
"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." — Psalm lxxiii. 24.

THE Psalmist felt his need of divine guidance. He had just been discovering the foolishness of his own heart, and, lest he should be constantly led astray by it, he resolved that God's counsel should henceforth guide him. A sense of our own folly is a great step towards being wise when it leads us to rely on the wisdom of the Lord. The blind man leans on his friend's arm, and reaches home in safety; and so would we give ourselves up implicitly to divine guidance, nothing doubting, assured that, though we cannot see, it is always safe to trust the All-seeing God. "*Thou shalt*" is a blessed expression of confidence. He was sure that the Lord would not decline the condescending task. There is a word for thee, O believer; rest thou in it. Be assured that thy God will be thy counsellor and friend; He shall guide thee; He will direct all thy ways. In His written Word thou hast this assurance in part fulfilled, for holy Scripture is His counsel to thee. Happy are we to have God's Word always to guide us! What were the mariner without his compass? And what were the Christian without the Bible? This is the unerring chart, the map in which every shoal is described, and all the channels, from the quicksands of destruction to the haven of salvation, mapped and marked by one who knows all the way. Blessed be Thou, O God, that we may trust Thee to guide us now, and guide us even to the end! After this guidance through life, the Psalmist anticipates a divine reception at last — "*And afterward receive me to glory.*" What a thought for thee, believer! God Himself will receive thee to glory — thee! Wandering, erring, straying, yet He will bring thee safe at last to glory! This is thy portion; live on it this day, and, if perplexities should surround thee, go in the strength of this text straight to the throne.

"But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell Him of her." — Mark i. 30.

VERY interesting is this little peep into the house of the Apostolic Fisherman. We see at once that household joys and cares are no hinderance to the full exercise of the ministry; nay, that since they furnish an opportunity for personally witnessing the Lord's gracious work upon one's own flesh and blood, they may even instruct the teacher better than any other earthly discipline. Papists and other sectaries may decry marriage, but true Christianity and household life agree well together. Peter's house was probably a poor fisherman's hut, but the Lord of Glory entered it, lodged in it, and wrought a miracle in it. Should our little book be read this morning in some very humble cottage, let this fact encourage the inmates to seek the company of King Jesus. God is oftener in little huts than in rich palaces. Jesus is looking round your room now, and is waiting to be gracious to you. Into Simon's house sickness had entered, fever in a deadly form had prostrated his mother-in-law, and as soon as Jesus came they told Him of the sad affliction, and He hastened to the patient's bed. Have you any sickness in the house this morning? You will find Jesus by far the best physician; go to Him at once, and tell Him all about the matter. Immediately lay the case before Him. It concerns one of His people, and therefore will not be trivial to Him. Observe, that *at once* the Saviour restored the sick woman; none can heal as He does. We may not make sure that the Lord will at once remove all disease from those we love, but we may know that believing prayer for the sick is far more likely to be followed by restoration than anything else in the world; and where this avails not, we must meekly bow to His will by whom life and death are determined. The tender heart of Jesus waits to hear our griefs; let us pour them into His patient ear.

"Thou whom my soul loveth." — Canticles i. 7.

IT is well to be able, without any "if" or "but," to say of the Lord Jesus — "*Thou whom my soul loveth.*" Many can only say of Jesus that they *hope* they love Him; they *trust* they love Him; but only a poor and shallow experience will be content to stay here. No one ought to give any rest to his spirit till he feels quite sure about a matter of such vital importance. We ought not to be satisfied with a superficial *hope* that Jesus loves us, and with a bare trust that we love Him. The old saints did not generally speak with "buts," and "ifs," and "hopes," and "trusts," but they spoke positively and plainly. "I know whom I have believed," saith Paul. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," saith Job. Get positive knowledge of your love of Jesus, and be not satisfied till you can speak of your interest in Him as a reality, which you have made sure by having received the witness of the Holy Spirit, and His seal upon your soul by faith.

True love to Christ is in every case the Holy Spirit's work, and must be wrought in the heart by Him. He is the *efficient cause* of it; but the logical reason why we love Jesus lies in *Himself*. *Why* do we love Jesus? *Because He first loved us.* *Why* do we love Jesus? *Because He "gave Himself for us."* We have life through His death; we have peace through His blood. Though He was rich, yet *for our sakes* He became poor. *Why* do we love Jesus? *Because of the excellency of His person.* We are filled with a sense of His beauty! an admiration of His charms! a consciousness of His infinite perfection! His greatness, goodness, and loveliness, in one resplendent ray, combine to enchant the soul till it is so ravished that it exclaims, "Yea, He is altogether lovely." Blessed love this — a love which binds the heart with chains more soft than silk, and yet more firm than adamant!

"I will ; be thou clean." — Mark i. 41.

PRIMEVAL darkness heard the Almighty fiat, "Light be," and straightway light was; and the Word of the Lord Jesus is equal in majesty to that ancient word of power. Redemption, like Creation, has its word of might. Jesus speaks and it is done. Leprosy yielded to no human remedies, but it fled at once at the Lord's "I will." The disease exhibited no hopeful signs or tokens of recovery; nature contributed nothing to its own healing; but the unaided Word effected the entire work on the spot and forever. The sinner is in a plight more miserable than the leper; let him imitate his example, and go to Jesus, "beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him." Let him exercise what little faith he has, even though it should go no farther than, "Lord, if thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean;" and there need be no doubt as to the result of the application. Jesus heals all who come, and casts out none. In reading the narrative in which our morning's text occurs, it is worthy of devout notice that Jesus touched the leper. This unclean person had broken through the regulations of the ceremonial law, and pressed into the house; but Jesus, so far from chiding him, broke through the law Himself in order to meet him. He made an interchange with the leper, for while He cleansed him, He contracted by that touch "a Levitical defilement. Even so Jesus Christ was made sin for us, although in Himself He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. O that poor sinners would go to Jesus, believing in the power of His blessed substitutionary work, and they would soon learn the power of His gracious touch. That hand which multiplied the loaves, which saved sinking Peter, which upholds afflicted saints, which crowns believers, that same hand will touch every seeking sinner, and in a moment make him clean. The love of Jesus is the source of salvation. He loves, He looks, He touches us, **WE LIVE.**

“Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” — Psalm cxx. 5.

AS a Christian you have to live in the midst of an ungodly world, and it is of little use for you to cry, “Woe is me.” Jesus did not pray that you should be taken out of the world, and what He did not pray for you need not desire. Better far in the Lord’s strength to meet the difficulty, and glorify Him in it. The enemy is ever on the watch to detect inconsistency in your conduct; be therefore very *holy*. Remember that the eyes of all are upon you, and that more is expected from you than from other men. Strive to give no occasion for blame. Let your goodness be the only fault they can discover in you. Like Daniel, compel them to say of you, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” Seek to be *useful* as well as consistent. Perhaps you think, “If I were in a more favorable position I might serve the Lord’s cause, but I cannot do any good where I am;” but the worse the people are among whom you live, the more need have they of your exertions; if they be crooked, the more necessity that you should set them straight; and if they be perverse, the more need have you to turn their proud hearts to the truth. Where should the physician be but where there are many sick? Where is honor to be won by the soldier but in the hottest fire of the battle? And when weary of the strife and sin that meet you on every hand, consider that all the saints have endured the same trial. They were not carried on beds of down to heaven, and you must not expect to travel more easily than they. They had to hazard their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, and you will not be crowned till you also have endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Therefore, “stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong.”

"In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." — Philippians ii. 15.

WE use lights to *make manifest*. A Christian man should so shine in his life, that a person could not live with him a week without knowing the gospel. His conversation should be such that all who are about him should clearly perceive whose he is, and whom he serves; and should see the image of Jesus reflected in his daily actions. Lights are intended for *guidance*. We are to help those around us who are in the dark. We are to hold forth to them the Word of life. We are to point sinners to the Saviour, and the weary to a divine resting-place. Men sometimes read their Bibles, and fail to understand them; we should be ready, like Philip, to instruct the inquirer in the meaning of God's Word, the way of salvation, and the life of godliness. Lights are also used for *warning*. On our rocks and shoals a lighthouse is sure to be erected. Christian men should know that there are many false lights shown everywhere in the world, and therefore the right light is needed. The wreckers of Satan are always abroad, tempting the ungodly to sin under the name of pleasure: they hoist the wrong light; be it ours to put up the true light upon every dangerous rock, to point out every sin, and tell what it leads to, that so we may be clear of the blood of all men, shining as lights in the world. Lights also have a very *cheering* influence, and so have Christians. A Christian ought to be a comforter, with kind words on his lips, and sympathy in his heart; he should carry sunshine wherever he goes, and diffuse happiness around him.

"Gracious Spirit, dwell with me;
I myself would gracious be,
And with words that help and heal,
Would Thy life in mine reveal,
And with actions bold and meek,
Would for Christ my Saviour speak."

“ And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was : and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.”

Mark ii. 4.

FAITH is full of inventions. The house was full, a crowd blocked up the door, but faith found a way of getting at the Lord and placing the palsied man before Him. If we cannot get sinners where Jesus is by ordinary methods, we must use extraordinary ones. It seems, according to Luke v. 19, that a tiling had to be removed, which would make dust and cause a measure of danger to those below ; but where the case is very urgent, we must not mind running some risks and shocking some proprieties. Jesus was there to heal, and therefore fall what might, faith ventured all so that her poor paralyzed charge might have his sins forgiven. O that we had more daring faith among us ! Cannot we, dear reader, seek it this morning for ourselves and for our fellow-workers, and will we not try to-day to perform some gallant act for the love of souls and the glory of the Lord.

The world is constantly inventing ; genius serves all the purposes of human desire : cannot faith invent too, and reach by some new means the outcasts who lie perishing around us ? It was the presence of Jesus which excited victorious courage in the four bearers of the palsied man : is not the Lord among us now ? Have we seen His face for ourselves this morning ? Have we felt His healing power in our own souls ? If so, then through door, through window, or through roof, let us, breaking through all impediments, labor to bring poor souls to Jesus. All means are good and decorous when faith and love are truly set on winning souls. If hunger for bread can break through stone walls, surely hunger for souls is not to be hindered in its efforts. O Lord, make us quick to suggest methods of reaching Thy poor sin-sick ones, and bold to carry them out at all hazards.

"From Me is thy fruit found." — Hosea xiv. 8.

OUR fruit is found from our God as to *union*. The fruit of the branch is directly traceable to the root. Sever the connection, the branch dies, and no fruit is produced. By virtue of our union with Christ we bring forth fruit. Every bunch of grapes has been first in the root; it has passed through the stem, and flowed through the sap vessels, and fashioned itself externally into fruit; but it was first in the stem: so also every good work was first in Christ, and then is brought forth in us. O Christian, prize this precious union to Christ; for it must be the source of all the fruitfulness which thou canst hope to know. If thou wert not joined to Jesus Christ, thou wouldst be a barren bough indeed.

Our fruit comes from God as to *spiritual providence*. When the dew-drops fall from heaven, when the cloud looks down from on high, and is about to distil its liquid treasure, when the bright sun swells the berries of the cluster, each heavenly boon may whisper to the tree and say, "From me is thy fruit found." The fruit owes much to the root — that is essential to fruitfulness — but it owes very much also to external influences. How much we owe to God's grace-providence! in which He provides us constantly with quickening, teaching, consolation, strength, or whatever else we want. To this we owe our all of usefulness or virtue.

Our fruit comes from God as to *wise husbandry*. The gardener's sharp-edged knife promotes the fruitfulness of the tree, by thinning the clusters, and by cutting off superfluous shoots. So is it, Christian, with that pruning which the Lord gives to thee. "My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Since our God is the author of our spiritual graces, let us give to Him all the glory of our salvation.

"I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." — Jeremiah xxxiii. 3.

THERE are different translations of these words. One version renders it, "I will show thee great and fortified things;" another, "great and reserved things." Now, there are reserved and special things in Christian experience: all the developments of spiritual life are not alike easy of attainment. There are the common frames and feelings of repentance, and faith, and joy, and hope, which are enjoyed by the entire family; but there is an upper realm of rapture, of communion, and conscious union with Christ, which is far from being the common dwelling-place of believers. We have not all the high privilege of John, to lean upon Jesus' bosom; nor of Paul, to be caught up into the third heaven. There are heights in experimental knowledge of the things of God which the eagle's eye of acumen and philosophic thought hath never seen: God alone can bear us there; but the chariot in which He takes us up, and the fiery steeds with which that chariot is dragged, are prevailing prayers. Prevailing prayer is victorious over the God of mercy. "By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto Him; he found Him in Beth-el, and there He spake with us." Prevailing prayer takes the Christian to Carmel, and enables him to cover heaven with clouds of blessing, and earth with floods of mercy. Prevailing prayer bears the Christian aloft to Pisgah, and shows him the inheritance reserved; it elevates us to Tabor, and transfigures us, till in the likeness of his Lord, as he is, so are we also in this world. If you would reach to something higher than ordinary grovelling experience, look to the Rock that is higher than you, and gaze with the eye of faith through the window of importunate prayer. When you open the window on your side, it will not be bolted on the other.

“And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him.” — Mark iii. 13.

THERE was sovereignty. Impatient spirits may fret and fume because they are not called to the highest places in the ministry; but, reader, be it thine to rejoice that Jesus calleth whom He will. If He shall leave me to be a doorkeeper in His house, I will cheerfully bless Him for His grace in permitting me to do anything in His service. The call of Christ's servants comes from above. Jesus stands on the mountain, evermore above the world in holiness, earnestness, love, and power. Those whom He calls must go up the mountain to Him; they must seek to rise to His level by living in constant communion with Him. They may not be able to mount to classic honors, or attain scholastic eminence, but they must like Moses go up into the mount of God, and have familiar intercourse with the unseen God, or they will never be fitted to proclaim the gospel of peace. Jesus went apart to hold high fellowship with the Father, and we must enter into the same divine companionship if we would bless our fellow-men. No wonder that the apostles were clothed with power when they came down fresh from the mountain where Jesus was. This morning we must endeavor to ascend the mount of communion, that there we may be ordained to the life-work for which we are set apart. Let us not see the face of man to-day till we have seen Jesus. Time spent with Him is laid out at blessed interest. We too shall cast out devils and work wonders if we go down into the world girded with that divine energy which Christ alone can give. It is of no use going to the Lord's battle till we are armed with heavenly weapons. We *must* see Jesus; this is essential. At the mercy-seat we will linger till He shall manifest Himself unto us as He doth not unto the world, and until we can truthfully say, “We were with Him in the Holy Mount.”

“*Be ye separate.*” — 2 Corinthians vi. 17.

THE Christian, while in the world, is not to be of the world. He should be distinguished from it in *the great object of his life*. To him, “to live,” should be “Christ.” Whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he should do all to God’s glory. You may lay up treasure; but lay it up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, where thieves break not through nor steal. You may strive to be rich; but be it your ambition to be “rich in faith” and good works. You may have pleasure; but when you are merry, sing psalms and make melody in your hearts to the Lord. In your *spirit*, as well as in your aim, you should differ from the world. Waiting humbly before God, always conscious of His presence, delighting in communion with Him, and seeking to know His will, you will prove that you are of heavenly race. And you should be separate from the world in your *actions*. If a thing be right, though you lose by it, it must be done; if it be wrong, though you would gain by it, you must scorn the sin for your Master’s sake. You must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Walk worthy of your high calling and dignity. Remember, O Christian, that thou art a son of the King of kings. Therefore, keep thyself unspotted from the world. Soil not the fingers which are soon to sweep celestial strings; let not those eyes become the windows of lust which are soon to see the King in His beauty — let not those feet be defiled in miry places which are soon to walk the golden streets; let not those hearts be filled with pride and bitterness which are ere long to be filled with heaven, and to overflow with ecstatic joy.

Then rise, my soul! and soar away,
Above the thoughtless crowd;
Above the pleasures of the gay,
And splendors of the proud;

Up where eternal beauties bloom,
And pleasures all divine; [sume,
Where wealth that never can con-
And endless glories shine.

"God is jealous." — Nahum i. 2.

OUR Lord is very jealous of your love, O believer. Did he choose you? He cannot bear that you should choose another. Did He buy you with his own blood? He cannot endure that you should think that you are your own, or that you belong to this world. He loved you with such a love that He would not stop in heaven without you; He would sooner die than you should perish, and he cannot endure that anything should stand between your heart's love and Himself. *He is very jealous of your trust.* He will not permit you to trust in an arm of flesh. He cannot bear that you should hew out broken cisterns, when the overflowing fountain is always free to you. When we lean upon Him, He is glad; but when we transfer our dependence to another, when we rely upon our own wisdom or the wisdom of a friend, worst of all, when we trust in any works of our own, He is displeased, and will chasten us that He may bring us to Himself. *He is also very jealous of our company.* There should be no one with whom we converse so much as with Jesus. To abide in Him only, this is true love; but to commune with the world, to find sufficient solace in our carnal comforts, to prefer even the society of our fellow-Christians to secret intercourse with Him, this is grievous to our jealous Lord. He would fain have us abide in Him, and enjoy constant fellowship with Himself; and many of the trials which He sends us are for the purpose of weaning our hearts from the creature, and fixing them more closely upon Himself. Let this jealousy, which should keep us near to Christ, *be also a comfort* to us; for if He loves us so much as to care thus about our love, we may be sure that He will suffer nothing to harm us, and will protect us from all our enemies. O that we may have grace this day to keep our hearts in sacred chastity for our Beloved alone, with sacred jealousy shutting our eyes to all the fascinations of the world!

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools." — Psalm lxxxiv. 6.

THIS teaches us that the *comfort* obtained by one may often prove serviceable to another; just as wells would be used by the company who came after. We read some book full of consolation, which is like Jonathan's rod, dropping with honey. Ah! we think our brother has been here before us, and digged this well for us as well as for himself. Many a "Night of Weeping," "Midnight Harmonies," an "Eternal Day," "A Crook in the Lot," a "Comfort for Mourners," has been a well digged by a pilgrim for himself, but has proved quite as useful to others. Specially, we notice this in the Psalms, such as that beginning, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Travellers have been delighted to see the footprint of man on a barren shore, and we love to see the waymarks of pilgrims while passing through the vale of tears.

The pilgrims dig the well, but, strange enough, it fills from the top instead of the bottom. We use the means, but the blessing does not spring from the means. We dig a well, but Heaven fills it with rain. The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord. The means are connected with the end, but they do not of themselves produce it. See here the rain fills the pools, so that the wells become useful as reservoirs for the water; labor is not lost, but yet it does not supersede divine help.

Grace may well be compared to rain for its purity, for its refreshing and vivifying influence, for its coming alone from above, and for the sovereignty with which it is given or withheld. May our readers have showers of blessing, and may the wells they have digged be filled with water. Oh, what are means and ordinances without the smile of Heaven! they are as clouds without rain, and pools without water. O God of love, open the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing!

"There were also with Him other little ships." — Mark iv. 36.

JESUS was the Lord High Admiral of the sea that night, and His presence preserved the whole convoy. It is well to sail with Jesus, even though it be in a little ship. When we sail in Christ's company, we may not make sure of fair weather, for great storms may toss the vessel which carries the Lord Himself, and we must not expect to find the sea less boisterous around our little boat. If we go with Jesus we must be content to fare as He fares; and when the waves are rough to Him, they will be rough to us. It is by tempest and tossing that we shall come to land, as He did before us.

When the storm swept over Galilee's dark lake, all faces gathered blackness, and all hearts dreaded shipwreck. When all creature-help was useless, the slumbering Saviour arose, and with a word, transformed the riot of the tempest into the deep quiet of a calm; then were the little vessels at rest, as well as that which carried the Lord. Jesus is the star of the sea; and though there be sorrow upon the sea, when Jesus is on it there is joy too. May our hearts make Jesus their anchor, their rudder, their lighthouse, their lifeboat, and their harbor. His Church is the Admiral's flagship; let us attend her movements, and cheer her officers with our presence. He Himself is the great attraction; let us follow ever in His wake, mark His signals, steer by His chart, and never fear while He is within hail. Not one ship in the convoy shall suffer wreck; the great Commodore will steer every bark in safety to the desired haven. By faith we will slip our cable for another day's cruise, and sail forth with Jesus into a sea of tribulation. Winds and waves will not spare us, but they all obey Him; and, therefore, whatever squalls may occur without, faith shall feel a blessed calm within. He is ever in the centre of the weather-beaten company; let us rejoice in Him. His vessel has reached the haven, and so shall ours.

"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings." — Psalm cxii. 7.

CHRISTIAN, you ought not to dread the arrival of evil tidings; because if you are distressed by them, *what do you more than other men?* Other men have not your God to fly to; they have never proved His faithfulness as you have done, and it is no wonder if they are bowed down with alarm and cowed with fear; but you profess to be of another spirit; you have been begotten again unto a lively hope, and your heart lives in heaven, and not on earthly things; now, if you are seen to be distracted as other men, what is the value of that grace which you profess to have received? Where is the dignity of that new nature which you claim to possess?

Again, if you should be filled with alarm, as others are, *you would, doubtless, be led into the sins so common to others under trying circumstances.* The ungodly, when they are overtaken by evil tidings, rebel against God; they murmur, and think that God deals hardly with them. Will you fall into that same sin? Will you provoke the Lord as they do?

Moreover, unconverted men often run to wrong means in order to escape from difficulties, and you will be sure to do the same if your mind yields to the present pressure. Trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Your wisest course is to do as Moses did at the Red Sea — "stand still, and see the salvation of God." For if you give way to fear when you hear of evil tidings, you will be unable to meet the trouble with that calm composure which nerves for duty, and sustains under adversity. How can you glorify God if you play the coward? Saints have often sung God's high praises in the fires, but will your doubting and desponding, as if you had none to help you, magnify the Most High? Then take courage, and relying in sure confidence upon the faithfulness of your covenant God, "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

“Partakers of the divine nature.”—2 Peter i. 4.

TO be a partaker of the divine nature is not, of course, to become God. That cannot be. The essence of Deity is not to be participated in by the creature. Between the creature and the Creator there must ever be a gulf fixed in respect of essence; but as the first man Adam was made in the image of God, so we, by the renewal of the Holy Spirit, are in a yet diviner sense made in the image of the Most High, and are partakers of the divine nature. We are, by grace, made like God. “God is love;” we become love — “He that loveth is born of God.” God is truth; we become true, and we love that which is true. God is good, and He makes us good by His grace, so that we become the pure in heart who shall see God. Moreover, we become partakers of the divine nature in even a higher sense than this — in fact, in as lofty a sense as can be conceived, short of our being absolutely divine. Do we not become members of the body of the divine person of Christ? Yes, the same blood which flows in the head flows in the hand; and the same life which quickens Christ quickens His people, for, “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Nay, as if this were not enough, we are married unto Christ. He hath betrothed us unto Himself in righteousness and in faithfulness, and he who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Oh, marvellous mystery! we look into it, but who shall understand it? One with Jesus — so one with Him that the branch is not more one with the vine than we are a part of the Lord, our Saviour and our Redeemer! While we rejoice in this, let us remember that those who are made partakers of the divine nature will manifest their high and holy relationship in their intercourse with others, and make it evident, by their daily walk and conversation, that they have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. O for more divine holiness of life!

"Bring him unto Me."—Mark ix. 19.

DESPAIRINGLY the poor disappointed father turned away from the disciples to their Master. His son was in the worst possible condition, and all means had failed ; but the miserable child was soon delivered from the evil one when the parent, in faith, obeyed the Lord Jesus' word, "Bring him unto Me." Children are a precious gift from God, but much anxiety comes with them. They may be a great joy or a great bitterness to their parents ; they may be filled with the Spirit of God, or possessed with the spirit of evil. In all cases, the Word of God gives us one receipt for the curing of all their ills, "Bring him unto Me." O for more agonizing prayer on their behalf, while they are yet babes. Sin is there, let our prayers begin to attack it. Our cries for our offspring should precede those cries which betoken their actual advent into a world of sin. In the days of their youth we shall see sad tokens of that dumb and deaf spirit which will neither pray aright nor hear the voice of God in the soul ; but Jesus still commands, "Bring them unto Me." When they are grown up they may wallow in sin and foam with enmity against God ; then, when our hearts are breaking, we should remember the great Physician's words, "Bring them unto Me." Never must we cease to pray until they cease to breathe. No case is hopeless while Jesus lives.

The Lord sometimes suffers His people to be driven into a corner that they may experimentally know how necessary He is to them. Ungodly children, when they show us our own powerlessness against the depravity of their hearts, drive us to flee to the Strong for strength ; and this is a great blessing to us. Whatever our morning's need may be, let it, like a strong current, bear us to the ocean of divine love. Jesus can soon remove our sorrow. He delights to comfort us. Let us hasten to Him while He waits to meet us.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Galatians v. 25.

THE two most important things in our holy religion are the *life of faith* and the *walk of faith*. He who shall rightly understand these is not far from being a master in experimental theology, for they are vital points to a Christian. You will never find true faith unattended by true godliness; on the other hand, you will never discover a truly holy life which has not for its root a living faith upon the righteousness of Christ. Woe unto those who seek after the one without the other! There are some who cultivate faith and forget holiness; these may be very high in orthodoxy, but they shall be very deep in condemnation, for they hold the truth in unrighteousness; and there are others who have strained after holiness of life, but have denied the faith, like the Pharisees of old, of whom the Master said, they were "whitewashed sepulchres." We must have faith, for this is the foundation; we must have holiness of life, for this is the superstructure. Of what service is the mere foundation of a building to a man in the day of tempest? Can he hide himself therein? He wants a house to cover him, as well as a foundation for that house. Even so we need the superstructure of spiritual life if we would have comfort in the day of doubt. But seek not a holy life without faith, for that would be to erect a house which can afford no permanent shelter, because it has no foundation on a rock. Let faith and life be put together; and, like the two abutments of an arch, they will make our piety enduring. Like light and heat streaming from the same sun, they are alike full of blessing. Like the two pillars of the temple, they are for glory and for beauty. They are two streams from the fountain of grace; two lamps lit with holy fire; two olive trees watered by heavenly care. O Lord, give us this day life within, and it will reveal itself without to Thy glory.

"The liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." — Gal. v. i.

HIS "liberty" makes us *free* to heaven's charter — *the Bible*. Here is a choice passage, believer: "When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee." You are free to that. Here is another: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee." You are free to that. You are a welcome guest at the table of the promises. Scripture is a never-failing treasury filled with boundless stores of grace. It is the bank of heaven; you may draw from it as much as you please, without let or hinderance. Come in faith, and you are welcome to all *covenant blessings*. There is not a promise in the Word which shall be withheld. In the depths of tribulations, let this freedom comfort you; amidst waves of distress, let it cheer you; when sorrows surround thee, let it be thy solace. This is thy Father's love-token; thou art free to it at all times. Thou art also *free to the throne of grace*. It is the believer's privilege to have access at all times to His heavenly Father. Whatever our desires, our difficulties, our wants, we are at liberty to spread all before Him. It matters not how much we may have sinned, we may ask and expect pardon. It signifies nothing how poor we are, we may plead His promise that He will provide all things needful. We have permission to approach His throne at all times — in midnight's darkest hour, or in noontide's most burning heat. Exercise thy right, O believer, and live up to thy privilege. Thou art free to all that is treasured up in *Christ* — wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It matters not what thy need is, for there is fulness of supply in Christ, and it is there *for thee*. O, what a "freedom" is thine! freedom from condemnation, freedom to the promises, freedom to the throne of grace, and at last freedom to enter heaven!

"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." — Judges vii. 20.

GIDEON ordered his men to do two things: covering up a torch in an earthen pitcher, he bade them, at an appointed signal, break the pitcher, and let the light shine, and then sound with the trumpet, crying, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" This is precisely what all Christians must do. First, *you must shine*; break the pitcher which conceals your light; throw aside the bushel which has been hiding your candle, and shine. Let your light shine before men; let your good works be such, that, when men look upon you, they shall know that you have been with Jesus. Then *there must be the sound*, the blowing of the trumpet. There must be active exertions for the ingathering of sinners by proclaiming Christ crucified. Take the gospel to them; carry it to their door; put it in their way; do not suffer them to escape it; blow the trumpet right against their ears. Remember, that the true war-cry of the Church is Gideon's watchword, "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*" God must do it; it is His own work. But we are not to be idle; instrumentality is to be used — "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*" If we only cry, "The sword of the Lord!" we shall be guilty of an idle presumption; and if we shout, "The sword of Gideon!" alone, we shall manifest idolatrous reliance on an arm of flesh: we must blend the two in practical harmony, — "*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!*" We can do nothing of ourselves, but we can do everything by the help of our God; let us, therefore, in His name determine to go out personally, and serve with our flaming torch of holy example, and with our trumpet tones of earnest declaration and testimony, and God shall be with us, and Midian shall be put to confusion, and the Lord of hosts shall reign forever and ever.

"I will rejoice over them to do them good." — Jer. xxxii. 41.

NOW heart-cheering to the believer is the delight which God has in His saints! We cannot see any reason in ourselves why the Lord should take pleasure in us; we cannot take delight in ourselves, for we often have to groan, being burdened, conscious of our sinfulness, and deploring our unfaithfulness; and we fear that God's people cannot take much delight in us, for they must perceive so much of our imperfections and follies, that they may rather lament our infirmities than admire our graces. But we love to dwell upon this transcendent truth, this glorious mystery: that as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so does the Lord rejoice over us. We do not read anywhere that God delighteth in the cloud-capped mountains, or the sparkling stars, but we do read that He delighteth in the habitable parts of the earth, and that His delights are with the sons of men. We do not find it written that even angels give His soul delight; nor doth He say, concerning cherubim and seraphim, "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in thee;" but He does say all that to poor fallen creatures like ourselves, debased and depraved by sin, but saved, exalted, and glorified by His grace. In what strong language He expresses His delight in His people! Who could have conceived of the eternal One as bursting forth into a song? Yet it is written, "He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing." As He looked upon the world He had made, He said, "It is very good;" but when He beheld those who are the purchase of Jesus' blood, His own chosen ones, it seemed as if the great heart of the Infinite could restrain itself no longer, but overflowed in divine exclamations of joy. Should not we utter our grateful response to such a marvellous declaration of His love, and sing, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation"?

"Let Israel rejoice in Him." — Psalm cxlix. 2.

BE glad of heart, O believer; but take care that thy gladness has its spring *in the Lord*. Thou hast much cause for gladness in thy God, for thou canst sing with David, "God, my exceeding joy." Be glad that the Lord reigneth, that Jehovah is King! Rejoice that He sits upon the throne, and ruleth all things! Every attribute of God should become a fresh ray in the sunlight of our gladness. That He is *wise*, should make us glad, knowing as we do our own foolishness. That he is *mighty*, should cause us to rejoice, who tremble at our weakness. That He is *everlasting*; should always be a theme of joy when we know that *we* wither as the grass. That He is *unchanging*, should perpetually yield us a song, since *we* change every hour. That He is full of grace, that He is overflowing with it, and that this grace in covenant He has given to us; that it is ours to cleanse us, ours to keep us, ours to sanctify us, ours to perfect us, ours to bring us to glory — all this should tend to make us glad in Him. This gladness in God is as a deep river; we have only as yet touched its brink; we know a little of its clear, sweet, heavenly streams, but onward, the depth is greater, and the current more impetuous in its joy. The Christian feels that he may delight himself not only in what God is, but also in all that God *has done* in the past. The Psalms show us that God's people in olden times were wont to think much of God's actions, and to have a song concerning each of them. So let God's people now rehearse the deeds of the Lord! Let them tell of His mighty acts, and "sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." Nor let them ever cease to sing, for as new mercies flow to them day by day, so should their gladness in the Lord's loving acts in providence and in grace show itself in continued thanksgiving. Be glad, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God.

"Accepted in the beloved." — Ephesians i. 6.

WHAT a state of privilege ! It includes our *justification* before God ; but the term " acceptance," in the Greek, means more than that. It signifies that we are the objects of *divine complacency*, nay, even of *divine delight*. How marvellous that we, worms, mortals, sinners, should be the objects of divine love ! But it is only "*in the beloved*." Some Christians seem to be accepted in their own experience ; at least, that is their apprehension. When their spirit is lively, and their hopes bright, they think God accepts them, for they feel so high, so heavenly-minded, so drawn above the earth ! But when their souls cleave to the dust, they are the victims of the fear that they are no longer accepted. If they could but see that all their high joys do not exalt them, and all their low despondencies do not really depress them in their Father's sight, but that they stand accepted in One who never alters, in One who is always the beloved of God, always perfect, always without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, how much happier they would be, and how much more they would honor the Saviour ! Rejoice then, believer, in this : thou art accepted "*in the beloved*." Thou lookest within, and thou sayest, " There is nothing acceptable *here* ! " But look at Christ, and see if there is not everything acceptable *there*. Thy sins trouble thee ; but God has cast thy sins behind His back, and thou art accepted in the Righteous One. Thou hast to fight with corruption, and to wrestle with temptation, but thou art already accepted in Him who has overcome the powers of evil. The devil tempts thee ; be of good cheer, he cannot destroy thee, for thou art accepted in Him who has broken Satan's head. Know by full assurance thy glorious standing. Even glorified souls are not more accepted than thou art. They are only accepted in heaven "*in the beloved*," and thou art even now accepted in Christ after the same manner.

“ For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way ; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him ; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him.” — Ezra viii. 22.

A CONVOY on many accounts would have been desirable for the pilgrim band, but a holy shame-facedness would not allow Ezra to seek one. He feared lest the heathen king should think his professions of faith in God to be mere hypocrisy, or imagine that the God of Israel was not able to preserve His own worshippers. He could not bring his mind to lean on an arm of flesh in a matter so evidently of the Lord, and therefore the caravan set out with no visible protection, guarded by Him who is the sword and shield of His people. It is to be feared that few believers feel this holy jealousy for God ; even those who in a measure walk by faith, occasionally mar the lustre of their life by craving aid from man. It is a most blessed thing to have no props and no buttresses, but to stand upright on the Rock of Ages, upheld by the Lord alone. Would any believers seek state-endowments for their Church, if they remembered that the Lord is dishonored by their asking Cæsar's aid ? as if the Lord could not supply the needs of His own cause ! Should we run so hastily to friends and relations for assistance, if we remembered that the Lord is magnified by our implicit reliance upon His solitary arm ? My soul, wait thou only upon God. “ But,” says one, “ are not means to be used ? ” Assuredly they are ; but our fault seldom lies in their neglect : far more frequently it springs out of foolishly believing in them, instead of believing in God. Few run too far in neglecting the creature's arm ; but very many sin greatly in making too much of it. Learn, dear reader, to glorify the Lord by leaving no means untried, if by using them thou wouldst not dishonor the name of the Lord.

"Just, and the justifier of him which believeth." — Romans iii. 26.

BEING justified by faith, we have peace with God. Conscience accuses no longer. Judgment now decides for the sinner instead of against him. Memory looks back upon past sins, with deep sorrow for the sin, but yet with no dread of any penalty to come; for Christ has paid the debt of His people to the last jot and tittle, and received the divine receipt; and unless God can be so unjust as to demand double payment for one debt, no soul for whom Jesus died as a substitute can ever be sent into hell. It seems to be one of the very principles of our enlightened nature to believe that God is just; we feel that it must be so, and this gives us our terror at first; but is it not marvellous that this very same belief that God is just, becomes afterwards the pillar of our confidence and peace! If God be just, I, a sinner, alone and without a substitute, must be punished; but Jesus stands in my stead, and is punished for me; and now, if God be just, I, a sinner, standing in Christ, can never be punished. God must change his nature before one soul, for whom Jesus was a substitute, can ever by any possibility suffer the lash of the law. Therefore, Jesus having taken the place of the believer, having rendered a full equivalent to divine wrath for all that His people ought to have suffered as the result of sin, the believer can shout with glorious triumph, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not God, for He hath justified; not Christ, for He hath died, "yea, rather, hath risen again." My hope lives, not because I am not a sinner, but because I am a sinner for whom Christ died; my trust is not that I am holy, but that, being unholy, *He* is my righteousness. My faith rests not upon what I am, or shall be, or feel, or know, but in what Christ is, in what He has done, and in what He is now doing for me. On the lion of justice the fair maid of hope rides like a queen.

"The myrtle trees that were in the bottom." — Zechariah i. 8.

THE vision in this chapter describes the condition of Israel in Zechariah's day; but being interpreted in its aspect towards *us*, it describes the Church of God as we find it now in the world. The Church is compared to a myrtle grove flourishing in a valley. It is *hidden*, unobserved, secreted; courting no honor and attracting no observation from the careless gazer. The Church, like her Head, has a glory, but it is concealed from carnal eyes, for the time of her breaking forth in all her splendor is not yet come. The idea of *tranquil security* is also suggested to us; for the myrtle grove in the valley is still and calm, while the storm sweeps over the mountain summits. Tempests spend their force upon the craggy peaks of the Alps, but down yonder, where flows the stream which maketh glad the city of our God, the myrtles flourish by the still waters, all unshaken by the impetuous wind. How great is the inward tranquillity of God's Church! Even when opposed and persecuted, she has a peace which the world gives not, and which, therefore, it cannot take away: the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps the hearts and minds of God's people. Does not the metaphor forcibly picture the peaceful, *perpetual growth* of the saints? The myrtle sheds not her leaves; she is always green; and the Church, in her worst time, still hath a blessed verdure of grace about her; nay, she has sometimes exhibited *most* verdure when her winter has been sharpest. She has prospered most when her adversities have been most severe. Hence the text *hints at victory*. The myrtle is the emblem of peace, and a significant token of *triumph*. The brows of conquerors were bound with myrtle and with laurel; and is not the Church ever victorious? Is not every Christian more than a conqueror through Him that loved him? Living in peace, do not the saints fall asleep in the arms of victory?

“Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?” — Deuteronomy xxxiii. 29.


HE who affirms that Christianity makes men miserable, is himself an utter stranger to it. It were strange indeed if it made us wretched; for see *to what a position it exalts us!* It makes us sons of God. Suppose you that God will give all the happiness to His enemies, and reserve all the mourning for His own family? Shall His foes have mirth and joy, and shall His home-born children inherit sorrow and wretchedness? Shall the sinner, who has no part in Christ, call himself rich in happiness, and shall we go mourning as if we were penniless beggars? No, we will rejoice in the Lord always, and glory in our inheritance, for we “have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” The rod of chastisement must rest upon us in our measure, but it worketh for us the comfortable fruits of righteousness; and therefore, by the aid of the divine Comforter, we, the “people saved of the Lord,” will joy in the God of our salvation. We are married unto Christ; and shall our great Bridegroom permit His spouse to linger in constant grief? Our hearts are knit unto Him; we are His members; and though for a while we may suffer as our Head once suffered, yet we are even now blessed with heavenly blessings in Him. We have the earnest of our inheritance in the comforts of the Spirit, which are neither few nor small. Heritors of joy forever, we have foretastes of our portion. There are streaks of the light of joy to herald our eternal sunrising. Our riches are beyond the sea; our city with firm foundations lies on the other side the river; gleams of glory from the spirit-world cheer our hearts, and urge us onward. Truly is it said of us, “Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?”

"The Lord looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men."
Psalm xxxiii. 13.

PERHAPS no figure of speech represents God in a more gracious light than when He is spoken of as stooping from His throne, and coming down from heaven to attend to the wants and to behold the woes of mankind. We love Him, who, when Sodom and Gomorrah were full of iniquity, would not destroy those cities until He had made a personal visitation of them. We cannot help pouring out our heart in affection for our Lord, who inclines his ear from the highest glory, and puts it to the lip of the dying sinner, whose failing heart longs after reconciliation. How can we but love Him, when we know that He numbers the very hairs of our heads, marks our path, and orders our ways? Specially is this great truth brought near to our heart, when we recollect how attentive He is, not merely to the temporal interests of His creatures, but to their spiritual concerns. Though leagues of distance lie between the finite creature and the infinite Creator, yet there are links uniting both. When a tear is wept by thee, think not that God doth not behold; for, "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Thy sigh is able to move the heart of Jehovah; thy whisper can incline His ear unto thee; thy prayer can stay His hand; thy faith can move His arm. Think not that God sits on high taking no account of thee. Remember that however poor and needy thou art, yet the Lord thinketh upon thee. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him.

*"Oh! then repeat the truth that never tires;
No God is like the God my soul desires;
He at whose voice heaven trembles, even He,
Great as He is, knows how to stoop to me."*

"Behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague." — Leviticus xiii. 13.

TRANGE enough this regulation appears; yet there was wisdom in it, for the throwing out of the disease proved that the constitution was sound. This morning it may be well for us to see the typical teaching of so singular a rule. We, too, are lepers, and may read the law of leper as applicable to ourselves. When a man sees himself to be altogether lost and ruined, covered all over with the defilement of sin, and no part free from pollution; when he disclaims all righteousness of his own, and pleads guilty before the Lord; then is he clean through the blood of Jesus, and the grace of God. Hidden, unfelt, unconfessed iniquity is the true leprosy; but when sin is seen and felt, it has received its death-blow, and the Lord looks with eyes of mercy upon the soul afflicted with it. Nothing is more deadly than self-righteousness, or more hopeful than contrition. We must confess that we are "nothing else but sin," for no confession short of this will be the whole truth; and if the Holy Spirit be at work with us, convincing us of sin, there will be no difficulty about making such an acknowledgment—it will spring spontaneously from our lips. What comfort does the text afford to those under a deep sense of sin! Sin mourned and confessed, however black and foul, shall never shut a man out from the Lord Jesus. Whosoever cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out. Though dishonest as the thief, though unchaste as the woman who was a sinner, though fierce as Saul of Tarsus, though cruel as Manasseh, though rebellious as the prodigal, the great heart of love will look upon the man who feels himself to have no soundness in him, and will pronounce him clean, when he trusts in Jesus crucified. Come to Him, then, poor heavy-laden sinner,

"Come needy, come guilty, come loathsome and bare;
You can't come too filthy—come just as you are."

"Sing forth the honor of His name, make His praise glorious."
Psalm lxi. 2.

IT is not left to our own option whether we shall praise God or not. Praise is God's most righteous due, and every Christian, as the recipient of His grace, is bound to praise God from day to day. It is true we have no authoritative rubric for daily praise; we have no commandment prescribing certain hours of song and thanksgiving; but the law written upon the heart teaches us that it is right to praise God; and the unwritten mandate comes to us with as much force as if it had been recorded on the tables of stone, or handed to us from the top of thundering Sinai. Yes, it is the Christian's *duty* to praise God. It is not only a pleasurable exercise, but it is the absolute obligation of his life. Think not, ye who are always mourning, that ye are guiltless in this respect, or imagine that ye can discharge your duty to your God without songs of praise. You are bound by the bonds of His love to bless His name so long as you live, and His praise should continually be in your mouth, for you are blessed in order that you may bless Him; "this people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise;" and if you do not praise God, you are not bringing forth the fruit which He, as the Divine Husbandman, has a right to expect, at your hands. Let not your harp then hang upon the willows, but take it down, and strive, with a grateful heart, to bring forth its loudest music. Arise and chant His praise. With every morning's dawn, lift up your notes of thanksgiving, and let every setting sun be followed with your song. Girdle the earth with your praises; surround it with an atmosphere of melody, and God Himself will hearken from heaven and accept your music.

"E'en so I love Thee, and will love,
And in Thy praise will sing,
Because Thou art my loving God,
And my redeeming King."