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## **GLIMPSES OF THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS**

by Octavius Winslow, 1846

### **PREFACE**

The title of the present volume will sufficiently explain its character and design. Unlike the previous productions of the same pen, it presents no continuity of subject—each chapter forming a uniting link in the chain of the discussion; but it exhibits a variety of themes, having no essential relation to each other, except that which the rays of light may be said to possess—each flowing from the same source, and converging to the same center. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Sun of the Christian system. He is the Fountain and the embodiment of all divine and spiritual truth. Every truth proceeds from, and leads to, him. The mind is furnished with real knowledge in proportion to its advance in the 'knowledge of Christ Jesus'. We hesitate not emphatically to affirm, that there is absolute darkness in the soul of man—be his attainments in human knowledge profound and brilliant as they may; if "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has not shined in his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Oh! what is the real value of all his boasted knowledge apart from this?

What though the philosopher has ransacked all the mysteries of nature, if he is yet ignorant of the God of nature, as revealed through Christ? What though the astronomer revels amid the glories of the material heavens, if he is experimentally unacquainted with the path by which he may arrive at the glories of the heaven of heavens? What though the geometrician may be able to measure all quantity, if he has not bestowed a serious thought upon the measureless eternity upon which he is soon to enter? And what though the

physician, skilled in the science of healing, is able to baffle every form of bodily disease, if he has no knowledge, in the cure of his own spiritual distemper, of the balm that is in Gilead, and of the Physician who is there? We ask, what real good, as it regards themselves, does it avail ? None whatever. See the vanity of all human knowledge, weighed with the momentous interests of an eternal world, except that which makes us it wise unto salvation.

It has been the aim of the writer in the following pages to exhibit this all-important truth, prominently and in various points of light. The work, in consequence, may be found to address itself more immediately to an unrenewed state of mind, or to a mind *theoretically*, but not *experimentally*, acquainted with the gospel, than perhaps may please the taste, or realize the expectation of some. Nevertheless, the writer trusts, that minds matured in grace may here and there obtain a glimpse of Jesus and of his truth—dim and imperfect though it may be—which, with the accompanying blessing of the Holy Spirit, will instruct and comfort, sanctify and stimulate the soul in the heavenly way.

It is proper briefly to allude to the history of this work. Scotland is its birth-place. It contains the substance of a few discourses which the author delivered from the pulpit of different Christian denominations, during a recent visit to that magnificent and interesting land. Yielding to the desire of several, for whom he cherishes the tenderest Christian love—albeit, in this instance, he may not commend the partiality of their judgment—they are snatched from assigned oblivion, and now appear in another, and a permanent form. The author has no idea that the solicitation of friends to publish is always a valid plea for inflicting a new volume upon the public. Nor has it in the present case, he thinks, blinded his eye to the very imperfect manner in which he has performed his task. And yet but for this prompting, which he would sincerely trace to a higher influence, he had never undertaken it. If, however, the same blessed Spirit who condescended to speak by these truths from the pulpit, will, to the same extent, speak by them from the press, the utmost wish of the author's heart will be granted. He cannot refrain from saying, that his work is literally ushered into the world upon the breath of prayer. The intimations which he has received from various quarters, of the especial and fervent supplications which have been made in its behalf, encourage him to hope that much glory to the Lord will accrue from this feeble production of his pen.

The author cannot close this allusion to the origin of his volume, without being permitted to remark, that one, who earnestly pleaded for its publication, has

since then passed away from earth, to *the world of full revelation, of complete holiness, and of perfect love*. The event has had the effect, he trusts, of imparting to his own mind, in tracing these pages, more vivid and realizing views of eternity. Strange though it may appear, he has felt a consciousness of her nearness, more palpable and sweet, than when last he bowed with her at the throne of grace, and in the midst of her own domestic circle. The home of the glorified is of more easy access, in the spirit's travel, than any home of earth. In the realization of faith, and in the anticipations of hope, and in the yearnings of love, Heaven is a nearer point. It is with the immaterial that we have communion; it is with mind that we converse; it is with spirit that we blend. And the more full their development, and the more complete their nature, the sweeter is the communion, and the higher is the enjoyment. And yet, though thus exercising that "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," we are forced to exclaim, "O the mystery of the invisible world! Where are the loved, the beautiful, and the holy, who have flitted from us and have disappeared? Do they know us—do they see us—do they attend us—do they love us still?"

But this we do know—that they are holy and happy, for they are with Christ, and are like him. And of this, too, we may be well assured, that to us the awful mystery will soon be explained; and we who are now wondering at the departed, will be 'wondered at,' for we shall mingle with the 'spirits of just men made perfect,' 'knowing even as we are known.'

But let us follow her, as she followed Christ. She loved the Lord—she lived for the Lord—and she waited and looked for the coming of the Lord—and now she is forever with the Lord. She needs not these partial and shadowy 'glimpses of the truth as it is in Jesus;' for *the full, the unclouded vision of the Lamb is hers*. She has passed within the veil, where the Forerunner had for her entered, and she has 'come to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant,' and she sees him, not 'through a glass darkly,'—but face to face. Her posture was always that of a lowly sinner, leaning in simple faith upon the atoning work of Immanuel. Her natural amiability and loveliness, great and admired as they were, never concealed from her view the plague of her own heart, nor beguiled her from the great truth, that only as she stood in the righteousness of the incarnate Son, could she appear with acceptance in the presence of the holy Lord God.

Never was there an instance of more entire laying down of self at the foot of the cross, drawing from it the motives that led to a simple and unreserved

surrender to the Lord. Thus clothed in the "righteousness of God," we believe that she is 'without fault before the throne,' adoring the grace that brought her there.

### **"The Voice of the Charmer"**

**"Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that has stopped its ears, that will not heed the voice of the charmer, however skillful the enchanter may be." Psalm 58:4-5**

**How glorious is the nature, and what an inestimable blessing to man, socially and individually considered, is the Gospel of Christ! It is a revelation of the most stupendous expedient, and a solution of the profoundest problem that ever interested the heart, or engaged the thought of the Eternal Mind. The salvation of guilty man secured in a way consistent with infinite holiness—the claims of stern justice reconciled with the pleadings of divine mercy—the moral government of God vindicated—and love, the favorite perfection of his nature, indulged—form the one sublime and precious theme of which it speaks in strains of newborn and unheard of melody. Well does the Holy Spirit entitle it, the "glorious Gospel of the blessed God." Thus, while this Gospel is to the sinner the golden chain of grace lowered to the very depth of his wretchedness and woe, it is an all-encircling shield thrown around the purity and the honor of that Being to whose nature it assimilates, and to whose communion it lifts him.**

**And yet, strange to say, man, the only creature personally interested in this wondrous revelation, is of all intelligences the least astonished at its glories, or affected by its appeals. Angels scan its mysteries, and adore—devils believe its announcements, and tremble; but man, whom it most deeply concerns, and to whom it is especially sent, "will not heed the voice of the charmer, however skillful the enchanter may be." May the Spirit of truth and love impart his own blessing, while we proceed to consider the nature of the gospel charm, and the guilt and consequences of its wilful neglect.**

**By every reflective and right-thinking mind, the gospel will be regarded as the most invaluable boon God ever bestowed upon our nation, while its withdrawal would be the greatest calamity that could arrest its prosperity and blight its happiness. The unenlightened philosopher, the political economist, and the wily statesman, may dispute the justness of this sentiment; but man's**

**unbelief cannot invalidate God's truth. Let God be true, and every man whose opinions contravene His veracity, be a liar, rather than that God were false. The gospel has made us, as a nation, all that we are—great, privileged, and free. Her greatness, her privileges, and her freedom, Britain owes not to the wisdom of her legislation, to the influence of her letters, or to the prowess of her military; but to Christianity, and to Christianity alone. But for this, she had still been classed with the idolatrous nations of the east. When the great apostle of the Gentiles planted his foot upon her shores, and, amid the heathen altars and idolatrous shrines consecrated to Woden, to Thor, and to Tuesco, proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ, he laid the foundation of all her future glory.**

**And although there have been periods in her remarkable history when the pale star of Popery has seemed in the ascendant, and the sun of gospel truth has for a while been obscured, yet the morning has again dawned—a morning without clouds"—and emerging from beneath the veil of night, it has shone forth with increased power and splendor, covering with overwhelming defeat every attempt to banish it from the land. And so it will continue to confound its enemies until the last conquest it achieves shall usher in the coming of the Son of man.**

**We might also adduce the history of the Western World as affording another evidence of the gospel as a national blessing. Contrast the present elevated moral, intellectual, and social condition of America, with the period, but recent, when the Indian paddled his canoe along her majestic waters, and the smoke of his rude wigwam, and the yell of his senseless worship, rose amid the stillness and the gloom of his unbroken forests; and to the inquiry, "What has so rapidly advanced, and so far elevated her in the scale of civilized nations?" we unhesitatingly reply, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," planted upon her shores by the labors, and nourished by the prayers, the sacrifices, and the tears of the Pilgrim Fathers, of whom the world was not worthy. We have made and have given this prominence to these remarks, feeling their importance and necessity.**

**There exists a marvellous tendency to undervalue the influence of Christianity as a great national blessing. Civilization, education, and science are thrust forward, as though all our greatness and true glory had been achieved by, and would be perpetuated through, them. It is alarming to think of the progress which these semi-infidel views are making. But as the gospel alone made, so the gospel alone can preserve us what we are. Christianity is the basis of our**

**institutions, and the bulwark of our strength. Our very existence as a nation depends upon it. The setting of this sun, to change the figure, would be the precursor of a fearful night of moral and intellectual gloom, the signal for every foul spirit of darkness to emerge from his hiding place, and stalk in triumph through the land. Let us hold fast the pure gospel. Nothing but its diffusion can retain it in our midst. No civil power can preserve it. It must take hold on the masses, it must enthrone itself on the hearts, embody itself in the intellects, and incorporate itself with the habits of the people. To attain this end, we must circulate the Bible, sustain the divine institution of the Christian ministry, live the gospel individually, and be more earnest and united in prayer for a deeper baptism of the Holy Spirit upon our churches.**

**But it is of the relation of man to the gospel, as an individual, and not as a society, we are particularly to speak in the present chapter. And in the foreground let us contemplate the charming Savior whom the gospel reveals, the Savior of God's providing, and in all points of view a gift worthy of so great and glorious a Giver. There are two passages of God's word which convey to the mind the most forcible and exalted views of the personal excellence and dignity of the Lord Jesus, at which we may give a rapid glance. The first portrays his matchless beauty, the second his incomprehensible greatness. "You are fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever," Psalm 45:2.**

**This doubtless refers to the perfection of his human excellence. As man, his beauty transcends the loveliest of human beings—"fairer than the children of men." Their beauty is mixed; his is pure. Theirs is derived; his is from himself. Theirs decays; his is imperishable. His body prepared by God; his mind filled with all the wisdom, grace, and holiness of the Spirit—he stands forth the "bright and morning star," the perfect, peerless Son of man. O for an eye to see and admire his excellence! and not admire only, but to imitate. O for grace to lie at his feet, and learn from his meekness! to lean on his bosom and drink of his love; to set the Lord always before us, never moving the eye from this perfect model, but ever aiming to transcribe its lineaments upon our daily life. Yes! you are "fairer than the children of men!" you altogether lovely One! And as I gaze upon your perfections, wandering from beauty to beauty, my admiration increases, and my love deepens, until, in the assurance of faith, and in the transport of joy, I exclaim, "this is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."**

**Respecting his superior nature, not less clear and emphatic is the declaration**

of his essential greatness. "No man knows the Son but the Father," Matt. 11:27. Surely these words are sufficient to remove all doubt as to his Deity. Were he only man, with what truth could it be affirmed of him, that "no man knows the Son?" It is the property of an angel, that he understands the angelic nature; and of man, that he understands the human nature. It is the perfection of God that He only understands the nature of God. Who, then, but the Infinite, can measure the infinite greatness of the Son of God? The loftiest created imagination, the mightiest human intellect, the profoundest angelic research, falls infinitely short of what he is. The Father alone knows the Son, because he is of the same nature and mind with the Father.

Beware of holding this doctrine lightly. A more important one—one more glorious or more precious, asks not the confidence of your faith. Hold it fast, even as the vessel in the storm clings to its anchor. This gone, the next mountain wave drives you upon the quicksand of doubt and perplexity, and then where are you? Consider how important must be that single truth, on which the value, the preciousness, and the efficacy of all other truths depend. Such a truth is the Godhead of Christ.

How glorious an object, then, is this Savior, whom the gospel thus reveals! It is true his essential greatness, like the peace which he himself gives, "surpasses all understanding;" yet like that peace, he may be known, though he cannot be measured. "We may know experimentally," as Owen beautifully remarks, "that which we cannot know comprehensively; we may know that in its power and effect, which we cannot comprehend in its nature and depths. A weary person may receive refreshment from a spring, who cannot fathom the depth of the ocean from where it proceeds." That this is true of the "love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge," is equally true of the person of Christ himself, whom "no man knows but the Father." Think not that all his beauty is concealed. They, in whom it has pleased the Father to reveal his Son, "behold his glory;" they "see the King in his beauty;" the discovery of his excellence often captivates their soul, and the sense of his love often cheers their hearts; while in lively faith and joy they exclaim, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine."

Take one more view of Him who is the "chief among ten thousand." Look at his sinless, yet real humanity; without a single taint, yet sympathizing with all the conditions of ours: afflicted in our afflictions; tempted in our temptations; infirm in our infirmities; grieved in our griefs; "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities;" and now that he is in glory, still

cherishing a brother's heart, bending down his ear to our petitions, ever standing near to catch our sighs, to dry our tears, to provide for our needs, to guide us by his counsel, and afterwards to receive us to glory. O what a Savior is Jesus Christ! Wonder not, my readers, that when he is known, all other beings are eclipsed; that when his beauty is seen, all other beauty fades; that when his love is felt, he becomes supremely enthroned in the affections; and that to know him more, is the one desire of the renewed mind, and to make him more known, is the one aim of the Christian life.

What charming tidings, too, does the gospel announce! Take the doctrine of PARDON, the very mention of which thrills the soul with gladness. Pardon through the blood-shedding of God's dear Son for "all manner of sin," and for the chief of sinners! What myriads have gone to glory, exulting with their expiring breath in those melodious words, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin!" Is there no music in this declaration to the ear of a sin-burdened soul? And when the called children of God behold in that blood of Immanuel—the sea which has drowned all their sins, the fountain which has cleansed all their guilt, the source of their reconciliation, the cause of their peace, and the ground of their access—is not the gospel a joyful sound to their ears?

And yet how few live in the full enjoyment of this truth, "You will cast all my sins behind your back." "You have forgiven all their iniquity." "I have blotted out as a cloud your transgressions, and as a thick cloud your sins." Precious truth! Since God has spoken it, faith exclaims, "I believe it. On this I can live holily, and on this I can die happily." The Gospel speaks, too, of a RIGHTEOUSNESS which places the believing sinner in a state of complete justification—a righteousness better than that of Moses, and superior to that of angels, because it is the "righteousness of God Himself."

Among the many glorious names which our Immanuel bears is, "JEHOVAH our Righteousness." He is made from God the righteousness of his people. As their law-fulfiller, obeying; as their surety, suffering in their stead, they become the righteousness of God in Him, so that the very name itself which Jesus bears in connection with our justification becomes ours. "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name by which she shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness." Thus the believer wears the clothing, and takes the name of Him, who is emphatically the husband of his Church. See how complete she is in him—Colos. 2:10. How glorious—Eph. 5:7. How lovely, Ezek. 16:14. In this righteousness she is

exalted, Psalm. 139:16; and in this it is her privilege greatly to rejoice, Isa. 41:10.

Is this righteousness yours, my reader? Have you cast aside the defiled, worm-eaten garment in which by nature you stand; and are you clothed in the fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints? Search and see! You may have gone far in a profession of Christ, in a visible enrolment among his people; and yet were the King to enter the banqueting room where you sit partaking the symbols of his death, to see the guests, it is possible that in view of his solemn, searching inspection, you may be found not having on the righteousness of Christ.

But if you have renounced your own merits, and have fled entirely from yourself to Jesus, then to this sweet note of the joyful sound, your heart responds, exclaiming, "In the Lord have I righteousness;" "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad." Standing in this perfect, spotless robe, you will aim after a life corresponding with a privilege so exalted; and whether living or dying, you will be openly and manifestly the Lord's.

A FREE GRACE voice will possess a charm to the spiritual ear which no word of man can fully express—and this is the true idea of the gospel. But for this, what charm to a convinced sinner would the gospel of Jesus possess? How could the rest, the privileges, and the blessings of this great charter of divine mercy raise a solitary emotion of gladness in the heart, were they not the gratuities of the God of grace? What music, do you think, to the ear of a condemned felon would be the pardon of his sovereign, were it upon terms which the very circumstances of his case rendered unavailable? What a cruel mockery would it be of his helplessness, and what a bitter taunting of his woe! But stand upon the threshold of his gloomy cell, and read to him in tones worthy of the announcement, a free, unconditional pardon; throw wide open his door, knock off his chains, and "say to the prisoner, Go forth," with no obligations imposed, but such as boundless goodness would dictate, and such as deathless gratitude would recognize—loyalty to a sovereign so gracious and benignant—and you do indeed bear to him glad tidings. You irradiate his dark dungeon with brightness, and you fill his desolate heart with joy. Such are the tidings which the Gospel proclaims.

Listen to it—eloquent are its accents: "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "It is by faith that it might be

by grace." "Without money, and without price." "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." "Come and take of the water of life freely." Are you a self-destroyed, self-condemned, bankrupt sinner, with, nothing to pay? Then may you exclaim, "Never was music so sweet to me as this! Salvation free! Redemption without money! Heaven without creature merit! All springing from the heart of God, and flowing down through the channel of the Savior's merits."

As a system of Divine and unfailing CONSOLATION, there is a charm in the gospel of Jesus of indescribable sweetness. Originating with that God, not only whose name and whose perfection, but whose very essence is love, and who Himself is the "God of all comfort," it must be a gospel of "strong consolation," commensurate with every conceivable sorrow of his people. Let those testify who, amid the trials and the conflicts of their pilgrimage, have thus experienced it. Indeed it is only by this test that its real character can be estimated. As we can convey no adequate idea of sound to the deaf, of color to the blind, or of life to the dead, neither can we by the most elaborate reasoning or eloquent description, impart to a mind estranged from sorrow—if such there be—any proper conception of the magic power of the gospel, as a consummate system of the richest consolation and support.

But let a Christian be placed in circumstances of the deepest grief and sorest trial—the bread and the water of affliction his food—the iron entering his soul—the heart bereaved—the mind perplexed—the spirit dark—all human hopes blighted, and creature cisterns failing him like a spring in the summer's drought; then let the Spirit of God, the Divine Paraclete, open this box of perfume, breathing into his soul the rich consolations, the precious promises, the strong assurances, the divine counsels, and the glowing hopes which it contains, and in a moment the light of love appears in his dark cloud, his fainting spirit revives, and all is peace!

Oh! that must be a charming gospel which can meet the necessities of man at every point; whose wisdom no human perplexity can baffle, and whose resources of sympathy and comfort, no case of suffering or of sorrow can exhaust. Tried soul! repair to this unfailing spring of comfort. God speaks to you in it—it is the unsealing of the heart of Jesus—it is the still small voice of the Spirit. It speaks to you—it bids you "cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you;" "Call upon him in the day of trouble, and he will answer you." It assures you that amid, all your perplexing cares, "He cares for you." It promises you that for your flint-paved path, your "shoes shall be iron and

brass;" and that "as your days are, so shall your strength be." It tells you that a "woman may forget her nursing child, yet God will not forget you;" that in all your assaults, you shall dwell on high, your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks;" and that though hemmed in on every side by a besieging foe, and all other supplies cut off, yet "your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." It invites you to lay your griefs and weep out your sorrows upon the bosom of Jesus, and so "leaning upon your Beloved, ascend from the wilderness." O to be led into the heart-felt experience of these truths, even while passing through billows of sorrow to a martyr's flames!

Not the least important and endearing element of the Gospel to a believer's heart, is its HOLINESS. All its truths to him are precious, because the tendency of all is to sanctify. What to him were its soothing consolations dissevered from its holy precepts? What were its comfort, if that comfort were secured at the expense of holiness? What though it dried his tears, but did not subdue his corruptions? What though it assuaged the fountain of his grief, while it left that of his sins unchecked? Its greatest charm were gone! No; he would desire guidance, instruction, and consolation, only so far as they advanced his divine conformity.

He longs, he pants, he prays, to be a holy child of God. That he so often and so far misses his mark—that he is so frequently foiled, disappointed, and forced back, in his strivings after sanctification, is to him the bitterest of bitter sorrows. But when at any time, and in any degree, he is enabled through grace to "do the will of God from the heart," and when in the great conflict of faith he advances to the foe, and covers that advance with glory, or retreats only to eclipse the glory of his advance, a shout more full of music never rose to heaven, than that which breaks from his adoring lips, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The "charmers," from whose lips this divine melody proceeds, are the true ministers of Christ, whom he has chosen, called, and furnished with grace and gifts, and to whom he has committed a dispensation of the gospel. Their appointment is from God; their succession is from Christ; their anointing for, and designation to, the work are from the Holy Spirit. He himself, though a minister of the Lord Jesus, is but an "earthen vessel," encompassed with, and often well near crushed by, the infirmity of which he is, in common with others, the subject. "For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men, in things pertaining to God,...who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way; for in that he himself is

compassed with infirmity."

He is often alarmed by the thought, that truth so divine and so pure should flow through a channel so earthly and so defiled; and that to an office so spiritual, and to a work so great, he should bring grace so shallow, and attainments so limited. Yet God has placed him in the office; and although tempted at times to relinquish his high trust, yet he is as often deterred by the solemn voice of conscience, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" But we would be far from conveying a gloomy representation of the office and functions of the Christian ministry. It is true, many, influenced by sordid and unworthy motives, seek admittance to the holy office; and that these should find its sacred labors distasteful and wearisome, is no marvel. But there are others who can humbly adopt the language of their Master, "My food and my drink are to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish his work."

They delight in their employment; they find their rest in their toil; and they often reap their highest joy from that which is the cause of their deepest sorrow. To proclaim that gospel which has often charmed his own soul—to preach that Jesus, at times so precious to his own heart—to comfort others with the comforts with which he himself has been comforted by God—to wipe a solitary tear from the eye—to chase a single grief from the heart—to smooth a dying pillow—to save a soul from death—to guide a saint to glory—O to him it were worth a million lives, were they even lives of tenfold toil and trial!

With all its solemn responsibilities, its wearisome labors, its painful anxieties, its lonely sorrows, who would not be a gospel charmer? Who would not, like Jesus, be anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek—to bind up the broken-hearted—to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound? With such a commission, and beneath such anointing, is it any marvel that such a minister should, like the apostle, look down from his lofty eminence with contempt upon the wisdom of man and the learning of the schools, the moment they clashed with the wisdom of God and the glory of the cross—that he should go forth, and to the lettered and the ignorant, to the polished and the rude, make known nothing but Christ crucified? These, then, are the "charmings." And of them the sweet poet sings,

"How beautiful are their feet  
Who stand on Zion's hill!  
Who bring salvation on their tongues,  
And words of peace reveal!

**How charming is their voice!  
How sweet the tidings are!  
Zion, behold your Savior King!  
He reigns and triumphs here."**

**But what is it to "charm wisely?" True wisdom has been defined that power which accomplishes the greatest results by the simplest means. Then, here is wisdom! To save souls from eternal death, by the "foolishness of preaching," must be regarded as the highest point to which wisdom can soar. It is recorded concerning the apostles, that they "so spoke, that a great multitude, both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed." They presented Christ so prominently—they divided truth so skillfully—and they preached with such power, point, and simplicity, that "multitudes were added to the Lord."**

**See with what contempt they looked down upon the unsanctified wisdom and lore of this world! Addressing the Corinthians, their great leader could say, "my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He charmed wisely; and by the influence of his preaching, pagan altars were destroyed, senseless idols were abandoned, the Pantheon and the Lyceum were forsaken, and "a great 'company of the priests were obedient to the faith;" but it was not with the "wisdom of this world," in order that their "faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.**

**And why may not the same results in the employment of the same means be ours? Do we not preach the same gospel? Don't we deal with the same intelligent and deathless mind? Don't we draw our motives and our appeals from the same eternity? True, we possess neither the spirit of prophecy nor the gift of miracles. We need them not. Nor did the apostles in their grand work of converting men to God. They never in a single instance quickened a soul by the power of a miracle. The extraordinary gifts with which they were endowed were bestowed for another and a different purpose. The cases of our Lord and of his Forerunner are strikingly in point. The ministry of Jesus, although attended by a succession of miracles the most brilliant and convincing, resulted in fewer conversions than the ministry of John, who did no miracle.**

**To what divine agency, then, did the apostles themselves trace the extraordinary result of their preaching? To what, but the demonstration of the Spirit? O for tongues of fire to proclaim the glad tidings of the gospel!**

**With such a Savior to make known—with such revelations to disclose—with such souls to save—with such results to expect—is it of a wonder that we should speak with any other? To charm wisely, then, is so rightly to divide God's word, as not to confound truth with error—so discriminatingly to preach it, as to separate the precious from the vile—and so distinctly and prominently to hold up the cross of Christ, as to save immortal souls. The cross, the cross must be the central object exhibited in our ministry, to which every eye must be directed, and before which all the glory of man must fade.**

**The Holy Spirit, too, must be more honored—his anointing more especially sought—and his influence more earnestly insisted upon. Apart from this, no ministry, be its character in other respects what it may, has any real power. How poor a thing it is, distinguished only by its learning, its genius, and its eloquence, and destitute of the vital warmth, and impassioned earnestness, and soul-subduing, and heart-awakening energy of the Holy Spirit! Weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, it is as light as air; estimated in view of the judgment, it is an awful mockery.**

**But a most solemn part of this subject remains to be considered. We allude to the reception which this heaven-sent message of reconciliation meets from multitudes on whose external ear only its accents of melody fall. The charge which God brings against such resolves itself into the indictment of a wilful neglect and rejection of this immense privilege. "Who will not heed the voice of the charmer, however skillful the enchanter may be." The character here alluded to has its classifications, to which, lest any should be self-deceived in so momentous a matter, we will briefly advert.**

**There are, in the first place, those who may be said to receive, and yet who do actually reject the gospel of Jesus. Supposing ourselves addressing such, we would present a line of argument somewhat like this: You are not, in the skeptical sense of the term, an unbeliever. In other words, you shudder at the idea, and would resent the suspicion of being an infidel. You believe the Holy Scriptures to be a divine record, Christ "a teacher come from God," and the Christianity which he taught a heaven-authenticated record of the doctrines to be believed and the precepts to be followed, essential to that "holiness without which no one can see the Lord." And yet, strange to say, notwithstanding all this, you are an unbeliever! Your unbelief is of a most alarming and fatal character; more ensnaring than that which saps the foundation of Christianity; because, while it professes to credit its truth, it practically makes it a lie, and thus fosters one of the most fatal delusions that**

**ever imperiled the immortal soul!**

**Do you live as if you believed the gospel to be true? What moral influence does your professed belief exert over you? What shape and coloring does it impart to your habits of reflection and of feeling? You affirm that you believe in the gospel; but upon what part of your conduct is the influence of that belief felt and seen? You declare that you have faith; but where are its fruits? Alas! the moonbeams fall not more coldly and powerlessly upon the sterile earth, than does the light which your intellectual faith sheds upon your whole path to eternity. You live as if there were no God—no Savior—no heaven—no hell—no death—no judgment—no eternity. Immersed in business or intent upon wealth, panting for fame or eager in chase of pleasure, the dread future, whose bleak, rock-bound coast you are each moment nearing, is all, all forgotten.**

**You consider yourself as a rational, reasonable, and sane being. But is it rational, reasonable, or sane, to merge the momentous interests of an ever-enduring future in the fleeting shadows of a present moment? What a mere fragment of your being is your present earthly life! Compared with the eternal future, it is as the particle of sand which the wind lifts and wafts from the shore, or like a drop of the spray which it scatters from the ocean's wave. And yet see how you live! And oh, how imperfectly you measure the great work to be done with the brief moment allotted to its accomplishment! You vainly imagine that it can all be crowded into, and accomplished within the space of a dying hour—that a business the most momentous that ever engaged the thought or enlisted the feelings of man, may be safely deferred until the period when the wasting away of sickness, and the fever of delirium, the madness of convulsions, the writhings of pain, and the throbs and throes of dissolving nature, shall task to the utmost all the powers of the mind—oh, what sheer madness is this!**

**See, then, to what your professed faith in the gospel of Christ brings you! The devils believe, and tremble at what they believe. You believe, and yet tremble not! O what a lie does your whole life give to your faith! The decided irreligion, worldliness, and thoughtlessness, which make up its history, prove your faith in the gospel to be a most woeful deception. It may be a sound faith, as far as reason and philosophy go; but a mere assent of the understanding to the truth is not the faith which the truth itself requires.**

**There are others, who profess no belief whatever in the gospel of Christ.**

Theirs is an entire, open, undisguised rejection of this divine system of truth. The atheist rejects it, in his avowed disbelief of God's being—the infidel, when he pronounces the Bible a fiction, and Christianity a lie—the Jew, when he exclaims, "not Jesus, but Barabbas"—the Socinian, in his denial of the Deity of the Son of God—the neologist and the transcendentalist, when they betray the Savior with a kiss. This class is a large one. It embraces in its melancholy catalogue the careless, the indifferent, the scorner, the scoffer, the worldling, the impenitent, the moralist, the pharisee—in a word, all—be they the learned, the philosophical, the intellectual, the refined, or the religious, according to the world's notion—all who are not born again of the Spirit, and who are not exemplifying the power of the truth which is according to godliness.

But there is a feature in this sin which imparts to it a still darker and more fearful complexion. We allude to its willfulness. There is in it the exhibition of a will not only totally unrenewed and unholy, but assuming an attitude of positive and determined hostility to this wondrous message of God's grace. Ponder the terms of this indictment: "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that has stopped its ears, that will not heed the voice of the charmer, however skillful the enchanter may be."

With this corresponds our Lord's description of the same character—"For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear and they have closed their eyes— so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me, and I should heal them." O it is this wilful rejection of the gospel of Jesus which more than all demonstrates your deep degeneracy, and constitutes the most alarming feature of your sin.

We can but briefly, in conclusion, advert to the appalling consequences of this wilful shutting of the ear against the sound of the gospel. They are most effectively told in the words of God himself. Thus he describes the sin and its punishment: "But they refused to listen to this message. They turned stubbornly away and put their fingers in their ears to keep from hearing. They made their hearts as hard as stone, so they could not hear the law or the messages that the Lord Almighty had sent them by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. That is why the Lord Almighty was so angry with them. Since they refused to listen when I called to them, I would not listen when they called to me, says the Lord Almighty." Zech. 7:11-13. O ponder, I beseech you, reader, these awful words, and no longer "pull away your shoulder"

from Christ's yoke, nor "stop your ears" against his voice.

**In the New Testament, the record of mercy and of love, it is fearfully written, "the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 2 Thes. 1:7-9 Are you prepared for this?**

**But not with a note of terror would we close this chapter. The last vibration that lingers on your ear shall be the "voice of the charmer." How rich the melody!**

**"In strains as sweet as angels use,  
The gospel whispers peace."**

**And sweeter too, "Ho! every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money, come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." O let your ear drink in this heavenly sound! It is God himself who speaks. Every word is from his heart. "Look unto Me, all you ends of the earth, and be saved, for I am God, and there is none else." Look unto Jesus, and not to yourselves. You stagger at your great unworthiness. What were this but to suppose that you would never be otherwise? No! Your worthiness is in Christ—your merit is in Christ—your righteousness is in Christ—your beauty is in Christ—your salvation is in Christ—all, all is in Jesus Christ. Out of him you are lost, and lost forever. Through him, though you were the vilest sinner whom the Spirit of God ever drew to the feet of Jesus, you may be saved, and saved forever!**

### **"Alone with Jesus"**

**And Jesus was left alone, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." John 8:9-11**

**Well did the trembling king of Israel exclaim, when with an air of tender faithfulness the prophet placed before him the choice of those evils which should mark his sin—"Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for very great**

are his mercies, but let me not fall into the hand of man." Every point of light in which his decision can be viewed, justifies both its wisdom and its holiness. It was wise: he knew that the Lord was his God: as such, he had long been wont to deal with him in transactions the most solemn and confiding, and thus, from knowledge and experience, he felt he could now safely trust in him. It was holy: he saw that God was most righteous in punishing his sin, and that in meekly submitting to that punishment which came more immediately from the Lord, he was sympathizing with the equity of the Divine Government, and was upholding the character of the "Judge of all the earth" as "most upright." Guided by these considerations, he would rather fall into the hands of the Lord, uplifted though they were to scourge.

Who has not made this prayer his own, and breathed it at the footstool of mercy? The "tender mercies of the wicked are cruelty," but the severest corrections of our Father are love. To be smitten by God is infinitely better to the believer than to be blest by man. The creature's affection often brings with it a snare; and the honor which comes from man tends to nourish the corrupt principle of depraved self. But whatever, in the experience of a child of God, that may be which comes more directly from the Lord, it brings with it its concealed but its certain and often unutterable blessing. O how safe are we in the Lord's hands! Though he frown, we yet may love. Though he scourge, we yet may cling. Though he slay, we yet may trust. "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." With such an issue, welcome the discipline that leads to it. "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for very great are his mercies."

The touching narrative which has suggested these reflections and the subject of this chapter, affords another example of the blessedness of being exclusively in the Lord's hands. Here was a poor accused sinner rescued from the violent grasp of men, and thrown in all her helplessness upon the mercy of Jesus. And while the Spirit unfolds the great gospel truths which it so impressively illustrates, may we experience something of the blessedness and sweetness of spending an hour alone with Jesus!

The character of the scene which it portrays is judicial—the grouping natural, the objects interesting, the whole instructive. With regard to the first object which arrests our attention—THE PRISONER AT THE BAR—we can scarcely imagine a case more calculated than this to awaken the tenderest sympathies of Jesus. The accused, now pale and agitated, weak and trembling, was a woman. A wreck of her former self though she was, there still was an

air of touching tenderness, if not of faded beauty and grandeur, still lingering amid the ruin. This would not escape the searching and discriminating glance of the Savior. She was a woman, and the acute sensibilities of her sex were hers. These had indeed received a fearful shock. It may be in the power of sin and crime deeply to obscure and greatly to blunt the fine and delicate instincts of our nature, but never totally to extinguish them. They will outlive the storm that may have scattered the verdure and dissipated the blossom of many an opening character. The external loveliness of that character may for a while be shaded, but there is a deathless beauty within—feelings, thoughts, purposes, and resolves, which die only with the dying breath. There is a class of feelings—certain sympathies and affinities—which would seem to be from their very nature imperishable. God has so ordered it.

A mother, for example, can never forget that she is a mother. The hidden fountain of feeling, unsealed in her heart, is ever springing up, pure and sparkling. She may wander from her home as a bird from its resting-place, but she will return and hover around her little ones; or she will clasp to her bosom with a firmness which the wrench of death only can relax, the infant that shares her wanderings and her guilt. And a woman is a woman still. Sin and sorrow may have beclouded the sun-light, and marred the joyousness of her spirit; but there are undercurrents of affection and feeling which the tempest that swept the surface has left untouched. That keen sensibility—that gentleness—that tenderness—that instinctive delicacy and that keen sense of honor—the peculiar traits of her sex—are still there. The delicate stem from which has fallen the beautiful flower, may bend before the blast; but tenderly raise, and kindly nourish it, it will live again, and bud and blossom as before. It may be a truant plant, still a plant of Eden, whose tint and fragrance may yet brighten and make glad the garden of the heart.

We should remember this in our walks and labors of benevolence. Brought, as we sometimes are, into contact with extreme cases of guilt and crime, we should not overlook the material we yet possess with which to repair the fallen structure. No heart should be considered too polluted—no mind too dark—no character too debased—for the power of God, working by human instrumentality, to restore. The surface may present to the eye the iron features of a hardened and a reckless character; nevertheless, there are springs of thought and feeling and memory beneath that repulsive surface, which, if touched by a skillful and a delicate hand, will unlock the door of the heart, and admit you within its most sacred recesses. Thus with gentleness and kindness you may soften the most hardened, disarm the most ferocious, calm

**the most violent, and attain complete possession of a mind that has long resisted and repelled every other subduing influence.**

**The law of love is the law of God's moral government of his people. By this, and by this alone, he rules them. All that is disciplinary in his conduct is resolvable into love. It is by kindness, "loving-kindness," yes, "marvellous loving-kindness!" that he wins back their truant hearts, and binds them closer to himself. "I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness." "With loving-kindness have I drawn you." O to imitate him in this particular!—to be like God in his kindness to the children of men. Then would there be less sitting in the judgment seat—less readiness to cast the first stone—less harshness and censoriousness in our conduct and spirit towards others; and more of that self-judging, self-condemning, and self-abasement, before the holy, heart-searching, all-seeing Lord God, without which we may be awfully self-deceived.**

**But what an object was here, befitting the Savior's sympathy and power! Do you think, reader, that from it his pure and gentle spirit shrunk? Would he feel terrified or polluted by so close a proximity to an object of guilt and wretchedness? Ah, no! Come, you vaunting philanthropists of poetry and romance, who dissolve into tears over a fiction, and petrify at a reality—come, you who have your tears for imaginary woe, and recoil from contact with true misery—who deem it pollution to take kindly the hand of a poor wanderer, exclaiming, "Get away, for I am holier than you!" Come and learn what true philanthropy and sensitiveness mean.**

**Our Lord's was no gushy, sentimental humanity, standing aloof from the fallen and the despised, and attracting to itself only the virtuous and the worthy. It was a humanity that identified itself with our fall, and with all its consequent miseries. Itself pure, it yet took our sins; itself happy, it yet took our sicknesses and our sorrows. He came as the Savior, and sinners were the objects of his love and compassion. He was a man, and to nothing that was human, but its essential taint of sin, was he a stranger. He even carried our sins, as a crushing weight, upon that sinless frame; and that heart, to which sorrow was unknown, became "acquainted with grief."**

**O it is wondrous to see how closely the Son of God linked himself with fallen, suffering man! Touch what chord you may of the human heart, and there comes up from the depths of his an instantaneous and harmonious response. With what effect would some of these hidden springs of feeling in the human**

soul of Jesus now be touched! He would remember, as his eye fell upon this trembling object of his sympathy, that he himself was born of a woman, amid her perils and her pangs. He would remember, too, that there still was one who bore to him the endearing appellation of mother, and that yet others stood to him in the fond relation of sisters, and all that was tender in his heart would be moved. Looking at her humiliation, and thinking of his own, pity would melt his heart; and while listening to the voice of her clamorous accusers, with the garden of Gethsemane and Calvary full in view, her sin would stir to its center the deep fountain of his mercy. Then, O then, if ever, did he appear the "brother born for adversity." Then was fulfilled the Messianic prediction in the Psalms, "He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper; for he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those who condemn his soul."

But dismissing for a moment the narrative itself, let us turn our attention to the gospel instruction which it unfolds. The truths which it illustrates are of the deepest moment. It brings vividly before the mind the case of a soul under the conviction and condemnation of the law, standing in the presence of Jesus, awaiting his solemn decision. We are now approaching that period of a man's life, upon which depend the complexion of his future history here, and the character of his destiny hereafter. Conversion, without which the present life is a perfect blank, and the future is "written in mourning, lamentation, and woe," is that event in individual history which creates all things new. The step which we are now describing, is the first in the great matter of conversion.

The Holy Spirit asserts this when, by the apostle, he describes the law as our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ. And in the school of the law, the first and the grand lesson which the sinner learns is his sin, his curse, and his condemnation. There he is convinced of his vileness, convicted of his guilt, and learns his poverty, helplessness, and hell-deserving. All the fond conceit of his own worthiness, strength, and fitness, vanishes as a vapor, and he sees himself in the power, under the curse, and exposed to the tremendous condemnation of God's righteous, broken, avenging law. Thus convicted in the very act of his rebellion against God, he is brought, like a felon, into the presence of Jesus. There he stands, pale and trembling, his witnesses many and loud, while his own awakened conscience pleads guilty to the charge.

Are you that soul, dear reader? Has the law arrested and brought you within Christ's court? O you never were in such a position before—so new, so strange, so blessed! It may be, you never felt yourself so near hell as now,

**under the sentence of God's law; but you never were so near heaven as now, in the presence of Jesus. You are now in that court where justice to the fullest is honored, and where mercy to its utmost is extended. You are in Christ's court, at Christ's bar—awaiting the sentence of him who was made under that law, fulfilled its precepts, and endured its penalty to the uttermost. You are in the presence of him who came to deliver sinners from its curse and woe, and to raise them far above the reach of all condemnation. Never were you so sensible of your guilt and ruin as now, yet never were you so near the fountain that cleanses from all sin, nor so close to him who was pierced to shelter the vilest of the vile. Your Judge is your Savior. He who sits upon that throne is he who hung upon the cross. You are arraigned in the presence, and are thrown upon the mercy of him, the delight of whose heart, and the glory of whose character, it is to save sinners; whose love for them induced him to screen his glory, and to appear in humiliation—to suffer, bleed, and die. You are in the presence of him who, though he has ascended on high, and is now glorified with the glory "he had with the Father before the world was," is yet engaged in securing the precious fruits of his soul's travail.**

**"His glory now, no tongue of man,  
Nor seraph bright can tell  
Yet still the chief of all his joys,  
That souls are saved from hell."**

**"For this he came and dwelt on earth;  
For this his life was given;  
For this he fought and vanquished death;  
For this he pleads in heaven."**

**Look up, poor soul! for "your redemption draws near." Never yet did he allow a sin-accused, self-condemned sinner to go out of this court unblessed, unsaved.**

**We return again to the narrative; and the second thing which arrests our attention, is THE CONDUCT OF JESUS TOWARDS THIS POOR WOMAN. Thus does the narrator describe their relative position, as each silenced and conscience-stricken accuser retires from the scene. "And Jesus was left alone, and the woman, standing in the midst." Envidable position! The prisoner and the Judge alone! The sinner and the Savior alone! Her accusers were silenced; her, enemies had retired; and, surrounded by the stillness and the solemnity of the place, stood the woman alone with Jesus. Upon this interesting and**

**instructive topic, let us pour out the fulness of our soul.**

**Can we imagine a position on this side heaven more replete with the bliss of heaven than this? What a privilege is nearness to Christ! Yet dear and precious as it is, how sadly is it overlooked! We may trace this in some degree to the believer's oversight of his oneness with Christ. Yet to forget this truth, is to forget that he lives. As the branch has one life with the vine, the graft one life with the tree, so he that is united to Christ, and grafted into Christ, has one life with Christ. Go where he may, he is one with Christ. Be his circumstances what they may, he is one with Christ. And as he is in Christ, so Christ is in him. And if Christ is in him, dwelling in him, living in him, walking in him, so also is Christ in every event, and incident, and circumstance of his history. He cannot look upon the darkest cloud that overhangs his path, but he may exclaim, "Christ is in my cloud; Christ is in my sorrow; Christ is in my conflict; Christ is in my need; Christ is all to me, and Christ is in all with me." We will specify a few occasions in which this blessed state is more especially realized by the believer.**

**In seasons of accusation, how precious the privilege and the feeling of being alone with Jesus! Satan, we know, is the great accuser of the saints. And yet how insensible are we of the great power which he still exerts over the people rescued forever from his grasp! It was Satan who stood up to persuade David to number Israel. It was Satan who would have prompted God to slay Job; and it was Satan who stood at the right hand of Joshua, to condemn his soul. Thus is he ever ready to assert his charge against the people of God.**

**Not less malignant is the world. Infidel in its principles, God-hating in its spirit, and Christ-rejecting in its whole conduct, it is no marvel that it should be the antagonist and the accuser of the saints. Sitting in judgment upon actions, the nature of which it cannot understand—interpreting motives, the character of which it cannot decide—ingeniously contriving, and zealously propagating, reports of evil—and ever ready to defame and to detract all who live godly in Christ Jesus must expect no mercy at its hand. Yes, the world is the accuser of the saints. Nor Satan and the world only.**

**How often, as the history of holy Job testifies, have the saints been found the accusers of the saints, (and with the deepest humiliation be it written,) with an uncharitableness and censoriousness, which might have kindled the world's cheek with the blush of shame. Thus does the church herself testify, "My mothers children were angry with me." "The watchmen that went about the**

city found me; they smote me, they wounded me: the keepers of the wall took away my veil from me." And from whom did our blessed Lord receive his deepest wounds? Were they not from those who ranked among his friends and followers?

But what so keen and so bitter as self-reproach? Accusations proceeding from others are often most unfounded and unjust. We have felt at the time the secret and pleasing consciousness that we "suffer wrongfully." The shaft flies, but the Parthian arrow falls not more pointless and powerless than it. But far different is the accusation which the true believer brings against himself. Seeing sin where others see it not—conscious of its existence and its perpetual working, where the saints applaud, and even the world admires, he lays his hand upon his heart, his mouth in the dust, and exclaims, "I am vile! I abhor myself!" Ah! no reproaches like those which an honest, sincere child of God charges upon himself. No accusation so true, no reproof so keen, no reproach so bitter. Happy are they who deal much in self-condemnation! If we judged ourselves more, we should judge others less. And if we condemned ourselves more, we should be less condemned.

But what a privilege in all times of accusation, come from what quarter it may, to be alone with Jesus! With him, when we know the charge to be untrue, to appeal to him as an all-seeing, heart-searching, and righteous Judge, and say, "Lord, you know my principles, my spirit, my motives, my aim, and that with honesty, purity, and singleness, I have sought to walk before you." Oh, it is a solace, the preciousness of which the throbbing heart may feel, but the most eloquent pen cannot describe! And when the accusation is just, and the believer feels, "Vile as I am in the eyes of others, yet more vile am I in my own eyes;" yet even then to be left alone with Jesus, self-reproved, self-condemned, is to be thrown upon the compassion of him, "very great are whose mercies."

Alone with him, not a reproving glance darts from his eye, nor an upbraiding word falls from his lips. All is mercy, all is tenderness, all is love. There before him the self-condemned may stand and confess; at his feet the penitent may fall and weep, and find, alone with Jesus, his arm a shield, and his bosom an asylum, within which his bleeding, panting heart may find safety and repose.

In seasons of mental depression and sorrow of heart, how welcome and precious is this privilege! The shadow and the spring, amid the burning desert, are not more welcome and refreshing to the way-worn pilgrim. Sorrow

is more or less the cup of all. But few there are whose lips have not pressed its bitter brim! Ah! judge not of the heart's hidden emotions, by the calm sunlight that plays upon the surface. Beneath that expression of joyousness, the canker-worm may be feeding. At the very core of that lovely flower, the insect may be rioting. The countenance all radiant with smiles, and the spirit all dark with sadness; the tongue discoursing sweet music, and the heartstrings breaking with grief. But O the consolation—who can describe it?—of unveiling the bosom when alone with Jesus! There the artificial vanishes, and the reality appears. There sorrow may indulge, and tears may flow, and sighs may heave, and complaints may breathe, and the heart may whisper its most sacred feelings, because the sorrowing believer is alone with Jesus.

To whom did the desolate disciples of the martyred John repair for sympathy and comfort, in the hour of their sudden and overwhelming bereavement? We are told, that "they took up the body of John, and buried it, and went and told Jesus." They poured their grief into his ear, and they laid their sorrow on his heart. And when the bereaved believer, whose fond earthly treasure the grave entombs, withdraws from the crowd of human comforters, and seeks to indulge his lonely grief, where does he love to retire? Not to the grave; this were to worship the dead; but to weep out his sorrow alone upon the bosom of Jesus. Ah! you whom death has bereaved! tell me, is there anything like this so soothing?

But perhaps it is in the light of prayer that this privilege most beautifully and sweetly appears. Thus far we may not have been accompanied by the sympathies of every reader; but touching the subject of unfettered, unreserved communion with God in prayer, all true believers are one. Disengaged from the world, and withdrawn from the saints—the one as needful for the cultivation of a close walk as the other; for there is much danger of substituting the communion of saints for communion with the King of saints—the believer retires to be alone with Jesus. The occasion is the most solemn and holy of the Christian life. The closet is entered—the door is shut—Christ and the believer are alone! Tread softly as you pass that spot, and put off your shoes from your feet as you pause, for the Triune God is there! Who can tell the solemn, sacred transaction, now transpiring! What confession of sin! what breathing forth of sorrow! what moaning out of grief! what opening of heart to heart, and what blending of spirit with spirit! what expressions of mutual confidence, affection, and delight—the believer making known the secret of his sorrow, and Christ unfolding the secret of his love!

**From this, too, its true source, the saint of God derives his great power in prayer. His amazing and prevailing strength appears at a time of the most apparent weakness, even when single-handed, and alone with Jesus. It was thus the patriarch wrestled and overcame. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let you go, except you bless me." Never was there a conflict of so illustrious a nature, and of so strange a result, between powers so dissimilar and extreme. The incarnate God, as if to demonstrate his own divine power, and at the same time to make the victory of human weakness over Infinite Might more illustrious and palpable, touches the wrestling patriarch, and he is a cripple! And then at the moment of his greatest weakness, when taught the lesson of his own insufficiency, that flesh might not glory in the Divine presence, Omnipotence retires vanquished from the field, and yields the palm of victory to the disabled but prevailing prince. And why all this? To teach us the amazing power of prayer which the feeblest believer may have when alone with Jesus.**

**No point of Christian duty and privilege set before you in this work, will plead more earnestly and tenderly for your solemn consideration, dear reader, than this. It enters into the very essence of your spiritual being. This is the channel through which flows the oil that feeds the lamp of your Christian profession. Dimly will burn that lamp, and drooping will be your spiritual light, if you are not wont to be much alone with Jesus. Every feeling of the soul, and each department of Christian labor, will be sensibly affected by this woeful neglect. He who is but seldom with Jesus in the closet, will exhibit, in all that he does for Jesus in the world, but the fitful and convulsive movements of a mind urged on by a feverish and unnatural excitement. It is only in much prayer—that prayer secret and confiding—that the heart is kept in its right position, its affections properly governed, and its movements correctly regulated.**

**And are there not periods when you find it needful to leave the society of the most spiritual, sweet as is the communion of saints, to be alone with Jesus? He himself has set you the example. Accustomed at times to withdraw from his disciples, he has been known to spend whole nights amid the mountain's solitude, alone with his Father. O the sacredness, the solemnity of such a season! Alone with God! alone with Jesus! No eye seeing, no ear hearing, but his; the dearest of earthly beings excluded, and no one present but Jesus only,**

the best, the dearest of all! Then, in the sweetest and most unreserved confidence the believer unveils his soul, and reveals all to the Lord. Conscience is read—motives are dissected—principles are sifted—actions are examined—the heart is searched—sin is confessed—and iniquity is acknowledged, as could only effectually be done in the presence of Jesus alone. Is there, among all the privileges of a child of God, one in its costliness and its preciousness surpassing this?

Yet another view of our Lord's conduct towards this solitary object of his mercy. Who was now HER JUDGE? He who came into the world "not to condemn the world, but to save it." She was in the presence of him who left the realms of glory and his Father's bosom, to save the chief of sinners. Here was one; and his heart yearned, and his spirit was moved with pity and compassion. Not a reproving glance darted from his eye, nor an upbraiding word breathed from his lips. Listen to the music of his voice—"Woman, where are those your accusers? has no one condemned you? She said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more." How like himself did he now appear! Here was a flower blighted—did He despise it? Here was a stem bruised—did he break it? Here was a plant crushed—did he trample it beneath his feet No! he took that blighted flower, and placed it in his bosom. With skillful and tender hands he bound up that bruised stem. He stooped and raised that prostrate plant, lifted it into sunshine, and bade it droop and fall no more.

O blessed type of Christ's conduct towards a penitent sinner! Behold the soul prostrated at the foot of the cross. He admits the truth of all the accusations alleged against him. He disproves not, nor palliates a single one. "Lord, I have destroyed myself," is his mournful humiliating acknowledgment. But alone the sinner and the Savior stand. The one all sin—the other all mercy. The one all fear—the other all love. The bosom of the one agitated and convulsed with guilt and shame—the bosom of the other thrilling, and yearning with mercy and forgiveness. "Are you," says Jesus, "convicted of this sin? Have you fled to my cross for salvation—to my bosom for shelter? Have you repaired to my blood for pardon, and taken hold of my righteousness for acceptance? Have you appealed to my compassion, and thrown yourself upon my mercy? Then I do not condemn you. You have touched every spring of tenderness in my heart; you have stirred my mercy to its very depth; you have crowned and glorified me, in that which is most dear to my heart—my power and my willingness to save to the uttermost; your sins are forgiven you; I condemn you not."

**It will perhaps be replied—but he declined to condemn this woman as a civil judge. Grant it. Shall we then suppose that our Lord is less compassionate and merciful as a moral judge? If He refuses the office of a temporal magistrate, does it follow that he vacates that of a spiritual minister? If he does not sit in the seat of Moses, will he abandon his own mercy-seat? No. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And to every repentant sinner brought into his presence, in the face of all his accusers, he says, "I condemn you not."**

**We turn to the closing scene of this instructive narrative—CHRIST'S DISMISSAL OF THE WOMAN. "Go, and sin no more." See how he manifests his abhorrence of the sin, while he throws his shield of mercy around the sinner. The Lord does not justify the sinner's transgression, though he justifies the sinner's person. In the great matter of salvation, justification and sanctification, pardon and holiness, are essentially and inseparably united. When the Lord Jesus dismisses a sinner with a sense of acquittal in his conscience, it is ever accompanied with that most affecting of all exhortations, "Sin no more." And as he passes out from the presence of Jesus, pardoned, justified, saved, the Savior's tender, soul-subduing words, from that moment seem to vibrate upon his ear, every step of his onward way. "Go, admire, and publish abroad the glory of that grace that has done such great things for you. Go, and spread his fame, and with your latest breath dwell upon his name, who, when sin, and Satan, and conscience accused you, and would have consigned you to eternal woe, appeared your Friend, your Advocate, and your Savior. Go, and when tempted to wound afresh the bosom that sheltered you, remember me from Gethsemane, from Calvary, and from the hallowed spot where I spoke to you, I condemn you not—go, and sin no more."**

**In closing this chapter, allow me, dear reader, to urge upon you the daily and diligent cultivation of that Christianity which derives its freshness, its vigor, and its gloss, from much hidden communion with Jesus. We plead not for the religion of the recluse. A monkish Christianity is not the Christianity of the Bible. When God, in the exercise of his sovereign grace, converts a man, he converts him, not for himself only, but also for others. He converts him, not for the church alone, but also for the world. He is to be a monument, whose inscription all may read—a city, whose beauty all may admire—a burning and a shining light, in whose radiance all may rejoice. He is to live and labor, and, if needs be, die for others. But we plead for more of that Christianity**

which is often alone with God; which withdraws at periods from the fatigue of labor and the din of strife—to renew its strength, and to replenish its resources, in a secret waiting upon the Lord. Christians must be more alone with Jesus. In the midst of what a whirlpool of excitement and of turmoil do numbers live! How few withdraw from domestic and public enjoyments, the calls of business, the duties of committees, of secretaryships, and of agencies—to hold communion alone with God! This must not be. The institutions which they serve, the calling at which they toil, the families for whom they labor, would be the gainers, rather than the losers, by their occasional sequesterment from the world, to be alone with God. And were our Lord still upon the earth, and contemplating their incessant action and little devotional retirement, and consequent leanness of spirit, would he not be constrained to address them as he once tenderly did his jaded and exhausted disciples, "Come aside into a desert place, and rest awhile?" He would allure them from others to himself. It is possible, my dear reader, that this page may be read by you at a period of painful and entire separation from all public engagements, ordinances, and privileges. The way which it has pleased the Lord to take thus to set you aside, may be painful and humbling. The inmate of a sick chamber, or curtained within the house of mourning, or removed far remote from the sanctuary of God and the fellowship of the saints, you are perhaps led to inquire, "Lord, why this?" He replies, "Come aside and rest awhile." O the thoughtfulness, the discrimination, the tenderness of Jesus towards his people! He has set you apart from public for private duties, from communion with others for communion with himself. Ministers, friends, privileges, are withdrawn, and you are—O enviable state! alone with Jesus. And now expect the richest and holiest blessing of your life! Is it sickness? Jesus will make all your bed in your sickness, and your experience shall be, "his left hand is under my head, and his right hand does embrace me." Is it bereavement? Jesus will soothe your sorrow, and sweeten your loneliness, for he loves to visit the house of mourning, and to accompany us to the grave to weep with us there. Is it exile from the house of God, from the ordinances of the church, from a pastor's care, from Christian fellowship? Still it is Jesus who speaks, "There will I be unto you as a little sanctuary."

The very circumstances, new and peculiar as they are, in which you are placed, God can convert into new and peculiar mercies, yes, into the richest means of grace with which your soul was ever fed. The very void you feel, the very need you deplore, may be God's way of satiating you with his goodness. Ah! does not God see your grace in your very desire for grace? Does he not mark your sanctification in your very thirsting for holiness? And can he not

turn that desire and convert that thirst into the very blessing itself? Truly he can, and often does. As one has remarked, God knows how to give the comfort of an ordinance in the lack of an ordinance. And he can now more than supply the absence of others by the presence of himself. Oh, who can compute the blessings which now may flow into your soul from this season of exile and of solitude? Solitude! no, it is not solitude. Never were you less alone than now. You are alone with God, and he is infinitely better than health, wealth, friends, ministers, or sanctuary, for he is the substance and the sweetness of all.

You have perhaps been laboring and watching for the souls of others; the Lord is now showing his tender care for your. And oh, if while thus alone with Jesus you are led more deeply to search out the plague of your own heart, and the love of his—to gather up the trailing garment—to burnish the rusted armor—to trim the glimmering lamp—and to cultivate a closer fellowship with your Father, how much soever you may mourn the necessity and the cause, you yet will not regret that the Lord has set you apart from others that you might rest awhile in his blest embrace—ALONE WITH JESUS.

"Alone with God! the universe shut out,  
Earth, sense, and time, excluded and forgot;  
All memories vanished of the parted past,  
All prospects of the future overborne  
And swallowed up in that one mighty sense,  
That all-engrossing consciousness of God!"  
"Alone with God! all earth-born love absorbed,  
All earthly ties dissolved—all thoughts of those  
Long held most dear, Elisha-like, who clung  
Around the parting soul to Tabor's brink,  
For a brief space (brief to eternity)  
Lost in that all-pervading thought of God!"  
"Alone with God! angelic hosts around  
'In burning row,' attending, but unseen,  
Angelic harps unheard, though far and high,  
The sounding cadence of their anthem rolls;  
The sea of crystal, and the streets of gold  
The walls of jasper, and the gates of pearl,  
Unnoticed all, resplendent though they be,  
The throne, and Him who sits thereon, beheld,  
Nothing else besides, in solitude sublime!

And do you shrink, my spirit, from the sight  
Of untreated majesty, and quail  
To meet the Eternal, naked and alone?"  
"Alone with God!—I shrink not—He is great  
His awful glory, when unveiled, might well  
Consume the spirits He has made; but still  
I shrink not—He is holy, too, and just,  
And very terrible: He dwells in light  
That no man can approach—no mortal eye  
Can look upon and live; but there is One  
Beside Him whom I dare to meet alone  
Whom I have met alone at midnight hour,  
In dark Gethsemane's sequestered shades,  
Alone, though trembling friends and armed foes  
Peopling the solitude, were round us there;  
Whom I have met alone on Calvary's hill,  
Though taunting crowds and dying men were there;  
Whom I have met alone on Tabor's mount,  
Unmindful of the little band that there  
Held heavenly converse, sacredly amazed."  
"Alone with Jesus! no, I cannot shrink  
From that blest fellowship, unbroken, deep,  
And soul-absorbing in the spirit land,  
So often intruded on in this dark world,  
By mortal joys and sorrows that would rob  
My soul of that communion, pure and high."  
"Alone with Jesus! on the Savior's breast  
Fondly to lean, and think on none but him  
How often my spirit feels lost in the crowd  
Of fellow-worshippers below, above,  
And longs, like his small band on earth, to be  
'Led out into a desert place alone,'  
To hear his voice, and share his love, as though  
That voice and heart of love were only mine."  
"Alone with God! in that blest solitude,  
Could earth be lacking with its fleeting joys,  
Or even its most abiding; and most pure  
To fill the measure of a finite soul!  
In that august communion could the loss  
Of mortal converse shade the holy light,

Or mar the sacred joy which, as a tide,  
A swelling tide of ecstasy, rolls in  
Upon the spirit conscious but of God?"

### **The Pastor's Request for the Prayers of His Flock**

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel" Ephes. 6:18-19

The Church of God, as if reflecting from its bosom, like a sea of glass, the order and the perfection of the heaven of glory, from which it descended, presents a beautiful harmony of relation and dependence in all its parts; while, as a whole, it forms a temple of magnificent construction and consummate symmetry—the Zion of God, the "perfection of beauty." In nothing does the evidence of this more strikingly appear than in the relation of the Church of God and the Christian ministry. The obligations involved in this relation, and the reciprocal influence which it is perpetually exerting, illustrate the harmony of this masterpiece of divine workmanship in a manner the most surprising. The Christian church and the Christian ministry are synchronous institutions. Separate and distinct from each other though they are, they yet never existed apart. There never was a church without a ministry; and the appointment of the Christian ministry always implied the existence of the Christian church—the one necessarily involving the other. Of this beautiful relation in one of its most interesting features we are now to speak—namely, the RELIANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY UPON THE INTERCESSIONS OF THE CHURCH.

It might be supposed, from a cursory view of this subject, that a Christian pastor, from the exalted nature of his office, and from the superior attainments in grace and knowledge to which he is *supposed* to have arrived, would occupy a place so far in the ascendant of the feeblest member of his flock, as to place him in a position independent of the influence which that individual might be capable of exerting. But not so. And here we trace the wisdom and the goodness of God in the nice adjustment of every part of the body of Christ to the whole. As in the physical structure of the human frame, the smallest and most insignificant muscles are observed to perform the most important and delicate actions—the minutest fiber transmitting a vital

influence to the brain—so in the more beautiful and perfect body, the church of God, "much more those members which seem to be more feeble are necessary." Thus no pastor can be unaffected by the individual influence of the lowliest member of a Christian body.

The portion of God's word which suggests the topic of this chapter, presents to our view the sublime moral spectacle of the great Apostle of the Gentiles—a man full of wisdom and of the Holy Spirit, mighty in grace, and enriched in gifts—so deeply conscious of personal weakness, and so crushed by the weight of his official responsibilities, and so desirous, too, of delivering his divine message with a moral courage worthy of its high character, stooping to ask at the hands of the Ephesian church, and even of the obscurest member of that church, an interest in his intercessory prayers. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit—and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." The subject is an interesting and an important one. Its bearings upon the mutual usefulness, holiness, and happiness of a pastor and his flock are solemn and far-reaching. It affords a solution of a difficult problem why there is often, comparatively, so little happiness and perpetuity in the pastoral relation; and why there is so much complaint on the one part of unprofitable preaching, and on the other part of careless and fruitless hearing. Prayer for the pastor is restrained before God! Let us endeavor to understand the meaning of the apostle's words, that we may feel the full force of his earnest and solemn request.

The first point to which it is proper to turn our attention is, **THE SUBLIME TOPIC OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.** The apostle designates it the "mystery of the gospel." He doubtless borrows the word from the secret rites of the heathen temples, to which none were admitted, and which none understood but the initiated. To all others they were mysteries. Freed from its original and profane use, it is here appropriately applied to designate the nature and the doctrines of the gospel of Christ, and thus becomes, by its association, a hallowed and expressive term. Nor is this the only place in which it occurs in the same use. Thus in I Cor. 2:7, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world for our glory." Equally clear is it, that none are initiated into this mystery of the gospel but those who are partakers of the second birth. For "unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is to him a mystery. He is blind and cannot see the glorious mysteries of this kingdom of grace. Addressing his twelve disciples, our Lord further elucidates this idea

when he reminds them of their great and gracious privilege "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto those who are outside, all these things are done in parables." Mark 4:11. Still more clearly is this truth developed in his remarkable prayer thus recorded: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in his spirit and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and have revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in your sight."

Permit one remark in passing. If, dear reader, you have been led in any degree into the knowledge of this glorious mystery of truth, hesitate not to ascribe it to the grace of God. Unto you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom. The sovereignty of God has so ordered it. The learning, the intellect, and the philosophy of the worldly wise and prudent, have afforded you no help in the solution and unraveling of these divine and glorious enigmas. "But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." To babes in Christ—to the lowly minded disciple—to the learner, willing to receive the kingdom of God, as a little child—God unfolds this mystery, that no flesh should glory in his presence. O favored, happy soul, if you, through the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit, have been led into the mystery of the Father's love in Christ to poor perishing sinners! "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in your sight!"

Now, here at the very threshold of the kingdom of grace, many hesitate and stumble. The glory of the Gospel—its divine mystery—is their great hindrance. The dim light of nature has conducted them thus far, and here they are brought to a stand-still. Looking into the sacred volume, and finding doctrines there propounded for their faith, which tower above their reason, they scornfully cast it aside, proudly and triumphantly asking, "If this were a revelation from God, why has He not excluded all mystery, clothing every truth with light, and freeing every doctrine from difficulty? Why can we not understand what he has revealed? Are we such babes in understanding, or such dolts in intellect, that these revelations should be veiled in mystery? And are we such fools as to believe that to be true which our reason pronounces to be false?" Thus, "vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild donkey's colt."

But, if it may avail to argue with such an objector, we would inquire—Is not the world without you and the world within you crowded with problems,

which laugh to scorn your oft-made attempts to solve them! Is not the universe of mind and of matter, of which you form a most mysterious speck, replete with mysteries which you cannot explore? Either search out those difficulties, and unravel those mysteries, and thus plant a new sun in the intellectual firmament, that shall dispel the lingering night of ages, or admit the truth of the mystery of the gospel. Where will you place your foot on this little planet of ours, that brings you not in contact with some law or with some product of nature which you cannot explain? The leaf that falls on the pathless desert, the dust brushed from the emmet's wing, baffle and confound you. The pulsations at your heart, the movement of your arm, awe and perplex you. Your very being is a fathomless mystery! Why, then, assume an air of such astonishment, and an attitude of such contempt—why look, why speak so doubtingly, when we present for your belief the mystery of revelation; the inexplicable wonders of God's salvation of man?

"Observe, I ask you," argues, with much force and beauty, an eminent continental divine, "in what manner the mysteries of which you complain have taken their part in religion. You readily perceive they are not by themselves, but associated with truths which have a direct bearing on your salvation. They contain them, they serve to envelope them; but they are not themselves the truths that save. It is with these mysteries as it is with the vessel which contains a medicinal draught; it is not the vessel that cures, but the draught; yet the draught could not be presented without the vessel. Thus each truth that saves is contained in a mystery, which, in itself, has no power to save. So the great work of expiation is necessarily attached to the incarnation of the Son of God, which is a mystery; so the sanctifying graces of the new covenant are necessarily connected with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is a mystery; so, too, the divinity of religion finds a seal and an attestation in the miracles, which are mysteries. Everywhere the light is born from darkness, and darkness accompanies the light. These two orders of truth are so united, so interlinked, that you cannot remove the one without the other; and each of the mysteries you attempt to tear from religion, would carry with it one of the truths which bear directly on your regeneration and salvation. Accept the mysteries, then, not as truths that can save you, but as the necessary conditions of the merciful work of the Lord in your behalf."

"The true point at issue in reference to religion is this—Does the religion which is proposed to us, change the heart, unite to God, prepare for heaven? If Christianity produces these effects, we will leave the enemies of the cross free to revolt against its mysteries, and tax them with absurdity. The gospel,

we will say to them, is then an absurdity; you have discovered it. But behold what a new species of absurdity that certainly is, which attaches man to all his duties, regulates human life better than all the doctrines of sages, plants in his bosom harmony, order, and peace, causes him joyfully to fulfil all the offices of civil life, renders him better fitted to live, better fitted to die, and which, were it generally received, would be the support and safeguard of society! Cite to us, among all human absurdities, a single one which produces such effects. If that 'foolishness' we preach produces effects like these, is it not natural to conclude that it is truth itself? And if these things have not entered the heart of man, it is not because they are absurd, but because they are divine."—  
Alexander Vinet

And yet how credulous is man when folly clothes itself in affected mystery, and demands his faith! The atheist, for example, seizing upon every childish cause that promises to solve his difficulties, and dispel his fears; the skeptic, launched upon the stormy sea of uncertainty and doubt, becomes the plaything of chance and fate, whose dreamings he implicitly believes. What folly so egregious has not man credited? By what imposture so gross has he not been entrapped? And to what superstition so abject has he not been a slave? And yet the sublime, glorious, precious mystery of the gospel, he, in the pride of his intellect, and in the depravity of his heart, scornfully and utterly rejects!

But let us specify some of the mysteries of the gospel, which, while it declares *transcending our reason*, yet propounds for our faith. We commence with the doctrine of the TRINITY. That this is a truth of express revelation, we think it will not be difficult to show. We may not find the term employed to designate the doctrine in the Bible, but if we find the doctrine itself there, it is all that we ask. On opening the Bible, with a view to the examination of this subject, the first truth that arrests our attention, is a solemn declaration of the Divine Unity—"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." Deut. 6:4. Prosecuting our research, we find two distinct people spoken of in relation to the Godhead, under the titles of the "Son of God," and the "Holy Spirit of God," to whom are ascribed the attributes of Deity and the qualities of a person, implying Divine personality. A step further brings us to a passage in which we find these three distinct, divine people, associated in an act of solemn worship—"Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." What conclusion must we draw from these premises? First, that there is a unity in the Godhead; and secondly, that in this unity, or in this one Godhead, there is a trinity of people, or three

distinct subsistences, styled the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Here, then, we have the doctrine for which we plead. The following passage clearly teaches the same glorious truth, Matt. 3:16 "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." What a conclusive evidence is this passage of the blessed Trinity! The FATHER speaks from the excellent glory; the SON ascends from the water, and receives the attestation of his Father; and the Holy SPIRIT descends from the heavens, and overshadows him. Here are three distinct people, to each of whom the marks of Deity are ascribed, and between whom it is impossible not to observe a bond of the closest and tenderest unity. Again, I Cor. 12:4-6 "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same SPIRIT. And there are differences of administrations, but the same LORD. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same GOD who works all in all." With what a sunbeam is this glorious truth here written! How richly it glows with light peculiarly its own! That here are three distinct subsistences, who can deny? And that they are equal, who can doubt? Gal. 4:6 "And because you are sons, GOD has sent forth the SPIRIT Of His SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Again, here are three people announced in connection with the blessed act of the Father's adoption of his people. Jude 20:21 "But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the HOLY SPIRIT, keep yourselves in the love of GOD, looking for the mercy of our LORD Jesus Christ, unto eternal life."

Wilfully, or judicially blind must he be, who sees not in these words the great truth for which we plead. And it is the glory of our land, and the joy of our hearts, to know, that from every Christian pulpit, the doctrine of the blessed Trinity is proclaimed whenever the apostolic benediction is pronounced, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen." That the mode of its existence is an awful mystery, we unhesitatingly admit; but it is not the mode of the fact, but the fact itself which the word presents as the object of our faith. I am not required to believe how the three people subsist as the One Godhead; but I am to believe upon the express testimony of revelation that they do so exist.

I find 'a trinity' within me—matter, mind, and spirit. I am baffled in my attempts to unravel the mystery. In vain I search for a clue; every attempt leaves me puzzled, lost, and more confounded. Do I therefore deny my own being? Or, do I not rather subordinate my reason to my faith, believing a fact, the truth of which I have the evidence, but the mode of which I cannot

understand? Surely, then, if I cannot fathom the shallows of a finite existence, how can I fathom the depths of an infinite? *Foolish man! expecting all else to be wrapped in profound mystery, and God alone to be understood!* "Can you by searching find out God? can you find out the Almighty unto perfection. It is higher than heaven, what can you do? deeper than hell, what can you know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

There is so much excellence of thought, and so clearly expressed, in the following observations, pertinent to our subject, by one of the ablest divines, that we are constrained to quote them. Alluding to the doctrine of the Trinity, he remarks—"The doctrine of which I now speak is freely admitted to be above reason. But it is of consequence to observe, that on this very account, it seems impossible to prove it contrary to reason. It is a common and just remark, that there is an essential difference between anything being above reason, and being contrary to it; and that it may be the former, without being the latter. I think we may go a step farther, and affirm, as I have just hinted, that this very circumstance of its being the former, precludes the possibility of proving it to be the latter. I question whether anything that is above reason can ever be shown to be contrary to it. For unless we have some notion of the thing itself, on what principle can we make out the contrariety? Were we to say that the people of the Godhead are one and three in the same sense, we should evidently affirm what is contrary to reason; because such a proposition would involve, in the very terms of it, an irreconcilable contradiction; but so long as we do not pretend to know, nor to say, how they are one, and how they are three, to prove that we assert what is contrary to reason, when we affirm that they are both, is, from the very nature of the thing, impossible. For what is it which is to be proved contrary to reason? Upon the supposition made, we cannot tell—it is something which we do not know, of the nature and circumstances of which we are left in total ignorance. For our own part, *so far from being staggered by finding mysteries in revelation, I am satisfied that the entire absence of them would have formed a much stronger ground for suspicion.* All analogy excites and justifies the expectation of them. Nature, in its various departments, is full of them; and shall we, then, account it strange, that there should be any in the department of grace? They abound in the works of God; why, then, should we not wish for them in his word? They present themselves in the nature and constitution of every one of his creatures; and is it to be conceived, that in his own nature and essence nothing of the kind should be found? Is it reasonable to think that all should be plain and easily comprehensible, which relates to God himself, and that inexplicable difficulties should embarrass and stop our researches, only in what regards

his creatures? Ought we not rather, on such a subject, to anticipate difficulties?—to expect to feel the inadequacy and the failure of our faculties?—and to expect this, with a certainty proportioned to the superior magnitude of the subject above all others that can engage our attention, and its complete and absolute remoteness from the sphere of all our senses, and of all our experience? *If finite things every moment confound us, ought we to be surprised at finding that we cannot comprehend what is infinite?* Let us remember the apostolic lesson, and let it be our desire, that we may think, and feel, and act, on all subjects, and on all occasions, consistently with the principle and spirit of it. 'I say, through the grace given to me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.'"—Dr. Wardlaw

Before we dismiss all allusion to this doctrine, we must venture to observe that, in an experimental and practical point of view, it is a truth fraught with the richest blessing to a believing mind. The relation which it sustains to our spiritual knowledge, happiness, and future glory, is but little considered. It is to the Christian, the key of the Bible. The Spirit imparting skill to use it, and the power, when used, it unlocks this divine arcade of mysteries, and throws open every door in the blest sanctuary of truth. But it is in the light of salvation that its fitness and beauty most distinctly appear—salvation in which JEHOVAH appears so inimitably glorious—so like Himself. The *Father's* love appears in sending his Son—the *Son's* love in undertaking the work—the *Holy Spirit's* love in applying the work. Oh, it is delightful to see how, in working out the mighty problem of man's redemption, the Divine Three were thus deeply engaged! With which of these could we have dispensed? All were needed—and had one been lacking, our salvation had been incomplete, and we had been eternally lost. In bringing to glory the Church they thus have saved, the sacred Three are solemnly pledged. And in the matter of *prayer*, how sustaining to faith, and how soothing to the mind, when we can embrace, in our ascending petitions, the blessed Three in One! "For through him (the Son) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

The doctrine of the INCARNATION presents another gospel mystery, if possible, more astonishing than the one which we have just considered. We can more easily understand that there should be three people in a unity of subsistence, than that God should be manifested in the flesh. The analogy of the one meets us everywhere; we turn the eye within ourselves, or we turn it outside upon the broad expanse of God's creation—from every point of

observation, a trinity of existence bursts upon our view. But, of the other, in vain we search for anything approaching to resemblance. It was a thing so unheard of and so strange, so marvellous and so unique, that there was nothing in the sublime or the rude, in the bold or the tender of nature's varied works, to prepare the mind for, or awaken the expectation of, a phenomenon so strange, so stupendous, and so mysterious. We do not overlook the fact that there have been found to exist in the history of nations, ideas that would seem analogous to the revealed doctrine of the incarnation. For instance, the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls—the Hindoo idea of the incarnation of Vishnu, and other examples which might be adduced. But how far these dim and vague notions were extracted from biblical tradition would be a nice and interesting question. But that the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God is any other than a pure and express revelation, no true believer will for a moment question. It was a secret originating and enclosed within the mind of JEHOVAH. He only could reveal it. Not that the possibility of such an event astonishes us. With Jehovah all things are possible. "Is anything too hard for me?" is a question that would seem to rebuke the first rising of such an emotion, "A God allowed, all other wonders cease."

But we marvel at the fact itself. Its stupendousness amazes us—its condescension humbles us—its glory dazzles us—its tenderness subdues us—its love overpowers us. That the uncreated Son of God should become the created Son of man—that the Eternal Word should be made flesh and dwell with men—that he should assume a new title, entwining in the awful letters that compose his divine name, others denoting his inferior nature as man, so revealing himself as Jehovah-Jesus! O wonder, surpassing thought! Before this, how are all others infinitely outshone; their luster fading away and disappearing as stars before the advancing light!

But viewed as a medium of the most costly blessings to the church of God, how precious a mystery does the incarnation of our Lord appear! The union of the divine and the human in Immanuel, is the re-union of God through the second Adam with fallen man. The first Adam severed us from the Divine nature—the second Adam re-unites us. The incarnation is the grand link between these two extremes of being. *It forms the verdant spot, the oasis in the desert, of a ruined universe, on which God and the sinner can meet together.* Here are blended, in marvellous union, the gloomy clouds of human woe, and the bright beams of divine glory—God and man united! And will you, O theist, rob me of this truth, because of its mystery? Will you yourself reject it, because reason cannot grasp it? Then might I rob you of your God, (whom

you ignorantly worship,) because of his incomprehensibleness, not one attribute of whom can you understand or explain. No! It is a truth too precious to part with so easily. God in my nature—my Brother—my Friend—my Counselor—my Guide—my Redeemer—my Pattern—my all! God in my nature—my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification, my redemption! But for this heaven-descending communication, of which the Patriarch's ladder was the symbol and the type, how could the holy God advance towards me, or I draw near to him? But *he takes my nature that he may descend to me, and he gives me his nature that I may ascend to him.* He stoops because I could not rise! O mystery of grace, wisdom, and love! Shall I doubt it?

I go to the manger of Bethlehem, and gaze upon the infant Savior. My faith is staggered, and I exclaim, "Is this the Son of God?" Retiring, I track that infant's steps along its future path. I mark the wisdom that he displayed, and I behold the wonders that he wrought. I mark the revelations that he disclosed, the doctrines that he propounded, the precepts that he taught, the magnanimity that he displayed. I follow him to Gethsemane, to the judgment hall, and then to Calvary, and I witness the closing scene of wonder. I return to Bethlehem, and with the evidences which my hesitating faith has thus collected, I exclaim, with the awe-struck and believing centurion, "Truly this is the Son of God!" All the mystery of his lowly incarnation vanishes, and my adoring soul embraces the incarnate God within its arms.

We marvel not that, hovering over the spot where this great mystery of godliness transpired, the celestial choir, in the stillness of the night, awoke such strains of music along the plains of Bethlehem, as were never heard before. They left the realms of glory to escort the Lord of glory in his advent to our earth. How gladly they trooped around him, thronging his wondrous way, their benevolent bosoms dilating in sympathy with the grand object of his mission. And this was the angel's message to the astonished shepherds: "Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will to men." Shall angels rejoice in the incarnation of the Son of God, and our hearts be cold and unmoved? Forbid it, love, forbid it, gratitude, forbid it, O my soul!

**THE MYSTICAL UNION OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH** is also declared to be one of the mysteries of the gospel. "This is a great mystery," says the

apostle, "but I speak concerning Christ and his Church." That Christ and his people should be one—one as the head and the body—the vine and the branch—the foundation and the house—is indeed a wondrous truth. We cannot understand how it is; and yet so many, palpable, and gracious are the blessings flowing from it, we dare not reject it. All that a believer is, as a living soul, he is from a vital union with Christ. As the body without the soul is dead, so is a sinner spiritually dead without union to Jesus. Not only his life, but his fruitfulness is derived from this source. All the "beauties of holiness" that adorn his character, spring from the vital principle which his engrafting into Christ produces. He is skillful to fight, and strong to overcome, and patient to endure, and meek to suffer, and wise to walk, as he lives on Christ for the grace of sanctification. "Without me you can do nothing."

Is it not indeed a mystery that I should so be one with Christ, that all that he is becomes mine, and all that I am becomes his? His glory mine, my humiliation his. His righteousness mine, my guilt his. His joy mine, my sorrow his. Mine his riches, his my poverty. Mine his life, his my death. Mine his heaven, his my hell. The daily walk of faith is a continuous development of the wonders of this wondrous truth: That in traveling to him empty, I should return from him full. That in going to him weak, I should come away from him strong. That in bending my steps to him in all darkness, perplexity, and grief, I should retrace them all light, and joy, and gladness. Why marvel at this mystery of the life of faith? My oneness with Jesus explains it.

And what a mystery is THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE SOUL! That a work so renewing, so gracious, and so holy, should ever transpire in the heart of a poor sinner, is itself a wonder. What a marvellous view of the power, nor less of the grace of God, does it present! Every step in the mighty process awakens new amazement. The first conviction of sin that saddens the heart—the first beam of light that illuminates the mind—the first touch of faith that heals the soul, possesses more that is truly wonderful than the most sublime mystery, or the profoundest secret, in nature. There is more of God in it; and the more of God, the more of wonder; and the more of wonder we see in his work and operations, the more readily should reason assent, and the more profoundly should faith adore.

The *mystery of grace* is illustrated by the mystery of nature. "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell where it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." I saw one man just yesterday living without God, and in total neglect of his soul's salvation.

The solemn eternity to which he was hastening, gave him not a moment's serious concern. His heart was filled with pharisaical pride, worldly ambition, and covetous desires. Self was his God—the only deity he worshiped; this world was his paradise—the only heaven he desired. Today I see him the subject of deep and powerful emotion; a humble suppliant, in the spirit of self-abasement, pleading for mercy as the chief of sinners. What a change has come over him! How in a moment have old things passed away, and all things become new! And he who but as yesterday was dwelling among the tombs, himself dead in trespasses and sins, today is sitting as a lowly disciple and an adoring worshiper at the feet of Jesus. Where did this wondrous transformation, this new creation, come from? Oh, it was the Spirit of God who wrought it, and the work is marvellous in our eyes!

Nor do the SUSTAINING AND THE CARRYING FORWARD OF THIS WORK OF GRACE IN THE SOUL unfold less of the wonderful power of God the Holy Spirit. When we take into consideration the sinful mass which the little leaven of grace has to transform—the extent of that revolted territory which the new kingdom has to subjugate to itself—then the sustaining and the perfecting of this work is one continued miracle of wonder. To see one strong in conscious weakness maintaining his position in the face of much opposition—buoyed up amid billows of sorrow—growing in grace in the midst of circumstances the most unfavorable—witnessing for God and his truth at the loss of family affection and long-endeared friendship—is a spectacle that must fill the mind with adoring thoughts of the love and faithfulness and power of that divine Spirit whose work it is.

There are other doctrines comprehended in the gospel which equally come under the denomination of mysterious. Such is the doctrine of THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY. "Behold," says the apostle in his splendid argument on this subject, "I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." And yet shall it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead? He who could call into existence that which was not, shall he be baffled in recalling into existence that which was? Why, then, should we reject the doctrine of the resurrection, because the process of resuscitating the identical dead, God has concealed in profound mystery?

These are some of the *gospel mysteries* which the apostle desired to make

known. He admitted that they were mysteries—mysteries which he could not fully unravel. It was enough for him that they were so revealed. He bowed his great intellect to the truth; and *what his mighty reason could not comprehend, his humble faith implicitly and gratefully received.* We may learn much from this. Let no minister of the gospel withhold any part, or doctrine, or truth of God's word, because it is "hard to be understood." Our functions are limited. We are but the expositors of what God has seen most consistent with his glory to make known. We are not to unloose seals which he has not broken, nor attempt to ascribe reasons for what he has seen fit to conceal. "He gives no account of any of his matters." All revealed truth is unqualifiedly to be declared. The doctrines of grace, towering though they do above the comprehension of carnal reason, and humbling though they are to human pride, are yet fully and broadly to be stated. "Even so, Father; for so it seems good in your sight," is the only answer we should give to him who dares to "reply against God." O for grace to preach as God has commanded; neither taking from, nor adding to, his revealed word!

It may be profitable for a moment to contemplate THE SPIRIT in which the apostle desired to make known this mystery of the gospel. The two blessings which he craved through the prayers of his flock were, utterance and boldness. "That *utterance* may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth *boldly* to make known the mystery of the gospel." The first which Paul desired was UNFETTERED UTTERANCE. He knew that He who made man's mouth could only open his lips to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. Great as were his natural endowments, and rich and varied as were his intellectual acquirements, he felt their inadequacy when working alone. We should never fail to *distinguish between the natural eloquence of man, and the holy utterance which the Spirit gives.* Paul had splendid gifts, and commanding powers of elocution. But what were they? He needed more—he asked for more. Dear reader, if the ministry of reconciliation comes to your soul with any power or sweetness, remember whose it is. Give not to man, but to God, the glory. Be very jealous for the honor of the Spirit in the ministry of the word. It is "spirit and life" to you only as God gives utterance to him that speaks. *It is mournful to observe to what extent the idolatry of human talent and eloquence is carried, and how little glory is given to the Holy Spirit in the gospel ministry.*

But there was yet another ministerial qualification which Paul sought. He desired to be *unshackled from the fear of man*: "That I may open my mouth **BOLDLY.**" Had we heard him utter this request, we might have been constrained to reply, "Do you desire boldness? You are the most courageous

and heroic of the apostles. You fear no man." Ah! we forget that when God stirs up the heart of a believer deeply to feel his need, and earnestly to desire any particular grace of the Spirit, that grace will be the distinguishing trait of his Christian character. *The very possession and exercise of a grace strengthen the desire for its increase.*

The more we have of Christ, the more we desire of Christ. The heart is never satiated. Do we see a man earnest and importunate in prayer for faith? faith will be his distinguishing grace. See we another wrestling with God for deep views of the evil of sin? that man will be marked for his humble walk with God. Is it love that he desires? his will be a loving spirit. Be sure of this the more you know of the value and the sweetness of any single grace of the Spirit, *the more ardently will your heart be led out after an increase of that grace. The reason why our desires for grace are so faint, may be traced to the small measure of grace that we already possess.* The very feebleness of the desire proves the littleness of the supply. As all holy desire springs from grace, so the deeper the grace the more fervent will be the desire. The Lord rouse us from our slothful seeking of him upon our beds!

Here, then, is the apostle desiring boldness yet who so bold in preaching Jesus as he? It was the master-spirit—the distinguishing trait of his ministry. At the very commencement of his Christian career, when even the disciples stood in doubt of him, we find him "speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts 9:29. The feathers were scarcely upon his wing, yet see how the eaglet soars! What promise of bolder flight and of fiercer bravery! One can almost see the white-haired martyr, in the Christian stripling. But just freed from the chain of Satan, we yet see at once the future character of the man—the fearless apostle of the Gentiles. His boldness never forsook him. His moral courage never failed him. He was never awed into silence by superior rank, nor brow-beaten into cowardice by vulgar threatening. Flattery never seduced, danger never alarmed him. Whether a friend or a criminal, fidelity and fearlessness were his strong characteristics. Whether among the polished or the rude, the lettered skeptics of Athens or the ignorant barbarians of Malta, he was the same; a dignified and graceful, but bold and uncompromising preacher of Jesus Christ. And yet this was the man who now was entreating the prayers of God's people, that he might with freedom of utterance and undaunted boldness make known the mystery of the gospel!

And who should be bold if not the ministers of the gospel? How can they be faithful and efficient preachers of the truth, if awed by a corrupt public

sentiment, or fettered by a pusillanimous fear of man? How much is the glory of the truth shaded, and its power impaired, and the dignity of their office compromised, by the man-pleasing, man-fearing spirit which, alas, so much prevails! We meet with boldness everywhere: *Satan* is bold in his onset upon the church of Christ. *Sin* is bold in developing its dark designs. *Error* is bold in its attacks upon truth. Men are bold in disseminating soul-destroying doctrines, and in following corrupt and superstitious practices. The whole kingdom of darkness and of sin is moving on to the coming battle with the kingdom of Christ, with a boldness of enterprise and of attack, which fills the mind with awe and wonder. And is the ministry of reconciliation, of truth, and of holiness to be the only exception? Is it at all congruous that men should have boldness enough to declare their sins, to speak them, to proclaim them, to wear them, to glory in them; and that those officers who are sent for no other business but, in the name and authority of Almighty God, to fight against the corruptions of the world, should, in the mean time, hang down the head and be tongue-tied? that men should have more boldness to destroy themselves, and to do Satan's work, than we to save them, or to serve God? No! it is not congruous that men should be bold and fearless in sinning against God, and in plunging into hell; and that those who are sent to warn, and to expostulate, and to save, shall be time-serving, man-pleasing, and cowardly in the discharge of their high and solemn trust.

And was ever boldness a more needed qualification of the Christian ministry than now? Error is rampant—the truth is assailed on every side—the enemy is coming in like a flood—the ancient land-marks are removed—false teachers are beguiling souls—men who "seemed to be pillars" are as reeds shaken by the wind—and but few preach a whole gospel and a full Christ. Verily, never were holy courage and uncompromising fearlessness, in contending earnestly for the faith, more urgently demanded than at the present moment!

We have now reached, perhaps by a too lengthy discussion, the specific subject of this chapter; one, it must be admitted, of universal interest and of high importance, yet not often brought before the Christian church. We allude to THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER IN BEHALF OF THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR. It was through this channel the Apostle sought the ministerial fitness which he craved: "*Pray also for me*, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel." Not in this instance only does he cast himself upon the intercessions of the saints. Thus he writes to the church at Rome: "Now I

beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you *strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.*" And then he proceeds to specify the petitions he would have them make on his behalf. He again pleads, "You also helping together by prayer for us." "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation *through your prayers*, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." "Withal *praying also for us*, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ." How significant is this language, and how touching are these appeals! The solemn earnestness which is here betrayed, is no expression of feeling exaggerated beyond the importance of the object eliciting it.

There are many weighty and solemn considerations, to a few of which we may allude, which powerfully plead for the prayers of the church of God in behalf of her ministers and pastors. The first which may be adduced is the magnitude of their work. A greater work than theirs was never entrusted to mortal hands. No angel employed in the celestial embassy bears a commission of higher authority, or wings his way to discharge a duty of such extraordinary greatness and responsibility. He is a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ—an ambassador from the court of heaven—a preacher of the glorious gospel of the blessed God—a steward of the mysteries of the kingdom. Properly to fill this high office—giving to the household their portion of food in due season—going down into the mine of God's word, and bringing forth to the view of every understanding its hidden treasures—to set forth the glory of Immanuel, the fitness of his work, and the fulness of his grace—to be a scribe well instructed, "rightly dividing the word of truth,"—to be wise and skillful to win souls, the grand end of the Christian ministry—oh, who so much needs the sustaining prayers of the church as the Ministers of the Christian church?

Secondly. The painful sense of their insufficiency supplies another affecting plea. For an office so high, how unworthy do they at times feel, and how imperfectly furnished with grace and gift for a work which "Might fill an angel's hands, Which filled the Savior's heart," do they appear to themselves to be! Who are ministers of Christ? Are they angels? Are they superhuman beings? Are they inspired? No, they are men in all respects like others. They partake of like infirmities, are the subjects of like assaults, and are estranged from nothing that is human. As the heart knows its own bitterness, so they only are truly aware of the existence and incessant operation of those many and clinging weaknesses of which they partake in sympathy with others. And yet, God has devolved upon them a work which would crush an angel's power if left to his self-sustaining energy. Oppressed often to the very earth with the

consciousness of this, is it incongruous with a pastor's dignity and character that he should still acknowledge his dependence upon the prayers of the feeblest member of his flock?

Thirdly. The many and peculiar trials of the ministry and the pastorate ask this favor at our hands. These are peculiar to, and inseparable from, the office that he fills. In addition to those of which he partakes alike with other Christians—personal, domestic, and relative—there are trials to which they must necessarily be utter strangers. And as are they unknown to, so are they unrelievable by, the people of their charge. With all the sweetness of affection, and the tenderness of sympathy, and the delicacy of attention, which you extend to your pastor, there is yet a lack which Jesus only can supply, and which, through the channel of your prayers, he will supply. In addition to his own, he bears the burdens of others. How impossible for an affectionate, sympathizing pastor to separate himself from the circumstances of his flock, be those circumstances what they may! So close and so sympathetic is the bond of union, if they suffer, he mourns; if they are afflicted, he weeps; if they are dishonored, he is reproached; if they rejoice, he is glad. He is one with his church. How feelingly the apostle expresses this! "Besides those things that are external, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" To see a Christian pastor, in addition to his own personal grief, borne often in uncomplaining loneliness and silence, yet bowed down under accumulated sorrows not his own—others looking to him for sympathy, for comfort, and for counsel; is a spectacle which might well arouse in behalf of every Christian pastor, the slumbering spirit of prayer. We marvel not to hear the chief of the apostles thus pleading, "Brethren, pray for us."

Fourthly. Your own personal profit through his ministry lays you under the deepest and most solemn obligation to give your pastor, in return, an especial and constant interest in your intercessions at the mercy-seat. Paul could say to the Philippians, "You are partakers of my grace." Most true is it, that *in the grace bestowed by God upon a Christian pastor, all the members of the flock share*. They partake of that which belongs to him. All the grace with which he is enriched—all the gifts with which he is endowed—all the acquirements with which he is furnished—all the afflictions with which he is visited—all the comforts with which he is soothed—all the strength with which he is upheld—all the distinction and renown with which he is adorned—belong alike to the church over which God has made him an overseer. There is in the pastoral relation a community of interest. He holds that grace, and he exercises those

gifts, not on account of his own personal holiness and happiness merely, but with a view to your holiness and happiness. You are partakers with him. You are enriched by his 'fatness,' or are impoverished by his 'leanness.' *The degree of his grace will be the measure of your own.* The amount of his intelligence, the extent of yours. As he is taught and blessed by Christ, so will you be. The glory which he gathers in communion with God will irradiate you; the grace which he draws from Jesus will sanctify you; the wealth which he collects from the study of the Bible will enrich you. Thus, in all things, are you "partakers of his grace."

How important, then, that on all occasions he should be a partaker of your prayers! Thus *your own best interests are his strongest plea.* Your profit by him will be proportioned to your prayer for him. To the neglect of this important duty, much of the barrenness complained of in hearing the word may be traced. You have, perhaps, been wont to retire from God's house, caviling at the doctrine, dissecting the sermon in a spirit of captious criticism, sitting in judgment upon the *matter* or the *manner* of the preacher, and bitterly complaining of the unprofitableness of the preaching. With all tender faithfulness would we lay the question upon your conscience—How much do you pray for your minister? We repeat the interrogation more emphatically—How much do you pray for your minister? Here, in all probability, lies the secret of the great evil which you deplore. You have complained of your minister to others—alas! how often, and how bitterly, to your deep humiliation be it spoken—have you complained of him to the Lord? And have you ever seriously pondered the fact, that your soul's barrenness under the preached word—of which you seem in some degree aware—may, in a great degree, be traceable to yourself? The surmise, perhaps, startles you. The thought may never have occurred to your mind before. New and strange though it may be, it is yet worthy of your profoundest consideration.

Have you ever seriously reflected how closely allied may be the deficiency in the pulpit, of which you complain, to your own deficiency in the closet, of which you have not been aware? You have restrained prayer in behalf of your pastor. You have neglected to remember in especial, fervent intercession with the Lord, the instrument on whom your advancement in the divine life so much depends. You have looked up to him as a channel of grace, but you have failed to ask at the hands of Jesus that grace of which he is but the channel. You have waited upon his ministrations for instruction and comfort, but you have neglected to beseech for him that teaching and anointing by which alone he could possibly establish you in truth, or console you in sorrow. You have

perhaps observed a poverty of thought, and have been sensible of a lack of power in his ministrations, but you have not traced it in part to your own poverty and lack in the spirit and habit of prayer in his behalf. You have marveled and lamented the absence of sympathy and feeling and tenderness, in the discharge of his pastoral duties, but you have forgotten to sympathize with the high responsibilities, and oppressive anxieties, and bewildering engagements, inseparable from the office which your pastor fills, and in which he may largely share, often "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he may despair even of life."

Thus in a great degree the cause of an unprofitable hearing of the word may be found nearer at home than was suspected. There has been a suspension of sympathy on your part, and God has permitted a suspension of sympathy on his. "If a man could, when he enters God's house," to quote an apposite remark of the godly Bishop Reynolds, "but pour out his heart in these two things—a promise and a prayer, 'Lord, I am now entering into your presence, to hear you speak from heaven unto me, to receive your rain and spiritual dew, which never returns in vain, but ripens a harvest either of grain or weeds, of grace or judgment. My heart is prepared, O Lord, my heart is prepared, to learn and love any of your words. Your law is my counselor, I will be ruled by it; it is my physician, I will be patient under it; it is my schoolmaster, I will be obedient unto it. But who am I that I should promise any service unto you? and who is your minister, that he should do any good unto me, without your grace and heavenly call? Be therefore, pleased to reveal your own Spirit unto me, and to work in me that which you require of me.' I say, if a man could come with such sweet preparations, of heart unto the word, and could thus open his soul when this spiritual manna falls down from heaven, he should find the truth of that which the Apostle speaks. You are not straitened in us, (or in our ministry,) we come unto you with abundance of grace; but you are straitened only in your own affections, in the hardness, unbelief, incapacity, and negligence of your own hearts, which receives that in drops which falls down in showers.

We exhort the people to pray for their ministers, since they have a service upon those who, without divine grace, none are sufficient for, that God would, by his special assistance, enable them to discharge so great a trust. God commands it; we beseech it; our weakness courts it; your souls require it. *The more you pray for your minister, the more you will profit by him.* You help to edify yourselves; you help him to study, and pray, and preach for you, while you pray for him."

**Oh you flocks of the Lord, you churches of Christ, you saints of the Most High, pray, PRAY for your ministers! No one more deeply needs, no one more affectingly asks your prayers than he. For you he toils in the study, wrestles in the closet, and labors in the pulpit. For your best welfare he consecrates his youthful vigor, his mature experience, his declining years. To you he has been the channel of untold blessing. Often has the Lord spoken through him to your oppressed heart, thoughts of peace and words of love. He has often been instrumental in removing doubt from your mind, in clearing up points of truth that were hard to be understood, and in building you up on your most holy faith. Often, too, has he been the means of endearing Christ to you, leading you to him as a Counselor, as a Brother, as a Friend, and as a Redeemer, thus unveiling his glory to your eye, and his preciousness to your heart.**

**Perhaps he first told you of Jesus! From his lips you heard the life-giving sound of the gospel; by him you were wounded, by him you were healed, and by his hands you were received within the pale of the visible church. Oh, then, is it an unreasonable request that he should ask especial remembrance in the petitions which you breathe to God for "all the saints?" Think how often you have filled his mind with thoughtfulness, his heart with anxiety, his eyes with tears, his mouth with holy and fervent pleadings at the throne of grace. Then, will you not continue to pray for your pastor? Gratitude demands it. Remember him not in your petitions on ordinary occasions merely, but let there be especial seasons of prayer set apart for him alone.**

**Particularly if you know him to be passing through a season of trial, or sorrow, or mental anxiety, take him constantly and especially to the Lord. You need not know the cause of that sorrow. Proper feelings dictating, you will not wish to know. It will be enough for you that with delicacy of perception you have seen the shade of sadness on his brow; the look of anxiety in his eye; the expression of deep thoughtfulness upon his countenance; you will instantly take him in your heart to the Lord. And oh! who can unfold the extent of the blessing which your prayers may thus be the channel of conveying to his soul?**

**You may deem yourself, my reader, but an insignificant member of the flock. The grace which the Lord has given you may constrain you to think lowly of yourself, and to retire into the shade; but low and feeble though you may be in your own eyes, yet you have power with God in prayer. See yon little cloud**

sailing athwart that blue sky? It has absorbed its precious treasures from some hidden spring, and, guided by God's invisible hand, is going to unbosom itself upon some parched and thirsty spot, refreshing, gladdening, and fructifying it. The little rivulet, that flows noiseless and unseen from that shaded spot, has thus transmitted from its sequestered glen an influence felt far beyond it, and to an extent it never conceived and never can know. Such, dear reader, may be the character and such the results of your intercessions in behalf of your pastor. Silver and gold you have none to offer him. He asks not this at your hands. But *your prayers you may give, and your prayers he does ask*. He beseeches you, earnestly and affectingly, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive in your prayers to God for him. And oh! the hallowing, gladdening influence which those prayers may shed upon his mind—eternity alone can reveal!

The return of blessing to yourself will be incalculable and immense. The moisture absorbed from the earth returns again to the earth in grateful and refreshing showers. And thus every prayer which you in fervency and in faith breathe to heaven for your pastor, will, through him, return again in "showers of blessing" upon your own soul.

### **"A Word in Season from Christ to the Weary"**

"The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary." Isaiah 50:4

A greater than the prophet Isaiah is here. It is even He who, alluding to his office as the servant of the Father, and the consequent humiliation of that servitude, thus speaks—"The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Who, then, is the speaker but Jesus? To no other will this remarkable description apply, and from no other could such precious words proceed. How full of significance and sweetness are they! With what melody will they fall on many an ear, and with what gladness will they thrill through many a heart!

They are addressed to the WEARY. Let us contemplate the character. It comprises a large class. Many there are who come within its description. All may not ascribe their weariness to the same cause, nor may all to the same

degree be sensible of their state. Yet all are weary. Man is not naturally in his original and right position. The needle of his soul has been diverted from its center, and, until it regains it, will continue in incessant and tremulous motion—never at rest. To illustrate the thought by another figure. He who leaves his mother earth and launches upon the sea, must submit to all the caprices of the new element on which he has embarked. He becomes the sport of every current, and the plaything of every wave. Life is this sea, ever moving, ever restless, ever flowing on. Upon its bosom, and exposed to its currents and its storms, man is voyaging to eternity. And that, thus exposed to its ever fluctuating, shifting scenes, habits, and passions, he should be weary, can create no surprise in a reflecting mind.

The world is a wearying and a weary world. We will suppose ourselves appealing for the truth of this statement to the world's most admiring and devoted votary. It has lavished upon you the utmost that it can give. You have ransacked its treasures, and have reveled among his sweets. What have you found it to be? You have no scriptural hope of another and a better world—what is the result of your experience of this? Did that green and sunny spot on which you lay afford you repose? Did that pleasant draught which you quaffed, slake your thirst? Have rank and wealth, honor and distinction, pride and beauty, love and friendship, realized the heart's fond hope, and placed you beyond the reach of weariness! Have they left you nothing to wish, nothing to desire, nothing to lament? Is there no heaving of life's sea—no ripple upon its surface—no trembling of its bosom? Is all satisfaction, and quietude, and repose? We will anticipate your honest reply—"Far from it." There are yet a craving and a restlessness which nothing has met. So true is God's word, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest." And so will it be until the creature man returns to his Creator God.

But not in the world of sense only do you complain of weariness. What rest, we would ask, have you found in the world of faith? Again the reluctant and mournful reply will be—"None." Least of all have you found it here. If the carnal mind and sensual heart found not satiety and repose in their own native world, they cannot be expected to find it in a world with which they have not the slightest sympathy. The world of faith is a foreign climate to the natural man; it is the antithesis of the world of sense. He that would pass from the one to the other must become a "new creature in Christ Jesus." There must be an entire revolution of mind and of feeling. Old things must pass away, and all things must become new. The moral constitution must be acclimated (so to speak) to the new world into which it is introduced. It cannot

**breathe its atmosphere, nor admire its scenery, nor enjoy its delights, nor participate in its employments, without a corresponding nature. It is impossible that rest can be found in things that are spiritual, by a heart all whose desires and appetites are carnal and only carnal.**

**Heaven itself would to such a one cease to be heaven. How truly and graphically the prophet describes this state: "And you say, 'What a weariness!' and you sniff at it contemptuously" (Mal. 1:13.) Is there not something peculiarly awful in this description of your state? What a weariness do you find in the religion of Christ! Of prayer you exclaim, "What a weariness!" Of public worship, "What a weariness!" Of hearing sermons, "What a weariness!" Of religious conversation, "What a weariness!" Of the service and work of the Lord, "What a weariness!" "and you sniff at it contemptuously, says the Lord Almighty." O awful condition! O melancholy state! The world heaving like an angry sea beneath your feet—the heavens lowering and threatening above your head! Things temporal and things spiritual alike affording no repose to your agitated and restless mind! How true is God's word: "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." Unconverted reader! this is your present character, and this your present state!**

**But these are not the "weary" to whom this passage especially addresses itself. They are the Lord's weary ones—souls quickened, aroused, made sensible of their condition, and led to seek and to find their rest in Jesus. "Him who is weary." The character may be regarded as descriptive of GRACE IN ITS EARLIEST AND WEAKEST UNFOLDINGS. When the Holy Spirit first enlightens and convinces, he produces a restlessness in the soul, which all created good refuses to meet. Previously to this, sin was not felt to be a burden, guilt produced no anxiety, eternity no fearfulness, and evil habits were not felt to be a galling and oppressive chain bound around the soul. The world's insufficiency was indeed acknowledged, and the soul's restlessness was felt; but still sin was loved, and the world was followed, and there was no brokenness of heart, nor contrition of spirit, nor going to Jesus for rest.**

**With others it was, perhaps, somewhat different. There was just awakening enough to produce alarm and anxiety of soul; sufficient light to reveal the pollution and the darkness; and knowledge enough to teach the necessity of a righteousness in which to stand before God. To work out that righteousness, and so find rest, was the object upon which the whole soul was bent.**

**Circuitous was its march, toilsome its work, and wearisome its way. "Do this and live," was all the sound it heard, the only gospel it knew. "What shall I do?" was its mournful and despairing reply. But the Spirit of God takes the work into his own hands. And what a revolution of thought and of feeling transpires! Sin is now felt to be a heavy burden, hateful and hated. Past iniquities rise before the eye like Alp piled upon Alp, or roll over the soul, like wave succeeding wave. The spirituality of the law is seen, its curse is felt, its condemnation is dreaded. In a word, the whole soul is laid prostrate at the feet of Jesus, weary and heavily laden. But oh! we may pronounce it, blessed weariness! sweet brokenness and contrition!**

**Show me the spot on which JEHOVAH's eyes rest with delight, and over which angels hover and rejoice, and you take me to one whose heart God has made soft, whose spirit is contrite, who mourns for sin, repenting in dust and in ashes. This is weariness indeed! Reader, have you felt your sins, and not your sins only, but your own righteousness to be a burdensome and a wearisome thing, too heavy for you to bear? Then, you are included in the number of the Lord's weary ones, and may come and take your place with them at his feet, and hear the words he would speak to you.**

**The Lord's weary ones, too, include all those WHO FEEL THE BURDEN OF THE BODY OF SIN, AND ARE CAST DOWN AND WEARY, BY REASON OF THE DIFFICULTIES AND THE HARDNESS OF THE WAY. The Lord's people are emphatically a weary people. It is a "weary land" through which they are passing—it is no marvel that they should be faint, even though pursuing. Here is the cause of the greatest weariness. Not more truly does the "whole creation groan and travail in pain," than does he who "bears about with him the body of sin and of death, day by day." It is indeed to him a continual and unrelievable pressure. "Who will deliver me from the body of sin and of death?" is his constant and mournful cry. It is the union of the opposites in him that creates his burden. Life and death—holiness and sin—grace and nature—are in perpetual, and often fierce combat. In this lies the inward conflict. This is the fight of faith. Until life was breathed, and holiness was created, and grace was given, there were no oppressions, and no warfare, and no weariness. Think of this, you burdened and oppressed saints of God! Let this thought fall like a sunbeam upon your gloomy and saddened spirit. Let it cheer you in your cloudy and dark day. Were you dead, or were you still in unrenewed nature, you would be an utter stranger to this weariness; and could never understand the meaning of the apostle, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity**

to the law of sin which is in my members."

**THE ASSAULTS OF THE ADVERSARY** contribute not a little to the sense of weariness which often prostrates a child of God. To be set up as a mark for Satan: the enemy smiting where sensibility is the keenest, assailing where weakness is the greatest, taking advantage of every new position and circumstance—especially of a season of trial, of a weak, nervous temperament, or of a time of sickness—distorting God's character, diverting the eye from Christ, and turning it in upon self—are among Satan's devices for casting down the soul of a dear believer.

And then, there are **THE NARROWNESS OF THE NARROW WAY**, and the **INTRICACIES** of the intricate way, and the **PERILS** of the perilous way, tending to jade and dispirit the soul. To walk in a path so narrow and yet so dangerous, that the white garment must needs be closely wrapped around; to occupy a post of duty so conspicuous, responsible, and difficult, as to fix every eye, some gazing with undue admiration, and others with keen and cold suspicion, ready to detect and to censure any slight irregularity—these add not a little to the toilsomeness of the way.

Add to this, **THE NUMEROUS AND VARIED TRIALS AND AFFLICTIONS** which pave his pathway to heaven; his tenderest mercies often his acutest trials, and his trials often weighing him to the earth—and you have the outline of a melancholy picture, of which he whose eye scans this page may be the original. Does it surprise us, then, that from the lips of such a one the exclamation often rises, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

It is to such the Lord Jesus now addresses himself in words most appropriate and animating, "The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary." His preeminent fitness for this peculiar and difficult office, is the first point with which he would arrest the attention. "An instructed tongue." The Lord's qualifications will appear in two or three particulars. His identity with their very nature describes him as well calculated to address himself to their case. Of the nature thus oppressed and weary, he in part partook. But for this, so infinitely removed had he been from their condition, he had been incapable of meeting its peculiar necessity. Absolute Deity could not, through the medium of sympathy, have conveyed a word of comfort to the weary. There had been

**lacking, not the power to relieve, but the mode of relieving the oppressed and sorrowful heart. There had been needed the connecting and transmitting chain—the heavenly highway of thought, of feeling, and of sympathy—between these extremes of being, the loving heart of God and the desolate heart of man. Unacquainted with grief, untouched by sorrow, unbeckoned by care, unaffected by weariness, an absolute God could not possibly offer the support and the condolence which sympathetic feeling alone could give, and which a jaded spirit and a sorrow-touched, care-oppressed, and sin-beckoned soul demanded.**

**Nor could angels afford the help required. The only burden which they know is the burden of love; and the only weariness they feel is the weariness of ever-burning devotion and zeal. It is this which gives strength to their wings, and swiftness to their flight. They are represented as "hearkening to the voice of the Lord," ready to speed their way on some embassy of mercy and love. In fulfilling this their ministry, their eye never slumbers, their pinions never droop. But we needed a nature so constituted as to enter into, and, as it were, become a part of the very weariness it sought to relieve.**

**Look at Jesus! "Behold the Man!" With weariness in every form he was intimate. He knew what bodily weakness was. Do you not love to linger in pensive thoughtfulness over that touching incident of his life which describes him as sitting fatigued upon Jacob's well? "And being weary, he sat thus upon the well." Picture him to your eye! See the dust upon his sandals—for he Jesus had walked forty miles that day—the sweat upon his brow, the air of languor upon his countenance, and the jaded expression in his eye! Do we deify his humanity? No! It was real humanity—humanity like our own. It is our joy, our boast, our glory, our salvation, that he was really man, as he was truly God.**

**Consider, too, what he endured for man, from man. This was no small part of the weariness of our nature into which he entered. How soon did he come to the end of the creature! Alas! the creature has an end, and sooner or later God brings us to it, and in the exercise, too, of the tenderest love of his heart. When most he needed its sheltering protection, he found the creature a withered gourd, and he bore his sorrow alone. And when he repaired to it for the refreshing of sympathy, he found it a broken cistern—and he panted in vain. Where were his disciples now? He was in trouble, but there was no one to help; he was in the storm, but no one would know him; refuge failed him, no man cared for his soul! He was in sorrow, but no bosom offered its pillow;**

he was accused, but no tongue was heard in its defense; he was scourged, but no arm was lifted to repel; he was condemned, but no one vindicated his innocence, nor sought to arrest his progress to the cross! Oh, how fully did Jesus realize the creature's nothingness, and so enter into his people's condition of weariness.

Contemplate, too, the pressure that was often, we might say always, upon his sensitive spirit. See him bearing our sicknesses and our sorrows; more than this, carrying our iniquities and our sins. Think not that your path is a lone one. The incarnate God has trodden it before you, and he can give you the clear eye of faith to envision his foot-print in every step. Jesus can say, and he does say to you, "I know your sorrow; I know what that cross is, for I have carried it. You have not a burden that I did not bear, nor a sorrow that I did not feel, nor a pain that I did not endure, nor a path that I did not tread, nor a tear that did not bedew my eye, nor a cloud that did not shade my spirit, before you, and for you. Is it bodily weakness? I once walked forty miles, to carry the living water to a poor sinner at Samaria. Is it the sorrow of bereavement? I wept at the grave of my friend, although I knew that I was about to recall the loved one back again to life. Is it the frailty and the fickleness of human friendship? I stood by and heard my person denied by lips that once spoke kindly to me; lips now renouncing me with an oath, that once vowed affection unto death. Is it straitness of circumstance, the galling sense of dependence? I was no stranger to poverty, and was often nourished and sustained by the charity of others. Is it that you are houseless and friendless? So was I. The foxes had their shelter, and the birds winged themselves to their nests, but I, though Lord of all, had nowhere to lay my head; and often day after day passed away, and no soothing accents of friendship fell upon my ear. Is it the burden of sin? Even that I bore in its accumulated and tremendous weight when I hung accursed upon the tree." Yes, Christian reader, you have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities, but was, in all points, tempted like as you are, though he was without sin. O how pre-eminently fitted is Christ to speak a word to the weary!

But in addition to this, Jesus possessed a derived fitness—a fitness communicated to him by his Father. This his words clearly imply. "The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned." All the grace and the gifts with which, as man, he was furnished, were the bestowment of the Spirit of God, and were given in order to qualify him to speak to the weary. In a distinguished sense, he possessed the tongue of the learned; or, as the passage

might be rendered, "The Lord Jehovah has given me an eloquent tongue, (literally, one skilled, practiced, instructed,) that I might know how to console the weary, or, that I may sustain the weary with a word."

Never was there a tongue like Christ's—so learned, so eloquent, and so skilled. "Never a man spoke like this man." Greece and Rome, in their "High and palmy state," never exhibited such philosophy as he taught, nor such erudition as he displayed, nor such eloquence as he breathed. Had he so chosen it, he could have placed himself at the head of a school of his own, and, with a beck, might have allured to his feet all the poets and philosophers of his day, proud to own him as their Master. But no! The wisdom and the eloquence of this world possessed no charm for him. He drew the learning and the melting power with which he spoke from a higher, even a heavenly source. His was divine philosophy; his was the eloquence of God! "The Lord Jehovah has given me the tongue of the eloquent."

And TO WHOM did he consecrate this learning, this wisdom, and this eloquence? To the very objects whom the proud philosophers and the doctors of his day despised and neglected—even the weary. What a field was here for the exercise of his skill and for the play of his benevolence! How fully would he demonstrate that he truly possessed the "tongue of the learned!" If, to interest the feelings of the exhausted; if, to enchain the attention of the weary; if, to concentrate upon one subject the powers of a mind, jaded and burdened; if, to awaken music from a heart whose chords were broken and unstrung, mark the loftiest reach of eloquence, then, his was eloquence unsurpassed—for all this he did. The beings whom he sought out and drew around him, were the burdened, the bowed down, the disconsolate, the poor, the friendless, the helpless, the ignorant, the weary. He loved to lavish upon such the fulness of his benevolent heart, and to exert upon such the skill of his wonder-working power. Earth's weary sons repaired to his out-stretched arms for shelter, and the world's ignorant and despised clustered around his feet, to be taught and blessed. Sinners of every character, and the disconsolate of every grade, attracted by his renown, pressed upon him from every side. "This man receives sinners," was the name and the character by which he was known. It was new and strange. Uttered by the lip of the proud and disdainful Pharisee, it was an epithet of reproach and an expression of ridicule. But upon the ear of the poor and wretched outcast, the sons and daughters of sorrow, ignorance, and woe, it fell sweeter than the music of the spheres. It passed from lip to lip; it echoed from shore to shore—"this man receives sinners!" It found its way into the abodes of misery and need; it penetrated the dungeon of

the prisoner, and the cell of the maniac; and it kindled an unearthly light in the solitary dwelling of the widow and the orphan, the unpitied and the friendless.

Thus received its accomplishment the prophecy that predicted him as the "Plant of renown," whom Jehovah would raise up. Thousands came, faint, and weary, and sad, and sat down beneath his shadow; and thousands more since then have pressed to their wounded hearts the balsam that flowed from his bleeding body, and have been healed.

Let us turn our attention for a moment, to the subject-matter of our Lord's address to the weary. **WHAT DOES HE SPEAK TO THEM?** Some would reply, the law. No; the law of God never spoke a word of comfort to the weary. It was not designed for such. Its very nature forbids it. It can anathematize, alarm, and wound; but not a solitary word of consolation and soothing can it address to a soul weary and heavily laden with sorrow and with guilt. But it is the glorious gospel of the blessed God that the Lord Jesus speaks to his weary ones. It was designed and framed especially for them. Its very nature fits it for such. Every word is an echo of the love of God's heart. Every sentence is permeated with grace, mercy, and truth. The word which Jesus speaks, is just the word the weary need. It unfolds a free pardon, complete acceptance, perfect reconciliation with God, and all-sufficient grace to perfect this work in holiness. It bids me, as a sinner, approach just as I am; my poverty, my vileness, my guilt, my utter destitution, forming no just hindrances to my salvation, because his atoning work has made it a righteous thing in God to justify the guilty, and a gracious act in Jesus to save the lost. Yes, he condescends to assure me in that word of a free grace gospel, which he speaks with a tongue so eloquent, that I honor him in accepting his offered boon, and that I glorify him by trusting my soul into his Almighty hands.

There is yet an essential and most important truth here to which we would direct the reader's particular attention. We allude to the **REST IN CHRIST** to which his word to the weary especially invites. Our blessed Lord is not one that mocks the circumstances of the weary. When he speaks, it is with all the love of his heart, and when he invites, it is with all the sincerity of his soul. Listen, then, to his gracious words, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." With what brightness does the truth appear written with beams of heavenly light—**JESUS, THE REST OF THE WEARY!** "Come unto me." The Father has made his Son the resting place of his church. He Himself has vested His whole glory in Christ. He knew what

**Christ was capable of sustaining. He knew that as His Fellow—one equal with Himself, He could with safety entrust the honor of His government in the hands of His Son. He confided therein Himself! His government, and His church—all in Christ. To this "tried stone," He would now bring His people. He found it strong enough for Himself, and He knows it to be strong enough for them, and with confidence He invites the weary to come and repose upon it. Jesus but echoes the heart of the Father when he says, "Come unto me, I will give you rest." Never did the tongue of Jesus utter words more learned—more eloquent—more persuasive. Just the word we need.**

**By nature we foolishly seek rest everywhere, and in everything, but in Jesus. We seek it in the sensual world, we seek it in the moral world, we seek it in the religious world—we find it not. We seek it in conviction, we seek it in ordinances, we seek it in doing the works of the law, and still it evades us. We go from place to place, from mean to mean, from minister to minister, and still the burden presses, and the guilt remains, and we find no rest. No; and never will we find it, until it is sought and found solely, wholly, exclusively, and entirely in Jesus. Rest for the sin-weary soul is only to be met with in him who bore the curse for man's transgression. Here God rests, and here the sinner must rest. Here the Father rests, and here the child may rest. Jesus is the great burden-bearer for God and for man. Listen again to the melody of his words: "Come unto me—I will give you rest." See, how he invites you, without one solitary condition. He makes no exception to your guilt and unworthiness. The word is, "Come unto me:" in other words, believe in me. To "come," is simply and only to believe.**

**And oh! how can we fully set forth THE REST to be found in Jesus? Let those testify who took their guilt to his blood, their vileness to his righteousness, their sins to his grace, their burdens to his arm, their sorrows to his heart. Let them tell how, in a moment, their sense of weariness fled, and rest, sweet, soothing rest to their soul, succeeded. Are you, my reader, a sin-weary soul? Then, to you is this invitation addressed: "Come unto ME—to me, the Savior, whose willingness is equal to my ability. To me; who never rejected a single soul that sought salvation and heaven at my hands. Come unto me—I will give you rest."**

**In the case of A TRIED BELIEVER, the rest that Jesus gives does not always imply the removal of the burden from where this sense of weariness proceeds. The burden is permitted to remain, and yet rest is experienced. Yes, it would appear from his procedure, that the very existence of the burden was essential**

to the experience of the rest. He does not withdraw the trouble from us, nor us from the trouble; and still the repose we sighed for is given. Wonderful indeed! But how is it explained? That burden takes us to Jesus! It is but the cause of our simply going to him. But for that sorrow, or that calamity, or that sickness, or that bereavement, we would have stayed away. The pressure compelled us to go. And how does he meet us? Does he open a way of escape from our difficulty, or does he immediately unbind our burden and set us free? No; better than this, he pours strength into our souls, and life into our spirits, and love into our hearts, and so we find rest. Thus are fulfilled in our experience the precious promises, "As your days, so shall your strength be." "My grace is sufficient for you."

But there is still a deeply interesting truth to be considered. It is **THE TIMING OF THE LORD'S ADDRESS TO THE WEARY**. It is always a "word in season." It is spoken just at the moment that it is needed. Herein is no small unfolding of the love of our Lord. Nor less an evidence of his complex person as God-man. How could he so time his word to the weary as to meet their emergency at its very crisis, did not his Deity make him cognizant of the critical junctures in which they were placed! And let it be mentioned, that this operation is going on in every place and at every moment! And how could he meet that crisis, and speak a word in season to the weary, but as his humanity was touched with the feeling of the infirmity? It is by this process of experience that we are brought into close views of the glory of our incarnate God.

Yes, it is a "word in season." When Jesus speaks to the penitent weeping at his feet, "Your sins are forgiven," who can describe the joy which now fills the heart, and the radiance of hope which now lights up the soul? It was, perhaps, at the moment of dark despair; all other refuge failed; all was given up for lost; and just as the last billow came rolling on, threatening to engulf the soul in woe, Jesus spoke a "word in season," and all was peace.

And when he speaks through the ministry of the word, or by the word itself, to the believer, wearied with conflict and with trial, it has been just at the moment that its sustaining and consoling power was needed. The eye that slumbers not, nor sleeps was upon you. He knew in what furnace you were placed, and was there to temper the flame when it seemed the severest. He saw your frail vessel struggling through the tempest, and he came to your rescue at the height of the storm. How has he proved this in seasons of difficulty and doubt! How often, at a crisis the most critical of your history, the Lord has

**appeared for you! Your lack has been supplied, your doubt has been solved, and your perplexity has been guided; he has delivered your soul from death, your eyes from tears, and your feet from falling.**

**A word by Jesus, spoken in due season, how good is it! In what an exalted and endearing light does this truth place Christ's sleepless vigilance of his people! Imagine yourself threading your way along a most difficult and perilous path, every step of which is attended with pain and jeopardy, and is taken with hesitancy and doubt. Unknown to you and unseen, there is One hovering each moment around you, checking each false step, and guiding each doubtful one; soothing each sorrow, and supplying each need. All is calm and silent. Not a sound is heard, not a movement is seen; and yet, to your amazement, just at the critical moment, the needed support comes—you know not from where, you know not from whom. This is no picture of imagination. Are you a child of God retracing your steps back to paradise by an intricate and a perilous way? Jesus is near to you at each moment, unseen and often unknown. You have at times stood speechless with awe at the strange interposition on your behalf, of providence and of grace. No visible sign betokened the source of your help. There was no echo of footfall at your side, no flitting of shadow athwart your path. No law of nature was altered nor suspended, the sun stood not still, nor did the heavens open; and yet deliverance, strange and effectual deliverance, came at a moment most unexpected, yet most needed. It was Jesus your Redeemer, your Brother, your Shepherd, and your Guide. He it was who, hovering around you, unknown and unobserved, kept you as the apple of his eye, and sheltered you in the hollow of his hand. It was he who armed you with bravery for the fight, who poured strength into your spirit, and grace into your heart, when the full weight of calamity pressed upon them. Thus has he always been to his children.**

**The incident of the disciples in the storm presents a striking instance of this. Behold him standing upon the shore, eyeing with riveted gaze the little boat as it struggled amid the sea. They were often invisible to human eye, but not a moment were they lost to his. Not even when in the mount alone in prayer, were they forgotten nor unobserved. He beheld from thence their peril; he knew their fears, and he hastened to their support. Stepping from the shore he approached them. O how majestic did his form now appear—walking like a man, and upon the water, like a God! They knew not that it was Jesus, and were afraid. But their knowledge of him was not necessary to their safety. It was enough that he knew them. And just as the storm was at its height, and their fears rose with their peril, he drew near and said in his own gentle**

soothing tone, unto them, "It is I, do not be afraid." It was a "word spoken in season."

It is one of the most blessed truths of the covenant of grace, that the God of the covenant is a "very present help in every time of trouble." Loving His people as He does, dwelling in them by His Spirit, their persons and circumstances continually before Him in the person and the intercession of His dear Son, how can He possibly lose sight of them for a single moment? They may, and they often do, lose sight of Him. They do not, alas! set the Lord always before their face. They do not train and discipline themselves to see Him in every event, circumstance, and incident of life. They are not clear-sighted to recognize, nor prompt to acknowledge Him in every providence that darkens or lightens upon their way. Were they but right-minded, they would exclaim of every good and of every evil as it came, "The Lord is in this!" But they are never for an instant out of his heart, out of his thoughts, out of his hands, or out of his eye.

How near to them, too, is THE HOLY SPIRIT! Dwelling in, and overshadowing them, he is at their side to guide, to uphold, and to cheer; bringing to their memory a precious promise, or writing upon their heart an animating truth, or opening before their eye some endearing glimpse of Jesus, just the moment it was needed. What a happy, what a favored people are the Lord's! "Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God. Happy is that people that is in such a case."

But let us trace some of THE PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS to which this interesting subject brings us. The Lord Jesus speaks at the present time to the weary. We need constantly to bear in mind the immutability of our Lord; that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." That all that he ever has been—and oh! what has he not been? he is at this moment. What countless numbers are now bathing their souls in the bliss of heaven, whose tears were once dried, whose fears were once quelled, whose burden was once removed by those precious words spoken in season—"Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" O could they, bending now from their thrones, but speak to us, they would testify what substance, what reality, what sweetness, what power, and what charm they once found in them! And they would bid every weary spirit, every weeping penitent, every tried saint believe, and press the promise to their heart.

But a dearer, a lovelier, and a better than they, bids you receive it. Jesus

himself speaks to you, "Come unto ME—and I will give you rest." All that he was in their happy experience, he will be in yours. The grace that made them what they once were, and what they now are, is sufficient for you. Go, and lay your weariness on Christ. Ask not, "Will he bear my burden?" He bears every burden brought to him. Not one poor, weary, heavy laden sinner does he turn away. You are, perhaps, a mourning penitent—he will receive you. You are, perhaps, a vile outcast—he will welcome you. He says he will, and he cannot deny himself. It is impossible that he should lie.

The Lord Jesus gives HIS PEOPLE THE TONGUE OF THE LEARNED, that they may sometimes speak a word in season to his weary ones. Have you not a word for Christ? May you not go to that tried believer in sickness, in poverty, in adversity, or in prison, and tell of the balm that has often healed your spirit, and of the cordial that has often cheered your heart? "A word duly spoken, how good is it!" A text quoted, a sentiment repeated, an observation made, a hint dropped, a kind caution suggested, a gentle rebuke given, a tender admonition left—oh! the blessing that has flowed from it! It was a word spoken in season! Say not with Moses, "I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue;" or, with Jeremiah, "Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak, for I am a child." Hear the answer of the Lord, "Who has made man's mouth? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall say."

And oh, how frequently and effectually does the Lord speak to his weary ones, even THROUGH THE WEARY! All, perhaps, was conflict within, and darkness without; but one word falling from the lips of a man of God, has been the voice of God to the soul. And what an honor conferred, thus to be the channel of conveying consolation from the loving heart of the Father to the disconsolate heart of His child! To go and smooth a ruffled pillow, and lift the pressure from off a burdened spirit, and light up the gloomy chamber of sorrow, of sickness, and of death, as with the first dawnings of the coming glory. Go, Christian reader, and ask the Lord so to clothe your tongue with holy, heavenly eloquence, that you may "know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary."

IN CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH, remember the Lord Jesus can give you the tongue of the learned. Listen to his promise—"I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Thus, the most unlearned, and the most weak, may be so deeply taught, and be so skillfully armed in Christ's school, as to be able valiantly to defend, and

successfully to preach the truth, putting to "silence the ignorance of foolish men.

It is a matter of much practical importance, that you take heed not to anticipate or to forestall the promised grace. For every possible circumstance in which you may be placed, the fulness of Christ and the supplies of the covenant, are provided. That provision is only meted out as the occasions for whose history it was provided occur. Beware of creating trouble by anticipating it. Seen through the mist, the advancing object may appear gigantic in size, and terrific in appearance. And yet the trouble you so much dread may never come; or, coming, it will assuredly bring with it the "word spoken in season." In the case of every child of God, calamity never comes alone; it invariably brings Jesus with it.

There is a period approaching—the last and great crisis of human life—when we shall more than ever need the "tongue of the learned." It will be of all seasons most trying and solemn, the season that separates the soul from the body. To that each must come. The hand that holds this pen, and the eye that reads the lines which it traces, will relax, and grow dim in death, and the writer and the reader will meet together to read another book in the light of the great white throne—the book of life! Oh blessed indeed to find our names recorded there! But if Jesus is our salvation, why shrink from that hour? He will be there to speak a word in season to your weary soul amid the swellings of Jordan—loving, and faithful to the last.

Do not be surprised at any way which the Lord may take to bring your weary soul to rest in himself. It is not always in the crowd that he speaks comfortingly to the heart. More frequently he leads his people out, and takes them apart by himself alone. It is often in the privacy of separation and retirement, when the soul is curtained within his pavilion, that the greatest and the sweetest nearness to Jesus is experienced. "Behold, I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her." (margin—speak friendly, to her heart.)

Has the Lord been leading you about—severing this tie, and breaking up that repose; disappointing you here, and thwarting you there? Amazed, you have asked, "Lord, why this?" And the only reply has been the comfort which he has spoken to your weary, desolate heart. Thus does he make good in your experience his own exceedingly great and precious promise—"I will satisfy the weary soul, and will replenish every sorrowful soul."

**"Is it for this my weary feet  
So long the wilderness have trod,  
Through winter's cold, and summer's heat,  
Thus to be comforted by God?"**

**"Is it for this he brought the night,  
And quenched awhile each tiny ray;  
That He himself might be my light,  
And turn the darkness into day?"**

**"Is it for this the waves arose,  
And tempests raged, and would not cease,  
That Christ himself might interpose,  
And shed around a perfect peace?"**

**"Is it for this he chastened sore,  
And let my soul in prison be;  
That he might show an open door,  
And say in tender love—'Be free'"**

**"Is it for this he laid me low,  
And filled my heart with strange alarms;  
That I might let all others go,  
And sweetly rest upon his arms?"**

**"Oh yes! my feeble faith descries  
Bright light between each parting cloud;  
And soon my soul, with glad surprise,**

**Shall mount and sing her song aloud."**

### **The Axe Laid at the Root**

**"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree  
which does not produce good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."  
Matthew 3:10**

**It is a solemn and a veritable thought, that *human character is training and***

*molding for eternity.* Nothing in the universe of matter or of mind is stationary. Everything is in motion; the motion is progressive—the movement is onward. Things whose being is limited by the present state, obeying the law of their nature, advance to their maturity, and then perish. They attain their appointed and ultimate perfection, and then die. Beings destined for another, a higher, and a more enduring state, are each moment tending towards that existence for which their natures are formed, and to which they aspire. There is, innate in man, a principle which incessantly yearns for, and reaches after, a state of perfection and deathlessness. He would sincerely, at times, quench in eternal night the spark of immortality which glows in his breast. A morbid distaste of life, or a pusillanimous shrinking from its evils, or the anticipation of some impending calamity—in most cases springing from a mind diseased, and destroying the power of self-control; have tended to inspire and to strengthen this desire. But eternal sleep is beyond his reach. He sighs for it, but it heeds not his moan; he invites it, but it comes not at his bidding; he inscribes the sentiment over the charnel house of the dead, but it changes not their state—he may slay the mortal, but he cannot touch the immortal. The compass of his soul points on to life. The long, bleak coast of eternity, its shores washed by the rough billows of time, stretches out before him; and towards it, his bark each instant tends, and to it it will assuredly arrive. Such is the chain that links man to the invisible world! So interesting and important a being is he. An eternity of happiness or of misery is before him—from it lie cannot escape—and for the one or the other, mind is educating, and character is forming.

A truth kindred in its solemnity to this, is the nearness of judgment to every unconverted individual. To his eye—its vision dimmed by other and diverse objects—it may appear far remote. Damnation may seem to linger, judgment to tarry. Sentence executed against an evil work may appear delayed. But this is an illusion of the mental eye, a deception of Satan, a lie which the treacherous and depraved heart is eager to believe. Never was a snare of the devil more successful than this. *But death, judgment, and hell are in the closest proximity to man;* nearer than he has any conception of. His path winds along the very precipice that overhangs the billows of quenchless flame. Let him assume what position he may, high or low, fortified or unguarded, from that position there is but one step between him and death, between death and judgment, between judgment and a fixed and a changeless destiny. As one has truly remarked, what a creature of time is eternity! Time is, in some respects, more solemn and important than eternity. The present decides the future. The future is all that the present makes it. It is "troubled or serene, inviting or

revolting, happy or miserable, a blessing or a curse, as time, omnipotent time, ordains it."

And this is the sentiment of the text which suggests our subject. "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." There is much truth in these words, that is deeply and solemnly instructive. They describe the *character* of an unconverted state, warn us of its *danger*, and predict its *doom*. May the Spirit who speaks in the word, be the Spirit who illumines us, while that word is now laid open to our view!

What A TRUE DESCRIPTION have we here OF THE CHARACTER OF A CARNAL, UNREGENERATE SOUL—"Every tree which brings not forth good fruit." No pencil could more accurately delineate the condition of such a one. There cannot be, by any possibility whatever, the slightest misconception here. This is not descriptive of a renewed state. The expressive metaphor cannot, by the most forced construction, be made to apply to a state of grace. *A living member of the true Vine is a fruit-bearing tree.* The *degree* of his fruitfulness is another question. It is with the reality of the vital principle within him, that he has first and mainly to do. The question that takes precedence of all others is, his severance from the 'wild olive tree' of a carnal, lifeless nature, and his grafting into Christ the true Vine.

Can any metaphor, drawn from the world of imagery, more strongly and truly set forth an unconverted state than this? It is a tree that bears *no* good fruit. It is a soul utterly destitute of everything that is really good, holy, and spiritual. It makes no allusion to the verdant leaves of a 'mere Christian profession', or to the blossoms of 'good resolutions' and 'external reformations', which often appear in life. These may be many and fair to look upon. But it speaks of more than 'the leaf', and the promising 'blossom'; it speaks of 'fruit', and of 'good fruit', and of good fruit only. The "tree which brings not forth GOOD FRUIT."

It will now be proper for us to inquire into the NATURE and the PROPERTIES of the "good fruit" which is found in a state of grace, the absence of which decides a state of nature.

Shall we begin with PRAYER? Who will not pronounce this a fruit of the Spirit, and in its nature and influence, truly good? When Saul of Tarsus was smitten to the ground by the divine light which shone around him—all his

pride and rebellion in a moment prostrated—the first accents heard from him in heaven, and announced on earth, were accents of prayer. There came a voice from the excellent glory, exclaiming, "Behold, he prays." Here was the first throbbing of life in the new-born soul. Here was *spiritual breath*, pouring out itself into the bosom of Him from whom it came. It was more than the *sprouting leaf*, more than the *opening bud*, more than the full-blown blossom; it was *precious fruit*, brought forth in the heart by God the Eternal Spirit. Are you a praying soul? Has the prayer ever burst from your lips, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" I ask not if you are theoretically, or notionally acquainted with prayer. You may be accustomed to *the formal habit of prayer*, and yet never pray. You may eagerly purchase, and diligently use every form of devotion which the piety or the skill of others has compiled, and yet the gladdening intelligence may never have passed from lip to lip in heaven—"Behold, he prays!" If this be true of you, you are that tree that brings not forth the good fruit of prayer. For years, perhaps it has been so. You have lived thus far a *prayerless life*. What! no hallowed communion with Heaven! No sweet fellowship with the Father! No yielding to the attraction of the throne of His grace!

What! an utter stranger to all this? Then, your life has been unsanctified by prayer—your family unblest by prayer—your business pursued without prayer. The *dew of mercy* has fallen, and the *sun of prosperity* has shone upon you; means of grace, and a thousand influences, have conspired to make you a man of prayer; and yet again and again has the Lord of the vineyard come seeking in you this good fruit, and found none. Then, what scriptural, reasonable, valid claim to the character of a child of God can you possibly have, lacking this, the first and the latest evidence of spiritual life?

In the House which Christ is rearing, and of which he is the foundation, all the stones are *living stones*. "You also as *living stones*, are built up a spiritual house." There are no dead materials here. In the *scaffolding*, and among the *rubbish*—things not forming essential parts of the building itself—we expect to find no life. Yes, solemn thought! *among the builders themselves there may be, there often are, those having no sympathy with the nature and character and ultimate design of the structure whose walls they are helping to uprear*. But in every stone, placed and cemented in that building, and forming an essential part, there is life—divine, spiritual, resurrection, deathless life, flowing from union to Christ, who has ever been, and ever will be, the "tried stone, the precious corner-stone, the sure foundation" of his church.

Then, do not be deceived; the *scaffolding* will be taken down, and the *rubbish* will be removed, and the workmen will be dispersed, and this beautiful and stupendous structure will present to the eye the spectacle of a "glorious church, not having a spot, or a wrinkle, or any such thing," partaking of the life, and radiant with the glory, of the Lord through eternity. Then, all those who had a Christian "name to live while they were dead," who were employed around this spiritual house, but formed no part of the house itself, will have their portion in the "second death." Speaking of the results of the Christian ministry, the Apostle employs this solemn language, "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." These are searching, shuddering facts, relating both to minister and to people.

But oh! *what a precious fruit of the renewed heart is true prayer!* If there is a single exercise of the soul that places the fact of its regeneracy beyond a doubt, it is this. Prayer, that comes as holy fire from God, and that rises as holy incense to God—prayer, that takes me, with every need and infirmity, with every sin and sorrow, to the bosom of the Father, through the smitten bosom of the Son—prayer, that sweetens my solitude, that calms my perturbed spirit, that weakens the power of sin, that nourishes the desire for holiness, and that transports the soul, by anticipation, beyond the region of winds, and storms, and tempests, into the calmer presence of God, where all is sunshine and peace—O what a wondrous privilege is this!

That there is much of awful mystery yet to be unraveled in relation to this holy exercise of the soul, we readily admit. How prayer operates upon God we know not. That it can effect any alteration in His purpose, or change His will, or afford Him information, no one for a moment supposes. And yet, that it should be an ordained medium by which finite weakness seems to overcome Infinite strength, and a human will seems to turn the Divine will, and man's shallow mind seems to pour knowledge into the fathomless mind of God—that it should halt a threatened judgment, or remove an existing evil, or supply a present need—is a marvel in which, like all others of Divine revelation, I submit my reason to my faith, receiving and adoring what my reason cannot, unless I were God, perfectly comprehend.

The only solution which we have of *this mystery of prayer*, is contained in these words: "He that searches the hearts, knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." *The Holy Spirit thus inditing just that petition which is in harmony with the*

*purpose, will, and love of Him who is emphatically the Hearer and the Answerer of prayer.* What a volume might be composed on the subject of prayer, and yet the half would not be told! A compilation of its achievements would of itself be the work of the longest life. Blessed are they who can enter into the spirit of these words, "I give myself unto prayer." "It is good for me to draw near unto God." "Pray without ceasing." "Praying with prayer." "If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us; and if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." Have you, reader, this fruit? Then, restrain not prayer before God!

"Prayer is a creature's strength, his very breath and being;  
Prayer is the golden key that can open the wicket of Mercy  
Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of Omnipotence;  
Therefore, pray, O creature, for many and great are your needs;  
Your mind, your conscience, and your being, your rights commend you unto  
prayer,  
The cure of all cares, the grand panacea for all pains,  
Doubt's destroyer, ruin's remedy, the antidote to all anxieties."  
(Tupper)

**GODLY SORROW** must be quoted as another fruit, good and precious, of the renewed heart. This, also, is the product of the Holy Spirit, indicating the life of God in the soul of man. No single exercise of mind is presented in the Word as holding so essential and important a place in a work of grace as this: it is absolutely indispensable as an element of conversion. There cannot be the subsequent stages of faith in Jesus, of righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit, without the previous sense and sorrow of sin. We need, on this interesting subject, no other teaching than what is contained in these words: "Thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Again—"For all these things has my hand made, and all these things have been, says the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembles at my word."

Can any truth be more strongly and affectingly stated? This, too, was the doctrine which our Lord preached: "I say unto you, that except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." And so did his Apostles, when they declared, "God now commands all men everywhere to repent." No command, no duty can be more distinctly, intelligently, and solemnly defined and urged than this.

**But the inquirer will ask, "What is repentance?" The reply is—it is that secret grace that lays the soul low before God—self, loathed; sin, abhorred, confessed, and forsaken. It is the abasement and humiliation of a man because of the sinfulness of his nature, and the sins of his life, before the holy, heart-searching Lord God.**

*The more matured believer is wont to look upon a broken and contrite spirit flowing from a sight of the cross, as the most precious fruit found in his soul. No moments to him are so hallowed, so solemn, or so sweet, as those spent in bathing the Savior's feet with tears. There is indeed a bitterness in the grief which a sense of sin produces; and this, of all other bitteresses, is the greatest. He knows from experience, that it is an "evil thing and bitter, that he has forsaken the Lord his God." Nevertheless, there is a sweetness—an indescribable sweetness, which must be experienced to be understood—blended with the bitterness of a heart broken for sin, from a sight of the cross of the incarnate God. O precious tears wept beneath that cross!*

**But how shall I portray the man that is of a humble and a contrite spirit? He is one who truly knows the evil of sin, for he has felt it. He apprehends, in some degree, the holiness of God's character, and the spirituality of his law, for he has seen it. His views of himself have undergone a radical change. He no longer judges himself as others judge him. They exalt him; he abases himself. They approve; he condemns. And in that very thing for which they most extol him, he is humbling himself in secret. While others are applauding actions, he is searching into motives; while they are extolling virtues, he is sifting principles; while they are weaving the garland for his brow, he, shut in alone with God, is covering himself with sackcloth and with ashes. O precious fruit of a living branch of the true Vine! Is it any wonder, then, that God should come and dwell with such a one, in whom is found something so good towards Him? O no! He delights to see us in this posture—to mark a soul walking before Him in a conscious sense of its poverty, the eye drawing from the cross its most persuasive motives to a deep prostration of soul at His feet.**

**Dear reader, to know what a sense of God's reconciling love is—to know how skillfully, tenderly, and effectually, Jesus binds up and heals, your spirit must be wounded, and your heart must be broken for sin. O it were worth an ocean of tears to experience the loving gentleness of Christ's hand in drying them. Has God ever said of you, as he said of Ahab, "See how he humbles himself before me?" Search and ascertain if this good fruit is found in your soul.**

And what shall be said of FAITH? Truly is it the crowning grace of all, and a most costly and precious fruit of the renewed mind. From it springs every other grace of a gracious soul. It has been designated *the Queen grace*, because a royal train ever attends it. Faith comes not alone, nor dwells alone, nor works alone. Where faith in Jesus is, there also are love, and joy, and peace, and long-suffering, and patience, and godly sorrow, and every kindred perfection of the Christian character, all blending in the sweetest harmony, all uniting to celebrate the glory of God's grace, and to crown Jesus Lord of all. Is it, then, surprising that this should be distinguished from all the others by the term "precious faith?" No! that must needs be precious which unfolds the preciousness of every thing else. It makes the real gold more precious, and it transmutes everything else into gold. It looks to a "precious Christ." It leads to his "precious blood." It relies unqualifiedly on the "precious promises." And its very trial, though it be by fire, is "precious."

It so changes the nature of the painful, the humiliating, and the afflictive, as to turn the Father's frown, rebuke, and correction, into some of the costliest mercies of life. Precious grace that bids me look upon God in Christ as reconciled; and which, in the absence of all, evidence of sight, invites me to rest upon the veracity of God!—which takes me in my deepest poverty to Jesus, my true Joseph, having in his hands, and at his disposal, all the treasures of grace and glory! These are some of the characteristics of this royal grace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." By faith I can not only say that Jesus died for sinners, but that he died for me. Faith makes the great atonement mine. *Faith appropriates to itself all that is in Christ.* It lays its hand upon the covenant of grace, and exclaims, "All things are mine." Oh! to see one bowed to the dust under a sense of sin, yet by faith traveling to the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus for salvation, and finding it too—to mark the power of this grace in sustaining the soul in deep waters, holding it up in perilous paths—is a spectacle on which God Himself must look down with ineffable delight.

The *application* of this truth, reader, must be to your conscience—"Do you believe in the Soil of God?" Have you "like precious faith" with that which we have attempted to describe? Alas! it may be that you are that tree which does not bring forth this good fruit. Yours may be a species of fruit somewhat resembling it; but do not be deceived in a matter so momentous as this. "You believe there is one God—you do well, the devils also believe, and tremble." That is, you assent to the first proposition of true religion—the being of God; this is well, because your judgment assents to that which is true. And still you

have not gone beyond the faith of demons! They believe, and yet horror inconceivable is but the effect of the forced assent of their minds to the truth—they "tremble." O look well to your faith! There must be in true faith, not only an *intellectual assent*, but also a *heart consent*. In believing to the saving of the soul, we not only assent to the truth of the word, but we also consent to take Christ as he is there set forth—the sinner's reconciliation with God. A mere intellectual illumination, or a historical belief of the facts of the Bible, will never place the soul beyond the reach of hell, nor within the region of heaven. There is a "form of knowledge," as well as a "form of godliness;" and both existing apart from vital religion in the soul, constitute a "vain religion."

Again we press upon you the important inquiry; Have you the "faith of God's elect?" Is it the faith that has stained the glory of 'merit', and laid the 'pride of intellect' in the dust? Is it rooted in Christ? Has it transformed you, in some degree, into the opposite of what you once were? Are any of the "precious fruits" of the Spirit put forth in your life? Is Jesus precious to your soul? And to walk in all circumstances humbly with God, is it the earnest desire of your heart? If there is no sorrow for sin, no going out of yourself to Jesus, no fruits of holiness, in some degree, appearing, then is yours but a "dead faith." Dead, because it is a part and parcel of a nature dead in trespasses and in sins—dead, because it is not the *fruit* of the quickening Spirit; dead, because it is *inoperative*, even as the lifeless root transmits no vitality and moisture to the tree—dead, because it never can bring you to eternal life. Of what value, then, is it? Cut it down! why does it cumber the ground? If, then, you have never brought forth the good fruit of prayer, and repentance, and faith, you are yet in the old nature of sin, of rebellion, and of death.

We are now conducted to a truly solemn branch of the subject under discussion: namely, **THE IMMINENT DANGER TO WHICH AN UNCONVERTED STATE IS EXPOSED.** "And now also behold the axe is laid unto the root of the tree: therefore every tree which does not bring forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Here is an unequivocal declaration of the over hanging judgment of Christless souls. "Their damnation slumbers not." It is "ready to be revealed." It is not that such a state is advancing to a judgment, so much as its closest proximity to that judgment, that constitutes the most solemn feature. Were you to repair to an adjacent plantation, and observe the woodman's axe lying by the side of some lifeless oak, you would naturally conclude—"here is the preparation for removal; its doom is fixed; the axe is laid at its root;" and you would naturally

**expect soon to see it level with the earth. You are that dead "tree that brings not forth good fruit!" At the root of your dead faith, and lifeless profession, and impenitent, prayerless, godless, Christless life, the axe of divine judgment is lying, ready to fell you to the ground. There it lies, waiting but the lifted hand of Justice, at the command of the long-suffering, but sin-avenging God—"Cut it down!" "Their judgment now of a long time lingers not." For a long time that judgment has been in abeyance—O how long!—but now it "lingers not."**

**Behold, "now also the axe is laid." And laid where? Not at the withered, fruitless branches merely; these, indeed, the Lord often severs. He removes gospel privileges, or withdraws great mercies, or cuts off peculiar and choice blessings; sickness, bereavement, reverses, enter the domestic circle, once bright and happy, throwing the pall of vacancy, of gloom, and of desolateness over all. In this way the Lord sometimes lays the axe at the pleasant branches of creature blessing and comfort, and they fall before our eye, leaving the heart bleeding, and brooding in gloomy loneliness over its loss. But the most alarming view of this truth is its personal relation to ourselves. The axe of God's judgment is lying at the root. In the due consideration of this fact, we lose sight of others, and concentrate all our thought and anxiety upon ourselves. It becomes now a truth of increased magnitude and solemnity; because no longer thinking of the branches which God has removed, or may yet remove from us, we are appalled by the irresistible conviction—"I must die! the axe is lying at the root."**

**Ah! this is the most calamitous of all divine judgments. This is the climax of horrors! This is the filling to the brim of the cup of woe. The loss of wife, or children, or property, or health, has often resulted in untold blessings to the loser. It has led him to seek and to find all that he had lost, and infinitely more, in Christ. The Eternal Spirit has made it the means and the occasion of his conversion to God. And thus while he has mourned in bitterness the severance of the pleasant branches, he has rejoiced with a joy unspeakable, in the mercy that has spared, and in the grace that has quickened, the root. And is it so, that the beloved of our hearts must die before we can live? Must bough after bough of fragrant blossom, and of pleasant fruit, be severed, before we are led to give to God our hearts and to Christ our service? Must the idol be crumbled, and its shrine be broken down, before the Holy Spirit enters to re-create, renew, and occupy us for himself? Yes, mourning reader, it is often so! "For us they languish, and for us they die."**

O happy for you, if now the vacant niche in your heart is filled by him who indeed "died for us, that we might live through him." Yes, judgment is suspended over the fruitless tree. The axe is lying at the root. And when a man loses himself, it is the direst loss of all. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world; and lose his own soul?" And what matter if a man lose all that the world esteems good, if yet he himself is found in Christ! He may lose all, and yet save himself. Ah! better that every branch, and leaf, and blossom should die, than that the root should be forever destroyed.

The periods at which the state of human probation ceases, are various. We often behold the young fall suddenly before the axe of death. The spectacle is peculiarly affecting; awfully so, if there is no hope! Picture it to your mind. The sun had scarcely risen before it set. It went down while it was yet day. The morning of life had just dawned, gilding the horizon with the golden hues of promise, when lo! the night of the grave drew rapidly on, and quenched all in darkness! There were health and beauty, vivacity and vigor. Hope predicted, and the world promised, much. A thousand avenues proffered to guide the youthful traveler to the sphere of happiness. The morning rejoiced over his head, and everything around him wore a smiling appearance. He traversed the newborn world, now bursting into beauty upon his view, cropping the unblown flower, and drinking the untasted spring. With spirits buoyant as the morning air, health blooming on his cheek, genius sparkling in his eye, visions of bliss floating before his imagination, he set out upon the journey of life. But the axe is at the root! It rises—it strikes—and in a moment the "strong staff is broken, and the beautiful rod!" Fearful, if on that tree "no good fruit" were found! Happy, if early ripe for heaven!

Such a one I knew. Nature had cast him in her finest mold. Possessed of a form of exquisite symmetry, a countenance penciled with lines of perfect beauty and mirroring the greatness of his soul, art in her noblest chiselings never embodied the idea of a more perfect man. Learning enriched his mind; travel added to his rich stores of thought and information, and heightened the polish and the grace of his address; a poetic genius, perfectly classic, imparted an indescribable tenderness and delicacy to his sentiments; while religion, heaven-born religion, threw its sanctity and its charm over all. On his return from mingling amid the classic scenes of Homer and of Virgil, and the yet more thrilling and hallowed scenes of Christ and of his apostles, he was invested with the holy office of the Christian ministry. In its sacred duties he was permitted for a while to engage; admiring multitudes hanging on the lips that spoke so eloquently of Christ and of his cross. But fell disease was

insidiously feeding at the root of this beautiful cedar of Lebanon; and when life was the sweetest and the brightest, and hope spoke most flatteringly to his ear; and when, from the precious stores of thought and sentiment, his fascinating voice flung their treasures the most lavishly around him, at that moment he sickened, and drooped, and died! The skillful hand of affection has reared a splendid monument to his memory, the materials of which his own richly furnished mind had supplied. But his true and imperishable record is on high.

But why recall the memory of the young and the beautiful who have passed away? To give, if possible, increased force and solemnity to the exhortation which the Holy Spirit addresses to the young, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth." Remember Him who created you, and who created you for his glory—who fashioned your form, and who endowed your mind, and who placed you in your present position in life, be it of rank and influence, or of lowliness and obscurity. Remember him as a holy, sin-hating God, and that you stand to Him in the relation of a fallen creature, impure and unrighteous, impotent and hostile, *unworthy to live, unfit to die*.

Remember what He must have done, and what He must do for you if ever that relation is changed, and you become a new creature, an adopted child, an heir of glory. Remember the strong and inalienable claims which He has upon you—claims which He will never relax nor revoke. He who commanded the first of the ripe fruits, and animals of the first year, to be offered to Him, bids you remember Him in the days of your youth!—your first days, and your best, while the body is in health, and the mind is vigorous, and all the faculties of the soul fit you especially for His service and His glory. Oh remember Him now, before other things and other objects come and occupy the place which belongs to God alone. Remember your breath is in His hands; that the axe of judgment is lying at the root of the green tree as well as the dry, that the blooming flower and the young sapling are often cut down long before the stately cedar or venerable oak bows itself to the earth. Build not upon length of days—plume not yourself with the laurels which profound learning, or brilliant talent, or successful enterprise may already have won for you. *See how soon they fade upon the brow which they adorn!* Think of Kirke White, and of Spencer, and of Urquhart, and of M'cheyne, and of Taylor, and of Swaine, and of Griffin—those beautiful cedars of God's Lebanon, how verdant and how fragrant were the honors which went down with them to the tomb! But they early lived in the Lord, and unreservedly for the Lord—and *the Lord took them early to live with himself forever*. They gave to Him the first

and the best, and He took them the first to glory, and has given them the best of glory. Who would not live and die as did they?

"It matters little at what hour of the day  
The righteous fall asleep. Death cannot come  
To those untimely, who are fit to die.  
The less of this cold world, the more of heaven,  
The briefer life, the earlier immortality."

Build, then, on nothing beneath the sky except an immediate and undoubted interest in Christ. Until you are born again, you are in peril; until God possesses your heart, as to any real holiness, and usefulness, and happiness, your life is a perfect blank. You live to yourself; and not to live to Him who created you, who upholds you, and who will soon judge you—is a poor life indeed. O give to Christ the golden period of your life! Bind the early sacrifice upon the altar. Lay upon it the first fruits—Jesus is worthy of your young affections, and of the earliest development of your mind. *O what a treasure is Christ!* To begin life with Christ in the heart, is to begin with a radiant morning—the sure prelude of a smiling day, and of a cloudless evening!

Others are cut down in the meridian of life. With them, the romance of youth is past; the ideal has vanished, succeeded by the *sober reality*. Immersed in its cares, entangled with its perplexities, or eager of its gains, its honors, and its pleasures, they heed not the sun's altitude; they watch not how far it has declined upon the dial of human life, and how near its setting is! With noiseless wing, time pursues its flight, and borne imperceptibly along upon the rapid current of human affairs, they realize not that they were born and are destined for another world, until they touch its confines!

"And while the scene on either side  
Presents a gaudy, flattering show,  
They gaze, in fond amusement lost,  
Nor think to what a world they go."

A few, and but a few, are spared to the winter of old age. The fruitless tree of many years, and of long and unwearied culture, is permitted to stand as a monument of God's tireless patience. The tints of autumn are upon its once green foliage, and its branches are withered and decayed. Long has God waited for the good fruit, but none has appeared. He has looked year after year, but has looked in vain. Judgment and mercy have been sent, and both

have alike proved ineffectual. No alarm, no seriousness, no reflection, no repentance, no prayer, have given evidence that within the man there dwelt a living soul. God has smitten, but he has not returned; God has smiled, but he has not loved! Oh where is there a spectacle in human life more awful and affecting than a fruitless, unconverted aged person? To see the hoary head found in the way of unrighteousness, worldliness, carnality, frivolity, hardness of heart and unbelief; instead of spirituality and sobriety, contrition and faith, is melancholy indeed. There is a worldly old age, and a sensual old age, and a frivolous old age, and a skeptical old age, and an impenitent old age.

And there is, on the other hand, a heavenly-minded old age, and a verdant, fruitful old age, and a happy old age! Dear aged reader, which is yours? You are approaching the end of all earthly things; you stand upon the borders of the invisible world; soon its tremendous realities will open upon you: this may be the last appeal; the grasp of death may be near you now, and mercy may be about to utter her eternal farewell. My heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved, even at the eleventh hour.

And O, should there appear, even now, in the exercise of God's rich and sovereign grace, the puttings forth of godly sorrow, and the buddings of precious faith in your soul—if now, at even-tide, it should be light—"your light rising in obscurity, and your darkness as the noon-day"—then, remember for your encouragement, the laborers who were welcomed into the vineyard at the eleventh hour; and think of the expiring malefactor, who, amid the very pangs of dissolving nature, and when his spirit trembled on the verge of eternity, uttered his cry for mercy, in penitence and faith, and was heard, and was forgiven, and was received up into glory—and press the truth to your heart, that yet there is hope for you!

And what is THE FINAL END of the "tree that bears no good fruit?" It is "hewn down and cast into the fire." Even as a tree marked for judgment, it is "hewn down." Sometimes it is by a gradual process of decay, long wasting disease bringing down the sinner to the grave. At other times it is sudden—a single stroke lays him low. "His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." All his 'thoughts' of long life, his 'thoughts' of worldly acquisition, his 'thoughts' of human fame, his 'thoughts' of domestic happiness, "in that very day his thoughts perish." A slight pressure upon the brain, a single pulse ceasing at the heart, a few moments' suspension of air, and the soul is gone, in the twinkling of an eye—gone to meet its God! The fruitless tree is hewn down!

**AND WHAT FOLLOWS? Shall we lift the veil? Christ has done it. "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." O horror of horrors! O death of deaths! There they lie! They roll in billows of flame! They gnaw their chains in agony! They torment each other! They reproach themselves! They call for water! They shriek in despair! They blaspheme God! They invoke names once dear to them! They stretch out their hands! They sink, deeper, and deeper, and deeper, exclaiming, "This worm, this flame, this agony, forever—FOREVER!" Reader, there is a HELL! It is written—ah! and it is written with the pen of heaven—"The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment." It is not the eternal sleep of the infidel—that is a dream. It is not the annihilation of the universalist—that is a lie. It is the Hell of fearful torments which the BIBLE reveals just as clearly as the heaven of ineffable delight. Yes, there is a HELL. Every moment its door opens and shuts upon some Christless sinner, entering to return no more—forever. "And now the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Eternal ages of torment will produce no alleviation and no change. "If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall be"—and that to all ETERNITY. Reader, you must be cut down, either by the sword of God's Spirit, or by the axe of God's judgment. Which?**

**Many will read these pages to whom this awful character will not apply. They are "trees of righteousness, of the Lord's own right hand planting." Removed from the wilderness of unrenewed nature, sovereign grace has placed you in the Lord's garden; if this be so, then upon you rests the high obligation to aim after much fruitfulness. Do not be satisfied with the low standard of the day. We are surrounded by a worldly, time-serving, man-pleasing, temporizing profession of Christianity. Many are dead while they live. There are the *leaves of Christian profession*, but where are the fruits of the Spirit? Rise superior to this standard, and dare to be singular for the Lord. Remember that Christ is your "Green Fir Tree from whom is your fruit found." *All contrition for sin flows from a sight of his cross; all obedience to his commands, from a sense of his love; all victory over temptation, from the power of his grace; and all consolation in sorrow, from the sympathy of his heart.***

**Perhaps you are bearing fruit in the midst of deep trial. Ah! never were you, it may be, so fruitful as now! Your Father never saw his image in you so fairly reflected—Jesus never saw his grace in you so triumphant—the Spirit never beheld his work so evident in your soul as now. You are bringing forth much**

precious fruit beneath the pruning hand of the heavenly Husbandman. Come, then, and rest your weary spirit—and satiate your hungry soul under the "Green Fir Tree." Listen how sweetly he invites you—"I am like a green fir tree; from me is your fruit found." You are one with that Tree, if you are a living branch. You are invited to come and partake of its fruit, and to sit down under its shadow. Its leaves are for your healing, its fruit is for your nourishing, its branches are for your refreshing. All that Christ is, belongs to you.

He is the Green Fir Tree—"the same yesterday, and today, and forever." No circumstance and no event can possibly effect any change in him. All that he ever was, as portrayed in the word, he is now, and will continue to be. His word is faithful, his truth is firm, his love is unchangeable. Jesus is the EVER GREEN—others may change, but he, never! He remains the same rich, loving, kind, true, and precious Brother, Friend, and Savior; when the frosts and the snows of wintry adversity have congealed every spring, and have mantled with gloom every object of creature good. Repair to him when you may, you will find him the Green Fir Tree—always the same. May the sentiments of the sweet poet be those of every reader!

"Sweet is the voice which now invites,  
And bids me shelter take  
In Christ, the living Tree, whose leaves  
No storms shall ever shake."

"Under his shade I would abide,  
And there your love, dear Lord,  
Shall, to this weary heart of mine,  
Rich stores of peace afford."

"With him my life is hid in God,  
From him my fruit is found;  
Can anything, then, tear me from his love,  
Can anything my hope confound?"

"Ah, no! he is the 'Green Fir Tree,'  
Firm as the rock he stands;  
Our hope as firm—to him we're bound  
By love's electing bands."

**"When they who 'neath his shade do dwell,  
As corn revive shall they,  
Like lily and the vine shall grow,  
But not like them decay."**

**"But like unto Mount Lebanon,  
They shall their branches spread;  
And sweetest fragrance breathe through Christ,  
Their life, their rest, their head."**

### **"Broken Cisterns"**

**"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." Jeremiah 2:13**

**Sin has created a deep and an agonizing void in the soul of man. There was a period—Oh that its joys should now be enshrouded in a cloud so dark!—when every affection and aspiration of the human mind soared towards, and centered in, God. Possessing a nature assimilating with the Divine nature, and a heart capable of loving God with a compass and a grasp of affection worthy of its object—dwelling near the habitation of His holiness, and holding the closest communion with Him in all the privacy of his walk, man sought and desired no other happiness than that which flowed from God, the "Fountain of living waters." God was in all his mercies, and all his mercies led him to God.**

**But a woeful change has taken place. A fearful chasm has followed. The moment sin invaded paradise, touching with its deadly taint this glorious and happy creature, he swerved from the center of his repose, and becoming sensible of an instantaneous loss, his restless and craving soul went in quest of a substitute to occupy the void which his guilt had created. In a word, he forsook the Fountain for the cistern, the Creator for the creature; and God, in return, abandoned him to all the dire consequences of so foolish and so fatal an exchange. To the contemplation of this state, as it is portrayed in the history of the unrenewed mind, let us now bend our thoughts, gathering from it those lessons of wisdom which it is, so eminently calculated to supply.**

**The first great truth that meets us is, God's figurative revelation of Himself—**

**"Me, the Fountain of living waters." Do we predicate this of the FATHER? Then, here is a truth which, for its vastness and its preciousness, is surpassed by no other. It meets a phase of Christian experience not often glanced at. We allude to the secret tendency which there is in us to a partiality in our estimate of the cost of redemption. There is a proneness to keep out of sight the interest which the Father took in the salvation of His church; and to look upon the work of the Son as though it originated and purchased all the love, and the benevolence, and the allurings which God the Father is represented as manifesting towards his revolted but recovered family. You have studied but imperfectly the wonders of redemption—have but partially seen its glories—with shallow line have fathomed its depth—and with feeble pinion have soared to its height, if you have not been accustomed to associate the Father's purpose of grace and love with every step which the Son took in working out the recovery of a lost church.**

**So wont are we to fix our admiring and adoring gaze upon the incarnate Son—so wont to entwine our exclusive affection around him who for us 'loved not his life unto the death,' as to come short of the stupendous and animating truth, that all the love, grace, and wisdom which appear so conspicuous and so resplendent in salvation, have their fountain-head in the heart of God the Father! May we not trace to the holding of this partial view, those hard and injurious thoughts of his character, and those crude and gloomy interpretations of his government, which so many of us bear towards him? And was it not this contracted and shadowy conception of the Father which Jesus so pointedly, yet so gently rebuked in his disciple, "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know him and have seen him." To this, his incredulous disciple still objected, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? He that has seen me, has seen the Father; how do you say then, Show us the Father?"**

**What further testimony, and what more conclusive proof need we? "He that has seen me, has seen the Father." Do we see the glory of Jesus beaming through the attempted concealment of his humanity?—it is the glory of the Father shining. Do we follow Jesus in his walks of mercy, and behold him lavishing the exuberance of his tenderness and sympathy upon the objects of misery and want who thronged his way?—strange though it may seem, yet, in those displays of love, and in those meltings of compassion, and in that voice of mercy, and in those tears of sympathy, we see and hear the Father himself. Do we contemplate the love of Jesus, laborings, suffering, dying?—we see the**

**Father's love in equal vastness, strength, and intensity. He that has thus seen the Son, has also seen the Father.**

**Would we breathe a syllable, or pen a line, tending to lessen your attachment to the Son? God forbid! Rather would we heighten your love, and elevate it to a standard never reached before. We claim for Christ your highest admiration and your supreme affection; and unhesitatingly declare, that there is not an object in the universe so worthy of them as he. But we are jealous for the Father's glory; and we wish to guide you through the channel to the Fountain from where it flows—even the eternal purpose, the everlasting love, the covenant mercy of God the Father. Here is the grand secret revealed of God, so loving to the world. His love originated the salvation of His Church—the salvation of the Church did not originate His love. Think not, then, that the work of Jesus was the procuring cause of God's love to sinners! O no! You do him great injustice and wrong if so you interpret his affection. He loved the Church long before He sent His Son from His bosom to die for it. There was the love, thirsting, panting, and longing for an outlet, and only finding it through the riven bosom of Jesus. Oh! to see that every step which Jesus took to work out our redemption from the curse, was in perfect harmony with the purpose, the mind, and the heart of the Father! He could, with all truth, say, as he travailed in soul, "I and my Father are one." "I do always those things which please him." "The Father that dwells in me, he does the works." "I am in the Father, and the Father in me."**

**Behold, then, the Fountain of living waters! The infinite, the eternal, and inexhaustible Fountain—the Father's love! Do you now marvel at redemption? Do you now wonder at His unspeakable gift? The mystery is explained in the Father's love. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Learn, dear Christian reader, to entwine the Father in the affections that cluster around the Son. Eternally welled in His infinite heart, was the love which constrained Him not to spare His own Son, that He might spare you. Give to him an equal place in your thoughts, your affections, your worship, and your service. Blend him with every view which you take of Jesus. Associate His love who gave, with every hallowed remembrance of his love who was given. And when you see the heart of the Son broken with sorrow, think that it "pleased Jehovah to bruise him and to put him to grief" for the love which He bore the Church. Behold what a fountain of life is God! All intelligences, from the highest angel in**

heaven, to the lowest creature on earth, drawing every breath of their existence from Him. "In Him we live and move and have our being."

But he is more than this to the Church. He is the Fountain of love as well as of life. The spirits of "just men made perfect," and the redeemed on earth, satiate their thirsty souls at the overflowing fulness of the Father's love. How much do we need this truth! What stinted views, unjust conceptions, and wrong interpretations have we cherished of Him, simply because we overlook His character as the Fountain of living waters. We "limit the Holy One of Israel." We judge of him by our poor, narrow conception of things. We think that He is such a one as we ourselves are. We forget in our approaches, that we are coming to an Infinite Fountain. That the heavier the demand we make upon God, the more we shall receive, and that the oftener we come, the more are we welcome. That we cannot ask too much. That our sin, and His dishonor, are, that we ask so little. We forget that He is glorified in giving; and that the more grace He metes out to his people, the richer the revenue of praise which He receives in return. How worthy of such an infinite Fountain of love and grace is His "Unspeakable Gift!" It came from a large heart; and the heart that gave Jesus will withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly.

The same figure will apply with equal truth to the LORD JESUS CHRIST. It is a most expressive one. He thus appropriates it to himself—"Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And in another place he describes the water which he gives, as "living water." Jesus is essential life. But he possesses also mediatorial life, held in covenant for his people. To this life he alludes in these words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and those who hear shall live. For as the Father has life in himself; so has he given to the Son to have life in himself." Thus clear is it, that Jesus is the "Fountain of living waters." What moral death is in the soul of man until he drinks of this living water! We cannot, nor dare we, close our eyes to the truth, such are the precious interests at stake. The soul of man, as to everything that is holy and spiritual, is spiritually dead. His professed faith, and works, and prayers, and religion are dead. All he does while in an unrenewed state, springs from death. He may be powerfully operated upon by a kind of religious galvanism. There may be apparent alarm, and conviction, and excitement, under the preaching of the truth, and solemn providences; and yet (to illustrate his condition by a more scriptural figure), like the bones in Ezekiel's vision, though there may be a shaking, and the outward covering

of skin and flesh, yet "there is no breath." "Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." It is by the quickening of the Spirit alone, that he becomes a, living soul.

**But what a Fountain of life is Jesus! The dead, on whose ear falls the sound of his voice, live. There is a grace in Christ—quickenings, regenerating, life-giving grace; and to whomsoever that grace is imparted, he that was lying cold and inanimate in the valley, begins to move, to live, to breathe, and to arise. One touch of Christ, a whisper of his voice, a breath of his Spirit, begets a life in the soul that never dies. That faint and feeble pulsation which often the most skillful touch can scarcely detect, is as deathless as the life of God! A stream from the Fountain of essential life has entered the soul, and it lives, and will live, a glorious life, running on parallel with God's eternity. What a Fountain of life is Jesus! Think of its limitlessness. There is the fulness of life in Christ. The grace that is welled in Jesus, is as infinite in its source as it is divine in its nature. "In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."**

**An uncreated fulness, it must possess an inexhaustible infinity. Had the Father deposited this life-giving grace in all the angels in heaven, it had long since been exhausted. Think of the myriads, thirsting for holiness and for happiness, who have knelt and slaked their thirst at this Fountain—think of the myriads who have here filled their empty vessels, and have gone away with joy and hope springing high in their minds. Think of the myriads whose sins his blood has washed away, whose souls his righteousness has clad, whose corruptions his grace has subdued, and whose sorrows his love has comforted. Think of the iniquities which he has pardoned; of the backslidings which he has healed; of the grief which he has removed; of the tears which he has dried; of the souls which he has saved. Think of the myriads, once drinking from the stream below, but who are now drinking from the Fountain-head in glory.**

**And yet is this Fountain as full as ever! Not one hair's-breadth has it sunk. Jesus is as full of pardoning grace for the guilty, and of justifying grace for the vile, and of sanctifying grace for the unworthy, as ever: full enough to meet the needs of every poor, thirsty, panting soul who ventures near. Oh, what a precious truth is this! Precious indeed to him who feels his insufficiency, poverty, and need. What, reader, is your need? what your sorrow? what your trial? what your infirmity? what your burden? Whatever it may be, repair with it to the Fountain of living waters, and despair not of a gracious welcome, and of an adequate supply. It is a Fountain, and a living Fountain. It needs no**

**persuasion to flow, for it flows spontaneously; and wherever it flows there is life.**

**This reminds us of its freeness. The grace that is in Christ Jesus must, from its very nature, be unpurchasable. It implies absolute poverty in the creature, and infinite affluence in God. Could it, by any possibility, be purchased, it would cease to be what it now is, the "grace of God." Because it is so great, so rich, and so infinite, God has made it as free as the sun-light and the air. Nothing can procure it. Tears cannot—convictions cannot—faith cannot—obedience cannot—prayer cannot—yes, not even can the most costly work of God's Spirit in the soul procure a drop of this "living water." God gives it, and he gives it, as the word implies, freely. This is its glory—it is an unpurchasable, and a freely bestowed gift. Upon no other terms is it granted. Consequently, no condition of human character, and no case of human guilt, are excluded. The vilest of the vile, the poor insolvent sinner, the needy, the wretched, the penniless, the voice of free grace welcomes to the "living waters."**

**What has kept you so long from this fountain? You have thirsted, and panted, and desired; but still your soul has not been replenished. You have, perhaps, long been seeking the Lord, asking the way, and desiring salvation. Why have you not found him? You have borne the heavy burden of sin, month after month, and year after year, knowing nothing of a sense of pardon, of acceptance, of adoption, of rest. And why? Because you have stumbled at the freeness of the gift. You have expected to receive it as a saint, not seeing that God will only give it to you as a sinner. But hear the word of the Lord: "By grace are you saved;" "Redeemed without money;" "Nothing to pay;" "Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." O receive into your heart this truth, and you will be a happy man! All creation will seem to smile upon you—the heavens will smile—the earth will smile—yes, God himself will smile. Dropping its chain, your emancipated soul will spring into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. What sovereignty, sweetness, and glory will now appear in the very act that forgives all, forgets all, and which introduces you into a new world, redolent of joy and delight. And while this precious fountain of grace and love, proceeding from the overflowing heart of the Savior, thus flows, you will exclaim, "My soul is caught, Heaven's sovereign blessings clustering from the cross, Rush on her in a throng, and close her round, The prisoner of amaze."**

**One other quality of the life-giving water of grace yet remains to be noticed—**

we allude to ITS SATISFYING NATURE. Can this be affirmed of any other bliss? Is this an ingredient in the thousand cups of creature good which men so eagerly put to their lips? Select your choicest, fondest, sweetest, temporal mercy, and say, is it satisfying to your soul? Does it, in its fullest enjoyment, leave no lack unsupplied, no desire unmet, no void unfilled? Does it meet the cravings of the mind? Go into the garden of creature blessing, and pluck the loveliest flower, and taste the sweetest fruit; repair to the cabinet of friendship, and select from thence its choicest pear; pass round the wide circle of earth-born joy, and place your hand upon the chief and the best—is it the feeling of your heart, and the language of your lips—"I am satisfied, I want no more?" Does it quench the spirit's thirst: does it soothe the heart's sorrow; does it meet the mind's cravings; does it quiet the troubled conscience, and lift the burden from the aching heart? O no! The height, the depth, the length, the breadth, exclaim, "It is not in me—am I in God's stead?"

But how blessed is that which truly satisfies! Listen to the gracious words of the Savior. "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Did language ever utter a sentiment more true than this! Jesus is an all-satisfying portion. They who have tried him can testify that it is so. His is not a satisfaction in name, but in reality and in truth. There is a felt, a realized sense of holy satiety. The MIND is content. The believer wanders no more in quest of happiness or of rest. He has found them both in Jesus. He is satisfied to stake his eternal all upon the finished work of Emmanuel—to live upon his smile, to abide in his love, to draw upon his grace, to submit to his will, to bear his cross, to be guided by his counsel, and afterwards to be received by him, and to him, into glory. "Whom have I in heaven but you? and who is there upon earth that I desire beside you?" "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise," —are the breathings of his adoring, loving, fixed heart.

Who that has fully received Christ into his heart, finds that heart sighing to return again to the bondage and the flesh-pots of Egypt? No man, having tasted of the old wine of God's everlasting love in Jesus, desires the new wine of the world's ever-changing joys. Satisfied with what he has through grace thus found, he exclaims, "The old is better." The Lord Jesus imparts contentment to the soul in which he enters and dwells. Vast as were those desires before, urgent as were those necessities, insatiable as were those cravings, and restless as was that mind, Jesus has met and satisfied them all. The magnetic power of his love has attracted to, and fixed the mind upon,

himself. "He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." The believer is satisfied that God should possess him fully, and govern him supremely, and guide him entirely, and be the sole Fountain from where he draws his happiness, gratefully acknowledging, "All my springs are in You." Thus is he content to be just what, and just where, his Father would have him. He is satisfied that he possesses God, and that possessing God, he has all good in God. He knows that his Father cares for him; that he has undertaken to guide all his steps, and to provide for all his needs. The only anxiety which he feels as to the, present, is, how he may the most glorify his dearest, his only Friend, casting the future on Him in the simplicity of child-like faith, which has "No care a day beyond today; No thought about tomorrow.

Nor is the satisfaction thus felt limited to the present state. It passes on with the believer to eternity. It enters with him into the mansions of bliss. There, in unruffled serenity, in unalloyed joy, in unmingled bliss, it is perfect and complete. "You will show me the path of life: in your presence is fulness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Happy saint! who have found your all in Jesus! Glorified spirit! would we recall you to these scenes of sin, of suffering, and of death? No! the needle of your soul no longer varies and trembles, diverted from its center by other and treacherous objects—Jesus fixes it now, and fixes it forever. Drink on, you spirits of the just made perfect, drink! "O Naphtali! satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord, possess you the west and the south." Yes, range the entire compass of infinite good, for all things in God, in Christ, and in the covenant, are yours, and yours to all eternity!

But man has his WRETCHED SUBSTITUTES for this "Fountain of living waters." This is the solemn charge which God here alleges against him. "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewn out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." There are three circles into which we will introduce the reader, each one affording evidence and illustration of the truth and nature of this charge. The first circle, perhaps the widest and the most melancholy, is, the circle of a self-righteous world. In no instance does the truth of this statement receive so affecting a confirmation as in this. What is the sad history of man in relation to this indictment? Has he not forsaken the righteousness of God, and sought a substitute in his own? What is man's own righteousness, the best that he ever made, but the hewing out of a created cistern, in the place of the infinite fountain? When Adam fell, he forsook God; and when expelled from paradise, he came out with a fig-leaf covering, a

wretched substitute for the beautiful robe which he had just cast aside, and a melancholy and expressive emblem and badge of his own shame, and of our ruin. It was then that the solemn charge was first laid at the door—of forsaking the Fountain for a cistern. And what a wretched cistern it is! See how contracted and how shallow!

In vain he "goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God." At every step he fails. "For the bed is shorter, than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower, than that he can wrap himself in it." His obedience, at best, must be but a partial and an imperfect one, and failing in a single point, entails eternal despair. "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." But not only is it a shallow and contracted, but it is also a "broken cistern." It can hold no water of life or of peace, of consolation or of joy. In vain his spirit, tormented with guilt and agitated with fear, repairs to it for satisfaction and repose—it supplies it not.

Let a man, for example, who is thus seeking salvation by the law, take the holiest day in the calendar of his life; let it be as free as it is possible for a fallen creature to make it from sin; let it be filled up with religious duties and services—it closes, and the curtains of night have drawn around him. Reposing on his pillow, he throws forward a glance into the eternal world—he thinks of the holy God, of the righteous law, of the solemn judgment, and the question, "What, if this night I should be summoned to stand before my Judge!—what, if tomorrow's sun should rise upon my corpse, and I, a departed spirit, should be mingling with the dread realities of an unseen world!"—and he trembles and turns pale. What! has not his best obedience, his holiest day, his strictest observance brought peace to his conscience and quietness to his soul? What! does no bright hope of glory play around his pillow, and no loving, peaceful view of God cradle him to rest? Ah, no! he has "forsaken the fountain of living waters, and has hewn him out a cistern, a broken cistern, that can hold no water," and his night closes in upon him hung with the drapery of hopeless gloom.

To you, reader, is this solemn word now sent. Ah! while your eye has been scanning this page, has there not been in your heart the secret conviction of its truth? You have forsaken the righteousness of God, and for years have been digging into the law, hoping thus to find in its strictest observance, some well-spring of life and peace to your soul. But all your toil has been in vain, and all your time mis-spent. And why? because, "by the works of the law shall no

man living be justified." And as true peace flows only through the channel of justification by faith, turning your back upon that channel, there is, there can be, no peace for your soul. O that this voice, now sounding in faithfulness in your ear, may awaken you to a sense of your delusion and your folly, and win you to the "good and the right way!" O that you may be persuaded to abandon the implements of a self-wrought righteousness, with which you have so long fruitlessly labored, and, just as you are—poor, guilty, vile, helpless, and hopeless—betake yourself to the "righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus!"

The law is a "broken cistern;" it holds no sweet waters of salvation, it gives out no streams of peace. But the Lord Jesus is the living fountain. He is the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes." He has "brought in a new and an everlasting righteousness" for the full justification of poor sinners, such as you. Abandon at once and forever the broken cistern of a creature righteousness—too long has it allured but to deceive you—and repair to the fountain of the Divine righteousness, which never has and never will deceive a believing sinner. Drink, O drink, from this life-giving fountain! Here are peace, joy, confidence, and hope. Clothed in this righteousness, you can look your sins in the face, and death in the face, and hell in the face, and fear nothing. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies."

We introduce the reader within another circle. In **THE UNRENEWED, UNGODLY WORLD**, what accumulated and melancholy evidence presents itself of man's abandonment of an infinite for a finite good—the fountain for the cistern! It matters not whether he is found in the intellectual, or in the sensual world, the world of science, or of sense; whether he drinks from the more refined, or the more polluted source—he has forsaken God, and has sought out some false and wretched substitute. Man is an inventive creature. And from the moment that he first turned away from the infinite source of happiness, until the present, he has been bent upon "finding out many inventions" of creature good. Not a day returns but it finds him still delving into the earth in quest of that which will quench the burning thirst of his soul. He formed the cistern, and lo! it proves a "broken cistern that can hold no water!"

The man of science has effected his ingenious discovery, the geometrician has solved his abstruse problem, the scholar has completed his production, the statesman has carried his measure, the warrior has gained his battle, the speculator has amassed his wealth, and the competitor has won his prize—are

they happy? Follow them into privacy, and behold them, when the fragrant incense of flattery, and the low murmur of applause, and the delirious excitement of success, and the burning flush of victory have, like a beautiful vision, passed away, and they are alone with themselves. Are they happy? Oh! that melancholy countenance, pale with thought—that deep-drawn sigh—that languid look—that restless pace—too painfully reveal that 'happiness'—that 'heaven-descending creature'—has not her home and her dwelling-place there!

And why do you marvel at this? They have committed two great sins—they have forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and have hewn out broken cisterns that can hold no water. Survey the daughter of worldly pleasure. She has retired from her evening fascinations to her couch of repose, intoxicated with the incense of adulation offered to her intelligence and her beauty. But the excitement evaporates, and the mind turns in upon itself—is she happy? Ask that heaving bosom—ask that aching head—ask that burning tear—ask that feverish restlessness—ask that sleepless pillow; each would exclaim—"It is not here!" And still do you wonder? Wonder not—she has forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and has hewn out a broken cistern that can hold no water.

Take the testimony of one who had ransacked the world of earthly good: "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." And what is the history of creature idolatry, but a mournful record of beautiful and inviting cisterns, which, nevertheless, God has destroyed? This is a wide and an affecting circle. We enter it cautiously, we allude to it feelingly and tenderly. We touch the subject with a pen that has often sought (though in much feebleness, it is acknowledged) to comfort the mourner, and to lift the pressure from the bowed-down spirit. We enter the domestic circle; oh! what beautiful cisterns of creature good, broken and empty, meet us here! The affectionate husband, the fond wife, the devoted parent, the pleasant child, the faithful friend, laid low in death. They were lovely cisterns, and the heart loved to drink from them its bliss. But lo! God has smitten, and they are broken, and the sweet waters have passed away! Was there not a worshiping of the creature rather than the Creator? Was not the object deified? Was not the attachment idolatrous? Did not the loved one occupy Christ's place in the heart? Ah! the wound, the void, the desolateness, the lonely grief of that heart, but too truly tell who was enthroned upon its strongest and its best affections.

**But we will seek an illustration of our subject from a narrower circle. Let us pass within the world of RELIGIOUS PROFESSION. What numerous and affecting proofs meet us here of the truth of God's solemn charge! Look at the false teaching of the day. What are the heretical doctrines which are now defended with such ability, and propagated with such zeal, but so many cisterns of error hewn out by man as substitutes for the fountain of revealed truth?—doctrines that sink revelation and exalt tradition, and so deny the word of God; that ascribe regenerating grace to sacraments, and so deny the Holy Spirit; that teach the "real presence" in the Lord's Supper, and so do away with the sacrifice and atonement of Christ; that make religion to consist in a mere observance of external rites, and so deceive and ruin immortal souls; that obliterate the revealed truth of future and eternal punishment, thus weakening the power and shading the glory of God's moral government. We hesitate not to say, that these, and their kindred heresies, are the inventions of man, and designed to beguile souls from the pure fountain of truth. They are cisterns of human contrivance, which hold no water but the water of death.**

**Shall we find nothing in the still smaller circle of the true Church of God which would seem to indicate a proneness to substitute some object in the experience of the believer for Christ? Verily, we think so. To adduce an example, alas! but too common—When the act of faith is substituted for the object of faith, what is this but the hewing out of a broken cistern? Whatever I put in Christ's place necessarily becomes a substitute for Christ. If I look to my faith for comfort, and peace, and evidence, instead of my faith looking to Christ for these, I exchange the Fountain for the cistern. We are now touching upon a truth of vital moment. Jesus is the fountain of all life, light, grace, and love to the believer. Faith is but the channel through which these blessings are received. And yet, who has not detected in his heart a tendency to look to faith for the evidence of his Christianity, instead of to Christ thus making the act of believing a substitute for the object in which we believe.**

**You have long been pleading, as your reason for the unsettled and unhappy state of your mind, the weakness of your faith. What, I ask, is this, but the making a Savior of your faith? It was not faith that died for you—it is not faith that saves you. It is Christ, and Christ alone. Your evidences, your peace, your joy, your hope, all, all must flow from Jesus. "You have made me glad through your work," was the Psalmist's experience. And your soul also will be made glad through the atoning, finished work of Christ. That you should have found faith a broken cistern of soul-comfort, should create in you no surprise.**

**The Lord is jealous for his glory—he will not give it to a creature, nor will he give it to a grace. Precious as that grace may be, it never can be a substitute for Christ's precious work. If by any means I exclude the sun from my garden, should I wonder that my seed did not germinate, and that my flowers did not appear, and that my plants drooped and died? Surely not. And if I veil the Sun of Righteousness from my soul, if some intervening object is allowed to arrest his beams, so that they fall not directly and warmly upon the "incorruptible seed" sown in my heart, need I wonder that it springs not forth in blossom, or that the blossom falls before it sets in fruit? But turn, O believer, from this broken cistern to Jesus the fountain. Draw your comfort, not from the channel, but from the source where it proceeds. Stumble no longer at the weakness of your faith. Turn your eye from every object but the Lord our Righteousness, in whom you may stand before God, the object of his love and delight.**

**Again, when we substitute spiritual frames and feelings for a simple resting on the Lord Jesus, we hew out broken cisterns that afford no true refreshment to the soul. These feelings are perpetually varying. The billows of the sea, and the winds of heaven, are not more restless, fluctuating, and uncertain. But if the mariner incessantly watches the heaving ocean, guiding his bark by its ever-changing undulations and currents, what progress towards his haven will he make? And you will make no advance in the divine life, if your eye is ever upon yourself instead of Christ. What though the experience of today is the opposite of the experience of yesterday—yesterday all brightness, today all cloudiness; yesterday your soul like a well-tuned harp, today every string loosed and uttering no melody; yesterday Jesus felt to be so near and precious, today seeming to awaken not a loving emotion in your heart; yesterday communion with God so sweet, today none whatever; yesterday desiring to walk uprightly, holily, and humbly, today detecting so much that is vacillating, weak, and vile;—nevertheless, Jesus is not changed.**

**The work of Christ is the same—your acceptance in him is the same—his intercession in heaven for you is the same; then why should you fly to spiritual experiences for support, strength, and consolation—rising when they rise, falling when they fall—when all your standing, joy, peace, and hope are entirely out of yourself, and are solely in Christ? What though you change a thousand times in one day? Jesus never changes. God may vary His dispensations; He may alter His mode of dealing—He may change the nature of His discipline—He may vary the lesson, but His loving-kindness and His truth are as unchangeable as His very being. He may dry up the earthly**

cistern, but He will never seal up the heavenly fountain; that will flow on in grace through all time, and In glory through all eternity.

And is it not an evil thing thus to have forsaken the Fountain of living waters? God speaks of it as involving two evils—the evil of forsaking Him, and the evil of substituting a false object of happiness for Him. "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me the Fountain of living waters, and they have hewn out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." We are now touching upon, perhaps, the most solemn and important part of this chapter—**THE SINFULNESS OF FORSAKING GOD, AND OF SUBSTITUTING SOMETHING ELSE FOR GOD.**

Dear reader, the true painfulness of this subject consists not in the sorrow which your heart may have felt in seeing your cistern broken. Ah no! the true agony should be, that you have, in your wanderings and creature idolatry, sinned, deeply sinned, against the Lord your God! This, and not your loss, ought to lay you low before Him. This, and not your broken scheme of earthly happiness, ought to fill you with the bitterness of sorrow, and clothe you with the drapery of woe. Oh! to have turned your back upon such a God, upon such a Father, upon such a Friend, and to have supposed that even a universe of creatures could have made you happy without Him, ought to bring you to His feet, exclaiming, "God be merciful to me the chief of sinners!" Is it no sin to say to God, as you have said a thousand times over—"I prefer myself to You—my family to You—my estate to You—my pleasure to You—my honor to You?" Is it no sin to have taken the gifts with which He endowed you, or the wealth with which He entrusted you, and forming them into a golden image, to have fallen down before it, exclaiming, "This is your God, O my soul!" O yes, it is a sin, the guilt and the greatness of which no language can describe.

There is coming a period, unconverted reader, when you will know it of a truth to be a sin. A dying bed! Ah yes! a **DYING BED!** the last cistern broken! the last joy fled! the last hope expired! And now, without God, and without Christ, and without hope! What! is there not one drop of your many earthly cisterns left to cool your spirit's burning? Have all your creature blessings fled, as if appalled by the horrors of the scene? Yes! all have fled, and have left you alone upon the dreary precincts of an eternal world! "Oh! how this eternity haunts me!" exclaimed a gay votary of worldly pleasure, the moment before her young, trembling spirit plunged into the dark and measureless abyss. "O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake you shall be ashamed, and

those who depart from you shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters."

And is it no sin, O believer in Jesus, to have turned away in your unbelief and inconstancy, from the glorious redemption which the Lord has obtained for you at such a price, and to have sought the assurance and the joy of your salvation from other sources than it? What! is not the atoning work of Jesus sufficient to give to your believing soul solid rest, and peace, and hope, but that you should have turned your eye from him, and have sought it in the polluted and broken cistern of self? O, slight not the precious blood, and the glorious righteousness, and the infinite fulness, and the tender love of Jesus thus! No! you dishonor this precious Jesus himself! Shall he have wrought such an obedience, shall he have made such an atonement, shall he have died such a death, shall he have risen and have ascended up on high, all to secure your full salvation and certain glory, and will you derive the evidence and the comfort of your acceptance from any other than this one precious source—"Looking unto Jesus!"

Look away, then, from everything—to Jesus. No matter what you are, look away from self—to Jesus. The more vile, the more empty, the more unworthy, the greater reason and the stronger argument wherefore you should look entirely off yourself—to Jesus. His atoning work is finished by him, and is sealed by the Father. It is impossible that God can reject you, entirely renouncing yourself, and fleeing unto Christ. Coming to Him in the name of Jesus, God cannot deny you. He has pledged Himself that whatever is asked in that name He will grant. Take Him at His word! Ask Him for the sense of His reconciled love—ask Him for the spirit of adoption—ask Him for the filial, loving, and obedient heart—ask Him for the meek, lowly, and submissive will. Yes, pour out your heart before Him: God waits to grant your utmost desire breathed out to Him in the name of Jesus. He has given you His beloved Son—O beneficence worthy of our God! O gift of gifts, priceless and precious beyond all thought!—what inferior blessing will He, then, withhold?

Allow, in closing this chapter, AN AFFECTIONATE EXHORTATION. Turn every loss of creature-good into an occasion of greater nearness to Christ. The dearest and loveliest creature is but a cistern—an inferior and contracted good. If it contains any sweetness, the Lord put it there. If it is a medium of any blessing to your soul, Jesus made it so. But forget not, beloved, it is only a cistern. And what more? Shall I wound you if I say it? Tenderly do I speak—and if, instead of leading you to, it draws you from, the Fountain, in unerring wisdom, and in tender mercy, and in faithful love, the Lord will break it, that

**you may learn, that while no creature can be a substitute for him, he himself can be a substitute for all creatures. Thus, his friendship, his love, and his presence, are frequently the sweetest and the most fully enjoyed, when he has taken all things else away. Jesus loves you far too much to allow another, however dear, to eclipse and rival him. "The day of the Lord will be upon all pleasant pictures," and then the poor, imperfect copy will retire, and give place to the divine and glorious Original; and God in Christ will be all in all.**

**One thought more—to some, perhaps, the sweetest in this work—the door of return is still open. The Fountain is still accessible! The waters of life still flow. "Ho! every one that thirsts, come to the waters and drink." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." "Return, backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, says the Lord, and will not keep anger forever." Let your restored heart respond, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he has torn, and he will heal us; he has smitten, and he will bind us up."**

**Be your posture, in view of the cisterns which the Lord has broken around you, one of high and holy expectation. The Lord often removes one mercy, preparatory to the bestowment of another. And he never gives less, but always more, than he takes away. You may have thought, in the depth of your heart's deep sorrow, that your wound was incurable, and that your blessing could not be replaced. But, ah! if Jesus now enters your heart through the breach which his own hand has made, and occupies the vacancy which his own providence has created, then will you know of a truth, that there is One who can heal your wound, and replace your mercy, giving you back infinitely more than he took away, in giving you HIMSELF.**

**You have, in the matter of your sorrow, to do with One who himself was wounded, who himself was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and who well understands the language of grief, the meaning of sighs, and the eloquence of tears. Do you go to your lonely chamber to weep there, thinking none are mindful of your grief? You, too, may chant a song in the night of your woe, in the language of a suffering brother—**

**"There was I met by One who had himself  
Been hurt by the archers; in his side he bore,  
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scar.  
With gentle force, soliciting the task,  
He drew them forth, and healed and bade me live."**

**Who can tell what thoughts of peace, what resolves of mercy, and what purposes of grace and love, may now be treasured in the heart of God towards you? The present mournful dealing may be but the dark background of a beautiful picture—portraying the brightest, the holiest, the happiest period of your life. And this broken cistern of earth-born hope, over which the eye weeps, and around which memory loves so fondly to linger, may but give place to those waters of renewing, sanctifying grace, which shall be in you a springing-well, rising into everlasting life.**

**All things and all events point us to, and are leading us towards, eternity. O how we absorb in our present sufferings and light afflictions, the thought of the coming death—the coming grave—the coming judgment—the coming heaven—the coming hell! Our sojourn here is but brief. We flit away like the shadow across the sun-dial. We weep today, we are wept for tomorrow. Today we are toiling, and fighting, and suffering; and anon, if believers in Jesus, we are with him, and "are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel."**

**Then, let us "gird up the loins of our minds, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Christ will soon appear in the clouds of heaven. "The coming of the Lord draws near." "The Lord is at hand." Let us hew out no more cisterns of earthly good; but following the stream of the Lord's love—deepening and widening as it ascends—let us rise to the fountain-head in glory, having our conversation in heaven, and our affections on things above, where Christ sits—and from where he will come again at the right hand of God. "Drink, yes drink abundantly, O beloved!" of this river, is your Lord's loving invitation. You cannot take to it too many vessels, nor vessels too empty. The precious "fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem," is "for sin and uncleanness." Then, as sinners, plunge into it, "wash and be clean."**

**Think not that you are alone in your grief at cisterns of creature-good thus broken. A 'cloud of witnesses' surrounds you, all testifying that the 'fleeting joy of earth' gives place to the full and permanent bliss of heaven; that Jesus**

now turns his people's sorrow into joy, by the sustaining power of faith, and the sweet-discoveries of love; and that he will perfect that joy when he brings them to drink of the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." May sanctified sorrow enable you to sing, as one has done before you,

"O Savior! whose mercy, severe in its kindness,  
Has chastened my wanderings, and guided my way,  
Adored be the power which illumined my blindness,  
And weaned me from phantoms that smiled to betray."

"Enchanted with all that was dazzling and fair,  
I followed the rainbow—I caught at the toy,  
And still in displeasure, your goodness was there,

Disappointing the hope, and defeating the joy."

"The blossom blushed bright, but a worm was below;  
The moonlight shone fair—there was blight in the beam;  
Sweet whispered the breeze, but it whispered of woe;  
And bitterly flowed in the soft flowing stream."

"So cured of my folly, yet cured but in part,  
I turned to the refuge your pity displayed;  
And still did this eager and credulous heart  
Weave visions of promise, that bloomed but to fade."

"I thought that the course of the pilgrim to heaven  
Would be bright as the summer, and glad as the morn;  
You showed me the path—it was dark and uneven  
All rugged with rock, and all tangled with thorn."

"I dreamed of celestial rewards and renown;  
I grasped at the triumph which blesses the brave;  
I asked for the palm-branch, the robe, and the crown;  
I asked—and you showed me a cross and a grave."

"Subdued and instructed, at length, to your will,  
My hopes and my longings I sincerely would resign;  
O give me the heart that can wait and be still,  
Nor know of a wish or a pleasure but Thine!"

**There are mansions exempted from sin and from woe,  
But they stand in a region by mortals untrod  
There are rivers of joy, but they roll not below;  
There is rest, but it dwells in the presence of God."  
—Robert Grant**

## **"The Coming of the Lord in its Relation to Nominal Christianity"**

**"Our lamps have gone out." Matthew 25:8**

**It is a distinguishing feature of the word of God that it is a record of stupendous and authenticated facts—a revelation of great and glorious events, a large portion of which yet remains to be fulfilled, but which will as certainly be accomplished as that God, whose Spirit in the prophets predicted them, is true. To the contemplation of one of these great transactions—the first in point of importance, and the greatest in point of grandeur—the attention of the reader will in this chapter be directed. The coming of the Lord in glory and majesty, is the event of unfulfilled prophecy—the central point of hope to the Christian Church, and will be the signal of terrible judgments upon nominal Christendom, and the unbelieving world. Surely it becomes a question with each individual, of the most serious moment, "What part will be assigned to me in the great transaction? What will be my position, and shall I be able to stand when he appears?"**

**The reader will at once perceive that it is our present design to view this subject in its practical bearing upon character, and more particularly in its solemn relation to a false profession of Christ. No statement in God's word can possibly be clearer than that which describes the Lord as finding, when he comes, a portion of the professing church in a state of actual unpreparedness for the event. They are not surprised in a state of infidelity, or of atheism, or of open and gross ungodliness, "eating and drinking with the drunken," but in the assumed character of professing Christians, mingling with the true church of God, and dreaming—alas! it is but a dream!—of an actual participation in the grace that is to be brought unto the saints at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Our Lord thus portrays their character and describes their state at his appearing—"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone (or, are going) out." Let us, in attempting a spiritual**

and a practical improvement of these solemn and searching words, direct our attention, first, to the great event to which they refer; and then, to an analysis of the character which they describe.

**THE EVENT** is none other than the **SECOND COMING OF THE LORD**. We are left to no speculation or surmise as to the certainty of this event. Not more clearly was the doctrine of the first advent one of express revelation and distinct announcement, than is the doctrine of the second advent. It is a doctrine of Scripture, and therefore to be studied and believed. And never will the standard of spirituality in the Christian church rise to its proper elevation, nor her serried ranks present so formidable a front to her foes, until she has been brought as fully to receive, and as joyfully to hail, the one advent as she has fully received and joyfully hailed the other. The truth is, the discussions which have agitated and divided the Christian church as to the mode of his coming, have; tended, we fear, to avert the eye of the church from the fact of the Lord's coming. And thus, the "blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God our Savior," which should have been a truth uniting, strengthening, and sanctifying the "one body," has been lost sight of amid the strife of party and the conflict of opinion. But we will endeavor to present to the believer's eye a scriptural glimpse of this great truth—a truth, than which, none can be more earth-detaching and heaven-attracting to a believing mind.

We have already gone at some length into the Scripture testimony to the doctrine of the second coming; but as it is possible that these pages may meet the eye of some who have not given to this line of argument any lengthened attention, we will arrange a few Scripture proofs under their proper heads, a candid and prayerful examination of which must lead to the conviction of the great truth which they so clearly substantiate. The reader is requested, at his leisure, to turn to the passages in his Bible.

1. The doctrine of the second coming of the Lord was fully believed and ardently anticipated both by the Old and New Testament saints.
2. Christ will come in the clouds of heaven.
3. His coming will be sudden and unexpected.
4. The gathering together of the saints to meet the Lord.
5. The trial of the Christian Church previously to the coming of the Lord.
6. The sealing of the saints in anticipation of this time of trial.
7. The saints will reign with Christ.
8. The iniquity of the earth will be full at the coming of the Lord. (See an analogy to this truth in the destruction of the wicked in the time of Noah. And

subsequently of the Amorites. And then of the Jews.)

9. The gathering together of the Jews, their restoration to their own land, their conversion, and the judgment of God upon their enemies.

10. The coming of the Messiah, the signal of vengeance upon his enemies.

11. The doctrine of the second coming of our Lord, a holy influential truth.

A motive to godly sorrow.

To holiness of life and divine conformity.

To the mortification of sin in believers.

To spirituality of mind.

To patience and long-suffering.

To moderation and sobriety.

Against censorious judgment.

To ministerial fidelity and diligence.

To growth in grace and holiness.

To the study of prophecy.

From this line of Scripture testimony, to the truth of the doctrine of our Lord's second appearing, let us proceed to take a rapid glance at some of its more interesting and prominent CHARACTERISTICS. The first point that strikes us is, the long interval which transpires previously to the accomplishment of the event. But in this we see an illustration of the wisdom and mercy which have ever been so conspicuous in the Divine government. Immediately after the apostle had announced the truth of the Lord's coming, he found it necessary to guard the individuals to whom he had written against the idea of the Lord's immediate appearing—an error into which they had evidently fallen—and which, in a second letter, he thus corrects: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus, and by our gathering together unto him, that you do not be soon shaken in mind, nor be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." Thus it clearly appears that, so far from the doctrine of the Lord's coming being a strange and a novel idea to the early church, it was not only an article of their belief, but it was the theme of their joy, and the cherished object of their anticipation. The apostle, however, found it necessary to check this ardent feeling of the early Christians, by reminding them, that certain great events must transpire, preparatory to the coming of the Lord. He then proceeds to specify two in particular—a season of great spiritual declension, and the temporary ascendancy of the papal power. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day will not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

**And is there nothing, we earnestly ask, in the events which are now transpiring, identical with these two remarkable premonitions of the advent of the Son of God? Are there not a sad waning of spirituality, a declension of vital godliness, of heart-felt religion? And are there not also a painful defection from the doctrines of grace, and a revival of Popery in a form the most specious and seductive, and therefore the more alarming? Let the reader make himself intelligently acquainted with the history of his own times, read, compare, and judge, and be found prepared for the final issue.**

**We may regard the delay attendant upon the second coming, in yet another and an interesting point of view, namely, as illustrating the dispensation of mercy under which we live. As in the antediluvian world, "the patience of God waited in the days of Noah," thus affording to the impenitent space for repentance before the Lord came in the terror of his judgment; so, as it regards the coming of the Son of Man,—the interval between the prediction and its accomplishment, is an interval of mercy to the ungodly and impenitent world. The patience of the Lord now waits. God has ever shown himself slow in the execution of judgment, but quick in the exercise of mercy. His wrath has been wont to linger, as if reluctant to break forth; but his goodness has ever gone before us, as if by anticipation, meeting and providing for our need. The coming of the Lord, while it will consummate the blessed hope of the Church, will, to an ungodly, infidel world, be the fearful signal of overwhelming judgments. Hence the delay. Mercy stays the uplifted arm of vengeance, and cries, "Forbear!" The Lord "waits to be gracious." "I gave her space for repentance."**

**The divine banner is extended, an armistice is proclaimed, proposals of peace are made, a plan of reconciliation is announced—rebel sinners are urged to ground their arms, and to submit to the government of God. Yet, see how the scoffers requite this merciful delay! "There will come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." But Christ will come, and "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appears!" Not those who Christian walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful. They 'shall be like the chaff which the wind drives away; the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the**

righteous.'

**But in what character, with especial relation to his Church, will our Lord appear? It will be twofold. He will come, first, as a triumphant King. As a victorious King, he is now enthroned in glory. "You have ascended on high; you have led captivity captive." He returned back to heaven as a conqueror over sin, hell, and death. Never did a Roman victor return from the battlefield bearing such spoil, nor amid such glory and acclamation, as that with which Jesus returned to his kingdom. The Captain of our salvation had gotten himself the victory over every foe of his Church. He met and battled, single-handed and alone, the combined hosts of his enemies, and hers. And although he fell in the conflict, he yet won the battle. He conquered by submitting to conquest; he overcame in being overcome. He slew death in being slain by death.**

**Do you want a confirmation to your belief in the essential Deity of your coming Lord? Behold it, beloved. Where will you turn to the record of a battle so strange, between combatants so opposite, and attended by results so wondrous? That, in the greatest weakness, our Lord should demonstrate his greatest strength; that, by a decided defeat, he should prove the victor; and that, in succumbing to the power and dominion of death, he should be the death of death! Oh! how truly divine does he appear! Believer in Jesus! the King, whose banner waves over you, has fought and won all your battles. One with him, every believer is victorious. Treading in his Lord's footsteps, he overcomes, even as he overcame. It is impossible but that the weakest believer must obtain the victory in the severe conflict which he is waging with the foe. He may at times be foiled, embarrassed, and overcome, but he will ultimately triumph. The battle may go against us, but not the war. Faith realizing its union with the Lord, obtains the victory. And never does the believer go forth to face the enemy in the name of Jesus, but with the disciples he may exclaim, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through your name." Come, you faint and exhausted warriors! and refresh your spirits and renew your strength with this precious truth—your Captain is victorious! He who lives for you upon the throne—he who dwells in you by his Spirit, is he who rose to glory with your every foe chained in defeat and humiliation to his chariot, "carrying captivity captive."**

**Do you still hesitate to believe so great a truth? Hark how his angelic escort heralded his approach to glory! "Lift up your heads, O you gates, even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is**

**this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."**

**"Hark, ten thousand harps and voices  
Sound the note of praise above!  
Jesus reigns, and heaven rejoices  
Jesus reigns the God of love;  
See, he fills yon azure throne!  
Jesus rules the world alone."**

**"King of glory, reign forever!  
Yours an everlasting crown  
Nothing from your love shall sever  
Those whom you have made your own;  
Happy objects of your grace,  
Destined to behold your face."**

**"Savior, hasten your appearing;  
Bring, O bring the glorious day!  
When, the awful summons hearing,  
Heaven and earth shall pass away,  
Then with golden harps we'll sing,  
Glory to Our REIGNING KING."**

**But our Lord, although a victorious, is not a triumphant King. Nor will he be, until he comes the second time to receive his kingdom, and to reign in undisputed and universal supremacy in the bosom of a gathered church, and over a subdued and renovated world. He will then appear "more than a conqueror"—even TRIUMPHANT. He is represented as having, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth waiting until his enemies be made his footstool." What are we to gather from this statement? Much that is deeply and gloriously significant. It describes the Redeemer in the interval between the victory and the triumph—the victory which signaled his past humiliation, and the triumph which will aggrandize his coming glory. It defines his position of repose, and his attitude of expectation. It is impossible not to perceive, in these remarkable words, a reference to another and a final conflict—the issue of that conflict being the crowning act of his glory.**

**Are his enemies yet his footstool? Are all things yet subdued under him? Is the world subdued? Is sin subdued? Is Antichrist subdued? Are the powers of**

darkness subdued? Is death subdued? No! But they shall be. At what time? When Christ "shall appear the second time without sin," or a sin-offering, and therefore no more as a Priest who is to die; "unto salvation"—and therefore as a King who is to reign. "Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet." Then, then will our Lord appear as a **TRIUMPHANT KING** to your eye.

Picture the scene! Every foe now falls before him. Death, the last enemy, is destroyed. All his enemies are "consumed with the word of his mouth"—the universal diffusion of his gospel, "and with the brightness of his coming"—the kingly power of his advent. All Antichrists retire—their imposture exposed, and their pretensions confounded—and **CHRIST** remains in triumph. All earthly kingdoms are dissolved—their dominion destroyed, and their glory passed away—and the kingdom of Messiah fills the world. All principalities and powers lay down their sovereignty at his feet, and Immanuel triumphantly reigns, having on his vesture and on his thigh a name written—"**KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**"

"He shall reign from pole to pole,  
With illimitable sway;  
He shall reign, when, like a scroll,  
Yonder heavens have passed away.  
Man's last enemy shall fall,  
Hallelujah, Christ in God,  
God in Christ, is all in all."

But our Lord will appear in another character—one particularly endearing to his Church. He will come as her **BRIDEGROOM**. "Behold, the Bridegroom comes!" Jesus sustains no relation to his Church more expressive than this. From all eternity he betrothed her to himself, and forever. He asked her at the hands of her Father, and the Father gave her to him. He entered into a covenant that she should be his. The conditions of that covenant were great, but not too great for his love to undertake. They were, that he should assume her nature, discharge her legal obligations, endure her punishment, repair her ruin, and bring her to glory. He undertook all, and he accomplished all—because he loved her. The love of Jesus to his Church is the love of the most tender husband. It is single, constant, affectionate, matchless, wonderful. He sympathizes with her, nourishes her, provides for her, clothes her, watches

over, and indulges her with the most intimate and endearing communion.

"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Reader, do you know what this union with Jesus is? Apart from its experience, pride not yourself upon any other union. The dearest, choicest ties of human affection are but as brittle glass. They are easily broken, and soon destroyed. No union, but that which is with Jesus, and in Jesus, extends beyond the grave. He must share in every tie of creature love, if it be holy and permanent. Think not that the union of holy hearts is dissolved by death. O no!—death does not sever, death unites the sanctified. The bonds of the holy are beyond his ruthless power to break. The love which the image of Jesus, reflected in his people, inspires, is as deathless as the love of Jesus himself. It is as immortal as their own redeemed, transformed, and glorified nature. And in reference to a more divine and elevated sentiment than that to which the poet refers, we apply his beautiful words,

"They sin who tell us love can die  
With life all other passions fly,  
All others are but vanity;  
But love is indestructible.  
Its holy flame forever burns;  
From heaven it came, to heaven returns."

But the Lord Jesus will come in the clouds of heaven, and this will be the occasion of his public espousal of his Church. Her present union to him is secret and unknown, invisible to the world, and often concealed to herself. But he will appear, openly and visibly, to take her to himself; and before his Father and the holy angels, he will solemnize her eternal union. O what a time of splendor and of rejoicing will that be! Arrayed in his nuptial robes, Jesus will descend to make her his own; and she, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, will go forth to meet him." Then will be heard the song of angels, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready." Yes! "blessed are they who are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb." May the writer and the reader, through grace, sit down together there!

But there will be those whom the coming of the Lord will surprise in a state of

**TOTAL UNPREPAREDNESS.** Our allusion now is to **NOMINAL PROFESSORS** of Christ. To such the words of our Lord's parable unquestionably refer. That the "five foolish virgins" were professors of the Gospel, cannot admit of a doubt. They, too, like the true disciples of Jesus, had their lamps. But they were lamps merely, and nothing more. When the Bridegroom came, they were found empty, without one particle of oil, and the despairing cry was—"Our lamps are going out!" But let us, with all solemnity, portray the character.

In attempting to describe the case of a mere professor of the Gospel, we will commence with his religious creed. Herein, we fear, lies his deepest self-deception. He is, perhaps, a profound theologian, is well schooled in the 'five points' of divinity, is an acute reasoner, a skillful debater, and an able and vigilant defender of the outposts of Christianity. He can subscribe fully to the Thirty-nine Articles, to the Westminster Confession, and to the general truths of revelation. He has no doubt of the divinity of the Bible, his creed is well balanced, and his general views of truth would be considered evangelical and orthodox. And yet, thus far may he proceed in the deepest self-deception. With all this "form of knowledge," this lodgment of the truth in the understanding, this subscription of the intellect to the doctrines of revelation, he is an utter stranger to that heart-transformation, that inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, without which the soul is spiritually dead, the heart is unrenewed and unholy, and the whole moral man is unfit for the kingdom of heaven. In short, we have here the case of one who, while his judgment assents to the truth, his heart entirely rejects it. The Gospel is to him a thing of intellectual subscription, and not of heart experience. Not a single truth of the Bible has become an element of life and holiness in his soul.

The word, in its letter, is an instrument of light; but not, in its spirit, is it an instrument of quickening. With such deep-meaning declarations as these, he is experimentally unacquainted—"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." "Your word has quickened me." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever." "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth." "Sanctify them through your truth." Thus far will the religion of intellect extend. The grand point at which this religion rests short, is **REGENERATION**, a word mighty in its import, although entirely excluded from the theological vocabulary of the man of mere intellectual subscription to Divine truth. Yet, what a mighty doctrine is this! There it stands in the Bible, and it cannot be erased. We tell the man

proud of his orthodoxy, and boasting of his well-poised creed—we tell the man of sound philosophy, and of high intellectual attainments, that though he had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge, yet without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, and supreme love to God, the light within him is darkness, and that darkness is the certain prelude to the "blackness of darkness" of despair. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Shall we describe him in his general conduct? This, perhaps, is exemplary and commendable. As a member of a Christian church, holding, it may be, an office of distinction and responsibility, as a parent, as a master, as a citizen, men admire and commend him. He is a zealous partisan, is the man of societies, of committees, and of meetings. His name may be found high upon the subscription list, and appended to generous donations. He is a religious patriot. He will devote his talents, his time, and his wealth, to the erection of public sanctuaries, or to the propagation of the Gospel, or in promoting various benevolent and popular enterprises. In the more retired walks of domestic life, the same species of religion may be seen. He will bend his knee in family worship, catechize his children, instruct his domestics, and seek to inculcate and exemplify that which is lovely and of good report.

But follow this Christian professor into the world. Is it evident that the great separation has taken place? Is he there a witness for God? Ah, no! He can mingle with the world, and be of the world, and be as the world, and yet not misplace a single fold of the silken robe with which his religion invests him. He talks of its innocent recreations as sources of high and justifiable enjoyment. He can devour the contents of a novel, or contemplate the transactions of a play, with the same interest with which he bends over the pages of inspiration. The dizzy mazes of the dance, and the voluptuous music of the oratorio, and the delirious excitement of the cup, are sources of enjoyment greater and more frequent than the hallowed engagements of the sanctuary. This is the man of mere religious profession. Have I exaggerated the picture? Ah, no! I have drawn from life. That there are innumerable cases of false profession, not so glaring, or so strongly marked, or so easy of detection and of analysis as this, I readily admit. Instances, many of an external putting on of Christ, and of a very zealous engagement in his service, and of apparent consistency of walk, of much acquaintance with Scripture, and fluency of religious phraseology, in which, nevertheless, the great separation of the man from his own righteousness has never taken place; the conviction of sin, never felt; brokenness of heart, never experienced; faith in Jesus, never exercised; the

**pardoning love of God, never realized; the preciousness and graciousness of the Lord, never tasted.**

**Even this may, by some, be thought too strong a picture of self-deception. Not stronger than that which Jesus himself drew—"Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name have cast out devils, and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity." These are searching, solemn words! Who can read them with composure, without fixing his eye of faith upon the cross of Jesus, exclaiming, as he looks, "Sinners, of whom I am chief?" Who has not, at times, been overwhelmed with the self-agonizing thought, "What, if I should be found at last to have possessed nothing but the empty lamp of a Christian profession?" Happy are they whom the searching inquiry may lead more entirely from themselves, to look to Christ, to rest in Christ, to walk in Christ—in the truth of Christ, in the love of Christ, and in the spirit of Christ!**

**But the dim and flickering light which a mere informed judgment, or which an external profession gives, sooner or later is extinguished. A season of prosperity often proves fatal to a profession of godliness. Divine Providence smiles, riches increase, and with them the temptations and the snares, the luxury, indulgence, and worldly show, which are inseparable from the accumulation of unsanctified and unconsecrated wealth. And what are the results? In most, cases, the entire relinquishment of the outward garb of a religious costume. Found to be in the way of the full indulgence of the carnal mind, it is laid aside altogether; and thus freed from all the restraints which consistency imposed, the heart at once plunges deep into the world it all the while secretly loved, sighed for, and worshiped. Oh! what a severe, but true, test of religious principle is this! How soon it detects the spurious and the false! How soon does the verdure wither away! "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them."**

**But if a professing man passes through this trial, and still retains his integrity—still walks closely and humbly with God—still adheres to the lowly cross—bearing path of Jesus—is still found as diligent in waiting upon God in public and private means of grace—is still as meek, lowly, and kind, increasing in devotedness, liberality, and love, with the increase of God's**

providential goodness around him, such a man has the "root of the matter in him;" and "he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." His prosperity has not destroyed him.

A time of adversity is often equally as fatal to a profession of religion, founded upon no true Christian principle. If, in the smooth path, we are apt to slide, in the rough path we may stumble. Periods of great revolution in the history of the Christian Church, when God tries the principles, the conscience, the love, and the faith of his people, are testing-periods. What numbers make shipwreck then of their high profession! And when God enters the pleasant garden of a man's domestic blessings, and blows upon the lovely blossom, or blights the fair flower, or severs the pleasant bough, or scatters the hard-earned wealth of years, or wastes the body's vigor, or frustrates the fond scheme, how does an unrenewed man deport himself? Is his carriage humble, submissive, childlike? Does stern Christian principle now exhibit itself, in beautiful contrast with the trial that has called it forth? Does Divine grace, like the aromatic flower, now appear the sweeter and the lovelier for its being crushed? No, does not every feeling of the heart rise in maddened rebellion against God and against his government? Ah, yes! how accurately does Christ describe his case!—"he has not root in himself, but endures for a while; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended."

It is impossible to blind the eyes to the truth, that a time of trial, such as the Christian Church has never yet experienced, is fast approaching. Our Lord foretells it. "There shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Daniel's "horn" is yet to "make war with the saints, and prevail against them until the Ancient of Days come, and judgment is given to the saints of the Most High."

To this period of trial, just previously to the Lord's second coming, the same prophet again refers in language similar to Christ's. "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as there never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Then will the Lord bring the principles of his people to the touchstone of truth. Then will he sift professors as corn is sifted, and the storm will scatter the chaff of mere profession, while not a grain of the

true wheat shall fall to the ground. The trial thus so clearly predicted, and so evidently approaching, will be, not so much a trial of separate branches of the Christian Church, as it will be a trial of the whole body. It will be a battle for the great essential truths of the gospel, held in common by all, and in which general and severe conflict, all the minor and indifferent things that have so long divided and dismembered the church of Christ, will be lost sight of and forgotten, merged in one great common cause, against one great common foe. This period of trial, while it thus will drive the sheep of the one fold more closely together—now alas! so widely separated and scattered—will be pre-eminently distinguished for its development of truth. The occasion for its investigation will be peculiarly favorable. It will be a conflict for the truth. "What is truth, what is the whole truth?" will be the inquiry of every lip. Christians will be placed in a better position, and be surrounded by more favorable circumstances, for its study.

Truth has never so clearly and powerfully developed itself—its nature and its energies—as in periods of trial and of suffering. What may be said of the growth of the believer in a personal knowledge of the truth, will, with equal propriety, apply to the advancement of truth in the world. The time of trial makes the truth more precious to the heart, and clear to the mind. The affections entwine more closely around it then, and the judgment more distinctly perceives its meaning and its bearings. What believer has not learned more of his Bible in a season of affliction than he had ever learned before? "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn your statutes." Then let the dark cloud lower, and the tempest that will shake the Church of Christ to its center, come, it will but develop the nature, and accelerate the advancement of the pure truth as it is in Jesus. Men of different views, driven beneath the same shelter by the common storm, finding themselves bending before the same mercy-seat, and addressing their petitions to the same Father, deriving their consolation from the same source, and realizing their oneness in the same Lord, all the mists of prejudice and the congealings of coldness now melted away, they will read, and examine, and compare together; and the happy result will be a clearer unfolding of the mind of the Spirit in the word, and a more perfect harmony of judgment and of affection in those who are one in the heart and mind of God. Then will the truth, the divine, precious truth as it is in Jesus, spread, replenishing this sorrowful earth with gladness, and girding this dark globe as with a zone of heavenly light.

There are two periods of awful solemnity, which will be found utterly to

**extinguish the mere lamp of a Christian profession. Will you follow me, reader, to the dying bed of a false professor? It is an awful place! It is an affecting spectacle! No hope of glory sheds its brightness around his pillow. There is no anchor within the veil, to which the soul now clings in its wrenchings from the body. No Divine voice whispers, in cheering, soothing accents, "Fear not, for I am with you." No light is thrown in upon the dark valley as its gate opens, and the spirit enters. Coldness is on his brow, earth recedes, eternity nears, the vaulted damp ascends and thickens around the parting spirit, and the last wail of despair breaks from the quivering lip, "My lamp is gone out!"**

**Withdrawing from this affecting scene, let us in retirement read and ponder, with an earnestness and self-examination which we have never done before, the appropriate warning of Jesus, "Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name; and in your name have cast out devils; and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you—depart from me, you that work iniquity. Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."**

**And so will it be when the Son of Man comes. This great event will fix unchangeably the destiny of each individual of the human race. It will break like the loud artillery of heaven upon a slumbering church, and a careless world. It will find the true saints with "oil in their vessels with their lamps," though in an unwatchful state. It will come upon the nominal professor, grasping firmly his lamp of profession, but utterly destitute of the oil of grace, and in a state of as little expectation of, as preparedness for, the advent of the Lord. And it will overtake and surprise the ungodly world as the flood did in the days of Noah, and the fire in the days of Lot—"they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and until the same day that Lot went out of Sodom." "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."**

The true saints will arouse from their slumber—the spirit of slothfulness and lethargy into which they had fallen—and, trimming their lamps by a fresh exercise of faith in Jesus, will go forth as the "children of the light," to welcome their approaching Lord. False professors, too, startled by the cry which breaks upon the awful stillness of midnight—solemn as the archangel's trumpet—will eagerly feel for their lamps—their evidences of acceptance based upon an outward profession of the gospel, when lo! to their surprise and consternation, they find themselves destitute of one drop of oil with which to feed the flickering, waning flame, and they exclaim in despair, "Our lamps are going out!" And now the intellectual light goes out, and the moral light goes out, and the professing light goes out, and the official light goes out; and while they have fled to human sources to procure the grace they needed—their backs being thus then turned upon Christ, the "Bridegroom comes; and those who are ready go in with him to the marriage, and the door is shut." They return with what they suppose the needed evidences, but now they learn—O that they should have learned it too late!—that to have had a mere professing name to live—to have outwardly put on Christ by baptism—to have united externally with the church of God—to have partaken of the Lord's Supper—to have promoted his truth, and to have furthered his cause—to have preached his Gospel, and even to have won converts to the faith, will avail nothing—alone and apart from union to Jesus by the Spirit, obtaining admittance to the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." In view of such a catastrophe, O how poor, contemptible, and insignificant, appears everything, however splendid in intellect, beautiful in morals, or costly in sacrifice, except the humble consciousness of having Christ in the heart the hope of glory!

But, there are those, whose lamps of Christian profession will not go out when the Lord appears. They are his own chosen, redeemed, and called people. Their light, by reason of manifold infirmities, may often have burned but dimly through life; but there is vital religion in the soul—the golden, precious oil of grace, flowing from Jesus into their hearts. And this can never be extinguished. Many were the hostile influences against which their weak grace had to contend; many were the trials of their feeble faith, but the light never quite went out. The waves of sorrow threatened to extinguish it; the floods of inbred evil threatened to extinguish it; the cold blasts of adversity threatened to extinguish it; and the stumbling of the walk, and the inconstancy of the heart, and the declension of the soul, often, for a while, weakened and

obscured it; but there it is, living, burning, and brightening, as inextinguishable and as deathless as the source from where it came.

The grace of God in the heart is as imperishable, and the life of God in the soul is as immortal, as God himself. That light of knowledge enkindled in the mind, and of love glowing in the heart, and of holiness shining in the life, will burn in the upper temple in increasing effulgence and glory through eternity. The divine light of Christian grace, which holy grief for sin has enkindled, which love to God has enkindled, which the indwelling of the Holy Spirit has enkindled, will outlive and outshine the sun in the firmament of heaven. That sun shall be extinguished, those stars shall fall, and that moon shall be turned into blood, but the feeblest spark of grace in the soul shall live forever. The Lord watches his own work with sleepless vigilance. When the vessel is exhausted, he stands by and replenishes it; when the light burns dimly, he is near to revive it; when the cold winds blow rudely, and the rough waves swell high, he is riding upon those winds, and walking upon those waves, to protect this the spark of his own kindling. The light that is in you, is light flowing from Jesus, the "Fountain of light." And can an infinite fountain be exhausted? When the Sun is extinguished, then all the lesser lights, deriving their faint effulgence from him, will be extinguished too—but not until then. Who is it that has often fanned the smoking flax? Even He who will never quench the faintest spark of living light in the soul. "You will light my candle." And if the Lord lights it, what power can put it out? Is not his love the sunshine of your soul? Is he not he himself your morning star? Is it not in his light that you see light, even the "light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?" then, "Arise and shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you!"

Of this holy and encouraging subject—the imperishable nature of true grace—let us take yet another view. And let it be remembered by the reader, that I am now referring especially to the weakest degree of grace ever found in a gracious soul—that grace cannot die. The divine life of a believer, from its very necessity, is deathless. The life of Adam was never so secure, even when he lifted his noble brow in spotlessness to God. The new life is more secure in a state of imperfection, than his was in a state of innocence. He stood in his own righteousness, upheld by his own power, and yet he fell. But we are more secure, because we stand in the righteousness, and are kept by the power, of God. His life was hidden in himself; our life is hidden in Christ, and is as secure in Christ, as Christ's is in God. It is truly remarked by Charnock, that "Adam had no reserve of nature to supply nature upon any defect;" but out

of Christ's fulness we receive grace upon grace.

How much more ready are we to complain against this small measure of grace, than to praise God for the weakest grace, and to thank Him for an inexhaustible source, on which we may at all times fall back! The believer ever has a reserve of grace. His resources may often be exhausted, but he has a stock in Christ's hand, and which, for the wisest end, is kept solely in Christ's hands, upon which he is privileged at any moment to draw. Well is it that that supply of grace is not all in our hands, else it would soon be wasted; and well is it that it is not in angels' hands, else they would soon be weary with our continual coming. But the covenant was made with Christ, he being the Mediator as well as the Surety; and in him it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. Thus, in his hands the Father has entrusted the keeping of his weakest child, even your soul, beloved, though you are the weakest of the weak. An infant as much belongs to the family as the most matured member. Its place in the parent's heart is as strong, and its claim upon its share of the inheritance is as valid. So is it with the feeblest child of God.

And most faithfully does our Lord Jesus discharge his office. Is the church a garden? Jesus goes early to the vineyard, to see "whether the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates bud." Is it a flock? Jesus "feeds his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom." Can any imagery more affectingly set forth the tenderness of Christ towards weak grace—the weak lamb carried, not on the shoulders, not in the arms, but in the bosom of the Shepherd? Yes, there is one image, the most expressive and tender in the universe of imagery a mother's love for her infant. Does God compare His love to this? Hearken to His words "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." O that you would, in the simplicity of faith, press this precious truth to your trembling, doubting, fearful heart! Nothing does the Holy Spirit seem to take such pains in comforting and strengthening, as real grace in its greatest weakness. Would he indulge our weak faith and our limited measure of grace? O no! But while he would have us sue for the highest degrees, he would yet watch over the lowest degree of grace in the soul. Remember, too, that the weakest grace has a throne of grace to supply it, and the God of grace to delight in it, and the Mediator of grace to influence it, and the Spirit of grace to brood upon it.

Though our grace be weak, yet the grace of all these is sufficient to preserve

**us. The weakest grace in Christ's hand shall stand, when the strongest nature without his guard shall fail. It is not our hold of Christ that so much preserves us, as Christ's hold of us; though the faith we hang by be a weak thread, yet Christ has a strong hand. Had you the grace of a glorified saint, you could not maintain it without his help; and that is sufficient to conduct through the greatest storms into the safe harbor. The 'preserved in Christ,' is the happy title of those who are "sanctified by God the Father."**

**But while I speak thus, it is in my heart, beloved, to urge you to aim after more than the glimmering light; in other words, to seek larger degrees of grace. Let your standard be the loftiest, and your aim the highest. Place no limit to that which God has not limited. Never cease expecting, until He ceases giving. If you are satisfied with your present measure of grace, a worse sign you could not have. To be content with being stationary in the divine life, places you in a doubtful position. It is an essential property of grace that it grows; it is the immortal seed of God, and must, from its very nature, germinate. If your faith does not increase, your doubts will increase; and if your grace does not strengthen, your fears will strengthen. Fill the measure with pure wheat, as one has said, and there will be no room for chaff. Aim after elevated principles if you desire elevated practice. Low principles inevitably lead to low practice. Watch against that which tends to impair the vigor of your grace. Watch against your most besetting sins—your greatest infirmities—your strongest temptations. Beware of your own heart—beware of self-confidence—beware of creature idolatry—beware of the world. Beware, too, of any neglect of the means of grace.**

**Nothing will more tend to keep your grace at a low ebb than this. God has appointed His channels of conveyance. They are the ministry of the word, and the reading of the word, prayer and praise, meditation, ordinances, and Christian communion. Beware that you do not despise any one of them. A neglected sanctuary—a forsaken throne of grace—an unread Bible—will soon bring leanness into your soul. The priests under the law were to bring fresh fuel to the altar, morning and evening, for the nourishment of the holy fire. "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out." It is thus God keeps alive the holy fire on the altar of our hearts in the use of His own appointed means. He has as much ordained the means of grace, as He has promised the grace of the means. You will invariably find, that grace languishes with duty. If, we are listless in duty, we shall soon become lifeless in duty. Therefore let us thirst after God, as the hunted deer pants for the water-brook. Especially draw largely by faith on Jesus. He is the great Reservoir**

from where all the conduits are supplied. All means of grace are just what Jesus makes them.

Behold, then, the coming of the Lord in its solemn relation to a nominal profession of Christianity. In a land where the institutions and the ordinances of religion are so strictly and so properly observed; where religious training from infancy, and the habit of an early connection with the visible church, and the consequent observance of the Lord's Supper is expected and enjoined, are such marked characteristics, would it be overstepping the bounds of propriety and delicacy, if, in view of this solemn event, we press upon the professing reader the importance of close self-examination, and of trial by the word of God touching the GREAT CHANGE, apart from which, the most splendid Christian profession will but resemble the purple robes and the fine linen with which Dives moved, in grandeur and in state, to the torments of the lost.

Professors of religion! Church communicants! office-bearers!—have you the root of the matter in you? Have you Christ in you? Are you temples of the Holy Spirit? Are you walking humbly with God? Are you born from above? Rest not short of the great change—the heavenly, the divine birth. Place no reliance upon your external relation to the church of God. Do not be deceived by a false semblance of conversion. You may go far, as we have shown, in a Christian profession, and even may live to see the Lord come in the air, and yet have not one drop of oil in your vessel with your lamp.

Have you sometimes trembled under the powerful exhibition of the truth so did Felix, and yet he never truly repented. Have you heard the Gospel gladly, and under its momentary influence, have done many things? so did Herod, and yet he kept Herodias, and beheaded John! Do you show much apparent zeal for the Lord? so did Jehu, but it was zeal for himself! Are you the associate and the companion of good and holy men? so was Demas, and yet he loved this present evil world! Have you been united to the church upon a profession of faith and by baptism? so was Simon Magus, and yet he was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity! Do you desire to die the death of the righteous? so did Balaam, and yet he died as the fool dies!

O look well to your religion! Take nothing for granted. Think less of polishing your "lamp," than of having a large supply of oil, that when the Lord sends or comes, you may not be found in darkness, not knowing where you go! Without converting grace in your heart, your church relation is but the union of a dead branch to a living stem; and your partaking of the Lord's Supper, an "eating

**and drinking of the Lord's body and blood, (as symbolically represented therein,) unworthily." Receive in love these faithful admonitions, penned by one whose only hope, as the chief of sinners, is in the finished work of Immanuel, and let them take you to prayer—to the word—to Christ.**

**"The coming of the Lord draws near." If the apostle, in his day, could thus exhort the saints, how much stronger reason have we for believing that "the Lord is at hand!" Every movement in the providential government of God, indicates the near approach of great events. The signs of the times are significant and portentous. The abounding profession of Christianity—the advancement of human science—the increase of the papal power—the spirit of despotism, of infidelity, and of superstition, these three master principles—at this moment expanding through Europe, and struggling each with the others, and all with the gospel, for supremacy—and the extraordinary movements now going forward in reference to the return of the Jews—are heralding the approaching chariot of the King of kings. The Church of God will yet pass through severe trials—"many shall be purified,' and made white, and tried;" nevertheless Jesus lives, and Jesus shall REIGN, and the church shall REIGN with Jesus.**

**Let the thought of his coming be an influential theme of meditation and joy, of hope and action. The present is the suffering state of the Church. It is through much tribulation that she is to enter the kingdom prepared for her by her coming Lord. But, amid the sorrows of the pilgrimage, the perils of the desert, the conflicts of the field, the blasphemies, the taunts, and the persecutions of the world, the pangs of disease, and the wastings of decay, we will have our "citizenship in heaven, from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." He, "whom not having seen, we love," will soon appear, and then he will chase away every sorrow, and dry up every tear, and annihilate every corruption, and perfect us in the beauties of holiness. Then there will be no more rising of inward corruption, no more exposure to temptation, no more solicitations of evil, and no more wounding of the bosom upon which we recline. The heart will be perfected in love; and the mind, developing its faculties, enlarging its knowledge, and yielding up itself to those intellectual revelations, to that everlasting sunlight of the soul," which all will enjoy who love, and long for, Christ's appearing—will merge itself in the light and glory and holiness of the Eternal Mind.**

**O that the reign of Christ may be first by his grace in our hearts, then we may indeed expect to reign with him in glory! The cross below, is the only path to the throne above. The crucifixion now, the glory then. The sword in our hearts here, the crown upon our heads hereafter. Precious Jesus! hasten your coming! We love you, we serve you, we long for you, we look for you. Come, and perfect us in your likeness!**

**"Oh! loved, but not enough—though dearer far,  
Than self and its most loved enjoyments are  
None duly loves you, but who, nobly free  
From sensual objects, finds his all in Thee."**

**"Glorious Almighty, First, and without end,  
When will You melt the mountains and descend?  
When will You shoot abroad your conquering rays,  
And teach these atoms you have formed, your praise?"**

**"My reason, all my faculties unite  
To make your glory their supreme delight;  
Forbid it, Fountain of my brightest days,  
That I should rob you, and usurp your praise!"**

**"My soul! rest happy in your low estate,  
Nor hope, nor wish to be esteemed or great;  
To take the impression of the will divine,  
Be that your glory and those riches Thine!"**

**"Confess him righteous in his just decrees,  
Love what he loves, and let his pleasure please;  
Die daily—from the touch of sin recede;  
Then you have crowned Him, and he reigns indeed!"  
M. Guion**

### **"Christian Love, a Test of Christian Character"**

**"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John 3:14**

**Surely it is a question of all others the most interesting and important, "Am I,**

or am I not; a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ?" We do not say that the state of doubt and uncertainty from which this inquiry arises, necessarily invalidates the evidence of grace which already exists; nor would we have it inferred, that the question itself indicates a healthy, vigorous tone of mind. But what we affirm is, that where there exists the principle of life, and a growing acquaintance with the plague of the human heart, and a conscience increasingly tender, the question will sometimes arise, "Am I a living soul in Christ?"

In enabling us to meet and satisfy this inquiry, how kind and condescending is God, the Holy Spirit! A state of uncertainty as to his personal salvation, cannot be regarded by the believer as the most favorable for the cultivation of personal holiness. He, indeed, is the most heavenly-minded, happy, and useful child of God, who, with the lowly confidence of the great apostle, can say, "I know in whom I have believed." But we must admire the love of the Spirit in providing for the necessities of the weakest state of grace. If saints of advanced stature in Christ can sympathize but little with the timidity, the fearfulness, and the weakness of children of more dwarfish proportions, not so the loving, faithful Spirit of God. He is never above his own work. The smallest part is too precious to his heart, to allow of the withdrawal of his eye from it for a single moment. It is not the extent of the territory which he has subjugated to himself in the soul, that most thrills his heart with delight—this he is sure to perfect—but it is his having at all effected an entrance, and established himself permanently there. This is the ground of his greatest triumph, and the source of his highest joy—that after all the opposition and the difficulty, he should at last have gotten himself the victory.

Is it possible, then, that the tenderest bud of grace, or the faintest glimmering of light in the soul, can be a matter of indifference to him? Ah no! Would Titian have despised a painting upon whose outline he had stamped the impress of his genius, because its pencilings were not complete? Would Canova have destroyed his sculpture, almost breathing with life, because its chiselings were unfinished? And will the Holy Spirit, in drawing the moral likeness of God upon the soul, in modeling the mind for heaven, slight this, his master-piece of wisdom and of power, because of its present incompleteness? No! The faintest outline of the divine image, the roughest shaping of the divine nature in man, presents to his eye more beauty, and symmetry, and finish, than the finest pencilings of nature, or the most perfect modelings of art. The universe of loveliness and of wonder contains nothing that can compare with it.

**Thus, rejoicing in his own work, he has placed before us, in the words which we have quoted, an evidence of Christian character, in the existence of Christian love. We do not say that it is the strongest attestation which might be given; no, it may be considered, by some, the weakest; and yet multitudes have met death with composure, and have gone to glory in peace, the Holy Spirit comforting their hearts by this sweet and lowly evidence—love to the brethren. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." But before we enter fully upon our main subject, namely, Christian love, evidencing the reality of Christian character—it may be profitable first, to consider THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE ITSELF, and then the existence and the operation of love as attesting its truth.**

**It is a state of transformation. The condition from which the renewed man passes, is that of death. This was his Adamic, or natural state. The sinner is by law dead; the curse is upon him, and condemnation awaits him. No, he is now condemned. "He that believes not, is condemned already." As in a state of grace, heaven is commenced below, so in a state of nature, hell is commenced below. Grace is the beginning of glory, and sinful human nature is the beginning of condemnation. The one has in it the element of eternal happiness; the other has in it the element of eternal woe. "Dead in trespasses and in sins," is the awful sentence written at this moment upon your brow. There is nothing in the history of that which is affecting and awful that will compare with it, but the condition itself of the finally lost. Indeed, the two states may be regarded almost as identical. The sinner is by law dead. He is under the curse of God, and is shut up to its condemnation, awaiting only the period of its final and eternal infliction. No, his condemnation has, in a measure, already commenced. "He who believes not, is condemned already." Listen to it, you unconverted men and women! Let the words, as they fall from the lips of Him into whose hands all judgment is committed, sink down into your ears like the knell of death. "He that believes not is CONDEMNED ALREADY." Your condition has been tried, the verdict has been given, the sentence has been pronounced, and nothing remains but the doom! The mournful preparation for its accomplishment is made. But one step, and you have passed beyond the reach of mercy, into the hands of your tormentors. Hark! Did you hear that sound? It has come from the invisible world. It is the great bell of eternity tolling the death of lost souls. Soon it will toll for you, if angels do not celebrate your heavenly birth. O think of passing from the death that is temporal, to the death that is eternal!—from the flames that might now be quenched, to the flames that are unquenchable. Rise and pray that God**

may not gather your soul with sinners, but that, numbered with those who shall have part in the first resurrection, upon you the second death may have no power.

But the believer in Jesus is one who has "passed from death unto life." Having somewhat touched upon this subject in the preceding pages, we will only seize upon a few of the more prominent characteristics illustrative of this renewed state. The Spirit of God has breathed into him the breath of life, and he has become a living soul. But, if possible, there is a yet stronger light in which we may view this change. The renewed man is a living soul, in consequence of his union with the life of Christ. We too little trace the life which is in us to the life which is in Jesus. The Spirit himself could not be our life apart from our union to Christ. It is not so much the work of the Spirit to give us life, as to quicken in us the life of Christ. The Apostle thus briefly but emphatically states it—"Christ, who is our life."

Hence we see the relation and the fitness of the second Adam to the church of God. In consequence of our federal union to the first Adam, we became the subjects of death—he being emphatically our death. And in consequence of our covenant union to the second Adam, we become the subjects of life—he being emphatically "our life." Hence it is said, "The second Adam is a quickening spirit." The headship of Christ, in reference to the life of his people, is written as with the point of a diamond in the following passages—"In him was life;" "The Son quickens whom he will;" "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live;" "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" "He that eats me, even he shall live by me;" "I am the life."

Now this life that is in Christ becomes the life of the believer in consequence of his union with Christ. "You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God;" "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." And what is the crowning act of Christ as the life of his people? What but his resurrection from the dead? "We are risen with Christ;" "You are also risen with him;" "That I may know the power of his resurrection." This doctrine of the Lord's resurrection is the pivot upon which the whole system of Christianity hinges. He is risen, and in virtue of this, his people are partakers of a resurrection life to eternal glory. It is utterly impossible that they can perish, for they have already the resurrection-life in their souls. Their own resurrection to everlasting life is pledged, secured, antedated, in consequence of the risen Christ being in them the hope of glory. Thus is Christ

**the life of his people. He is the life of their pardon—all their iniquities are put away by his blood. He is the life of their justification—his righteousness gives them acceptance with God. He is the life of their sanctification—his grace subdues the power of the sins, the guilt of which his blood removes. He is the life of their joys, of their hopes, of their ordinances; the life of everything that makes this life sweet, and the life to come glorious.**

**But what an amazing truth is this! We see into what a new and holy life the believing sinner has passed. Leaving forever the low life of sense, he now enters on the exalted life which every believer leads—the life of faith in the Son of God. He has now learned to lean upon Jesus, his righteousness and his strength, his consolation and his support. He is happy in sorrow, joyful in tribulation, strong in weakness, as by faith he leans upon Christ.**

**What a life, too, is the life of communion with God, springing from his life of oneness with Christ! The believer now holds communion with essential life, with essential holiness, with essential love. The holy breathing of his soul is the fellowship of Christ below, with the Father above. It is the one life in heaven and on earth. What is prayer to you, my reader? Is it communion? is it fellowship? Does God meet you, and open His heart to you? Are you ever sensible that you have, as it were, attracted His eye, and possessed yourself of His ear? Is prayer the element in which your soul lives? Do you make every circumstance of life an occasion of prayer? As soon as sorrow comes, do you take it to the Lord's heart? As soon as burdening care comes, do you take it to the Lord's arm? As soon as conscience is beclouded, do you take it to the Lord's blood? As soon as the inward corruption arises, do you take it to the Lord's grace? This, beloved, is the life of faith. Mistake not the nature of prayer. True prayer is never more eloquent and prevailing than when breathed forth in real desires, and earnest longings, and groans that cannot be uttered. Sighs, and words, and tears, flowing from a lowly, contrite heart, have a voice more powerful and persuasive than the most eloquent diction that ever clothed the lips of man. O to be led by the Spirit more perfectly into a knowledge of the nature and the power of prayer! for this is the grand evidence of our spiritual life.**

**This life of the renewed soul, springing from the indwelling of Christ by the Spirit, includes the crucifixion of self. "I live, yet not I." What a depth of meaning is contained in these words! We may not in this life be able fully to measure its depth, but we may in some degree fathom it. There is not—indeed there cannot be, a more sure evidence of the life of Christ in the soul, than the**

mortifying of that carnal, corrupt, self-boasting that is within us. For its utter annihilation, in this present time-state, we do not plead. This would be to look for that which the word of God nowhere warrants. But we insist upon its mortification; we plead for its subjection to Christ. Who has not detected in his heart its insidious working? If the Lord has given us a little success in our work, or put upon us a little more honor than upon another, or has imparted to us a degree more of gift or grace, O what fools do we often make of ourselves in consequence? We profess to speak of what he has done—of the progress of his work—of the operation of his grace; when, alas! what burning of incense often is there, to that hideous idol—self! Thus, we offer 'strange fire' upon the altar.

But the most gracious soul is the most self-denying, self-crucifying, self-annihilating soul. "I live, yet not I. I believe, and am comforted—yet not I. I pray, and am answered—yet not I. I preach, and sinners are converted—yet not I. I labor, and good is done, yet not I. I fight, and overcome—yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Beloved, the renewed life in us will be ever striving for the mastery of self in us. Self is ever striving to take the glory from Jesus. This is one cause of the weakness of our faith. "How can you believe," says the Savior, "who receive honor one from another, and seek not the honor which comes from God only?" "We know but little of God," remarks an eminently holy man, "if we do not sicken when we hear our own praise. And if we have kept the glory of God in view, rather than our own, remember, it is the gift of God, the work of his Spirit, which has gained a victory over self, through faith in Christ." O that the life of Christ within us may more and more manifest itself as a self-denying, self-mortifying, self-annihilating life—willing to be fools for Christ; yes to be nothing, that Christ may wear the crown, and God be all in all.

And remember that there will be a correspondence between the life of Christ in the soul, and the life which Christ lived when he tabernacled in the flesh. We have before remarked, that the indwelling of Christ in the believer is a kind of second incarnation of the Son of God. When Christ enters the heart of a poor sinner, he once more clothes himself with our nature. The life which Christ lived in the days of his sojourn on earth, was a life of sorrow, of conflict, of temptation, of desertion, of need, and of suffering in every form. Does he now live a different life in the believer? No; he is still tempted, and deserted, and in sorrow, and in need, and in humiliation, and in suffering—in his people.

**What! did you think that these fiery darts were leveled at you? Did you suppose that it was you who were deserted, that it was you who suffered, that it was you who was despised, that it was you who was trodden under foot? No, my brother, it was Christ dwelling in you. All the malignity of Satan, and all the power of sin; and all the contempt of the world, are leveled, not against you, but against the Lord dwelling in you. Were it all death in your soul, all darkness, and sinfulness, and worldliness, you would be an entire stranger to these exercises of the renewed man. Behold the love and condescension of Jesus! that after all that he endured in his own person, he should again submit himself to the same in the person of his saints; that he should, as it were, return, and tread again the path of suffering, and of trial, and of humiliation, in the life which each believer lives. O how it speaks that love which surpasses knowledge! How completely is Christ one with his saints! And yet, how feebly and faintly do we believe this truth! How little do we recognize Christ in all that relates to us! and yet he is in all things. He is in every providence that brightens or that darkens upon our path. "Christ is all, and in all."**

**The unearthliness of this life is a feature that must not be overlooked. It is a divine and spiritual, and therefore an unearthly life. Its principles are unearthly, its actings are unearthly, its aspirations are unearthly, its pleasures are unearthly, its enjoyments are unearthly, its employments are unearthly, its aims are unearthly. It mixes not, it cannot mix, with earth. Most true it is, that that life which the believer lives is "in the flesh," but it is not of the flesh, nor after the flesh, and cannot coalesce with the flesh. The flesh may often deaden, and weaken, and becloud, and depress, and chain it down, but, like the needle of the compass, the moment it obtains its freedom, it turns to God again. O what a heavenly life is this! What a marvel that it should be found, like a precious pearl, in the midst of so much darkness, and pollution, and deadness, and earthliness! Who but God could maintain a life so immortal, in the midst of so much deadliness; a life so holy, in the midst of so much impurity; a life so heavenly, in the midst of so much earthliness. And yet so it is.**

**But may there be a personal persuasion of our possession of this divine life? The Apostle: answers this inquiry in the affirmative, when he says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." For it is a thing of whose possession the believer may be assured. He can speak of its possession with holy boldness, and with humble confidence. The life of God in the soul authenticates itself. It brings with it its own evidence. Is it possible that a believer can be a subject of the quickening grace of the Holy Spirit, and not**

**know it? Possess union with Christ, and not know it? the pardon of sin, and not know it? communion with God, and not know it? breathing after holiness, and not know it? Impossible! The life of God in the soul evidences itself by its actings. Are you sensible of your sinfulness? do you love the atoning blood? is Jesus precious to your soul? do you delight in God, and in retirement for communion with Him? Then, for your encouragement we remind you, that these are not the actings of a soul lying in a state of spiritual death, nor are these the productions of a soil still unregenerate. They proceed from the indwelling life of God, and are the ascendings of that life to God, the Fountain from where it flows. Thus the weakest believer in Jesus may humbly explain, "This one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." He knows that he has passed from death unto life.**

**The Holy Spirit is also a witness to the reality of this great change. "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." The mode of his testimony is in character with the fact which he authenticates. No voice is heard, no vision is seen, nothing tangible is felt, no law of our being is suspended; but by a silent and concealed, yet effectual, operation, he witnesses to the great fact of our having "passed from death unto life." He it is who breathes the cry of "Abba, Father," in the heart—who sprinkles the reconciling blood upon the conscience—who guides the eye of faith to the cross—and who, by thus testifying of the death of Jesus to the soul, testifies to the love of Jesus in the soul. From the cross of Immanuel he brings a flood of heavenly light, and sheds it upon his own regenerating work, proving its reality, and discovering its glories. Beautiful, holy, and perfect, as is the work of the Spirit in the soul, yet not a line is revealed until Jesus shines upon it. Then, how glorious does it appear.**

**But have all the saints of God alike this clear personal assurance? and is its possession essential to true faith? We are far from asserting this. We do indeed think that every regenerate soul must be sensible of a transformation of mind, of character, and of habit. He must acknowledge that by the grace of God he is what he once was not. To what can he ascribe this change but to the second birth? But even this secret persuasion may be connected with many harassing fears and distressing doubts. The constant discovery of the hidden evil, the perpetual tendency to remove the eye from Jesus, the dark and the painful often experienced in the dealings of God, will at times prompt the believer to question the reality of his life. "With all this," he inquires, "can I be a child of God?"**

**And yet the most holy saints have been the most doubting and fearful saints. David, for example, who had more testimonies of God's favor than any man, yet, as one says, he was at a loss sometimes to spell his evidences. And that holy man Rutherford remarks, "I have questioned whether or not I ever knew anything of Christianity, except the letters which make up the word." But doubting faith is not doubtful faith. If the believer has not the faith of assurance, he may have the faith of reliance, and that will take him to heaven. All the doubts and fears that ever harassed a child of God cannot erase his name from the Lamb's book of life, nor take him out of the heart of God, nor shut him out of glory.**

**"Unbelief," says Rutherford, "may, perhaps, tear the copies of the covenant which Christ has given you; but he still keeps the original in heaven with himself. Your doubts and fears are no parts of the covenant; neither can they change Christ." "The doubts and fears of the elect," remarks another, "are overruled by almighty grace to their present and eternal good; as conducing to keep us humble at God's footstool, to endear the merits of Jesus, and to make us feel our weakness and dependence, and to render us watchful unto prayer." Did ever an unregenerate, lifeless soul entertain a doubt or fear of its spiritual condition? Never. Was it ever known anxiously and prayerfully to question, or to reason about its eternal state? Never. Do I seek to strengthen your doubts? No; but I wish to strengthen your tried and doubting faith. I would tell you for your encouragement, that the minutest particle of grace has eternal glory in it, even as the smallest seed virtually contains all that proceeds from it—the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear.**

**Faint not, nor be discouraged in your trial of faith. There is not a sweeter way to heaven than along the path of free grace, paved with hard trials. It was the way which he trod who was "full of grace." Rich though he was in grace, yet see how deeply he was tried. Think not, then, that your sore trials are signs of a graceless state. O no! The most gracious saints have been the most tried saints. But rest not here. There is still richer, surer comfort for you—even the fulness of grace that is in Jesus—grace ever flowing, and yet ever full. Disclose to him your doubts and fears. Tell him you desire him above all good. Plunge into the sea of his fulness; and he who has created in your soul a thirst for grace, will assuredly and bountifully give you the grace for which you thirst.**

**But there is one test—a gentle, sweet, and holy test—by which the most timid and doubting child of God may decide the genuineness of his Christian character: the evidence to which we allude is, LOVE TO THE SAINTS. "By**

**this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The grace which is here singled out, is the sweetest and the loveliest of all the graces. It is the product of the Holy Spirit, it flows from the heart of God, and it, more than all others, assimilates the heart to the nature of God, for "God is love." Without love, what is the actual value of all intellectual endowments, acquisitions of knowledge, understanding of mysteries, or even the achievements of faith? But small indeed. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing."**

**There is no truth more distinctly uttered, or more emphatically stated than this—the infinite superiority of love to gifts. And in pondering their relative position and value, let it be remembered, that the gifts which are here placed in competition with grace, are the highest spiritual gifts. Thus does the apostle allude to them: "God has set some in the Church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, after that of miracles, then gifts of healing." And then follows his expressive declaration—"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." In other words, "Though I were an apostle, having apostolic gifts; or, though I were a prophet, possessed of prophetic gifts; or, though I were an angel, clothed with angelic gifts, yet, destitute of the grace of love, my religion were but as an empty sound, nothing worth." Is there in all this any undervaluing of the spiritual gifts which the great exalted Head of the Church has bestowed upon his ministers? Far from it. The apostle speaks of the way of spiritual gifts as excellent, but of the way of the grace of love as a "more excellent." Gifts may be possessed separate from love—but existing alone, they cannot bring the soul to heaven. And love may exist apart from gifts, but where love is found, even alone, there is that sweet, excellent grace that will assuredly conduct its possessor to glory. Grace embellished with gifts is the more beautiful; but gifts without grace, are only a richer spoil for Satan.**

**And why this superiority of the grace of love? Why is it so excellent, so great, and so distinguished? Because God's love in the soul is a part of God himself—for, "God is love." It is, as it were, a drop of the essence of God falling into the heart of man. "He that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him." This grace of love is implanted in the soul at the period of its**

generation. The new creation is the restoration of the soul to God, the expulsion from the heart of the principle of enmity, and the flowing back of its affections to their original center. "Every one that loves is Born of God."

Is it again asked why the love of His saints is so costly in God's eye? Because it is a small fraction of the infinite love which He bears towards them. Does God delight Himself in His love to His Church? Has He set so high a value upon it as to give His own Son to die for it? Then, wherever he meets with the smallest degree of that love, He must esteem it more lovely, more costly, and more rare, than all the most splendid gifts that ever adorned the soul. "We love him because he first loved us." Here, then, is that grace in the soul of man which more than all others assimilates him to God. It comes from God, and it raises the soul to God, and it makes the soul like God.

How encouraging, then, to know the value which the Lord puts upon our poor returns of love to him! Of gifts we may have none, and even of love but little, yet of that little, who can unfold God's estimate of its preciousness? He looks upon it as a little picture of Himself. He sees in it a reflection—dim and imperfect indeed—of His own image. And as He gazes upon it, He seems to say—"Your abilities, my child, are humble, and your gifts are few: your knowledge is scanty, and your tongue is stammering; you can not speak for me, nor pray to me in public, by reason of the littleness of your attainments and the greatness of your infirmity; but you do love me, my child, and in that love which I behold, I see my nature, I see my heart, I see my image, I see myself; and that is more precious to me than all besides. Most costly to Him also are all your labors of love, and obedience of love, and sacrifices of love, and offerings of love, and sufferings of love. Yes, whatever blade, or bud, or flower, or fruit grows upon the stalk of love, it is most lovely, and precious, and fragrant to God.

But there is another point of light which still more strongly presents to view the superior excellence and preciousness of the grace of love. We allude to the manifested love of the saints to one another. The apostle presents this as a true test of Christian character. He does not say, as he in truth might have said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love God;" but placing the reality of this wondrous translation upon a lower evidence, the Holy Spirit, by the inspired writer, descends to the weakest exhibition of the grace which his own power had wrought, when he says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Thus, so costly in God's eye would appear this heaven-born, heaven-like grace, that

even the faint and imperfect manifestation of it by one saint to another, shall constitute a valid evidence of his relation to God, and of his heirship to life eternal.

Our blessed Lord, who is beautifully said to have been an incarnation of love, places the evidence of Christian discipleship on precisely the same ground. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." He might justly have concentrated all their affection upon himself, and thus have made their sole and supreme attachment to Him the only test of their discipleship. But no! In the exercise of that boundless benevolence which was never happy but as it was planning and promoting the happiness of others, he bids them "love one another," and condescends to accept of this as evidencing to the world, their oneness and love to himself.

We are at length conducted to the consideration of the subject to which this chapter more specifically invites our attention—CHRISTIAN LOVE, A TEST OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. The affection under consideration, let it be remarked, transcends all similar emotions embraced under the same general term. There is a natural affection, and a human affection, and a denominational affection, which often binds in the sweetest and closest union those who are of the same family, or of the same congregation, or who assimilate in mind, in temper, in taste, or in circumstance. But the affection of which we now speak, is of a higher order than this. We can find no parallel to it, not even in the pure, benevolent bosoms of angels, until, passing through the ranks of all created intelligences, we rise to GOD Himself. There, and there alone, we meet the counterpart of Christian love. Believer, the love for which we plead is love to the brethren—love to them as brethren. The church of God is one family, of which Christ is the Elder Brother, and "all are members one of another." It is bound by a moral tie the most spiritual, it bears a family likeness the most perfect, and it has a common interest in one hope, the most sublime. No climate, nor color, nor sect, affects the relationship. Do you meet one from the opposite hemisphere of the globe, having the image of Christ, manifesting the fruits of the Spirit; who in his walk and conversation is aiming to cultivate the heavenly dispositions and holy habits of the Gospel, and who is identifying himself with the cause of God and of truth, and you meet with a member of the one family, a brother in the Lord, one who calls your Father his Father, your Lord his Lord, and one, too, who has a higher claim upon your affection and your sympathy than the closest and the tenderest natural relation that life can command.

**But it is proper that we explain more clearly, in what the true UNITY of the church of God consists. The words of her Great Head shall be our sole authority and guide. "That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us." We commence with a declaration of a great truth, that the unity of the church of God, as set forth in this remarkable passage, is, her unity in the Triune God. Her unity in herself is the effect of a cause. She is one bodily, because she is spiritually and essentially one in Jehovah. The words, "One in us," convey the strongest idea, and afford the clearest evidence of her essential and individual unity, of any that exists. We commence with God the Father—she is one in Him. The apostle clearly states this in the Epistle to the Ephesians. "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." All who?—the one church of God. One covenant God and Father unites the one family in heaven and in earth. They are one in His choice, one in His purpose, one in His covenant, one in His heart. The same will chose them—the same affection loved them—the same decree predestinated them: they are one in Him. Blessed truth!**

**"One God and Father." Behold them clustering together around the mercy seat—they come from various parts of the world, they speak different languages, they express opposite feelings, they unfold various needs and sorrows—yet, listen! they all address Him as, "Our Father." Every heart bows in love to Him—every heart is fixed in faith upon Him, and every tongue breathes, the lofty, and endearing, and holy name of, "Abba, Father." There, in the glowing light amid which the throne of mercy stands, all sectarian feeling dies, all denominational distinction is lost, and Christians of every name meet, and embrace, and love as brethren. Holy thought! One God loves all and protects all—one Father pities all, supplies all, bears with all, and, with an impartial affection, binds all together and alike in his heart.**

**The church is also one in THE SON—"There is one Lord." The Lord Jesus is the one Head, as he is the one Foundation of the Church. All believers are chosen in Christ, blessed in Christ, saved in Christ, preserved in Christ, and in Christ will be glorified. The work of Christ is the one resting-place of their souls. They rely for pardon upon the same blood, for acceptance upon the same righteousness, and for sanctification upon the same grace. One in Christ, all other differences and distinctions are merged and forgotten. "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female, for You Are All One in Christ Jesus." Blessed truth! The "righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all those who believe," imparts the same completeness to all believers in Christ. Upon the breast-**

plate of the great High Priest, now within the veil, every name is alike written—not a sectarian appellation dims the luster of the "Urim and the Thummin," in whose glowing light the names of all the saints are alike enshrined.

What a uniting truth is this! Jesus is the one Head of life, light, and love, to all his saints. He carried the transgression of all—he bore the curse of all—he endured the hell of all—he pardons the sin of all—he supplies the need of all—he soothes the sorrows of all—and he lives and intercedes for all. To him all alike repair—it is true, with different degrees of knowledge and of faith, and from different points; yet, to Jesus, as to one Savior, one Brother, one Lord, they all alike come. Oh! what a cementing principle is this! The body of Christ—the purchase of the same blood, loved with the same affection, and in heaven represented by the same Advocate, and soon, O how soon, to be "glorified together with him!" What love, then, ought I to bear towards him whom Jesus has so loved! How can I feel coldly to, or look unkindly at, or speak uncharitably of, one whom Jesus has redeemed with the same precious blood, and whom he carries each moment in the same loving heart.

The Church of God, too, is equally one in the HOLY SPIRIT. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." With what increasing glory does this great truth unfold itself! We seem to be brought to the climax of the argument here. One Spirit regenerating all, fashioning all, teaching all, sealing all, comforting all, and dwelling in all. Degrees of grace, and "diversities of gifts" there are, "but the same Spirit." That same Spirit making all believers partakers of the same Divine nature, and then taking up his abode in each, must necessarily assimilate them in every essential quality, and feature, and attribute of the Christian character. Thus the unity of the Church is an essential and a hidden unity.

With all the differences of opinion, and the varieties of ceremonial, and the multiplicity of sects into which she is broken and divided, and which tend greatly to impair her strength, and shade her beauty, she is yet essentially and indivisibly ONE—her unity consisting, not in a uniformity of judgment, but, better far than this, in the "unity of the Spirit." Thus, no individual believer can with truth say, that he possesses the Spirit exclusively, boasting himself of what other saints have not; nor can any one section of the Christian Church lay claim to its being the only true Church, and that salvation is found only within its pale. These lofty pretensions, these exclusive claims, this vain-glory

and uncharitableness, are all demolished by one lightning touch of truth, even by that blessed declaration, "for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."

Behold, then, the threefold cord which unites the family of God. The ever blessed and glorious Trinity dwells in the Church, and the Church dwells in the blessed Trinity. Who can divide this body from itself, or separate it from God? Having thus endeavored to show in what the unity of the Church of God really consists, we proceed to the subject more especially before us—the manifestation of this unity by believers, and the evidence which it affords, and the consequent assurance which it imparts, of their personal relationship to God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

The feeling here referred to is a love to the saints, as saints. Whatever natural infirmities we may discover in them, whatever different shades of opinion they may hold from us, and to whatever branch of the Christian Church they may belong, yet the feeling which is to establish our own divine relationship, is a love to them as brethren. Irrespective of all dissonance of creed, of denomination, of gifts, of attainment, of rank, of wealth, of nation—when we meet in a Christian professor the image of Christ, the family-likeness, our love will prompt us immediately to recognize that individual as a believer in Jesus, and to acknowledge him as a brother in the Lord.

And what are the grounds of my affection? I may esteem his character, and prize his gifts—may admire his talents, and feel there is an assimilation of disposition, of taste, and of judgment—but my Christian love springs from an infinitely higher and holier source. I love him because the Father is in him, and because the Son is in him, and because the Holy Spirit is in him. I love him because he is an adopted child of the same family, a member of Christ, and the same body, and a temple of the same Holy Spirit. I love him that is begotten, because I love him that begat. It is Christ in one believer, going out after himself in another believer. It is the Holy Spirit in one temple, holding fellowship with himself in another temple. And from hence it is that we gather the evidence of our having "passed from death unto life." "He that loves him that begat, loves him also that is begotten." Loving the Divine Original, we love the human copy, however imperfect the resemblance. The Spirit of God dwelling in the regenerate soul, yearns after the image of Jesus, wherever it is found. It pauses not to inquire, to what branch of the Christian Church the individual resembling him belongs; that with which it has to do is the

resemblance itself. Now, if we discover this going out of the heart in sweet, and holy, and prayerful affection towards every believer in Christ—be his denominational name what it may—the most to those who most bear the Savior's image, then have we the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us.

A surer evidence we cannot have. There is the affection which surmounts all the separating walls of partition in the Church, and in spite of sects, and parties, and creeds, demonstrates its own divine nature and heavenly birth, by its blending with the same affection glowing in the bosom of another. And where this love to the brethren exists not at all, in any Christian professor, we ask that individual, with all the tenderness of affection consistent with stern faithfulness, where is the evidence of your union with the body of Christ? You have turned away with contractedness of heart, and with frigidity of manner, if not with secret disdain, from one whom God loves, whom Christ has redeemed, and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, because he belonged not to your sect. Yes, you have turned away with coolness and suspicion from Christ himself! How can you love the Father and hate the child? What affection have you for the Elder Brother, while you despise the younger? And if you are a living branch of the same Vine, can you, while, cherishing those feelings which exclude from your affection, from your sympathies, and from your fellowship, other Christians, more deeply; wound Jesus, or more effectually grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom they are "sealed unto the day of redemption?"

Perhaps, my brother, you have long walked in darkness and uncertainty as to the fact of your own personal adoption into the family of God. Anxious fear and distressing doubt have taken the place of a holy assurance and a peaceful persuasion that you are one of the Lord's people. In endeavoring to trace this painful state of mind to its cause, did it ever occur to you, that your lack of enlargement of heart towards all saints, especially towards those of other branches of the same family, has, in all probability, so grieved the Spirit of adoption, that he has withheld from your own soul that clear testimony, that direct witness by which your interest in the covenant love of God, and your union with Christ, would have been clearly made known to you? You have grieved that same Spirit in your brother, who dwells in you, and upon whom you are so dependent for all your sweet consolation and holy desires; and he has suspended the light, and peace, and joy of your own soul.

But here is a test of relationship to the family of God which never fails. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." From this, the weakest believer may extract the greatest

consolation. Other evidences, beloved, may be beclouded. Divine knowledge may be deficient, and Christian experience may be limited, and the question, "Am I a child of God?" may long have been one of painful doubt; but here is an evidence which cannot deceive. You may doubt your love to God, but your love to His people, as such, proves the existence and the reality of your love to Him. Your attachment to them, because they are holy, is an evidence of your own holiness, which no power can invalidate or set aside. Since the Holy Spirit has constituted it as evidence, and since God admits it as such, we press its comfort, with all the energy which we possess, upon the heart of the doubting, trembling child of God. You may often have questioned the reality of your love to God, scarcely daring to claim an affection so great as this. Your attachment to Jesus, so inconstant, so wavering and so cold, may often have raised the anxious fear and the perplexing doubt. But your love to the people of God has been like a sheet-anchor to your soul. This you have not questioned, and you could not doubt. You have loved them because they were the people of God; you have felt an attachment to them because they were the disciples of Christ.

What can this prove, but your love to God, your affection to Jesus, and your own participation in the same Divine nature? It were a thing impossible for you to love that which is holy without a corresponding principle of holiness in yourself. Speaking of the enmity of the ungodly against his people, our Lord employs, this language: "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Now, if there is the opposite feeling to this, glowing in your hearts, be sure that, as the hatred of the world to the saints proves that it loves only its own, so your love to the saints places the fact of your union with them beyond all doubt.

Try your heart, beloved, by this test. Do you not love the people of God because they are His people? Is not Christ's image in them, that upon which you so delight to gaze, and, gazing upon which, often enkindles your soul with love to Christ himself? And do you not love to gather the choicest flowers of grace in the Lord's garden—growing in what bed they may—as those in whom your soul has the greatest delight—their different tints, their varied beauties and odors, rather increasing, than diminishing, the pleasure which they afford you? Then, let every Christian professor test his religion by this grace. Let him who has been wont to retire within his own narrow enclosure ask himself the question, "If I love not my brother whom I have seen, how can I love God whom I have not seen?"

**Let us now briefly trace some of the operations of this heaven-born grace of Christian love, by which its real existence in our hearts is proved. We have endeavored to show, that it recognizes as brethren, all who are partakers of like precious faith with us, who hold Christ the head, who walk according to the Gospel of Christ, and who are laboring and seeking for the coming of his kingdom. We will now proceed to portray some of the EFFECTS of brotherly love.**

**It tenderly sympathizes with all the suffering believers. Here is the evidence of our own membership with the family of God. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." And it is in this exercise of Christian sympathy that "the members have the same care one for another." The Church of God is a suffering Church. All the members are, more or less, and variously, tried. Many are the burdens of the saints. It would be impossible, we think, to find one, whose lip has not touched the cup of sorrow, whose spirit has not felt the pressure of trouble. Some walk in doubt and darkness—some are particularly set up as a mark for Satan—some suffer from a nervous temperament, discoloring every bright and beautiful picture of life—some are the subjects of personal affliction, pining sickness excluding them from all participation in the songs of Zion and the solemn assemblies of the saints—some are bereaved, sorrowing like Rachel for her children, or mourning, like the sisters of Bethany, for their brother. Some are suffering from narrowed and exhausted resources; and there may do not be a few, suffering even from actual poverty itself.**

**Ah! how many will say, "You have touched upon every sorrow but mine,"—so extensive is the field of Christian sympathy! But what scope for the play of those heaven-born affections begotten in the heart of each true believer! "A new commandment give I unto you," says Christ, "that you love one another." And how is this commandment to be obeyed? The apostle answers, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Therefore the bearing of one another's burdens is a necessary effect and proper exercise of this holy love. It will delight to recognize the suffering Savior in his suffering members. And it will go and lift the pressure from the spirit, and chase the sorrow from the heart, and dry the tear from the eye, and supply the pressing need. And if it cannot accomplish this, it will take its place by the side of the sufferer, sharing the sorrow and the need it has no power to comfort or remove. Is this law of Christ—the law of love—thus exhibited in you?**

**"Do you love Christ? I ask not if you feel  
The warm excitement of that party zeal  
Which follows on, while others lead the way,  
And make his cause the fashion of the day  
But do you love him when his garb is mean;  
Nor shrink to let your fellowship be seen?  
Do you love Jesus, blind; and halt, and maimed?  
In prison support him; nor feel ashamed  
To own him, though his injured name may be  
A mark for some dark slander's obloquy?  
Do you love Jesus in the orphan's claim,  
And bid the widow welcome in his name?  
Say not, 'When saw we him?'—Each member dear,  
Poor and afflicted, wears his image here;  
And if unvalued or unknown by you,  
Where can your union with the Body be?  
And if you thus are to the body dead,  
Where is your life in Christ the living Head?  
And if dissevered from the living Vine,  
How can you dream that you have life divine!**

**"Sweet is the union true believers feel  
Into one Spirit they have drunk; the seal  
Of God is on their hearts—and thus they see  
In each the features of one family!  
If one is suffering—all the rest are sad;  
If but the least is honored—all are glad.  
The grace of Jesus, which they all partake,  
Flows out in mutual kindness for his sake;  
Here he has left them for a while to wait,  
And represent him in their suffering state;  
While he, though glorified, as yet alone,  
Bears the whole church before the Father's throne."**

**In the exercise of brotherly love, there will also be a tender forbearance with all who differ from us in judgment. The exercise of private judgment is the natural and inalienable right of every individual. Sanctified by the Spirit of God, it becomes a precious privilege of the believer. He prizes it more than riches, claims it as one of the immunities of his heavenly citizenship, and will surrender it only with life itself. Christian love will avoid infringing, in the**

least degree, upon this sacred right. I am bound, by the law of love, to concede to my brother, to its fullest extent, that which I claim for myself. I am, moreover, bound to believe him conscientious and honest in the views which he holds, and that he maintains them in a reverence for the word, and in the exercise of the fear of God.

He does not see eye to eye with me in every point of truth—our views of church government, of ordinances, and of some of the doctrines, are not alike. And yet, discerning a perfect agreement as to the one great and only way of salvation; and, still more, marking in him much of the lowly, loving spirit of his Master, and an earnest desire, in simplicity and godly sincerity, to serve him, how can I cherish or manifest towards him any other than a feeling of brotherly love? God loves him, God bears with him, and Christ may see in him, despite of a creed less accurately balanced with the word of truth than mine, a walk more in harmony with the holy, self-denying, God-glorifying precepts of that truth. With an orthodoxy less perfect, there maybe a life more holy. With less illumination in the judgment, there may be more grace in the heart. How charitable in my interpretation, then, how loving in my spirit, how kind and gentle in my manner, should I be towards him!

How jealous, too, ought I to be of that independence of mind, in the exercise of which he may, notwithstanding, have arrived at conclusions opposite to my own! Cherishing these feelings, Christians who differ in judgment, will be placed in a more favorable position for the understanding of one another's views, and for the united examination of the word of God. Diversity of judgment, through the infirmity of our fallen nature, is apt to beget alienation of feeling; and, consequently, the development of truth is hindered. But where harmony of affection is cultivated, there will be a greater probability of arriving at more perfect agreement in sentiment, thus walking in accordance with the Apostle's rule—"I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment."

Another exercise of Christian love will be its endeavors to avoid all occasions of offence. These, through the many and fast-clinging infirmities of the saints of God, will often occur. But they are to be avoided, and in the exercise of that love which proves our Christian character, they will be avoided. The child of God will desire to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Whatever tends to weaken that bond, he will endeavor to lay aside. Whatever

he may discover in his communion with the saints calculated to wound, to distress, to alienate, to offend, either in his manner, or in his spirit, the healthy exercise of holy love will constrain him to overcome. He will avoid giving offence. He will be modest in the expression of his own opinion, respectful and deferential towards the opinion of others. He will avoid that recklessness of spirit which, under the cover of faithfulness, cares not to estimate consequences; but which, pursuing its heedless way, often crushes beneath its rough-shod heel the finest feelings of the human heart; saying and doing what it pleases, regardless of the wounds which, all the while, it is deeply and irreparably inflicting.

How sedulous, too, will he be to avoid anything like a dictatorial manner in enunciating his judgment, and all hard words and strong expressions in differing from authorities of equal, perhaps of greater weight than his own. Oh! were this divine affection but more deeply lodged in the hearts of all those who 'profess and call themselves Christians,' what courtesy of manner—what grace of deportment—what tender regard of one another's feelings—what kindness in word and in action—what carefulness to avoid inflicting even a momentary pain—what putting away, as becomes saints, all wrath, anger, evil speaking, and malice—and what constant remembrance of his solemn words, who said, "Whoever shall offend one of these little ones who believe in me, it were better that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea,"—would each believer exhibit! Lord, fill our souls more and more with this lovely grace of love!

The forgiveness of offences is an operation of Christian love, equally as essential and beautiful. If there is a single exercise of divine grace in which, more than in any other, the believer resembles God, it is this. God's love to man is exhibited in one great and glorious manifestation and a single word expresses it—FORGIVENESS. In nothing has He so gloriously revealed Himself as in the exercise of this divine prerogative. Nowhere does He appear so like Himself as here. He forgives sin, and the pardon of sin involves the bestowment of every other blessing. How often are believers called upon thus to imitate God! And how like Him in spirit, in affection, and in action do they appear, when, with true greatness of soul and with lofty magnanimity of mind, they fling from their hearts, and efface from their memories, all traces of the offence that has been given, and of the injury that has been received!

How affecting and illustrious the example of the expiring Redeemer! At the moment that his deepest wound was inflicted, as if blotting out the sin and its

remembrance with the very blood that it shed, he prayed, as the last drop oozed and as the last breath departed, "Father, forgive them!" How fully and fearfully might he have avenged himself at that moment! A stronger than Samson hung upon the cross. And as he bowed his human nature and yielded up his spirit, he could as easily have bowed the pillars of the universe, burying his murderers beneath its ruins. But no! he was too great for this. His strength should be on the side of mercy. His revenge should impose itself in compassion. He would heap coals of fire upon their heads. He would overcome and conquer the evil—but he would overcome and conquer it with good. "Father, FORGIVE them."

It is in the constant view of this forgiveness that the followers of Christ desire, on all occasions of offence given, whether real or imaginary, to "forgive those who trespass against them." Themselves the subjects of a greater and diviner forgiveness, they would be prompt to exercise the same holy feeling towards an offending brother. In the remembrance of the ten thousand talents from whose payment his Lord has released him, he will not hesitate to cancel the hundred pence owed to him by his fellow-servant.

Where, then, will you find any exercise of brotherly love more God-like and divine than this? Forgiveness, in its immediate proposal, its greatest sweetness and richest charm appear. The longer forgiveness is delayed, the more difficult becomes the duty. The imagination is allowed to dwell upon, and the mind to brood over, a 'slight offence' received, perhaps never intended, until it has increased to such a magnitude as almost to extend, in the eye of the aggrieved party, beyond the limit of forgiveness. And then follows an endless train of evils; the wound festers and inflames; the breach widens; coldness is manifested; malice is cherished; every word, look, and act, are misinterpreted; the molehill grows into a mountain, and the little rivulet swells into an ocean, and happiness and peace retire from scenes so uncongenial, and from hearts so full of all hatred and strife.

But how lovely in its appearance, and how pleasurable in the feelings it enkindles, is a prompt exercise of Christian forgiveness! Before the imagination has had time to play, or the wound to fester, or ill-minded people to interfere, Christian love has triumphed, and all is forgiven! How full of meaning is our blessed Lord's teaching on this point of Christian duty! It behooves us prayerfully and constantly to ponder his word. Peter inquired of him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him until seven times? Jesus says unto him, I say not, Until seven times, but, Until

seventy times seven." Thus, true love has no limits to its forgiveness. If it observes in the bosom of the offender, the faintest marks of regret, of contrition, and of return, like Him from whose heart it comes, it is "ready to forgive," even "until seventy times seven."

O who can tell the debt we owe to His repeated, perpetual forgiveness? And shall I refuse to be reconciled to my brother? Shall I withhold from him the hand of love, and let the sun go down upon my wrath? Because he has trampled upon me, who have so often acknowledged myself the chief of sinners; because he has slighted my self-importance, or has wounded my pride, or has grieved my too sensitive spirit, or, it is possible, without just cause, has uttered hard speeches, and has lifted up his heel against me. Shall I keep alive the embers of an unforgiving spirit in my heart? Or rather, shall I heap coals of fire upon his head, not to consume him with wrath, but to overcome him with love? How has God my Father, how has Jesus my Redeemer, my Friend, dealt with me? Even so will I deal with my offending brother. I will not even wait until he comes and acknowledges his fault. I will go to him and tell him that, at the mercy-seat, beneath the cross, with my eye upon the loving, forgiving heart of God, I have resolved to forgive all, and will forget all. "And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

But some may reply, The breach is of so long standing, it is now too late to seek reconciliation. An old and acute writer thus meets the objection: "Well, then, if it be too late, give me leave to entreat one thing at your hands; it is this: I say if it be too late, and you say it is too late to be reconciled and to love one another, let me entreat this, that you should lay aside your garments—the garments of your profession of being Christ's disciples. For our Savior says, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." And, therefore, if it be too late to love one another, and to be reconciled, come and let us lay down our garments, let us lay down our profession of being the disciples of Christ; yes; let us lay down our expectation of heaven too, for says the apostle, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' And is not passion, malice, and lack of love, flesh and blood? Certainly, certainly, if I do not walk in this way of love, it is not all my parts and all my gifts that will bail me from the arrest of that scripture, 'Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.' Believe it, believe it, it is not too late, it is not too late to love one another; it is not too late to do my

work as long as it is not too late to receive my wages. And if I say, it is too late to be reconciled, what if God say to me, then it is too late for my soul to be saved?

And oh! what a lovely spectacle would it be—a spectacle on which angels would look down with delight—to see, in the exercise of this all-divine, all-powerful, all-expulsive emotion of Christian love, individuals, or families, or churches, who had long been at variance one with another, now drawn together in sweet affection, past injuries and old animosities forgotten in the joys of perfect reconciliation, forgiveness, and love! Let the holy attempt be made. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, affections of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you."

Christian forbearance is another beautiful exhibition of this feeling. The image of God is but imperfectly restored in the renewed soul. The resemblance to Christ in the most matured believer, is at best but a faint copy. In our communion with the saints of God, we often meet with much that calls for the exercise of our forbearance—many weaknesses of the flesh and of the spirit; and many peculiarities of thought and of manner. There are, too, diversities of gifts, and degrees of grace. Some are more deeply taught than others—some are strong, and some are weak—some travel rapidly, and others slowly—some are fearless and courageous, others are timid and scrupulous. Now all these things call for the exercise of Christian forbearance. The apostle clearly defines the rule that should guide us here—"We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."

Especially in 'church fellowship' will the grace of forbearance be called in requisition. When the providence of God has thrown together a community of individuals, composed of a great variety of character, and of mind, and of constitutional temperament, although each grade may be more or less modified by the renewing of the Spirit, there will still be a broad field for the passive exercise of love. In a church, necessarily imperfect, there may be found to exist many things, in which taste as well as judgment will be found at fault, calculated to engender a feeling of dislike, and even of disgust, in a mind refined and delicate. But here Christian forbearance must be exercised. They are the infirmities of the weak of Christ's flock, and they who are stronger in grace should kindly and patiently bear them.

**In pursuing a different course, we may wound some of the most gracious, humble, and prayerful saints of God. We may be but little aware with what frequent and deep humiliation in secret, their conscious failings may overwhelm them. And we ought to bear in mind, that if we sometimes might wish to see in them less that was rough in speech, and abrupt and forward in manner, and fault-finding in disposition, they may detect in us a loftiness of spirit, a coldness of manner, and an apparent haughtiness of carriage, which may be an equal trial to them, demanding the exercise on their part of the same grace of forbearance towards us. How watchful, how tender, how kind, then, should we be, ever standing with that broad mantle of love in our hands, which "is patient and kind; which seeks not its own; is not easily provoked," prepared to cast it over the failing of a Christian brother, the moment it meets the eye!**

**The duty of brotherly admonition and reproof is a perfectly legitimate exercise of Christian love. It may be found the most difficult, but the result will prove it to be the most holy and precious operation of this grace. The Church of God is one family, linked together by ties and interests the closest, the holiest, and the tenderest. It is natural, therefore, that each member should desire for the others the utmost perfection of Christian attainment, and must feel honored or dishonored, as the case may be, by the walk and conversation of those with whom the relationship is so close. In Christian friendship, too, the same feeling is recognized. We naturally feel anxious to see in one whom we tenderly love, the removal of whatever detracts from the beauty, the symmetry, and the perfection of Christian character. Here, then, will the duty of brotherly admonition and reproof, find its appropriate sphere of exercise. But few things contribute more to the formation of Christian character, and to the holy walk of a church, than the faithful, Christ-like discharge of this duty.**

**It is true, it requires an extraordinary degree of grace in him who administers, and in him who receives, the reproof. That in the one there should be nothing of the spirit which seems to say, "Stand by, I am holier than you;" nothing to give needless pain or humiliation, but the utmost meekness, gentleness, and tenderness; and that in the other, there should be the tractable and humble mind, that admits the failing, receives the reproof, and is grateful for the admonition. "Let the righteous smite me," says David, "it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil." "He that refuses reproof errs, and he that hears reproof gets understanding, and shall be honored. Open rebuke is better than secret love; and faithful are the wounds of a**

friend." Thus, while this duty is administered and received in the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus, the Church will be kindly affectioned one to another, knit together in love, and growing up into that state in which she will be without a spot, or a wrinkle, or any such thing.

True Christian love will avoid taking the seat of judgment. There are few violations of the law of love more common than those rash and premature 'infallible' judgments, which some Christians are ever ready to pronounce upon the actions, the principles, and the motives of others. And yet a more difficult and delicate position, no Christian man can be placed in than this. To form a true and correct opinion of a certain line of conduct, we must often possess the heart-searching eye of God. We must be intimately acquainted with all the hidden motives, and must be fully in possession of all the concomitant circumstances of the case, before we can possibly arrive at anything like an accurate opinion. Thus, in consequence of this blind, premature judgment, this rash and hasty decision; the worst possible construction is often put upon the actions and the remarks of others, extremely unjust and deeply wounding to the feelings.

But especially inconsistent with this love, when small unessential differences of opinion in the explanation of scriptural facts, and consequent nonconformity in creed and discipline, are construed into rejection of the faith once delivered to the saints, and made the occasion of hard thoughts, unkind and severe treatment. Let us then hear the Lord's words, "Judge not, lest you be judged." And the apostle's, "Why do you judge your brother? Or why do you set at nothing your brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us not therefore judge one another any more."

Christian liberality, in alleviating the necessities of the Lord's poor, is an attribute of brotherly love which we must not pass by unnoticed. The greater number of the Lord's people are "poor in this world." "I will leave in the midst of you a poor and an afflicted people, and they shall trust in the Lord." The poor, the Church has always with her. They are a precious legacy committed to her care by her ascended Lord. The line of Christian duty is clear respecting them. Even in the old dispensation, we find more than a dim shadowing forth of this duty. "If your brother becomes poor, you shall relieve him. You shall not give him your money on interest, nor lend him your food for increase." "If there be among you a poor man of one of your brethren, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother: but you shall open your hand wide unto him, and shall surely lend him sufficient

**for his need. And your heart shall not be grieved, you shall not begrudge the gift, but shall give cheerfully, when you give unto him."**

**This duty becomes still more obligatory, and is enforced with still stronger motives, under the Christian dispensation. "Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Thus, "by love we serve one another." And what holy luxury of feeling has the Lord associated with the discharge of this Christian duty! Who has not realized, in walking in this sweet and lovely precept, a blessing peculiar to itself? Who has not felt that it was "more blessed to give than to receive;" that in this walk, the greatest expenditure has always resulted in the greatest increase; and that in supplying Christ's need in his poor, tried, and necessitous representatives, Christ has himself met us in the way with some manifest token of his gracious approval?**

**O for more love to Christ as exhibited towards his people! To see only Christ in them—be they lowly, or poor, or tried, or infirm, or despised, or reviled, or sick, or in prison, or in bonds—to recognize Christ in them, and to love Christ in them, and to serve Christ in them. This would bring more sweet discoveries of the indwelling of Christ in our own souls. How could we show our love to Christ in another, and not feel the sunshine of his love in our own hearts? Impossible! Oh! to hear him speak when the case of need presents itself, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto ME!"**

**True Christian love will excite in the mind, a holy jealousy for the Christian reputation of other believers. How sadly is this overlooked by many professors! What sporting with reputation, what trifling with character, what unveiling to the eyes of others, the weaknesses, and the infirmities, and the stumblings, of which they have become cognizant; marks many in our day! Oh! if the Lord had dealt with us, as we have thoughtlessly and uncharitably dealt with our fellow-servants, what shame and confusion would cover us! We would blush to lift up our faces before men. But the exercise of this divine love in the heart, will constrain us to abstain from all envious, suspicious feelings; from all evil surmisings; from all wrong construing of motives; from all tale-bearing—that fruitful cause of so much evil in the Christian church; from slander; from unkind insinuations; and from going from house to house, retailing evil, and making the imperfections, the errors, or the doings of others, the theme of idle, sinful gossip—"busy-bodies in other men's matters."**

**All this is utterly inconsistent with our high and holy calling. It is degrading, dishonoring, lowering to our character as the children of God. It dims the luster of our piety. It impairs our spiritual influence in the world. Ought not the character of a Christian brother to be as dear to me as my own? And ought I not as vigilantly to watch over it, and as zealously to promote it, and as indignantly to vindicate it, when unjustly aspersed or maliciously assailed, as if I, and not he, were the sufferer? How can the reputation of a believer in Jesus be affected, and we not be affected? It is our common Lord who is wounded—it is our common salvation that is injured—it is our own family that is maligned. And our love to Jesus, to his truth, and to his people, should caution us to be as jealous of the honor, as tender of the feelings, and as watchful of the character and reputation of every member of the Lord's family, be his denomination what it may, as of our own. "Who is weak," says the apostle, "and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"**

**O how graciously, how kindly does our God deal with His people! Laying His hand upon their many spots, He seems to say, "No eye but mine shall see them." Oh! let us, in this particular, be "imitators of God as dear children!" Thus shall we more clearly evidence to others, and be assured ourselves, that we have "passed from death unto life." But, inviting as it is, we must conduct this subject to a close.**

**Anticipate the happiness of heaven. It is a world of love. Love reigns in every heart—beams from every eye—glows on every cheek, and breathes from every lip. Nothing is there tending to interrupt the deepest flow of this, the holiest, the divinest, and the sweetest of all affections. The God of love is there; and Jesus, the revelation of love, is there; and the Holy Spirit, the revealer of love, is there; and from the infinite plenitude of each, the glorified spirits receive and drink full and everlasting draughts of love. O blissful regions these, where there are no more strifes, and divisions, and selfishness, and pride, and ambition, and coldness, and discord; but where the songs are the music of love; and the trees wave in the winds of love; and the rivers flow with the fulness of love; and the air is balmy with the soothing of love; and the bowers are fragrant with the odors of love! "Love is the golden chain that binds the happy souls above, And he's an heir of heaven, who finds his bosom glow with love."**

**Let us more deeply cherish in our bosoms this heaven-born affection; let us cultivate it more and more towards all with whom we hope to spend our**

**eternity of joy. Let us "love as brethren." Why should we 'fall out by way,' when we are journeying to the same land of promise? And why should we stand aloof from one another, when We are All One in Christ Jesus?**

**"We are ONE in Christ our Lord,  
Time has no chain to bind us,  
We fear not death's sharp sword,  
And the grave we leave behind us."**

**"We are ONE in faith below,  
In hope and consolation,  
Though garb and colors show  
Shadows of variation."**

**"We are ONE in love divine,  
Each stony heart renewing,  
Let it reflected shine,  
Christians, your hearts imbuing."**

**"We are ONE from Christ's last prayer,  
Whom the Father hears ever,  
And how can we despair,  
Who from his love can sever?"**

**"We are ONE in homes on high,  
Which Jesus is preparing,  
For the blessed ones who die,  
One cross, one glory sharing."**

**"We are ONE in Christ our Lord,  
O You, of peace the Giver  
From every strife abhorred  
Your family deliver."**

**"We are ONE in Christ our Lord,  
He speaks who knows no turning,  
And we stay upon his word,  
Its light afar discerning."**

**"We are ONE in Christ our Lord,**

**Though earth and hell endeavor  
To change his mighty word,  
Its truth abides ever."**