one of progress, holiness, triumph, glory, and none shall dare to stay them in it. No lion shall be on their way, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon. "The hind of the morning" has drawn the cruel hunters upon himself, and now the most timid roes and hinds of the field may graze at perfect peace among the lilies of his loves. The thunder-cloud has burst over the Cross of Calvary, and the pilgrims of Zion shall never be smitten by the bolts of vengeance. Come, my heart, rejoice in the immunity which thy Redeemer has secured thee, and bless his name all the day, and every day.

"Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." — Matt. xxvi. 56.

HE never deserted them, but they, in cowardly fear of their lives, fled from Him in the very beginning of His sufferings. This is but one instructive instance of the frailty of all believers if left to themselves; they are but sheep at the best, and they flee when the wolf cometh. They had all been warned of the danger, and had promised to die rather than leave their Master; and yet they were seized with sudden panic, and took to their heels. It may be that I, at the opening of this day, have braced up my mind to bear a trial for the Lord's sake, and I imagine myself to be certain to exhibit perfect fidelity; but let me be very jealous of myself, lest, having the same evil heart of unbelief, I should depart from my Lord as the apostles did. It is one thing to promise, and quite another to perform. It would have been to their eternal honor to have stood at Jesus' side right manfully: they fled from honor; may I be kept from imitating them! Where else could they have been so safe as near their Master, who could presently call for twelve legions of angels? They fled from their true safety. O God, let me not play the fool also. Divine grace can make the coward brave. The smoking flax can flame forth like fire on the altar when the Lord wills it. These very apostles, who were timid as hares, grew to be bold as lions after the Spirit had descended upon them, and even so the Holy Spirit can make my recreant spirit brave to confess my Lord, and witness for His truth.

What anguish must have filled the Saviour as He saw His friends so faithless! This was one bitter ingredient in His cup; but that cup is drained dry; let me not put another drop in it. If I forsake my Lord, I shall crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame. Keep me, O blessed Spirit, from an end so shameful!

"The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." — Eph. iii. 19.

THE love of Christ in its sweetness, its fulness, its greatness, its faithfulness, passeth all human comprehension. Where shall language be found which shall describe His matchless, His unparalleled love towards the children of men? It is so vast and boundless that, as the swallow but skimmeth the water, and diveth not into its depths, so all descriptive words but touch the surface, while depths immeasurable lie beneath. Well might the poet say,

"O love, thou fathomless abyss!"

for this love of Christ is indeed measureless and fathomless; none can attain unto it. Before we can have any right idea of the love of Jesus, we must understand His previous glory in its height of majesty, and His incarnation upon the earth in all its depths of shame. But who can tell us the majesty of Christ? When He was enthroned in the highest heavens He was very God of very God; by Him were the heavens made, and all the hosts thereof. His own almighty arm upheld the spheres; the praises of cherubim and seraphim perpetually surrounded Him; the full chorus of the Hallelujahs of the universe unceasingly flowed to the foot of His throne: He reigned supreme above all His creatures, God over all, blessed forever. Who can tell His height of glory then? And who, on the other hand, can tell how low He descended? To be a man was something, to be a man of sorrows was far more; to bleed, and die, and suffer, these were much for Him who was the Son of God; but to suffer such unparalleled agony — to endure a death of shame and desertion by His Father, this is a depth of condescending love which the most inspired mind must utterly fail to fathom. Herein is love! and truly it is love that "passeth knowledge." O let this love fill our hearts with adoring gratitude, and lead us to practical manifestations of its power!

"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." — Hebrews v. 8.

WE are told that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering; therefore we who are sinful, and who are far from being perfect, must not wonder if we are called to pass through suffering too. Shall the head be crowned with thorns, and shall the other members of the body be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Christ pass through seas of His own blood to win the crown, and are we to walk to heaven dryshod in silver slippers? No, our Master's experience teaches us that suffering is necessary, and the true-born child of God must not, would not, escape it if he might. But there is one very comforting thought in the fact of Christ's "being made perfect through suffering" — it is, that He can have complete sympathy with us. "He is not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities." In this sympathy of Christ we find a sustaining power. One of the early martyrs said, "I can bear it all, for Jesus suffered, and He suffers in me now; He sympathizes with me, and this makes me strong." Believer, lay hold of this thought in all times of agony. Let the thought of Jesus strengthen you as you follow in His steps. Find a sweet support in His sympathy; and remember that to suffer is an honorable thing — to suffer for Christ is glory. The Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to do this. Just so far as the Lord shall give us grace to suffer *for* Christ, to suffer *with* Christ, just so far does He honor us. The jewels of a Christian are his afflictions. The regalia of the kings whom God hath anointed are their troubles, their sorrows, and their griefs. Let us not, therefore, shun being honored. Let us not turn aside from being exalted. Griefs exalt us, and troubles lift us up. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

"He was numbered with the transgressors." — Isaiah liii. 12.

WHAT did Jesus suffer Himself to be enrolled amongst sinners? This wonderful condescension was justified by many powerful reasons. *In such a character He could the better become their advocate.* In some trials there is an identification of the counsellor with the client; nor can they be looked upon in the eye of the law as apart from one another. Now, when the sinner is brought to the bar, Jesus appears there Himself. *He* stands to answer the accusation. He points to His side, His hands, His feet, and challenges Justice to bring anything against the sinners whom He represents; He pleads His blood, and pleads so triumphantly, being numbered with them, and having a part with them, that the Judge proclaims, "Let them go their way; deliver them from going down into the pit, for He hath found a ransom." Our Lord Jesus was numbered with the transgressors in order that they might *feel their hearts drawn towards Him.* Who can be afraid of one who is written in the same list with us? Surely we may come boldly to Him, and confess our guilt. He who is numbered with us cannot condemn us. Was He not put down in the transgressor's list *that we might be written in the red roll of the saints?* He was holy, and written among the holy: we were guilty, and numbered among the guilty. He transfers His name from yonder list to this black indictment, and our names are taken from the indictment, and written in the roll of acceptance, for there is a complete transfer made between Jesus and His people. All our estate of misery and sin Jesus has taken; and all that Jesus has comes to us. His righteousness, His blood, and everything that He hath, He gives us as our dowry. Rejoice, believer, in your union to Him who was numbered among the transgressors; and prove that you are truly saved by being manifestly numbered with those who are new creatures in Him.

"With His stripes we are healed."—Isaiah liii. 5.

PILATE delivered our Lord to the lictors to be scourged. The Roman scourge was a most dreadful instrument of torture. It was made of the sinews of oxen, and sharp bones were intertwined every here and there among the sinews; so that every time the lash came down these pieces of bone inflicted fearful laceration, and tore off the flesh from the bone. The Saviour was, no doubt, bound to the column, and thus beaten. He had been beaten before; but this of the Roman lictors was probably the most severe of His flagellations. My soul, stand here and weep over his poor stricken body.

Believer in Jesus, can you gaze upon Him without tears, as He stands before you the mirror of agonizing love? He is at once fair as the lily for innocence, and red as the rose with the crimson of His own blood. As we feel the sure and blessed healing which His stripes have wrought in us, does not our heart melt at once with love and grief? If ever we have loved our Lord Jesus, surely we must feel that affection glowing now within our bosoms.

"See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty's hands,
And spit in their Creator's face.
With thorns His temples gored and gashed
Send streams of blood from every part;
His back's with knotted scourges lashed,
But sharper scourges tear His heart."

We would fain go to our chambers and weep; but, since our business calls us away, we will first pray our Beloved to print the image of His bleeding self upon the tablets of our hearts all the day, and at nightfall we will return to commune with Him, and sorrow that our sins should have cost Him so dear.