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*"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers."* — Cant. v. 13.

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**W**HEN, the flowery month is come! March winds and April showers have done their work, and the earth is all bedecked with beauty. Come, my soul, put on thine holiday attire, and go forth to gather garlands of heavenly thoughts. Thou knowest whither to betake thyself, for to thee the "beds of spices" are well known, and thou hast so often smelt the perfume of the "sweet flowers," that thou wilt go at once to thy well-beloved and find all loveliness, all joy in Him. That cheek once so rudely smitten with a rod, oft bedewed with tears of sympathy, and then defiled with spittle — that cheek, as it smiles with mercy, is as fragrant aromatic to my heart. Thou didst not hide Thy face from shame and spitting, O Lord Jesus, and therefore I will find my dearest delight in praising Thee. Those cheeks were furrowed by the plough of grief, and crimsoned with red lines of blood from Thy thorn-crowned temples; such marks of love unbounded cannot but charm my soul far more than "pillars of perfume." If I may not see the whole of His face, I would behold His cheeks, for the least glimpse of Him is exceedingly refreshing to my spiritual sense, and yields a variety of delights. In Jesus I find not only fragrance, but a bed of spices; not one flower, but all manner of sweet flowers. He is to me my rose and my lily, my heart's-ease and my cluster of camphor. When he is with me, it is May all the year round, and my soul goes forth to wash her happy face in the morning-dew of His grace, and to solace herself with the singing of the birds of His promises. Precious Lord Jesus, let me in very deed know the blessedness which dwells in abiding, unbroken fellowship with Thee. I am a poor worthless one, whose cheek Thou hast deigned to kiss. O let me kiss Thee, in return, with the kisses of my lips.



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*"I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world."*  
John xvii. 15.

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**I**T is a sweet and blessed event which will occur to all believers in God's own time — the going home to be with Jesus. In a few more years the Lord's soldiers, who are now fighting "the good fight of faith," will have done with conflict, and have entered into the joy of their Lord. But although Christ prays that His people may eventually be with Him where He is, He does not ask that they may be taken at once away from this world to heaven. He wishes them to stay here. Yet how frequently does the wearied pilgrim put up the prayer, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest!" but Christ does not pray like that; He leaves us in His Father's hands, until, like shocks of corn fully ripe, we shall each be gathered into our Master's garner. Jesus does not plead for our instant removal by death, for to abide in the flesh is needful for others, if not profitable for ourselves. He asks that we may be kept from evil, but He never asks for us to be admitted to the inheritance in glory till we are of full age. Christians often want to die when they have any trouble. Ask them why, and they tell you, "Because we would be with the Lord." We fear it is not so much because they are longing to be with the Lord, as because they desire to get rid of their troubles; else they would feel the same wish to die at other times, when not under the pressure of trial. They want to go home, not so much for the Saviour's company, as to be at rest. Now it is quite right to desire to depart, if we can do it in the same spirit that Paul did, because to be with Christ is far better; but the wish to escape from trouble is a selfish one. Rather let your care and wish be to glorify God by your life here as long as He pleases, even though it be in the midst of toil, and conflict, and suffering, and leave Him to say when "it is enough."



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*"In the world ye shall have tribulation."* — John xvi. 33. . . .

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**N**ERT thou asking the reason of this, believer? Look *upward* to thy heavenly Father, and behold Him pure and holy. Dost thou know that thou art one day to be like Him? Wilt thou easily be conformed to His image? Wilt thou not require much refining in the furnace of affliction to purify thee? Will it be an easy thing to get rid of thy corruptions, and make thee perfect, even as thy Father which is in heaven is perfect? Next, Christian, turn thine eye *downward*. Dost thou know what foes thou hast beneath thy feet? Thou wast once a servant of Satan, and no king will willingly lose his subjects. Dost thou think that Satan will let thee alone? No, he will be always at thee, for he "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Expect trouble therefore, Christian, when thou lookest beneath thee. Then look *around thee*. Where art thou? Thou art in an enemy's country, a stranger and a sojourner. The world is not thy friend. If it be, then thou art not God's friend, for he who is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. Be assured that thou shalt find foemen everywhere. When thou sleepest, think that thou art resting on the battle-field; when thou walkest, suspect an ambush in every hedge. As mosquitos are said to bite strangers more than natives, so will the trials of earth be sharpest to you. Lastly, look *within thee*, into thine own heart, and observe what is there. Sin and *self* are still within. Ah! if thou hadst no devil to tempt thee, no enemies to fight thee, and no world to insnare thee, thou wouldst still find in thyself evil enough to be a sore trouble to thee, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Expect trouble then, but despond not on account of it, for God is with thee, to help and to strengthen thee. He hath said, "I will be with thee in trouble; I will deliver thee and honor thee."



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*"Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?"*

Jer. xvi. 20.

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**N**ONE great besetting sin of ancient Israel was idolatry, and the spiritual Israel are vexed with a tendency to the same folly. Remphan's star shines no longer, and the women weep no more for Thammuz; but Mammon still intrudes his golden calf, and the shrines of pride are not forsaken. Self, in various forms, struggles to subdue the chosen ones under its dominion, and the flesh sets up its altars wherever it can find space for them. Favorite children are often the cause of much sin in believers; the Lord is grieved when he sees us doting upon them above measure: they will live to be as great a curse to us as Absalom was to David, or they will be taken from us to leave our homes desolate. If Christians desire to grow thorns to stuff their sleepless pillows, let them dote upon their dear ones.

It is truly said that "they are no gods," for the objects of our foolish love are very doubtful blessings; the solace which they yield us now is dangerous, and the help which they can give us in the hour of trouble is little indeed. Why, then, are we so bewitched with vanities? We pity the poor heathen who adores a god of stone, and yet worship a god of gold. Where is the vast superiority between a god of flesh and one of wood? The principle, the sin, the folly is the same in either case, only that in ours the crime is more aggravated, because we have more light, and sin in the face of it. The heathen bows to a false deity, but the true God he has never known; we commit two evils, inasmuch as we forsake the living God and turn unto idols. May the Lord purge us all from this grievous iniquity.

"The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
And worship only Thee."



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*"I will be their God, and they shall be My people."* — 2 Cor. vi. 16.

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**W**HAT a sweet title — "My people"! What a cheering revelation — "their God"! How much of meaning is couched in those two words, "My people"! Here is *speciality*. The whole world is God's; the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's, and He reigneth among the children of men; but, of those whom He hath chosen, whom He hath purchased to Himself, He saith what He saith not of others — "My people." In this word there is the idea of *propriety*. In a special manner the "Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." All the nations upon earth are His; the whole world is in His power; yet are His people, His chosen, more especially His possession; for He has done more for them than others; He has bought them with his blood; He has brought them nigh to Himself; He has set His great heart upon them; He has loved them with an everlasting love, a love which many waters cannot quench, and which the revolutions of time shall never suffice in the least degree to diminish. Dear friends, can you, by faith, see yourselves in that number? Can you look up to heaven, and say, "My Lord and my God; mine by that sweet *relationship* which entitles me to call Thee Father; mine by that hallowed *fellowship* which I delight to hold with Thee when Thou art pleased to manifest Thyself unto me as Thou dost not unto the world?" Canst thou read the Book of Inspiration, and find there the indentures of thy salvation? Canst thou read thy title writ in precious blood? Canst thou, by humble faith, lay hold of Jesus' garments, and say, "My Christ"? If thou canst, then God saith of thee, and of others like thee, "My people;" for, if God be your God, and Christ your Christ, the Lord has a special, peculiar favor to you; you are the object of His choice, accepted in His beloved Son.



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*"We dwell in Him."* — 1 John iv. 13.

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 O you want a house for your soul? Do you ask, "What is the purchase?" It is something less than proud human nature will like to give. It is without money and without price. Ah! you would like to pay a respectable rent! You would love to do something to win Christ! Then you cannot have the house, for it is "without price." Will you take my Master's house on a lease for all eternity, with nothing to pay for it, nothing but the ground-rent of loving and serving Him forever? Will you take Jesus, and "dwell in Him"? See, this house is furnished with all you want; it is filled with riches more than you will spend as long as you live. Here you can have intimate communion with Christ, and feast on His love; here are tables well stored with food for you to live on forever; in it, when weary, you can find rest with Jesus; and from it you can look out, and see heaven itself. Will you have the house? Ah! if you are houseless, you will say, "I should like to have the house; but may I have it?" Yes; there is the key—the key is, "Come to Jesus." "But," you say, "I am too shabby for such a house." Never mind; there are garments inside. If you feel guilty and condemned, come; and, though the house is too good for you, Christ will make you good enough for the house by and by. He will wash you and cleanse you, and you will yet be able to sing, "We dwell in Him." Believer! thrice happy art thou to have such a dwelling-place! Greatly privileged thou art, for thou hast a "strong habitation" in which thou art ever safe. And, "dwelling in Him," thou hast not only a perfect and secure house, but an *everlasting* one. When this world shall have melted like a dream, our house shall live, and stand more imperishable than marble, more solid than granite, self-existent as God, for it is God Himself. "We dwell in Him."



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*"Multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all."*—Matt. xii. 15.

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**W**HAT a mass of hideous sickness must have thrust itself under the eye of Jesus! Yet we read not that He was disgusted, but patiently waited on every case. What a singular variety of evils must have met at His feet! What sickening ulcers and putrefying sores! Yet He was ready for every new shape of the monster evil, and was victor over it in every form. Let the arrow fly from what quarter it might, He quenched its fiery power. The heat of fever, or the cold of dropsy; the lethargy of palsy, or the rage of madness; the filth of leprosy, or the darkness of ophthalmia, — all knew the power of His word, and fled at His command. In every corner of the field He was triumphant over evil, and received the homage of delivered captives. He came, He saw, He conquered everywhere. It is even so this morning. Whatever my own case may be, the beloved Physician can heal me; and whatever may be the state of others whom I may remember at this moment in prayer, I may have hope in Jesus that He will be able to heal them of their sins. My child, my friend, my dearest one, I can have hope for each, for all, when I remember the healing power of my Lord; and on my own account, however severe my struggle with sins and infirmities, I may yet be of good cheer. He who on earth walked the hospitals still dispenses His grace, and works wonders among the sons of men: let me go to Him at once in right earnest. Let me praise Him, this morning, as I remember *how* He wrought His spiritual cures, which bring Him most renown. It was by taking upon Himself our sicknesses. "By His stripes we are healed." The Church on earth is full of souls healed by our beloved Physician; and the inhabitants of heaven itself confess that "He healed them all." Come, then, my soul, publish abroad the virtue of His grace, and let it be "to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off."



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*"He that was healed wist not who it was." — John v. 13.*

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**Y**EARS are short to the happy and healthy ; but thirty-eight years of disease must have dragged a very weary length along the life of the poor impotent man.

When Jesus, therefore, healed him by a word, while he lay at the pool of Bethesda, he was delightfully *sensible of a change*. Even so the sinner, who has for weeks and months been paralyzed with despair, and has wearily sighed for salvation, is very conscious of the change when the Lord Jesus speaks the word of power, and gives joy and peace in believing. The evil removed is too great to be removed without our discerning it ; the life imparted is too remarkable to be possessed, and remain inoperative ; and the change wrought is too marvellous not to be perceived. Yet the poor man was *ignorant of the author* of his cure ; he knew not the sacredness of His person, the offices which He sustained, or the errand which brought Him among men. Much ignorance of Jesus may remain in hearts which yet feel the power of His blood. We must not hastily condemn men for lack of knowledge ; but where we can see the faith which saves the soul, we must believe that salvation has been bestowed. The Holy Spirit makes men penitents long before He makes them divines ; and he who believes what he knows shall soon know more clearly what he believes. Ignorance is, however, an evil ; for this poor man was much *tantalized by the Pharisees*, and was quite unable to cope with them. It is good to be able to answer gainsayers ; but we cannot do so if we know not the Lord Jesus clearly, and with understanding. The cure of his ignorance, however, soon followed the cure of his infirmity, for he was *visited by the Lord in the temple* ; and, after that gracious manifestation, he was *found testifying* that "it was Jesus who had made him whole." Lord, if Thou hast saved me, show me Thyself, that I may declare Thee to the sons of men.



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*"Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings." — Eph. i. 3.*

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**A**LL the goodness of the past, the present, and the future, Christ bestows upon His people. In the mysterious ages of the past, the Lord Jesus was His Father's first elect, and in His *election* He gave us an interest, for we were chosen in him from before the foundations of the world. He had from all eternity the prerogatives of *Sonship*, as His Father's only-begotten and well-beloved Son; and He has, in the riches of His grace, by adoption and regeneration, elevated us to Sonship also, so that to us He has given "power to become the sons of God." The *eternal covenant*, based upon suretyship and confirmed by oath, is ours, for our strong consolation and security. In the *everlasting settlements of predestinating wisdom* and omnipotent decree, the eye of the Lord Jesus was ever fixed on us; and we may rest assured that in the whole roll of destiny there is not a line which militates against the interests of His redeemed. The *great betrothal* of the Prince of Glory is ours, for it is to us that He is affianced, as the sacred nuptials shall ere long declare to an assembled universe. The *marvellous incarnation* of the God of heaven, with all the amazing condescension and humiliation which attended it, is ours. The bloody sweat, the scourge, the cross, are ours forever. Whatever blissful consequences flow from *perfect obedience, finished atonement, resurrection, ascension, or intercession*, all are ours by His own gift. Upon His breastplate He is now bearing our names; and in His authoritative pleadings at the throne He remembers our persons and pleads our cause. His *dominion* over principalities and powers, and His absolute majesty in heaven, He employs for the benefit of them who trust in Him. His high estate is as much at our service as was His condition of abasement. He who gave Himself for us in the depths of woe and death, doth not withdraw the grant now that He is enthroned in the highest heavens.



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*"But now is Christ risen from the dead."* — 1 Cor. xv. 20.

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**T**HE whole system of Christianity rests upon the fact that "Christ is risen from the dead;" for, "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain: ye are yet in your sins." The *divinity* of Christ finds its surest proof in His resurrection, since He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It would not be unreasonable to doubt His deity if He had not risen. Moreover, Christ's *sovereignty* depends upon His resurrection, "for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." Again, our *justification*, that choice blessing of the covenant, is linked with Christ's triumphant victory over death and the grave; for "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Nay, more, our very *regeneration* is connected with His resurrection; for we are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And most certainly our *ultimate resurrection* rests here; for "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." If Christ be not risen, then shall we not rise; but if He be risen, then they who are asleep in Christ have not perished, but in their flesh shall surely behold their God. Thus, the silver thread of resurrection runs through all the believer's blessings, from his regeneration onwards to his eternal glory, and binds them together. How important, then, will this glorious fact be in his estimation, and how will he rejoice that beyond a doubt it is established, that "now is Christ risen from the dead"!

"The promise is fulfilled,  
Redemption's work is done,  
Justice with mercy's reconciled,  
For God has raised His Son."



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*"I am with you alway."*—Matthew xxviii. 20.

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**I**T is well there is One who is ever the same, and who is ever with us. It is well there is one stable rock amidst the billows of the sea of life. O my soul, set not thine affections upon rusting, moth-eaten, decaying treasures, but set thine heart upon Him who abides forever faithful to thee. Build not thine house upon the moving quicksands of a deceitful world, but found thy hopes upon this Rock, which, amid descending rain and roaring floods, shall stand immovably secure. My soul, I charge thee, lay up thy treasure in the only secure cabinet; store thy jewels, where thou canst never lose them. Put thine all in Christ: set all thine affections on His person, all thy hope in His merit, all thy trust in His efficacious blood, all thy joy in His presence, and so thou mayst laugh at loss, and defy destruction. Remember that all the flowers in the world's garden fade by turns, and the day cometh when nothing will be left but the black, cold earth. Death's black extinguisher must soon put out thy candle. Oh! how sweet to have sunlight when the candle is gone! The dark flood must soon roll between thee and all thou hast; then wed thine heart to Him who will never leave thee; trust thyself with Him who will go with thee through the black and surging current of death's stream, and who will land thee safely on the celestial shore, and make thee sit with Him in heavenly places forever. Go, sorrowing son of affliction, tell thy secrets to the Friend who sticketh closer than a brother. Trust all thy concerns with Him who never can be taken from thee, who will never leave thee, and who will never let thee leave Him, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." "Lo, I am with you alway," is enough for my soul to live upon, let who will forsake me.



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*“And will manifest myself to Him.” — John xiv. 21.*

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**T**HE Lord Jesus gives special revelations of Himself to His people. Even if Scripture did not declare this, there are many of the children of God who could testify the truth of it from their own experience. They have had manifestations of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in a peculiar manner, such as no mere reading or hearing could afford. In the biographies of eminent saints, you will find many instances recorded in which Jesus has been pleased, in a very special manner, to speak to their souls, and to unfold the wonders of His person; yea, so have their souls been steeped in happiness that they have thought themselves to be in heaven, whereas they were not there, though they were well nigh on the threshold of it — for when Jesus manifests Himself to His people, it is heaven on earth; it is paradise in embryo; it is bliss begun. Especial manifestations of Christ exercise a holy influence on the believer's heart. One effect will be *humility*. If a man says, “I have had such and such spiritual communications, I am a great man,” he has never had any communion with Jesus at all; for “God hath respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knoweth *afar off*.” He does not need to come near them to know them, and will never give them any visits of love. Another effect will be *happiness*; for in God's presence there are pleasures forevermore. *Holiness* will be sure to follow. A man who has no holiness has never had this manifestation. Some men profess a great deal; but we must not believe any one unless we see that his deeds answer to what he says. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” He will not bestow His favors upon the wicked: for while He will not cast away a perfect man, neither will He respect an evil doer. Thus there will be three effects of nearness to Jesus — *humility, happiness, and holiness*. May God give them to thee, Christian!



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*"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."*  
Psalm xxx. 5.

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**C**HRISTIAN! if thou art in a night of trial, think of the morrow; cheer up thy heart with the thought of the coming of thy Lord. Be patient, for

"Lo! He comes with clouds descending."

Be patient! The Husbandman waits until He reaps His harvest. Be patient; for you know who has said, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." If you are never so wretched now, remember

"A few more rolling suns, at most,  
Will land thee on fair Canaan's coast."

Thy head may be crowned with thorny troubles now, but it shall wear a starry crown ere long; thy hand may be filled with cares — it shall sweep the strings of the harp of heaven soon. Thy garments may be soiled with dust now; they shall be white by and by. Wait a little longer. Ah! how despicable our troubles and trials will seem when we look back upon them! Looking at them here in the prospect, they seem immense; but when we get to heaven we shall then

"With transporting joys recount  
The labors of our feet."

Our trials will then seem light and momentary afflictions. Let us go on boldly; if the night be never so dark, the morning cometh, which is more that they can say who are shut up in the darkness of hell. Do you know what it is thus to live on the future — to live on expectation — to antedate heaven? Happy believer, to have so sure, so comforting a hope. It may be all dark now, but it will soon be light; it may be all trial now, but it will soon be all happiness. What matters it though "weeping may endure for a night," when "joy cometh in the morning"?



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*"Joint heirs with Christ."*—Romans viii. 17.

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**T**HE boundless realms of His Father's universe are Christ's by prescriptive right. As "heir of all things," He is the sole proprietor of the vast creation of God, and He has admitted us to claim the whole as ours, by virtue of that deed of joint-heirship which the Lord hath ratified with His chosen people. The golden streets of paradise, the pearly gates, the river of life, the transcendent bliss, and the unutterable glory, are, by our blessed Lord, made over to us for our everlasting possession. All that He has He shares with His people. The crown royal He has placed upon the head of His Church, appointing her a kingdom, and calling her sons a royal priesthood, a generation of priests and kings. He uncrowned Himself that we might have a coronation of glory; He would not sit upon His own throne until He had procured a place upon it for all who overcome by His blood. Crown the head, and the whole body shares the honor. Behold here the reward of every Christian conqueror! Christ's throne, crown, sceptre, palace, treasure, robes, heritage, are yours. Far superior to the jealousy, selfishness, and greed, which admit of no participation of their advantages, Christ deems His happiness completed by His people sharing it. "The glory which thou gavest Me have I given them." "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The smiles of His Father are all the sweeter to Him, because His people share them. The honors of His kingdom are more pleasing, because His people appear with Him in glory. More valuable to Him are His conquests, since they have taught His people to overcome. He delights in His throne, because on it there is a place for them. He rejoices in His royal robes, since over them His skirts are spread. He delights the more in His joy, because He calls them to enter into it.



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*"All that believe are justified."* — Acts xiii. 39.

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**T**HE believer in Christ receives a *present* justification. Faith does not produce this fruit by and by, but *now*. So far as justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ, and accepts Him as its all in all. Are they who stand before the throne of God justified now? — so are we, as truly and as clearly justified as they who walk in white and sing melodious praises to celestial harps. The thief upon the cross was justified the moment that he turned the eye of faith to Jesus; and Paul the aged, after years of service, was not more justified than was the thief with no service at all. We are *to-day* accepted in the Beloved, *to-day* absolved from sin, *to-day* acquitted at the bar of God. O, soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of Esheol's vine which we shall not be able to gather till we enter heaven; but this is a bough which runneth over the wall. This is not as the corn of the land, which we can never eat till we cross the Jordan; but this is part of the manna in the wilderness, a portion of our daily nutriment with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are *now* — even *now* pardoned; even *now* are our sins put away; even *now* we stand in the sight of God accepted, as though we had never been guilty. "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." There is not a sin in the Book of God, even *now*, against one of his people. Who dareth to lay anything to their charge? There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any one believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth. Let present privilege awaken us to present duty, and now, while life lasts, let us spend and be spent for our sweet Lord Jesus.



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*"Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."*—1 Timothy vi. 17.

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**O**UR Lord Jesus is ever giving, and does not for a solitary instant withdraw his hand. As long as there is a vessel of grace not yet full to the brim, the oil shall not be stayed. He is a sun ever-shining; He is manna always falling round the camp; He is a rock in the desert, ever sending out streams of life from His smitten side; the rain of His grace is always dropping; the river of His bounty is ever flowing, and the well-spring of His love is constantly overflowing. As the King can never die, so His grace can never fail. Daily we pluck His fruit, and daily His branches bend down to our hand with a fresh store of mercy. There are seven feast days in His weeks, and as many as are the days, so many are the banquets in His years. Who has ever returned from His door unblessed? Who has ever risen from His table unsatisfied, or from His bosom un-emparadised? His mercies are new every morning and fresh every evening. Who can know the number of His benefits, or recount the list of His bounties. Every sand which drops from the glass of time is but the tardy follower of a myriad of mercies. The wings of our hours are covered with the silver of His kindness, and with the yellow gold of His affection. The river of time bears from the mountains of eternity the golden sands of His favor. The countless stars are but as the standard bearers of a more innumerable host of blessings. Who can count the dust of the benefits which He bestows on Jacob, or tell the number of the fourth part of His mercies towards Israel? How shall my soul extol Him who daily loadeth us with benefits, and who crowneth us with loving kindness? O that my praise could be as ceaseless as His bounty! O miserable tongue, how canst thou be silent? Wake up, I pray thee, lest I call thee no more my glory, but my shame. "Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake right early."



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*"So to walk even as He walked."*—1 John. ii. 6.

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**W**HY should Christians imitate Christ? They should do it for *their own sakes*. If they desire to be in a healthy state of soul—if they would escape the sickness of sin, and enjoy the vigor of growing grace, let Jesus be their model. For their own happiness' sake, if they would drink wine on the lees, well refined; if they would enjoy holy and happy communion with Jesus; if they would be lifted up above the cares and troubles of this world, let them walk even as He walked. There is nothing which can so assist you to walk towards heaven with good speed, as wearing the image of Jesus on your heart to rule all its motions. It is when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you are enabled to walk with Jesus in His very footsteps, that you are most happy, and most known to be the sons of God. Peter afar off is both unsafe and uneasy. Next, for *religion's sake*, strive to be like Jesus. Ah! poor religion, thou hast been sorely shot at by cruel foes, but thou hast not been wounded one half so dangerously by thy foes as by thy friends. Who made those wounds in the fair hand of godliness? The professor who used the dagger of hypocrisy. The man who, with pretences, enters the fold, being nought but a wolf in sheep's clothing, worries the flock more than the lion outside. There is no weapon half so deadly as a Judas-kiss. Inconsistent professors injure the gospel more than the sneering critic or the infidel. But, especially for *Christ's own sake*, imitate His example. Christian, lovest thou thy Saviour? Is His name precious to thee? Is His cause dear to thee? Wouldst thou see the kingdoms of the world become His? Is it thy desire that He should be glorified? Art thou longing that souls should be won to Him? If so, *imitate Jesus*; be an "epistle of Christ, known and read of all men."



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*"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him."* — Colossians ii. 9, 10.

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**A**LL the attributes of Christ, as God and man, are at our disposal. All the fulness of the Godhead, whatever that marvellous term may comprehend, is ours to make us complete. He cannot endow us with the attributes of Deity; but He has done all that can be done, for He has made even His divine power and Godhead subservient to our salvation. His omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, and infallibility, are all combined for our defence. Arise, believer, and behold the Lord Jesus yoking the whole of His divine Godhead to the chariot of salvation? How vast His grace, how firm His faithfulness, how unswerving His immutability, how infinite His power, how limitless His knowledge! All these are by the Lord Jesus made the pillars of the temple of salvation; and all, without diminution of their infinity, are covenanted to us as our perpetual inheritance. The fathomless love of our Saviour's heart is every drop of it ours; every sinew in the arm of might, every jewel in the crown of majesty, the immensity of divine knowledge, and the sternness of divine justice, all are ours, and shall be employed for us. The whole of Christ, in His adorable character as the Son of God, is by Himself made over to us most richly to enjoy. His wisdom is our direction, His knowledge our instruction, His power our protection, His justice our surety, His love our comfort, His mercy our solace, and His immutability our trust. He makes no reserve, but opens the recesses of the Mount of God, and bids us dig in the mines for the hidden treasures. "All, all, all are yours," saith He; "be ye satisfied with favor and full of the goodness of the Lord." Oh! how sweet thus to behold Jesus, and to call upon Him with the certain confidence that in seeking the interposition of His love or power, we are but asking for that which He has already faithfully promised!



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*"I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth."* — Ecclesiastes x. 7.

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**UPSTARTS** frequently usurp the highest places, while the truly great pine in obscurity. This is a riddle in providence whose solution will one day gladden the hearts of the upright; but it is so common a fact, that none of us should murmur if it should fall to our own lot. When our Lord was upon earth, although He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, yet He walked the footpath of weariness and service as the Servant of servants; what wonder is it if His followers, who are princes of the blood, should also be looked down upon as inferior and contemptible persons? The world is upside down, and therefore the first are last, and the last first. See how the servile sons of Satan lord it in the earth! What a high horse they ride! How they lift up their horn on high! Haman is in the court, while Mordecai sits in the gate; David wanders on the mountains, while Saul reigns in state; Elijah is complaining in the cave, while Jezebel is boasting in the palace; yet who would wish to take the places of the proud rebels? and who, on the other hand, might not envy the despised saints? When the wheel turns, those who are lowest rise, and the highest sink. Patience then, believer! eternity will right the wrongs of time. Let us not fall into the error of letting our passions and carnal appetites ride in triumph, while our nobler powers walk in the dust. Grace must reign as a prince, and make the members of the body instruments of righteousness. The Holy Spirit loves order, and He therefore sets our powers and faculties in due rank and place, giving the highest room to those spiritual faculties which link us with the great King; let us not disturb the divine arrangement, but ask for grace that we may keep under our body, and bring it into subjection. We were not new created to allow our passions to rule over us, but that we, as kings, may reign in Christ Jesus over the triple kingdom of our spirit, soul, and body, to the glory of God the Father.



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*"Marvellous loving kindness."* — Psalm xvii. 7.

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**W**HEN we give our hearts with our alms, we give well, but we must often plead to a failure in this respect. Not so our Master and our Lord. His favors are always performed with the love of His heart. He does not send to us the cold meat and the broken pieces from the table of His luxury, but He dips our morsel in His own dish, and seasons our provisions with the spices of His fragrant affections. When He puts the golden tokens of His grace into our palms, He accompanies the gift with such a warm pressure of our hand, that the manner of His giving is as precious as the boon itself. He will come into our houses upon His errands of kindness, and He will not act as some austere visitors do in the poor man's cottage, but He sits by our side, not despising our poverty, nor blaming our weakness. Beloved, with what smiles does He speak! What golden sentences drop from His gracious lips! What embraces of affection does He bestow upon us! If He had but given us farthings, the way of His giving would have gilded them; but as it is, the costly alms are set in a golden basket by His pleasant carriage. It is impossible to doubt the sincerity of His charity, for there is a bleeding heart stamped upon the face of all His benefactions. He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. Not one hint that we are burdensome to Him; not one cold look for His poor pensioners; but He rejoices in His mercy, and presses us to His bosom while He is pouring out His life for us. There is a fragrance in His spikenard which nothing but His heart could produce; there is a sweetness in His honeycomb which could not be in it unless the very essence of His soul's affection had been mingled with it. Oh! the rare communion which such singular heartiness effecteth! May we continually taste and know the blessedness of it!



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*"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." — 1 Peter ii. 3.*

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**I**F : — then this is not a matter to be taken for granted concerning every one of the human race. "If:" — then there is a possibility and a probability that some may not have tasted that the Lord is gracious. "If:" — then this is not a general, but a special mercy; and it is needful to inquire whether we know the grace of God by inward experience. There is no spiritual favor which may not be a matter for heart-searching. But while this should be a matter of earnest and prayerful inquiry, no one ought to be content whilst there is any such thing as an "if" about his having tasted that the Lord is gracious. A jealous and holy distrust of self may give rise to the question even in the believer's heart, but the *continuance* of such a doubt would be an evil indeed. We must not rest without a desperate struggle to clasp the Saviour in the arms of faith, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." Do not rest, O believer, till thou hast a full assurance of thine interest in Jesus. Let nothing satisfy thee till, by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with thy spirit, thou art certified that thou art a child of God. Oh, trifle not here; let no "perhaps," and "peradventure," and "if," and "may be," satisfy thy soul. Build on eternal verities, and verily build upon them. Get the sure mercies of David, and surely get them. Let thine anchor be cast into that which is within the veil, and see to it that thy soul be linked to the anchor by a cable that will not break. Advance beyond these dreary "ifs;" abide no more in the wilderness of doubts and fears; cross the Jordan of distrust, and enter the Canaan of peace, where the Canaanite still lingers, but where the land ceaseth not to flow with milk and honey.



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*"He led them forth by the right way." — Psalm cvii. 7.*

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**C**HANGEFUL experience often leads the anxious believer to inquire, "Why is it thus with me?" I looked for light, but lo, darkness came; for peace, but behold, trouble. I said in my heart, My mountain standeth firm; I shall never be moved. Lord, Thou dost hide Thy face, and I am troubled. It was but yesterday that I could read my title clear; to-day, my evidences are be-dimmed, and my hopes are clouded. Yesterday, I could climb to Pisgah's top, and view the landscape o'er, and rejoice with confidence in my future inheritance; to-day, my spirit has no hopes, but many fears; no joys, but much distress. Is this part of God's plan with me? Can this be the way in which God would bring me to heaven? Yes, it is even so. The eclipse of your faith, the darkness of your mind, the fainting of your hope, — all these things are but parts of God's method of making you ripe for the great inheritance upon which you shall soon enter. These trials are for the testing and strengthening of your faith — they are waves that wash you farther upon the rock — they are winds which waft your ship the more swiftly towards the desired haven. According to David's words, so it might be said of you, "So He bringeth them to their desired haven." By honor and dishonor, by evil report and by good report, by plenty and by poverty, by joy and by distress, by persecution and by peace, by all these things is the life of your soul maintained, and by each of these are you helped on your way. Oh, think not, believer, that your sorrows are out of God's plan; they are necessary parts of it. "We must, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom." Learn, then, even to "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

"O let my trembling soul be still,  
And wait Thy wise, Thy holy will;  
I cannot, Lord, Thy purpose see,  
Yet all is well, since ruled by Thee."



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“*The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*”

Psalm cxxxviii. 8.

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**M**OST manifestly the confidence which the Psalmist here expressed was a *divine confidence*. He did not say, “*I have grace enough to perfect that which concerneth me — my faith is so steady that it will not stagger — my love is so warm that it will never grow cold — my resolution is so firm that nothing can move it ;*” no, his dependence was on the Lord alone. If we indulge in any confidence which is not grounded on the Rock of Ages, our confidence is worse than a dream ; it will fall upon us, and cover us with its ruins, to our sorrow and confusion. All that nature spins, time will unravel, to the eternal confusion of all who are clothed therein. The Psalmist was wise ; he rested upon nothing short of the *Lord's* work. It is the Lord who has begun the good work within us ; it is He who has carried it on ; and if He does not finish it, it never will be complete. If there be one stitch in the celestial garment of our righteousness which we are to insert ourselves, then we are lost ; but this is our confidence, the Lord who began will perfect. He *has* done it all, *must* do it all, and *will* do it all. Our confidence must not be in what we have done, nor in what we have resolved to do, but entirely in what *the Lord* will do. Unbelief insinuates — “ You will never be able to stand. Look at the evil of your heart ; you can never conquer sin ; remember the sinful pleasures and temptations of the world that beset you ; you will be certainly allured by them and led astray.” Ah ! yes, we should indeed perish if left to our own strength. If we had alone to navigate our frail vessels over so rough a sea, we might well give up the voyage in despair ; but, thanks be to God, He will perfect that which concerneth us, and bring us to the desired haven. We can never be too confident when we confide in Him alone, and never too much concerned to *have such a trust*.



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*"Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer."*

Psalm lxvi. 20.

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**I**N looking back upon the character of our prayers, if we do it honestly, we shall be filled with wonder that God has ever answered them. There may be some who think their prayers worthy of acceptance — as the Pharisee did; but the true Christian, in a more enlightened retrospect, weeps over his prayers, and if he could retrace his steps he would desire to pray more earnestly. Remember, Christian, how *cold* thy prayers have been. When in thy closet thou shouldst have wrestled as Jacob did; but instead thereof, thy petitions have been faint and few — far removed from that humble, believing, persevering faith, which cries, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." Yet, wonderful to say, God has heard these cold prayers of thine, and not only heard, but answered them. Reflect, also, how *unfrequent* have been thy prayers, unless thou hast been in trouble, and *then* thou hast gone often to the mercy-seat; but when deliverance has come, where has been thy constant supplication? Yet, notwithstanding thou hast ceased to pray as once thou didst, God has not ceased to bless. When thou hast neglected the mercy-seat, God has not deserted it, but the bright light of the Shekinah has always been visible between the wings of the cherubim. Oh! it is marvellous that the Lord should regard those intermittent spasms of importunity which come and go with our necessities. What a God is He thus to hear the prayers of those who come to Him when they have pressing wants, but neglect Him when they have received a mercy; who approach Him when they are forced to come, but who almost forget to address Him when mercies are plentiful and sorrows are few! Let His gracious kindness in hearing such prayers touch our hearts, so that we may henceforth be found "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit."



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*"Forsake me not, O Lord."* — Psalm xxxviii. 21.

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**F**REQUENTLY we pray that God would not forsake us in the hour of trial and temptation, but we too much forget that we have need to use this prayer *at all times*. There is no moment of our life, however holy, in which we can do without His constant upholding. Whether in light or in darkness, in communion or in temptation, we alike need the prayer, "Forsake me not, O Lord." "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." A little child, while learning to walk, always needs the nurse's aid. The ship left by the pilot drifts at once from her course. We cannot do without continued aid from above; let it then be your prayer to-day, "Forsake me not." Father, forsake not Thy child, lest he fall by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, forsake not Thy lamb, lest he wander from the safety of the fold. Great Husbandman, forsake not Thy plant, lest it wither and die. "Forsake me not, O Lord," now; and forsake me not at any moment of my life. Forsake me not in my joys, lest they absorb my heart. Forsake me not in my sorrows, lest I murmur against Thee. Forsake me not in the day of my repentance, lest I lose the hope of pardon, and fall into despair; and forsake me not in the day of my strongest faith, lest faith degenerate into presumption. Forsake me not, for without Thee I am weak, but with Thee I am strong. Forsake me not, for my path is dangerous, and full of snares, and I cannot do without Thy guidance. The hen forsakes not her brood; do Thou then evermore cover me with Thy feathers, and permit me under Thy wings to find my refuge. "Be not far from me, O Lord, for trouble is near, for there is none to help." "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

"O, ever in our cleanséd breast  
Bid Thine Eternal Spirit rest,  
And make our secret soul to be  
A temple pure and worthy Thee."



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*"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."*

Psalm lv. 22.

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**C**ARE, even though exercised upon legitimate objects, if carried to excess, has in it the nature of sin. The precept to avoid anxious care is earnestly inculcated by our Saviour, again and again; it is reiterated by the apostles; and it is one which cannot be neglected without involving transgression; for the very essence of anxious care is the imagining that we are wiser than God, and the thrusting ourselves into His place to do for Him that which He has undertaken to do for us. We attempt to think of that which we fancy He will forget; we labor to take upon ourselves our weary burden, as if He were unable or unwilling to take it for us. Now this disobedience to His plain precept, this unbelief in His Word, this presumption in intruding upon His province, is all sinful. Yet more than this, anxious care often leads to acts of sin. He who cannot calmly leave his affairs in God's hand, but will carry his own burden, is very likely to be tempted to use wrong means to help himself. This sin leads to a forsaking of God as our counsellor, and resorting instead to human wisdom. This is going to the "broken cistern" instead of to the "fountain;" a sin which was laid against Israel of old. Anxiety makes us doubt God's loving kindness, and thus our love to Him grows cold; we feel mistrust, and thus grieve the Spirit of God, so that our prayers become hindered, our consistent example marred, and our life one of self-seeking. Thus want of confidence in God leads us to wander far from Him; but if, through simple faith in His promise, we cast each burden as it comes upon Him, and are "careful for nothing" because He undertakes to care for us, it will keep us close to Him, and strengthen us against much temptation. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."



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*“ So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem ; for he did eat continually at the king's table ; and was lame in both his feet.*

2 Samuel ix. 13.

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**M**EPHIBOSHETH was no great ornament to a royal table, yet he had a continual place at David's board, because the king could see in his face the features of the beloved Jonathan. Like Mephibosheth, we may cry unto the King of Glory, “ What is Thy servant, that Thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am ? ” but still the Lord indulges us with most familiar intercourse with Himself, because He sees in our countenances the remembrance of His dearly-beloved Jesus. The Lord's people are *dear for another's sake*. Such is the love which the Father bears to His only begotten, that for His sake He raises His lowly brethren from poverty and banishment to courtly companionship, noble rank, and royal provision. Their *deformity shall not rob them of their privileges*. Lameness is no bar to sonship ; the cripple is as much the heir as if he could run like Asahel. Our right does not limp, though our might may. A king's table is a noble hiding-place for lame legs, and at the gospel feast we learn to glory in infirmities, because the power of Christ resteth upon us. Yet grievous *disability may mar the persons of the best-loved saints*. Here is one feasted by David, and yet so lame in both his feet that he could not go up with the king when he fled from the city, and was therefore maligned and injured by his servant Ziba. Saints whose faith is weak, and whose knowledge is slender, are great losers ; they are exposed to many enemies, and cannot follow the king whithersoever he goeth. This *disease frequently arises from falls*. Bad nursing in their spiritual infancy often causes converts to fall into a despondency from which they never recover, and sin in other cases brings broken bones. Lord help the lame to leap like a hart, and satisfy all Thy people with the bread of Thy table !



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*"Whom He justified, them He also glorified."* — Rom. viii. 30.

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**T**HERE is a precious truth for thee, believer. Thou mayst be poor, or in suffering, or unknown, but for thine encouragement take a review of thy "calling," and the consequences that flow from it, and especially that blessed result here spoken of. As surely as thou art God's child to-day, so surely shall all thy trials soon be at an end, and thou shalt be rich to all the intents of bliss. Wait awhile, and that weary head shall wear the crown of glory, and that hand of labor shall grasp the palm-branch of victory. Lament not thy troubles, but rather rejoice that ere long thou wilt be where "there shall be neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." The chariots of fire are at thy door, and a moment will suffice to bear thee to the glorified. The everlasting song is almost on thy lip. The portals of heaven stand open for thee. Think not that thou canst fail of entering into rest. If He hath called thee, nothing can divide thee from His love. Distress cannot sever the bond; the fire of persecution cannot burn the link; the hammer of hell cannot break the chain. Thou art secure; that voice which called thee at first, shall call thee yet again from earth to heaven, from death's dark gloom to immortality's unuttered splendors. Rest assured, the heart of Him who has justified thee beats with infinite love towards thee. Thou shalt soon be with the glorified, where thy portion is; thou art only waiting here to be made meet for the inheritance; and that done, the wings of angels shall waft thee far away to the mount of peace, and joy, and blessedness, where

"Far from a world of grief and sin,  
With God eternally shut in,"

thou shalt rest forever and ever.



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*"Thou hatest wickedness."* — Psalm xlv. 7.

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**B**E ye angry, and sin not. There can hardly be goodness in a man if he be not angry at sin; he who loves truth must hate every false way. How our Lord Jesus hated it when the temptation came! Thrice it assailed Him in different forms, but ever he met it with, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." He hated it in others; none the less fervently because He showed His hate oftener in tears of pity than in words of rebuke; yet what language could be more stern, more Elijah-like, than the words, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers." He hated wickedness so much that He bled to wound it to the heart; He died that it might die; He was buried that He might bury it in His tomb; and He rose that He might forever trample it beneath His feet. Christ is in the Gospel, and that Gospel is opposed to wickedness in every shape. Wickedness arrays itself in fair garments, and imitates the language of holiness; but the precepts of Jesus, like His famous scourge of small cords, chase it out of the temple, and will not tolerate it in the Church. So too in the heart where Jesus reigns, what war there is between Christ and Belial! And when our Redeemer shall come to be our Judge, those thundering words, "Depart, ye cursed," which are, indeed, but a prolongation of His life-teaching concerning sin, shall manifest His abhorrence of iniquity. As warm as is His love to sinners, so hot is His hatred of sin; as perfect as is His righteousness, so complete shall be the destruction of every form of wickedness. O thou glorious champion of right, and destroyer of wrong, for this cause hath God, even thy God, anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.



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*"Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines."*  
Canticles ii. 15.

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**A** LITTLE thorn may cause much suffering. A little cloud may hide the sun. Little foxes spoil the vines; and little sins do mischief to the tender heart. These little sins burrow in the soul, and make it full of that which is hateful to Christ, so that He will hold no comfortable fellowship and communion with us. A great sin cannot destroy a Christian, but a little sin can make him miserable. Jesus will not walk with His people unless they drive out every known sin. He says, "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Some Christians very seldom enjoy their Saviour's presence. How is this? Surely it must be an affliction for a tender child to be separated from his father. Art thou a child of God, and yet satisfied to go on without seeing thy Father's face? What! thou the spouse of Christ, and yet content without His company! Surely, thou hast fallen into a sad state, for the chaste spouse of Christ mourns like a dove without her mate, when He has left her. Ask, then, the question, What has driven Christ from thee? He hides His face behind the wall of thy sins. That wall may be built up of *little* pebbles, as easily as of great stones. The sea is made of drops; the rocks are made of grains: and the sea which divides thee from Christ may be filled with the drops of thy little sins; and the rock which has well nigh wrecked thy bark, may have been made by the daily working of the coral insects of thy little sins. If thou wouldst live with Christ, and walk with Christ, and see Christ, and have fellowship with Christ, take heed of "the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." Jesus invites you to go *with Him* and take them. He will surely, like Samson, take the foxes at once and easily. Go with Him to the hunting.



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*"The king also himself passed over the brook Kidron."*

2 Samuel xv. 23.

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**D**AVID passed that gloomy brook when flying with his mourning company from his traitor son. The man after God's own heart was not exempt from trouble, nay, his life was full of it. He was both the Lord's Anointed, and the Lord's Afflicted. Why then should we expect to escape? At sorrow's gates the noblest of our race have waited with ashes on their heads; wherefore then should we complain as though some strange thing had happened unto us.

THE KING of kings himself was not favored with a more cheerful or royal road. He passed over the filthy ditch of Kidron, through which the filth of Jerusalem flowed. God had one Son without sin, but not a single child without the rod. It is a great joy to believe that Jesus has been tempted in all points like as we are. What is our Kidron this morning? It is a faithless friend, a sad bereavement, a slanderous reproach, a dark foreboding? The King has passed over all these. Is it bodily pain, poverty, persecution, or contempt? Over each of these Kidrons the King has gone before us. "In all our afflictions He was afflicted." The idea of strangeness in our trials must be banished at once and forever, for He, who is the Head of all saints, knows by experience the grief which we think so peculiar. All the citizens of Zion must be free of the Honorable Company of Mourners, of which the Prince Immanuel is Head and Captain.

Notwithstanding the abasement of David, he yet returned in triumph to his city, and David's Lord arose victorious from the grave; let us then be of good courage, for we also shall win the day. We shall yet with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation, though now for a season we have to pass by the noxious streams of sin and sorrow. Courage, soldiers of the Cross; the King himself triumphed after going over Kidron, and so shall you.