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THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

By Octavius Winslow, 1864

PREFACE

The 'foot of the Cross' is a sacred "household word" in the family of God—rich in the Divine truths and precious in the Christian experience it is employed to express. Adopting this familiar but emphatic phrase, the author has sought in these pages to expound and illustrate, in a few instances, its tender and solemn significance. He has aimed to show how all vital, *saving* truth centers in, and all *sanctifying* and comforting blessing springs from, the *Cross of Christ*. The discussion of this comprehensive and sublime theme, in the present instance, is limited and faulty—as the most elaborate and finished human exposition of such a theme must necessarily be. It is but here and there he has plucked a cluster of fruit bending from this Tree of Life, or has gathered a flower, blooming in beauty and breathing in fragrance, beneath its hallowed shade. Still, if his imperfect labor shall have attracted some truth-perplexed mind, some sin-burdened conscience, some sorrow-stricken heart, some hope-despairing soul to the 'foot of the cross,' there to experience the precious blessing sought, he will not regret having presented to the Church of God even this partial and imperfect discussion of a theme which the combined intellect of heaven could not fully unfold, nor the study and contemplation of eternity utterly exhaust—*the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Reader! study these pages with fervent prayer to the Holy Spirit that He, through this dim medium, might unveil to you, in some degree, the glory of Christ's *finished work*, guide your trembling steps to the foot of the cross, give

you simple faith in the Crucified, and thus bring you into a state of *Perfect Peace with God* through Christ.

"It is finished!—but what mortal dare
In that triumph hope to share?
Savior, to Your cross I flee;
Say, It is finished! and for me.
"Then will I sing, The cross! the cross!
And count all other gain but loss;
I'll sing the cross, and to Your tree
Cling evermore, blessed Calvary!"

To the benediction of the Triune Jehovah this little volume is prayerfully commended.

February 1864.

"Nearness to the Cross"

"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." John 19:25

It was a mournful yet an unspeakably precious and enviable spot around which now clustered these holy watchers! They had been to our Lord as ministering spirits in many an hour of weariness and need. With true feminine delicacy, they had followed Him, silently and meekly, in the distance, approaching His person but to receive from Him a blessing or to bestow upon Him a charity. Their love was not ostentatious, nor were their attentions officious and wearying. Gentle, yet softening as the dew—silent, yet cheering as the sunbeam, they hovered around His lone and dreary path, shedding upon it the luster and the soothing of their holy sympathy, and in seasons of sinking necessity and exhausting toil, "ministering to Him of their substance."
And now that His disciples, pledged and sworn to a friendship and faithfulness unto death, had, in the dark hour of His woe, one by one all forsaken Him, these holy women drew near and took their position as sentinels at the cross, watching the descending sun of His life, as, amid suffering, darkness, and blood, it set in death. But a deeper love and a higher life than nature owns had brought them here. Christ had wrought wonders of grace for these women. They were lost, and He had found them; sinners, and

He had saved them. Their sins He was now bearing, their curse He was now exhausting, their penalty of suffering He was now enduring. For them were these agonies, this soul-sorrow, this blood-shedding, and this death. And now that He was afflicted of God, tortured of man, deserted by friends, insulted by foes, lo! amid the darkness and the earthquake, the insults and the imprecations, "there stood by the cross of Jesus; His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." Honored women! envied spot! But how suggestive in its spiritual instruction is this scene! To its study let us devoutly turn.

Although eighteen hundred years have elapsed since that scene occurred, the believer in Jesus still spiritually lives it over. The cross of Christ is still the central object of attraction to the Church of God. Around it in faith and love a countless throng daily, hourly gather of Christ-believing, Christ-loving souls, finding cleansing in its blood, extracting joy from its sorrow, deriving life from its death, and beholding the brightness of glory blended with the darkness of shame.

But is this the true spiritual position and posture of every believer in Jesus? Are all the professed disciples of the Savior seeking and cultivating the religion that is drawn only from, and is cherished only by, close communion with the cross of Christ? Are we walking with God in a sense of pardoned sin, of personal acceptance, of filial communion, of holy obedience, of unreserved consecration beneath the cross? Do we delight to be here? Do we resort there that grace might be replenished, that the fruits of the Spirit might be nourished, that backslidings might be healed, that the conscience might be cleansed? Is the cross of Jesus our confessional, our laver, our crucifixion, and our boast? These are searching, solemn questions! Persuaded, as we are, that the foot of the cross is the nearest spot to Heaven, that Heaven's choicest blessings are found only there; that, beneath its warm sunshine the holy fruit of the Spirit ripens, and that under its sacred shade the sweetest repose is found; that, never is the believing soul so near to God, in such intimate fellowship with Christ, more really under the direct teaching of the Holy Spirit, as when there, we would sincerely employ every scriptural argument and put forth every persuasive motive to allure the reader to this hallowed spot, assured that, once he finds himself in believing, loving adoration at the foot of Christ's cross, he has found himself at the focus of all divine glory, and at the confluence of all spiritual blessing.

A few words of explanation in the outset. The foot of the cross! What do we

mean by the words? *Literally*, the cross was an ancient instrument of torture among the Romans, to which only those were subjected who were considered by the state as the greatest and most ignominious malefactors. To be crucified was considered a mark of ineffable infamy and disgrace, and its death one of lingering and indescribable agony. Such was the nature, character, and instrument of our Lord's death! Jesus of Nazareth was crucified upon a tree. The Son of God, suspended between two malefactors, died the accursed death of the cross, voluntarily enduring its torture, and uncomplainingly submitting to its infamy—to such suffering and abasement could incarnate love stoop! Hence the frequent expression of the Bible, "The cross of Christ."

Symbolically, the cross of Christ represents *the doctrine of the cross*, and is an expression equivalent to *the atonement of the Son of God*, by which we, who were once at variance with God, rebels against His being, government, and truth, are now reconciled, brought into a state of at-one-ment with Jehovah. Thus, "we who some time were afar off, are made near by the blood of Christ."

But, *spiritually*, we understand by the expression the believer's close realization of the moral power of the cross, his fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, and the believing, lowly posture of the soul at the spot where concentrate the blessings of grace here, and where bloom the *first fruits* of glory hereafter.

The spiritually depressed state of the soul which this position meets, is more serious and prevalent than is generally suspected by the saints of God. There is no part of the circumference of divine truth or of Christian experience so remote from Christ the center, at which the believer may not at some period of his course find himself in his unsuspected wanderings. The planet revolving round the sun, the needle pointing to the pole, have not a stronger tendency to oscillate from the center of attraction, than the renewed soul to recede to a remote distance from Jesus. *Nearness to the cross!*—alas! it is the exception and not the rule. *Standing by the cross!*—it is the privileged position of the few and not the many. The world, in some one, or all, of its many forms of power—the creature, in its unsuspected yet insinuating influence—*unbelief*, in its latent yet ever-potent force—*sin*, in its indwelling and ever-working sway, allures the soul from the cross. And so the Christian disciple, unconscious of the spiritual declension of his heart from Christ, finds himself moving in a distant orbit, cold, and dreary, far remote from the warm, genial influence of the Sun beneath whose divine beams he was wont so joyously to bask in the

days of his "first love." "And Peter followed Him afar off." And in that distant walk, that orbit far removed from the Divine Center, that starting off to the utmost limit of departure, he had become a wandering and a blasted star forever—as he was an eclipsed constellation for the moment—but for the power of God that kept him, and the Savior's love that interceded for him, and the divine grace that restored him. That distance of walk led to his denial of his Lord. To what deep declension must the work of the Holy Spirit in his soul have sunk to have issued in an event in his spiritual history so appalling, and in a crime against his Savior so great! There is no security, as there is no enjoyment, of the believer in the distance of his soul from the cross. We tread enchanted ground when we walk where the sanctifying power of the cross is not recognized and felt. Jesus is not known, His cross is not recognized, His love is not felt in the walks of worldly gaiety and in the haunts of carnal pleasure. These things are divided from the cross by a wide and ever-separating gulf. You cannot, my reader, mingle with the world and maintain at the same time spiritual nearness to the cross. The cross is the crucifier of the world, the death of sin. Beneath its awful shadow, brought to its sacred foot, the world's glory pales, sin's power is paralyzed, and Satan, the arch-tempter, recoiling from its brightness and writhing beneath its death-bruise, relinquishes his victim, and retires, defeated and dishonored, to his own place.

The inquiry naturally arises in this part of our subject, What are some of THE EVIDENCES OF NEARNESS TO THE CROSS? In other words, What are the true tests by which the believer may ascertain the spiritual position of his soul? Without anticipating subsequent parts of this volume, let a few words suffice to meet this inquiry.

The first we quote is, ardent love to Jesus. The cross, rugged and gory, heavy and offensive, possesses no beauty or attraction apart from Him who was nailed to its wood. That which makes Calvary the most hallowed spot to the believer, and the cross the most attractive spectacle on earth, is the wonderful Being who there poured out His soul unto death, a self-consumed victim amid the fires of His own love. "Zeal for your house will consume me." Associated with a Redeemer so divine, with a salvation so stupendous, with sufferings so unparalleled, with a death so atoning, with a heaven so glorious, with a fact so strange—the Sinless condemned, that the guilty might go free; the Blessed bearing the curse, that the accursed might bear the blessing; the Living dying, that the dead might live; the Glorious covered with shame, that the abased might be covered with glory; Christ enduring our hell, that we might enjoy His heaven—blended, we say, with transfers so strange and with blessings so

precious, it is not surprising the warm and supreme attachment of the believer to Him who died upon the cross. Here, then, is a true test of your soul's nearness to the cross. *Love to Jesus will sweetly attract and powerfully detain you there, in devout, adoring contemplation.* To him who has no love to Christ, the cross of Christ has no attraction. A heart chilled in its affection to the Savior will wander away in quest of objects more congenial with its carnal taste. A trifle, a shadow, anything the most childish and insignificant, will win and gratify a heart upon whose affections Christ has no hold. Oh, it is astonishing what straws men will gather, and what phantoms they will chase, when the soul's center is not the cross of Jesus!

What, beloved, is the state of your heart's love to Christ? Turn not from the inquiry, shrink not from the scrutiny. The fervor of its love will be the measure of your soul's nearness to the cross. Love to Christ will bring you into frequent and close fellowship with Him in suffering; and with a heart often sequestered from the world, and cloistered amid the hallowed gloom of Gethsemane—at home with Christ in suffering—the position of your soul will be that of the holy Mary's, standing by the cross of Jesus.

Attachment to the doctrines of the cross may be regarded as a test of the believer's spiritual nearness to the Crucified. A lessening of love to the person of Jesus will invariably be followed by a lessening of love to the truth as it is in Jesus. Christ is the truth. The truth and Christ are one and indivisible. There can be no real, certainly no healthy, vigorous love to the person of Christ where there exists a latent laxity of opinion respecting the gospel of Christ. Christ and His gospel stand or fall, rise or sink together. "In vain you love Me," might the Savior say, "while you undervalue my words. My doctrine is divine, and he that rejects my words rejects Me." What, then, is your attachment to the gospel of Christ? Is it increasingly precious to your soul, sanctifying to your heart, influential in your life? Would you bid high for the truth of Jesus at any cost of personal ease and worldly advantage, and sell it not for earth's richest gem?

Do you increasingly love it because it searches, rebukes, abases you, and yet strengthens, comforts, and sanctifies you? Do you feel a growing love for those doctrines that are especially identical with, that spring from, that are found beneath, and that lead the soul to, the cross of Jesus? Thus may you test the proximity of your soul to the Crucified. Christ precious to you, oh, how precious will be the truth He taught! Purer than the purest silver, richer than the richest gold, sweeter than the sweetest honey, lovelier than the fairest gem,

will be to you those doctrines, precepts, and promises which your Lord and Savior embodied in His teachings, and enjoined upon your simple faith, your fervent love, your holy walk, your zealous dissemination, and, if need be, your testimony at the martyr's stake. The doctrine of the substitutionary offering, the expiatory suffering, the atoning blood, the imputed righteousness of Christ, all based upon, and deriving their virtue, their power, and their efficacy from, the divine dignity and spotless holiness of His person, will be entwined with your increasing love and unswerving faith.

The precepts which enjoin your bearing Christ's cross, your confession of His name, your self-denying service in His cause, your crucifixion to the world, and your simple, unreserved obedience to His commands, will be to you His easy yoke and His lightsome burden. Test, then, your spiritual nearness to the cross by your ardent attachment to the doctrines of the cross. "If any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine." "O how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." "How sweet are your words unto my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth." "Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

Loyalty to Christ is another evidence of nearness to the cross. Disloyalty to the Savior and His truth creates an immeasurable distance between Christ and the soul. Any, the slightest, compromise with error, with the world, with sin, with the enemies of the cross, is disloyalty to the Headship, the Crown, the Person, and the Gospel of the Son of God. No proof is more unmistakable of a receding from the cross, of a distance of the heart from Jesus, than infidelity to His person, government, and truth. Peter compromised his loyalty to Christ when he followed his Master 'afar off.' He disowned and denied Jesus, forswore and renounced allegiance to his Savior, when he followed Him at a distance to the hall of judgment, and then took his place among His enemies. Let but your love to Jesus wane, your faith in His Word relax, your attachment to His cause lessen, your interest in His people decline, and you are fast becoming a disloyal subject of that Sovereign whose person you professed to love, whose truth you affirmed to believe, whose cause you swore to defend, whose fortunes and whose kingdom you avowed to follow and promote until death. Oh, be loyal to Christ!—to the glory of His person, to the divinity of His truth, to the interests of His Church, to the rights of His crown, to the honor of His name! "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Fidelity to God will not render you less, but all the more, faithful to man. You

will not be less fitted for the relations and duties of the life that now is, but all the more competent, because daily advancing in fitness for the life that is to come. Let stern, uncompromising fidelity to Christ, then, evidence the closeness of your fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Keep *that impressive spectacle* ever in view—*the dying of the Lord Jesus in your stead*—and the foe that would tamper with your loyalty to the Savior will be disarmed of his power, and, like unto the noble army of martyrs, you will "overcome him by the blood of the Lamb."

We will supply but another test of your close communion with the Crucified—the spiritual barometer of the soul. Nothing will more satisfactorily indicate your exact position in relation to the cross than *the state of your spiritual life*. *The divine life in the soul flourishes or decays, is vigorous or sickly, in exact proportion to its proximity to the cross of Jesus*. As Christ is our life, so our life must be sustained by Christ. If your Christianity is healthy; your breathings after God and holiness and heaven deep and fervent; your love to Jesus constant and intense; and you are aiming to walk after the simplicity of Christ, bringing every thought into obedience to Him, then you may safely infer that you stand spiritually, where stood literally the holy women—close by the cross of Jesus. Here alone spiritual religion flourishes. Here only the believing soul is as a *well-watered garden*. If, as the naturalist tells us, beneath the Upas tree all natural life expires, it may with more significance be affirmed that beneath the cross of Jesus all spiritual life lives.

"There stood by the cross of Jesus—His *mother*." Significant and touching words!—replete with teaching and with tenderness. Who can portray that scene? who describe the *love of that Son*—the *sorrow of that mother*? Such a Son! Such a mother! The love of Jesus was now illustrating its greatness by the vastness of its achievement—the salvation of His Church; and its tenderness in that gentle look of affection which He bent upon the woman who stood by His cross in all the depth and constancy of a mother's love.

But we turn from a scene which distances all human description, to *you*, my reader. It is possible that your present position bears some resemblance to this. You may be watching by the couch of a suffering, dying one, whom you deeply, tenderly love—perchance, love as a parent, yes, as a mother only can. Take your place with Mary—by the cross of Jesus. There meet and blend *suffering and love, sorrow and sympathy*. Standing in faith by the cross, you are near the suffering Savior, the loving Son, the sympathizing Brother born for your present grief. Jesus, in the depth and tenderness of His love, is at this

moment all that He was when, in soul-travail, He cast that ineffable look of filial love and sympathy upon His anguished mother. He can enter into your circumstances, understand your grief, sustain and soothe your spirit as one only can who has partaken of the cup of woe which now trembles in your hand. Drink that cup submissive to His will, for He drank deeply of it before you, and has left the fragrance of His sympathy upon its brim. Your sorrow is not new to Christ.

He can embosom Himself in a parent's grief as no other being could. He knows a mother's heart, compassionates a mother's sorrow. You may be sorrowing for a child, perhaps over his folly, his waywardness, his sin; or, you are watching by your child's couch of weakness, or the bed of suffering, or the pillow of death. Oh, is there a place more appropriate for you as a smitten parent, a mourning mother, a spirit overwhelmed with anguish, hope and fear alternately struggling in your breast, watching the languor which you cannot rouse, the sufferings you cannot relieve, the disease you cannot avert, the advancing foe you cannot arrest, the approaching wrench you cannot avert. Is there a spot where your spirit will be more calmed, your heart more comforted, your will more subdued, your soul more strengthened, your mind more sweetly responsive to the words of Jesus, "Your will be done," than beneath the cross? Close to it stand, believing, loving, clinging, until this calamity be overpast.

There grace will be given you to bear this crushing trial, strength to pass through this weary watching, love to sustain this bitter anguish, sympathy to soften and to soothe this hour of sad and final parting. Mourning, sorrowing mother! Jesus invites you to His sheltering, soothing cross, "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment." *There is nothing but love and sympathy and repose for the mourning, anguished spirit prostrate beneath the cross of Jesus.* Its divine light is on you, its sacred shadow is over you, its invincible shield is around you. There Jesus speaks—"It is I; do not be afraid. I, who know a son's suffering and a mother's anguish. I, who control the winds and the waves, who stills the tempest and calm the sea. I, who have promised that my grace shall be sufficient, and that my strength shall be perfected in weakness. Approach my cross, *shelter near my wounded side, get within my bleeding heart*—there is love and there is room and there is rest for you there."

"Tossed with rough winds, and faint with fear,
Above the tempest, soft and clear,

**What still small accents greet my ear!
It is I; do not be afraid!**

**"It is I who led your steps aright;
It is I who gave your blind eyes sight;
It is I, your Lord, your Life, your Light.
It is I; do not be afraid!**

**"These raging winds, this surging sea,
Bear not a breath of wrath to thee;
That storm has all been spent on Me.
It is I; do not be afraid!**

**"This bitter cup fear not to drink;
I know it well—oh! do not shrink;
I tasted it over Kedron's brink.
It is I; do not be afraid!**

**"My eyes are watching by your bed,
My arms are underneath your head,
My blessing is around you shed.
It is I; do not be afraid!**

**"When on the other side your feet
Shall rest mid thousand welcomes sweet.
One well-known voice your heart shall greet!
It is I; do not be afraid!**

**"From out of the dazzling majesty,
Gently he'll lay His hand on thee,
Whispering, 'Beloved, do you love me?'
It is I; do not be afraid!"**

Once more heed the exhortation—stand close to the cross of Jesus! It is the most accessible and precious spot this side of heaven—the most solemn and awesome one this side of eternity. It is the focus of divine love, sympathy, and power. Stand by it in suffering, in persecution, in temptation. Standby it in the brightness of prosperity and in the gloom of adversity. Shrink not from its offence, humiliation, and woe. Defend it when scorned, despised, and denied. Stand up for Jesus and the gospel of Jesus. Oh, whatever you do, or whatever you endure, *be loyal to Christ's cross*. Go to it in trouble, repair to it in

weakness, cling to it in danger, hide beneath it when the wintry storm rushes fiercely over you. Near to the cross, you are near a Father's heart, a Savior's side. You seem to enter the gate of heaven, to stand beneath the vestibule of glory. You "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 firstborn, which 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."

Nothing but a believing proximity to the cross of Jesus brings the soul into a present fellowship with these gospel, precious, and transcendent blessings. Again, I reiterate the fact, that nothing but love will welcome your approach to the cross of Jesus—love that pardons all your sins, flows over all your unworthiness, heals all your wounds, soothes all your sorrows, and will shelter you within its blessed pavilion until earth is changed for heaven, and you lay down the warrior's sword for the victor's palm, and spring from the foot of the cross to the foot of the throne—"forever with the Lord."

**"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing,
From the sinner's dying Friend.**

**"Here I'll sit forever viewing
Mercy's streams, in streams of blood;
Precious drops! my soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God.**

**"Truly blessed is this station,
Low before His cross to lie;
While I see divine compassion
Floating in His languid eye,**

**"Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the cross I gaze
Love I much? I've more forgiven;
I'm a miracle of grace.
"Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears His feet I'll bathe,
Constant still in faith abiding;**

Life deriving from His death.

"May I still enjoy this feeling,
In all need to Jesus go;
Prove His blood each day more healing,
And Himself more fully know."

"A Sight of Sin and a Sight of Jesus"

"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn."—
Zech. 12:10

We can only properly deal with sin as, at the same moment, we personally and closely deal with Jesus. A spiritual sight of the one object, apart from a believing sight of the other, will plunge the soul into the deepest despair. A sight of atoning blood must accompany the sight of our guilt. Seen and dealt with alone, dissociated from the Savior, it is the darkest and most appalling object that can engage human study. But God has graciously and marvelously met the case. The instrument that exhibits sin in its greatest blackness at the same moment exhibits it in its fullest pardon. A sight of sin and a sight of Jesus, as presented in the cross, is found in no other spot in the universe. Nowhere not upon earth, where its ravages are vividly and fearfully traced—not in hell, where its punishment is fully and eternally endured—is sin seen as in the light of Christ's cross. God's hatred of its nature and infliction of its penalty, as exhibited in the soul-sorrow, and bodily suffering of His beloved Son, is a demonstration unsurpassed, yes, unparalleled. Oh, how great the love of God to provide such a mirror in which to see at the same moment the enormity of sin and the completeness of its forgiveness—the Ethiopian blackness of its guilt—and the snow-white purity of its cleansing. There was but one Being in the universe who concentrated upon Himself so much sin—yet, "He knew no sin"—and in whom met so much punishment of sin, as Jesus, the Sinbearer of His Church. What defective views and realizations have we of this truth! How shallow our sounding of its infinite depths, how faint our experience of its preciousness and power! And yet it is all and everything to us in the momentous matter of our comfort, holiness, and hope. If Jesus did not bear my transgression and curse; He did nothing for me, and I am yet in my sins. If He did, then the load is gone, the burden is annihilated, all transferred to Him, and by Him borne into eternal oblivion. I am no longer my own sin and burden bearer; my sins were all laid on Jesus, not by my

hand, but by the hand of God. Since, then, Jesus has cared for my sins, *my only care should be first to realize their full pardon, and then to walk so holily as not to recommit those sins which Christ bore*, and for which He sorrowed in Gethsemane, bled and expired on the tree, and so crucify the Son of God afresh. Deeply interesting to the believing, spiritual mind is the theme of our present chapter. *To have a sight of sin and a sight of Jesus at the same moment constitutes one of the holiest and richest pages in the history of a child of God.* There are many of the Lord's people who see sin, but who do not see Jesus at the same moment—who do not look at their sins through the medium of the cross. To look at sin through the divine holiness, as reflected in the divine law, is to look and despair, to look and die! But to look at sin through Christ—to see it in the blood that cleanses it, in the righteousness that covers it, in the love that pardons it fully, freely, and forever; oh, this is to look and hope, to look and live! *One eye upon sin, and one eye upon sin's atonement*, will enable the soul to walk humbly and filially with God. One eye looking at self and one eye looking at Christ will so regulate the experience of the soul, so accurately adjust its moral compass, as to preserve the balance between presumption and despair; leading to *a humble, holy, watchful walk as it regards sin on the one hand, and to an assured, happy, hopeful sense of pardon, acceptance, and glory on the other.* No fact in Christian experience is more certain than this, that *sin is never properly seen until Christ is known; and that Christ is never fully known, until sin is seen in its existence, guilt, and power.* It is a sense of our vileness, guiltiness, and condemnation that takes us to Christ; and when we see Christ, and accept Christ, and enter into believing rest in Christ, we then have the deepest conviction of the greatness, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and at the same moment the most assured conviction of our full and eternal deliverance from its guilt, tyranny, and condemnation. This harmony of tint—the blending of light and shade—sin and Christ—forms one of the loveliest and most impressive pictures of the many which illustrate the history of the Christian's life.

We have remarked in the preceding pages that *it is only beneath the influence of Christ's cross that the graces of the Spirit in the soul of the believer find their truest and richest culture.* We purpose to confirm and illustrate this truth by citing, as examples, two or three of the more distinctive graces commencing with the grace of CONTRITION. We admit that true repentance, essential to true conversion, may exist in its incipient and early stage apart from any clear, evangelical view of the cross, from any clear acceptance of Christ. Yet, as it advances and matures—for it is that divine grace that attends the child of God to his latest moment—it grows less legal and more evangelical, flows less

from the harshness of the law and more from the tenderness of the gospel, less from dealing with Moses and more from looking to Christ, *is less associated with the dread of hell and more entwined with the hope of heaven. Oh, there is no contrition for sin so real, so soothing, so tender, or so holy as that which is produced by a sight of the Crucified—looking at Him whom those sins once so deeply pierced.* Such is the subject which will now engage the reader's devout meditation. The incident which we cite as sustaining this theory, and as illustrating this truth, doubtless, in its more remote and prophetical interpretation, refers to the final restoration of the Jews, their acceptance of Christ, their Messiah, with weeping and mourning and confession. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn." But the fact is precisely the same, and the truth strictly analogous, that a believing sight of the crucified Redeemer—the faith of God's elect being identical in its effects, whether it be in a Jew or a Gentile—breaks the heart for sin, produces tender, holy contrition of spirit. That we are fully justified in pressing this striking prophecy into our argument, and quoting it as receiving a present and spiritual fulfilment, the words of the evangelist conclusively show. Alluding to the crucifixion of our Lord, John says, "These things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And, again, another scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they pierced." Thus clear is it that this splendid prediction, destined to receive in the conversion of the Jews a glorious accomplishment, possesses a present and a gospel application. Blessed are they who are its witnesses.

We have observed that repentance in its earliest form is, for the most part, legal in its origin and slavish in its nature—springing mainly from a view of the divine law, its spirituality, extent, and threatening. A clear apprehension of the divine holiness, the solemn thought of hell, the dread of condemnation—the law thus doing its own office in the soul—often reproduces the memorable inquiry of the convicted and alarmed jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" Observe, "What Must I Do?" But if *repentance begins with the law, it invariably ends with the gospel.* If its first and most imperfect impulse is derived from Sinai, its latest, sweetest, deepest throb is inspired by Calvary. If the poor sinner enters the sacred portal of salvation by the *north* gate, he emerges from the *south*, and finds himself wandering through the sylvan bowers of a new creation, himself a new creature in Christ Jesus. If, in a word, his first acquaintance is with Moses—the type of the law—it is but to introduce him to the acquaintance of Christ, (of whom Moses spoke,) the substance, the sweetness, the fulness of the gospel. Thus in the first dawn of repentance in the soul there may be but little, if any,

of a clear apprehension of the cross of Jesus.

There is a looking at self, and at sin, and at death, and at hell, but no looking to the Crucified One, who has delivered us from it all. We repeat this statement for the encouragement of those whose sorrow for sin has not reached a more advanced and gospel stage. Although there may be much legality, slavish fear, and dread of condemnation mixed with your present feelings, yet it is not for all that the less real, nor is it less the work of the Holy Spirit. If you are truly convinced of sin, led to see the plague of your own heart, and to lay your mouth in the dust before God, a supernatural power has wrought this supernatural work in your soul, and saints and angels have beheld your repentance with acclaim. Would that every eye that traces these pages were moistened with a like sorrow for sin! How many a faithful yet discouraged minister would rejoice, how many a Christian and long-praying parent would retire to his chamber, his heart thrilling with gladness and his lips eloquent with praise! "Who is this that engages his heart to approach unto me? says the Lord." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word."

Here, then, let me pause and inquire, *Have you been brought to true and deep repentance for sin?* It is the first stage of that true conversion, that spiritual change of heart, without which you cannot be saved. *Every glorified saint in heaven was once a mourning sinner on earth. Each happy spirit before the throne was once a penitent suppliant beneath the cross.* Are you preparing to take your place among this happy, this countless throng? We reiterate the truth, that, without true and godly repentance for sin before God, you have no scriptural, valid evidence that you are saved! I ask not whether Sinai or Calvary, the law or the gospel, has awakened it—whether it flows from a terrifying sight of hell, or a loving view of Jesus. All I ask is—Has your heart been broken and your spirit become contrite before God? Examine yourself, prove your own self by God's word, for it is your life! Repentance towards God precedes faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and while both are separate and distinct graces of the Spirit, both are indispensable to, and are blended with, the salvation of the soul.

But our object is to present the great work of contrition in a higher form, in its more evangelical character, as experienced beneath the cross, as flowing from a believing, realizing view of Jesus the Crucified. And oh, how eminently calculated is *the spectacle of Christ on the cross* to produce this holy emotion!

The object of sight is JESUS. "They shall look upon ME." *It is the most lovely, winning, wondrous object upon which the intelligent eye ever rested.* There is nothing in it terrifying or repelling, nothing to raise a thought or impart an emotion anything other than the most tender, holy and subdued. Trace the points of attraction which meet in Jesus, and marvel not that when the eye roams over them, the heart is irresistibly won, the soul is instantly dissolved, and the believer prostrates himself at the foot of the cross in the profoundest sense of his vileness before God. All loveliness, all excellence, all glory meet and center in Jesus the Crucified. He is the most wonderful, as He is the most beauteous and attractive being in the universe. All the infinite perfection of absolute Deity, all the finite excellence of impeccable humanity, concentrate in Christ. God has created beauty for man, and in man a taste for the beautiful. Every object, as it originally emanated from God, was molded and tinted with some resemblance to His own infinite perfection. "How great is His beauty!" must have been the exclamation which chimed through the bowers and glens of paradise, from the adoring lips of the unsinned and sinless creature man. There is no sin in a love of the beautiful. The sin is in not seeing and loving God in it. The taste to appreciate it, the capacity to enjoy it, the heart to love and adore God in it, belonged to our original creation. The perfection of beauty himself, man was born into a world stored and studded with the beautiful. There was a fitness between the house and the tenant—harmony between creation and its lord; and the most exquisite music, in strains angels might imitate, ascended to Him who "made everything beautiful in his season." But the destroyer came, the disturber entered, and the beauty and the joy were marred. And yet creation still is lovely—lovely in its varied seasons, in its countless forms, in its moral teaching. The *spring*, when earth throws off its frosted incrustations, and bursts into new-born life, bloom, and perfume, is beautiful—telling us of the resurrection of the just, when the saints, gently awakened from their sleep, shall spring into rejuvenescent glory, and shall walk the earth in eternal youth, light, and love. *Summer*, when the glowing sun dresses the fields and the gardens with variegated splendor, and the valleys are covered over with corn, and the pastures are clothed with flocks, and the little hills rejoice on every side, is beautiful—reminding us of a fruitful, maturing Christianity beneath the rich, warm influence of the Sun of Righteousness. *Autumn*, clad in mellowed radiance, uprearing its horns of plenty, and garnering its golden sheaves amid the joyous song of "harvest home," is beautiful—reminding us of the saints of God ripening in grace, and grace preparing for glory. *Winter*, with its winding-sheet of snow and its ice-bound streams, as though earth were enshrouded for the tomb, is beautiful—reminding us that down to hoary hairs, God will be with His people, and that

the head covered with the frosts of time, yet encircled with the crown of righteousness, will soon cease its weariness and its aching in the silent grave. The flowers, earth's stars, are beautiful—telling us in language all their own that *God created them for no practical purpose other than to please and charm us*. The sky, dyed in the purest azure—the image of heaven's purity; the ocean, illimitable and sublime—the emblem of God's eternity and power; the sun, traveling in the greatness of its strength on wings of light—the glorious symbol of Jesus; the moon, walking in her silver attire—the expressive figure of the Christ of God; the planets, revolving round the sun in their harmony—reminding the believer of his divine and glorious Center—the nearness, power, and attraction of Jesus—all these things He has made beautiful. But seen with the Christian eye, all is beautiful, and all testifies of God. The clouds floating in endless forms of loveliness and tint—the snowy alps that pierce them—the lakes that mirror them from their glassy bosom—the sylvan glen, the shady grove, the pensive dale, the meandering river, the purling stream, the birds of gorgeous plumage and of heavenly song—all, all is beautiful, "and only man is vile." And yet for man this beautiful earth was made, and for his sustenance and enjoyment she pours forth from her bosom her hidden and inexhaustible stores of health and loveliness.

"For me kind Nature wakes her genial power,
Suckles each herb, and spreads out every flower!
Annual for me, the grape, the rose, renew
The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew;
For me, the mine a thousand treasures brings;
For me, health gushes from a thousand springs." (Pope)

But higher forms of beauty engage our thoughts—the beauty of holiness as embodied in Jesus. The gospel dispensation introduces us to a new world of loveliness, and a new Being of love, wonder, and admiration, surpassing in His perfection all that earth in its pristine glory ever beheld—*the Incarnate Son of God*. Does love inspire, does loveliness win, do we stand in speechless awe before the image of the great, the good, the beautiful? Behold the Lamb of God—"fairer than the children of men, the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely one."

"The loveliest, sweetest, dearest One
That eyes have seen, or angels known."

What marvellous *power* does the spiritual beholding of Christ in His moral

beauty possess to produce in the believing heart the tender, holy sentiment of contrition! In what spiritual light can we contemplate ourselves, our righteousness and our unrighteousness? What view can we take of sin—the sin of our *holy* and of our *unholy* things, when seen in contrast with the holiness, the beauty, and the perfection of Christ—what but the most humiliating, heart-subduing, and self-abasing? *Could we for a moment regard sin with indifference, could we in any one act look upon ourselves with complacency, were we more conversant with the purity, and more enamored with the loveliness, and more deeply imbued with the love of Jesus?* Would not our experience be that of the evangelical Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

Let us study more closely the Lord Jesus! It is only as by faith we see His spiritual beauty that our own pales; it is only as discoveries of His holiness are made to us by the Spirit that we cry, "Unclean! unclean!" and lay our mouth in the dust. Oh, there is nothing like a clear apprehension of the Lord Jesus to empty, humble, and prostrate us at His feet! The region of the cross is too bright not to see our sinfulness, too pure not to loathe it, and too divine not to be assured of its pardon. One beam from that focus of light, oh how excellent, nourishing, and sanctifying! One glimpse of that cross, oh how replete with life, bliss, and hope inconceivable, inexpressible! Who that has felt its magnetic power, its magic influence beneath the corrodings of guilt, the shadings of sorrow, the assaults of Satan, the weariness of the world, the accusations of self, will not testify that nearness to the cross of Jesus is nearness to the source of perfect confidence, assured peace, and unruffled quietness? This, then; is the light in which we must view sin—every sin—all sin—even the light of the Savior's glory as it gathers round His cross. And contemplating it in this light, we shall see sin as it really is—divested of its disguise, disentangled from its sophistry, dissevered from its causes; and thus seeing it in its own native and naked deformity, the heart will dissolve into deep, holy, tender contrition beneath the cross of Jesus.

But not only does a sight of Christ's beauty, but the spectacle of His sufferings contributes essentially to promote holy contrition for sin. We see suffering in the cross of Jesus in its unparalleled form. As a sufferer, Christ stood alone; like the light in which Jehovah dwells, *His sufferings were unapproached and unapproachable.* "He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," as no man ever was. What He endured when He exclaimed, "Now is my soul sorrowful, even unto death;"—what was the bitterness of that cup of which

the cry of His humanity went up to heaven, that it should pass His lips untouched, but which yet He drank and drained—what was involved in that exclamation, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—we shall never fully know. Enough that He traveled the whole compass of sorrow, and touched each point. "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, with which the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger." Can we, then, approach the cross, stand before this marvellous, unequaled spectacle of suffering love, and remember that all this was on our behalf?—for us, the sin bearing; for us, the soul sorrow; for us, the bodily anguish; for us, the thorn-crown, the bloody sweat, the cross, the death—and not feel a holy contrition for those sins which crucified the Lord of life and glory? We feel a sense of pity for the individual who can behold human suffering with unmoved sensibility. Can we view the sickly pallor; the tremulous lip, the care-shaded brow, the tear-bedewed eye, the manly form which sorrow has bowed, or the gentle one which bereavement has mantled with its symbol of woe, unmoved? Turn to the cross of our suffering Lord. With what emotion other than the profoundest grief, with what feeling other than the deepest shame, with what thoughts other than the most self-abasing, can we sit down and watch Him there! What! no penitence, no self-humiliation, no sin-loathing, no sorrow for having wounded Jesus! The universe, as if conscious of its curse for man's sin, is in sympathy with the suffering Savior dying for man's sin. *The sun is veiling, the heavens are mourning, the earth is trembling, the rocks are rending, the graves are opening*, all in sympathy with a spectacle such as earth never saw and such as the universe is convulsed in seeing. And yet, how marvelously, how criminally insensible, impenitent, and cold we are!—we whose sins He was then bearing, whose curse He was then exhausting, whose death-penalty He was then suffering, who in that hour of atonement was covering our hell that He might unveil to us His heaven. Surely if sin is ever seen in its true light, if it is loathed, crucified, and forsaken, it is at the foot of Christ's cross. It is here alone it can be truly studied. We must know Christ crucified before we shall know sin crucified. To gauge in any degree the depth of our iniquities, we must in some measure gauge the depths of Christ's suffering.

There must be close, personal dealings with the cross. This may reveal the secret of the crude, imperfect views of sin which you so mournfully deplore, and the consequent absence of all spiritual vitality, joy, and hope in the soul. You have been studying sin and your own sinfulness in the light of the present feverish uneasiness and restlessness which it produces, and of the alarming consequences which it entails; and all the while you have found your feelings

grow more callous, your conscience more seared, and your future painted in deeper, darker hues, and sin still maintaining its undisputed, unimpaired supremacy. But, approach the cross! Turn from the power, the tyranny, and the corrodings of sin, and view *the wondrous provision* the God of love has made for its pardon and its conquest. Concentrate your believing gaze upon Jesus suffering, Jesus dying for sin. Go and stand by the cross of Christ. One uplifted glance, one believing look, *one dim sight of the pierced Savior—wounded, bleeding, dying for your iniquities*—will revolutionize all your views and feelings respecting sin. It will appear to you as a new created thing. Its blackness, its turpitude, its results will stand out in such magnitude and color, and, at the same time, its atonement will appear so suitable, its redemption so costly, its pardon so complete, the purple flood which tides over all, and drowns all and every transgression so effectual, and He who provided it all and accomplished it all, so divine, glorious, and precious as to prostrate your soul before the cross, dissolved in penitence and love. Oh, there are no affections like those which spring from a view of Jesus crucified! No tears so precious, no feelings so true, no contrition so intense and tender as gushes from the hidden springs of the soul, touched and unsealed by the heart's believing communion with the suffering Savior!

"Law and judgment do but harden,
All the time they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves the heart of stone."

Yes! if there is anything that can dissolve that heart of stone it is Christ's atoning blood. You have been around the mount that burns with fire, draped with blackness and darkness and tempest, but your heart has felt no softening. You have traversed the round of legal duty, have been strict in every religious engagement, have been conscientious in the fulfilment of every relative obligation, and yet your soul has felt no peace. In all this you have not found Jesus. You have sought Him in splendid temples, in gorgeous worship, in costly sacrifices, in excited crowds, in the pious circles of rank and wealth and influence, and still you have not found Jesus. But at length, by some power, invisible and inexplicable, gently and persuasively moving upon your mind, you have been led into another, more shaded and sequestered path—you have sought Jesus at the cross, in poverty and desertion, in humiliation and sorrow, in suffering, blood, and death, and lo! you have found just the Savior that you needed, the peace you craved, the joy for which you longed, the hope for which you sighed; and now, beneath the cross of Jesus, you are prostrate, a

rebel won, a soul penitent, a sinner saved! Oh, one moment's believing, close contact with the cross will do more to break the heart for sin, deepen the conviction of its exceeding sinfulness, and disenthral the soul from all its bondage and its fears, bringing it into a sense of pardon and acceptance and assured hope, than a lifetime of the most rigid legal duties that ever riveted their iron chain upon the soul.

But it is the spectacle, not so much of Christ's personal beauty and suffering, as of *His suffering love*, that most deeply moves the heart! The picture of love sacrificing itself, courting death itself in its most terrific form, for an object unworthy of its affection, would seem sufficient to melt the marble to sensibility. The sight of mere suffering has a tendency in some minds rather to petrify than to soften the feelings, so entirely has sin impaired the finest and noblest parts of our nature. But when in faith we look upon Him whom by our sins we have pierced, we behold, not suffering only, but *suffering love*—love the divinest and most ancient, love the most tender and strong, love the most self-sacrificing the dying love of Jesus! Nothing provides a clue to the marvels of Christ's history but *love*. Love was the inciting cause of all, the moving spring of all, the rational solution of all the wondrous events that traced the life of our blessed Lord. Oh, how He loved! The love of Christ!—it passes knowledge. Lying at the cross where *Incarnate Love* was transfixed, where it sorrowed, bled, and died, the soul dissolves into tenderness and contrition. He who writes the history of the cross, writes the history of love—the only record of love that shall be preserved in the archives of eternity. This is the love upon which the pierced Savior invites us to look. To look at the Incarnate God is to look upon Incarnate Love.

Bring your soul, my reader, beneath the focus of the cross, and you have concentrated upon it the burning rays of incarnate love—and *self-abasement, holy penitence, and sweet affection will be the blessed result*. Who can stand unmoved before the sight and look and words of love—that love sacrificing itself for us? Such is the love of Jesus! Often as its history has been traced, its story told, its pains and sorrows and death portrayed, yet, when shed abroad afresh in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, when we approach the cross and attain a clearer view of its reality, a deeper sense of its depth and tenderness, a more vivid realization of its marvellous sacrifice, a more spiritual apprehension of the wondrous redemption it has wrought, the full salvation it has finished, the free pardon, the perfect peace, and the unspeakable joy it inspires, the hell it has sealed and the heaven it has opened, oh, can we look upon Him whom our sins, past, present and future so deeply pierced, and not mourn?

We thus reach an important part of our subject—the LOOKING upon Him whom we have pierced. "They shall *look* upon Me." *There must be a believing, spiritual apprehension of Christ, or sin cannot properly be seen, or seen only to plunge the observer into the depths of despair.* The mere presentation of the cross to the natural eye will awaken no emotion, other than natural ones. That which is natural can only produce what is natural. Nature can never rise above itself—it invariably finds its own level. Thus, in a contemplation of the sufferings of Christ, there may in minds of deep natural sensibility, be emotion, the spectacle may affect the observer to tears—but it is *nature* only. Those who are accustomed to foreign travel may often have stood amid the deep religious gloom of the gorgeous cathedral, and have observed the ghostly form of the pious devotee of papal superstition slowly and solemnly gliding along its shaded cloisters, and then falling prostrate before the picture of a dead Christ, in apparently the profoundest emotion. Beyond this the 'religion of feeling' cannot go.

My reader, beware of mistaking *nature* for *grace*; the emotions of a stirred sensibility, for the tears of a broken and a contrite heart. The eye that looks upon Christ, and upon sin through Christ, is *the eye of faith, that marvellous telescope of the renewed soul which beholds the invisible, sees the unseen, peers into eternity, and makes future things present realities.* This it is that dissolves the heart into holy, tender contrition. Such a sight of Him whom we have pierced will smite the rock, and the streams of godly grief will flow. One simple, believing, close look at the cross will more quickly and effectually subdue the heart for sin, give a deeper sight of its sinfulness, and inspire the soul with a stronger confidence in the forgiving love of God, than all the thunders that rolled and the lightnings that flashed around the brow of Sinai.

You who have some legal apprehension of sin, who see your depravity, feel your condemnation, dread the judgment—you who have been laboring for acceptance with God, oh receive the message of the gospel!—look believably to the cross, gaze upon Him whom your sins pierced, and you shall realize the marvellous effects in your soul of one believing look of faith, one drop of atoning blood, one beam of forgiving love, transforming the sepulchral darkness of your soul into the meridian light of God's salvation. Oh most significant words—"They shall look upon ME!" They shall turn from Moses, and from the law, and from their sacrifices, and from all their sins and transgressions, and one object shall attract and fix their believing gaze—"ME whom they have pierced."

The EFFECT of this believing look at sin through Christ, and at Christ as putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, we are yet to consider. Our remarks must be brief. We read, "And they shall *mourn* for Him, as one that mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." The following are some of the distinctive features of that deep contrition for sin which springs from a view of this glorious sacrifice. It is evangelical in its nature, as opposed to the *legal*. It is an emotion in alliance with the gospel and not the law. It is from Christ—it is produced by Christ—it is full of Christ. It is a flower that blooms beneath the cross. A sight of atoning blood—a sense of pardoned sin—the streams of dying love as they flow from the cross gliding into the soul; in a word, a full, clear, simple sight of Jesus as saving sinners, sinners the vilest, sinners the oldest, sinners the chief, sinners who have not one plea springing from themselves but the greatness and the number and the turpitude of their transgressions—will fill the soul with gospel mourning.

It is holy in its nature, in opposition to the sorrow of the world. It is emphatically and preeminently *godly sorrow*. *The most holy posture of the soul is at the foot of the cross*. There all the feelings and thoughts which possess it, are produced by, and are in sympathy with, the most extraordinary display of holiness the intelligent creation ever beheld—the Son of God dying for our sins! Holy, then, is the nature and holy the fruits of that contrition for sin which dissolves the heart before the spectacle of Jesus crucified. *Never is sin more vividly seen, or so deeply felt, never is self so profoundly loathed, or so entirely forsaken, as when the believing soul is enshrined within the pierced side of Christ.*

"Then beneath the cross adoring,
Sin does like itself appear;
When the wounds of Christ exploring,
I can read my pardon there."

It is intense. The deepest feeling of which the human soul is capable is experienced beneath the cross of Christ. Our Lord has selected from the world of imagery the most expressive and touching simile to illustrate this—a parent's grief for his first-born! To behold the heir of the family and the inheritor of the estate, the tall cedar, the strong and beautiful staff, smitten to the earth, borne to an early tomb, is sorrow intense indeed! Is there a sorrow that surpasses it in intensity? There is! Deep and keener far that sorrow which

overwhelms the soul prostrate in view of Jesus upon the cross. The one sorrow touches but the natural, the other stirs to the lowest depth the *spiritual affections of the soul*. In the one, the religious element has no place, in the other, there is the deepest sense of sin against the holy Lord God. How conclusive of this the Scripture specimens of godly sorrow for sin. "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." "Pardon my iniquity, O Lord, for it is great." Trace the remarkable workings of this intense godly sorrow in the repentant Corinthians. "Behold this self-same thing, that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yes, what cleansing of yourselves, yes, what indignation, yes, what fear, yes, what vehement desire, yes, what zeal, yes, what revenge!" Truly, "they shall mourn and be in bitterness, as one that mourns for his first-born."

It is the harbinger of joy. *The sight of sin and the sight of Christ at the same moment constitutes an element of the deepest, purest joy.* The tears of godly sorrow are the seeds of holy joy. He that goes forth weeping, bearing this precious seed, shall doubtless return again with joy. Weeping beneath the cross may endure for a night, but the joy of the Lord will assuredly dawn with the dawn of morning. The gloom that drapes the soul, weeping at the cross, shall dissolve into light, unclouded and serene. The joy of knowing that God is reconciled in Christ Jesus, that sin is pardoned, that peace is possessed, that heaven is secure, oh, it is a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Henceforth, O believer, the cross shall, like the glorious sun, illumine your path through this region of sin and sorrow with its growing luster, until it lead you up to the realms of perfect day.

O God! to life's last and latest hour let me be a weeper at the cross! Precious Savior! in view of my sins and my sinfulness—in view of the awful solemnities of eternity, what can I do but cling to Your cross? And when *death*, of whom You, O Christ, are the plague, dissolves the silver cord and sets my spirit free, take me to the place where Your own soft hand shall wipe my tears, and turn *my present and momentary sorrow for sin into the future and eternal joy of perfect holiness!* Lord, for that blissful hour my longing spirit pants!

"When shall I be at rest? my trembling heart
Grows weary of its burden, sickening still

**With hope deferred. Oh! that it were Your will
To loose my bonds, and take me where You are.**

**"When shall I be at rest? my eyes grow dim
With straining through the gloom, I scarce can see
The way-marks that my Savior made for me;
Oh, that it were morn, and I were safe with Him.**

**"When shall I be at rest? Hand over hand
I grasp, and climb an ever steeper hill,
A rougher path. Oh! that it were Your will
My tired feet might tread the Promised Land.**

**"Oh that I were at rest! a thousand fears
Come thronging over me lest I fail at last.
Oh that I were safe, all toil and danger past,
And Your own hand might wipe away my tears.**

**"Oh that I were at rest, like some I love,
Whose last fond looks drew half my life away;
Seeming to plead that either they might stay
With me on earth, or I with them above.**

**"But why these murmurs? You did never shrink
From any toil or weariness for me,
Not even from that last deep agony;
Shall I beneath my little trials sink?
"No, Lord, for whom I am indeed at rest.
One taste of that deep bliss will quite efface
The sternest memories of my earthly race,
Save but to swell the sense of being blest.**

**"Then lay on me whatever cross I need
To bring me there. I know You can not be
Unkind, unfaithful, or untrue to me!
Shall I not toil for You, when You for me did bleed."**

Faith at the Foot of the Cross

"God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."
Romans 3:25

"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."
Romans 3:25

"For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us." Romans 3:25

If there be a grace of the Christian, a divine principle wrought in the heart by the power of the Spirit of God, that has its *source* in Christ, is by Christ *sustained* and *strengthened*, it is the grace, the principle of faith. The faith of God's elect—the faith that justifies, sanctifies, and saves—is pre-eminently *a divine plant*, having its *root* and *nourishment* in a crucified Savior. And all professed faith that is not thus engrafted upon the cross of Christ, that has not Christ Jesus for its author, sustainer, and finisher, is a spurious, dead, notional faith, that never will, because it never can, bring its possessor within the realms of glory.

In the further prosecution of our subject, illustrating the graces of the Christian, as clustered around and engrafted upon the cross of Christ, we bend our thoughts to the consideration of this precious grace, the faith of the true believer, showing that it has directly and exclusively to do with a crucified Redeemer. "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood."

The first view which will engage briefly our attention is the OBJECT OF FAITH'S TRUST—CHRIST JESUS OUR PROPITIATION. The very idea of faith, which, in other words, is simple trust or credence, implies *an object in every respect worthy of its confidence*. There are things in nature and beings in the world in which we repose confidence only to be betrayed. We cherish human *hopes* but to see them crushed and die; worldly *expectations* but to prove the illusory phantoms of imagination. But in the great matter of our salvation it is of infinite moment that the object in which our souls trust for a blessed futurity should be worthy of our implicit and solemn confidence. If, when the shadows of eternity are darkening around you, it be found that the object upon which your faith has been reposing—perchance your legal obedience or your religious duties—betrays you at a moment when more than ever you will need the peace and joy and hope which true faith in Jesus

inspires, what a fearful discovery to find that you have placed confidence for salvation in an object which, when most you needed its supports and succourings, woefully and utterly fails you! We hasten, then, to place before you, my reader, the *one exclusive object on which saving faith exclusively reposes*—it is Christ Jesus our propitiation.

Now, with regard to this PROPITIATION, there are three points of light in which we would briefly present it. The first is the idea of satisfaction. Christ Jesus, our propitiation, has given a satisfaction to the claims, demands, and requirements of God's moral government, upon the divine basis of which the most hell-deserving sinner, repenting and believing, may be eternally saved. Need we argue the *necessity* of such a propitiation? There must be a satisfaction made to the righteous government of God, because we have sinned against Him. We have cast off God. We have rebelled against Him. We have trampled upon the glory of His name. We have done outrage to His love and rendered ourselves obnoxious to His righteous displeasure. Now, before God can take a step in restoring us to His divine favor, and in reinstating us among His people, there must be such an *equivalent satisfaction made to His moral government, as shall vindicate His righteousness, satisfy His justice, illustrate and guard His holiness*.

There are two ways by which many endeavor either to avoid the force of this truth, or entirely to ignore it. The first is, by *denying any necessity of a satisfaction to God's government, in order that a sinner may be saved*. The individual who wraps himself up in the attribute of Divine mercy at the expense of every other perfection of God, denies this truth, that God's justice demands satisfaction, that His moral government requires a vindication before He could be merciful or gracious to the sinner. He, in effect, says, "I expect to be saved without this satisfaction of which you speak."

Then, there are others who deny this truth by *presenting a satisfaction of their own*. All who have not simple faith in the propitiation of the Lord Jesus Christ are endeavoring to provide a satisfaction of human invention. "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." The Papal Church is fruitful of these human satisfactions, nor are they lacking outside its pale.

But we come to the great truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is our propitiation; in other words, He is our satisfaction. Oh, what a marvellous and precious

truth is this! Christ has given all the satisfaction that the divine government required. He has vindicated God's honor, has satisfied His justice, and has upheld His truth by the offering of Himself in our stead, by the shedding of His most precious blood for our sins, by bringing in a new and everlasting righteousness for our justification; and now, on the ground of his satisfaction, God can be propitious, pardoning our sin and accepting our person. "I am perfectly satisfied," says Justice. "I demand no more," responds the Law. And thus, through the one offering of Christ as our satisfaction, God is glorified and the sinner is saved.

The second idea suggested in the doctrine of Christ our propitiation is covering. Literally, it means the covering of the mercy-seat, from above which God would hold converse with His people. Now, Christ is our propitiation. In other words, he is our covering. He covers our transgressions and hides our sins from the eye of God's justice and the eye of His law. Christ's imputed righteousness, which is "unto all and upon all those who believe," thus becomes the clothing, or the covering of the saints. "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Another idea involved in propitiation is reconciliation. Christ has reconciled us unto God by His blood. He has brought us into a state of friendship with Jehovah, into a state of oneness with the Father. The atonement, as we have intimated, literally means at-a-one-ment. The work of Christ annihilates the enmity and brings us into a state of peace with the righteous and Holy One. Mistake not this reconciliation, beloved. Some seem to suppose that Christ's sacrifice procured the love of God—that the Father loved us because the Son died for us—yes, died to inspire that love? But this is an egregious fallacy. *What Christ did was to remove the obstruction in the way of God's love.* There were insuperable obstructions—obstructions which all the angels in heaven never could remove. Christ undertook their removal. The everlasting love of God towards His Church panted to be free, struggled for an outlet. Christ came into the world to open a channel through which it might flow down freely to poor sinners. He honored and magnified the law by His obedience, gave to justice its full requirement, by His sufferings vindicated the righteousness of God's government, and so divine love gushed forth to man. Thus, *Christ stood in the breach, spanned the mighty gulf between God and the soul, bridged the chasm with the cross, and now, through His pierced and bleeding heart, God's everlasting love flows uninterruptedly, freely, to poor, guilty sinners;* and those who accept in faith his propitiation; are in a state of reconciliation with God. Oh, blessed reconciliation!

Reconciliation in any form is delightsome. To see disturbed friendship restored, alienated affections won back, a rebellious child replaced in a parent's love, is a spectacle that moves to its depths the most callous sensibility. But oh, transcendent spectacle that moves all heaven—God and man at peace through Christ Jesus! "All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." "And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in His sight." All now is peace between God and the Christ-believing sinner. The enmity is removed, the controversy has ceased, harmony is restored, friendship exists, and God and man once more are reconciled and at peace.

Now, this satisfaction which Christ has made to God, is faith's confidence. Is it, my reader, the ground upon which your professed faith reposes, or is it some phantom of your own? Are you building your hope of heaven upon the divine atonement of which we have been treating, or upon an obedience wrought by yourself? I ask you as one having upon you the sentence of death, as an accountable being, a being possessed of a solemn immortality, where is your professed faith resting in reference to the salvation of your soul? If it is not resting on Christ's righteousness as the covering of your soul, you are not in a state of reconciliation with God through Christ Jesus, and it will go hard with you when summoned to meet your God. You will appear before Him without the wedding-garment.

We are now conducted to the consideration of THE MATERIAL OF FAITH'S NOURISHMENT. Here the great truth of faith's vital nourishment is brought out—the atoning blood of Christ. "Through faith in His blood." Now, in what sense is atoning blood the support and sustenance of that faith which sanctifies and saves the soul?

In the first place, faith is nourished by accepting all the blessings which flow from Christ's atoning blood—the blessings which result from the sacrifice of Christ are many, vast, and glorious. The pardon of all your sins—complete and free justification—adoption into the family of God—peace and friendship with God—hope that makes not ashamed—filial fellowship and communion with the Invisible—holy motives, added to filial obedience—submission to God's will in all His various dispensations—these untold blessings flow to us through the channel of the atoning blood of Christ. That blood of Christ,

beloved, was so divine in its efficacy, a thing so transcendently precious to God, so unspeakably costly, that it freely purchased and eternally secured every blessing that we can be the recipients of in this vale of tears. Now we return again to the truth, that our faith is fed and nourished by its simple, unquestioning reception of all the blessings which flow to the believer through the atoning blood of Christ. Do not put away from you any of these blessings. Be careful how you reason, "I put in a plea for this blessing, or a plea for that, but I dare not put in a plea for all." What is this but robbing your own soul? Oh, trifle not with the atoning blood of Christ! It has secured all the blessings of the new covenant, and you have an individual inalienable right to all the costly blessings of that covenant. And if your simple faith will receive all the good things which the blood of Christ has purchased and secured, you crown faith with its brightest diadem. The moment you begin to hesitate and question your title to any of these blessings, the divine principle of faith becomes impaired; but when it lays its hand upon the Magna Charta of redemption, when it takes the whole string of precious pearls and says, "They are each and all mine;" when it lays its hand upon the everlasting covenant, and fully believes that all its fulness is yours, and that you are Christ's, you will find that, as your faith grasps these precious truths, it will strengthen and grow with the grasp.

Faith is also nourished by the vitalizing influence of the atoning blood of Christ. Your faith has a spiritual and deathless vitality. According to the physical law of our material structure, the life is in the blood. What a grand truth does this illustrate in regard to the essential power of the atoning blood of Christ! My reader, *our souls' spiritual vitality is in the blood of Jesus. One drop of that precious blood applied by the Holy Spirit to the soul of a poor, penitent sinner, vitalizes that soul with spiritual life.* Now, your faith, dealing closely and habitually with the blood of Christ, realizing its personal application, accepting the blessings it has purchased and sealed, you will find that, as it thus deals with the cross it will be nourished, strengthened, and fruitful—its root being fed and kept alive by the atonement of the crucified Savior.

Faith is nourished, too, by the changeless efficacy of the atoning blood of Christ. The blood of Christ has a perpetual and deathless efficacy. In nature there are some remedial things which in time lose their curative influence in disease; and so the physician is perpetually compelled to change his recipe. My reader, it is the glory of a child of God that the *atoning blood of Jesus is that divine remedy that never loses its efficacy; its virtues never decay, its*

sovereign power never changes. Come to this sacred recipe when and how you may, you shall find that faith, simply dealing with it, brings peace and assurance, comfort and hope, to the heart. Come to that blood with fresh accumulations of guilt, new failures, new surprisals, new falls, yet mourning over and confessing your sin, with your mouth in the dust, you shall find that, washing in it, His blood is as powerful, as healing, as precious as ever—and thus the blood nourishes and strengthens faith.

Dear reader, the blood shall never lose its sovereign, sanctifying and saving virtue. In heaven, at this very moment, it is pleading for the saints. The grand argument of our Great High Priest in glory is the blood He shed on earth. "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." As an Intercessor, He could only enter heaven with blood—that blood His own. Through no other door, and with no other plea, can we follow Him to glory. While the atoning blood of Jesus is pleading for us in heaven, we must plead it upon earth. The plea is one and the same—the plea of the Advocate and the plea of the client, the Savior and the sinner—the blood of Jesus. Having liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, hesitate not to draw near and claim all the costly and precious things His blood has fully purchased, and His grace freely bestows.

We will only add that faith is fed and strengthened by constant exercise with the blood of Jesus. You will find this in your experience unmistakably the case. If you hesitate in repairing constantly to the blood, if you walk remote from the fountain, and for days, and weeks, and months trifle with a guilt-stained conscience, sin unconfessed at the foot of the cross, the heart unquieted by a present application of the blood, you will inevitably find your faith become weaker and weaker, until at length you shall begin to doubt whether you have any real faith in Christ at all. And we would earnestly, solemnly inquire if, while you are without the enjoyment of peace with God, and a comfortable assurance that your sins are pardoned, and that your person is accepted in the Beloved, may it not be traced to this as the primary cause—your remote distance from the blood? *You have not been washing constantly in the fountain, and consequently you have lost its immediate and hallowed effect.* But, *returning to the blood perpetually, bathing in the cleansing fount constantly*, your faith will become stronger and stronger, your peace will flow like a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea. Thus the more you deal with the blood of Christ, the stronger will be your faith in, and the closer your communion with, the Crucified One.

We have to advert, before we close this chapter, to THE DIVINE WARRANT FOR THE CONFIDENCE OF FAITH. "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." If GOD has devised and revealed the plan of saving sinners, we may be well satisfied that it meets all the requirements of His own glory, and is in all respects suitable for us. "Whom God has set forth." This, beloved, is your divine warrant.

In the first place, this divine expedient of propitiation meets all the requirements of God's own glory. God has declared, in effect, that He has confided the interests both of His glory and His Church with Christ—that Jesus having fully atoned for sin in His own person, God is now prepared to be propitious, merciful, and gracious to all who believe in His name. Consequently, you have, my reader, no reason for one moment to suppose that, if you venture your soul, guilty and sinful as it is, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that you are contravening God's glory. Oh, no! it will be to God's greatest honor and glory that you do now believe the record He has given of His Son; and that, believing that record, you accept the free grace and salvation which is in Christ Jesus, and walk holily and happily as one, all whose sins are pardoned, and whose person is fully accepted through Jesus Christ the Beloved.

This divine warrant also sets forth God's love. What is the grand perfection of God that shines the most resplendent in the redemption of man? It is not justice, awful though it is; not holiness, beautiful though it is; not truth, immutable though it is. What, then, is it? Oh, it is love! If there is one perfection that shines out more luminously and transcendently than another, it is this. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins." Read these words thoughtfully and devoutly. Do they affirm—"In this was manifested the *justice* of God, that He gave His only-begotten Son?" or, "In this was manifested the *righteousness* of God, in that He made him a propitiation for our sins?" or, "In this was manifested the *wrath* of God, in that He punished Christ for our transgressions?" Oh, no! but, "in this was manifested the LOVE of God." Here, beloved, is the warrant for your faith to believe in the Lord Jesus, for your trusting in Him, for committing your immortal interests into His hands, and for rolling the burden of your guilt upon the Savior. God loved you, and gave His Son to die for you, and you have his warrant now to believe in the Lord Jesus that you may be saved. With such a divine warrant to accept Christ, will you, can you hesitate? The Holy Spirit having convinced you of sin, may He open your eye to see it all laid by God upon Christ, and then

enable you to believe in the Lord Jesus, to the salvation of your soul.

Then, there is the Word of God as the warrant for your simple faith in the propitiation of Christ. His own Word has declared that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The *promises and invitations* with which the gospel so richly and freely abounds, are your warrant to come to Jesus; and God will never countervail His blessed Word. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one promise of pardoning mercy to a poor sinner shall fail. Oh, come to Jesus, then, on the credit of His Word.

But if you still hesitate and demur, if you desire to believe in the Lord Jesus, yet fear a repulse, I repeat the encouragements to you—first, your simple faith will glorify God; secondly, you have the warrant of God's love to recline upon Christ, and thus you possess the invitations and promises of Christ himself. Can you, then, hesitate believing in the Lord Jesus Christ?

"Through faith in His blood." Again, and yet more emphatically and solemnly, we reiterate this truth—faith, in the matter of the soul's salvation, deals directly and solely with Christ's blood. Not only in the first and earliest stage of our salvation, but in every subsequent one—in our progressive sanctification, in our growing peace, in our deepening joy, in our endurance of trial, in our conflict with the foe, and in our advancing fitness for heaven—it is still directly and only with the blood that faith has to deal. Nothing else, not the holiest, the most essential, the most useful duties and engagements of our holy religion, can be a substitute for the blood. "What! not my devout study of the Bible? not my holy converse with God? not a spiritual ministry, refreshing ordinances, the communion of the saints, the self-denying service, in all of which I find so much that is congenial with, and helpful to, the life of God in my soul?" No, my reader, emphatically, no! The faith of your soul, if it be a principle wrought by the Holy Spirit, will no more find perfect repose in any of these substitutes than the needle of the compass pointing to the south pole. Nothing, nothing but the *Blood of Jesus*. Not the ministry, though it were the most Christ-exalting; not the Word, though it unveiled its richest treasures; not the throne of grace, though its sacrifice rose to heaven in purest, sweetest fragrance; not Christian usefulness, though it won its thousands to the Savior, and made the wilderness to bloom and blossom like the rose—Oh, no! the blood, the *blood of Christ* alone is the object to which real faith travels, on which it rests, and from which it draws the sense of pardon and acceptance with God, peace of conscience, purity of heart, and deep, intense breathings after divine conformity.

And now comes the climax of the whole—this blood of Jesus cleanses from ALL Sin. "What," you exclaim, "from all sin? From heart sins? from presumptuous sin? from conscience sin? from mental sin? from lip sins? sins after conversion, after communion, after confession, after forgiveness? sins against light, and conviction, and truth?" Yes, my reader, from ALL Sin! It is written, yes, it is written!—"the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin." Who will dare alter, or modify, or limit, or dispute this divine declaration? Let him do so at the peril of his soul! It is the *blood* that cleanses. No part of our adorable Lord but His blood! Not His gospel, not His teaching, not His example, but His blood. It is the blood that made the atonement, and it is the atonement that provides for the pardon of sin—and thus it is to the blood of Jesus alone that the true faith of the sin-burdened conscience travels. Come in faith, then, to the blood of Christ. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"—for "the BLOOD of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses from ALL Sin." Once more we repeat the words—"Through Faith in His Blood."

"Faith is a very simple thing,
Though little understood;
It frees the soul from death's dread sting,
By resting in the blood.

"It looks not on the things around,
Nor on the things within;
It takes its flight to scenes above,
Beyond the sphere of sin.

"It sees upon the throne of God,
A Victim that was slain;
It rests its all on his shed blood,
And says, I'm born again.

"Faith is not what we feel or see,
It is a simple trust
In what the God of love has said
Of Jesus as 'the Just.'

"The Perfect One that died for me,
Upon His Father's throne,

Presents our names before our God,
And pleads himself alone.

"What Jesus is, and that alone,
Is faith's delightful plea;
It never deals with *sinful* self,
Nor *righteous* self in me.

"It tells me I am counted 'dead'
By God in His own Word!
It tells me I am born again
in Christ, my risen Lord.

"In that He died, He died to sin;
in that he lives—to God;
Then I am dead to nature's hopes,
And justified through blood.

"If He is free, then I am free,
From all unrighteousness;
If He is just, then I am just,
He is my righteousness.

"What lack I more to perfect bliss
A body like His own
Will perfect me for greater joys
Than angels round the throne."

We have thus given a brief outline of this precious subject—*faith fed and nourished beneath the cross*. But little remains for us to add save a few words of exhortation and encouragement.

If Christ is the root of faith, then see that by its continuous exercise in Christ this divine grace of the Spirit is kept vigorous and fruitful. It is *humble* only as it sits at the foot of the cross; it is *mighty* only as it entwines around the stem of the cross; it is *fruitful* only as it draws its life from the sacrifice of the cross; it is *victorious* only as it overcomes by the blood of the cross. It is *nourished* by the blood of Christ, it is *sustained* by the grace of Christ, it is *shielded* by the intercession of Christ, it is *crowned* by the diadem of Christ. "Through faith in His blood." What marvellous words are these! Angels' chimes breathe no

melody so sweet. They speak of *an infinite depth of mercy, of a fathomless sea of love, of a boundless ocean of grace, of pardon for the vilest, of cleansing for the guiltiest, and a full and free blotting out of all sin.* Faith in Christ's blood!—it will conduct us into the very holiest. Faith in Christ's blood!—it will throw open every chamber of God's heart. Oh, have faith in Christ's blood, it will unbind the heavy burden from your shoulder, it will break the galling yoke from your neck, it will speak peace to your troubled conscience, joy to your sad heart, will turn your mourning into dancing, and the gloom and depression of despair into the sunshine and exuberance of hope.

Run with your weak and tempted faith to the foot of the cross. Is it tried? Is it sifted as wheat? Are its efforts of resistance languid? Is its vision of Christ dim? of the good land which is very far off misty and obscure? Oh, take it just as it is to Christ's cross, and the blood that streams from it, and the life that springs from it, and the light that beams from it, and the peace and joy and hope that flow from it, will strengthen, energize, and elevate this precious grace of your soul, and you shall be "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

See the instrument by which faith battles and conquers—*the cross of Jesus.* Let us go forth with any other weapon to meet the vaunting foe, be it the Goliath that defies the armies of the living God, or the little maid in Pilate's hall, defeat and shame are certain. But faith battling beneath the cross, battling with the cross, shall foil and triumph over all its foes. "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." Oh, then, let your faith deal much with Christ's wounds. Read your pardon there, see your peace there, behold your shelter and safety there. Christ's wounds invite you to their asylum, speak peace to you on earth, and plead for you in heaven. Only let your faith rest at the Savior's cross, and life shall be to you a continuous pleasant song of praise to Jesus; death shall swell the music in the lone and shaded valley; and heaven shall take up and prolong its joyous strains through eternity.

"The cross! my hope, my boast, my theme,
There's music in the very word;
Compared to it, how worthless seem
All earthly thoughts, and how absurd
The thoughts and aims of men appear
To those to whom the cross is dear.

"The cross! the cross! mysterious tree,
On which the Savior breathed His last;

You wondrous cross, I look to you!
The bitterness of death is past;
The sense of guilt so keen before,
So terrible—is felt no more.

"The cross! the cross! how safe he is
Who trusts in it, and it alone;
The promise and the blessing his,
It is better than a royal throne.
A throne, what is it but a toy,
Compared to what the saints enjoy?
"The cross! the cross! Tis shame I know;
It may be death—I love it still!
The cross be mine, come weal, come woe,
From it can come no real ill;
It is fraught with blessing rich and free,
And he who has them, blest is he."—Kelly.

"Love at the Foot of the Cross"

"Do you love Me?" He said, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." John 21:17

There is no place where the believer's love to Christ receives a diviner inspiration, a stronger and more healthful impulse, than at the cross of Jesus. The cross of Calvary is the altar of divine love—it is love in its most sublime, most touching and impressive form. *No perfection of God is so conspicuous, precious, and transcendent in the redemption of man as love.* "God is love," are words emblazoned upon the cross in letters of living light. It is true there was an awesome manifestation of *justice*, and a solemn display of *holiness*, and a stern vindication of *truth*, and an overwhelming demonstration of *power* in the cross of Jesus; but divine love outshone and eclipsed them all. The cross of Jesus is love's portrait, love's exponent, love's sacrifice—the place where this divine plant of heaven in the believer's soul takes its deepest root, unveils its richest beauty, and breathes its sweetest fragrance. Having studied the graces of *penitence* and *faith* at the cross of Jesus, let us view in the same hallowed light the kindred grace of love.

Love to Christ is both the *essence* and the *evidence* of our Christianity; we

thus become, as believers in Jesus, a reflection—faint, indeed!—of the essential nature of God. "God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him." *There is not a truer or more powerful test of our religion than love.* The fulfilling of the law and obedience to the gospel are resolvable into the same principle—the principle of love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "If you love me, keep my commandments." Such was the test to which our Lord subjected the attachment and fidelity of Peter. "Do you love me?" Detaching him from every other object, the Savior presented Himself as the one, sole absorbing object of His disciple's love. "Do you love ME?" *Here was the divine magnet and its attraction.* Never did our Lord propound an question more expressive and touching; and never did a disciple return an answer more responsive and precious. "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Beloved, the question and the answer equally concern us. To every professed follower the Savior addresses the same question. Does the reply of Peter find a response in our heart? Is it the echo of our feelings? Let us in faith approach the foot of the cross, and beneath its solemn light have close dealings with Jesus and with our own hearts touching this vital matter—our LOVE to the Savior. To this test let us bring our affections, by it let us try our religion. Let us realize that Christ is addressing us individually—is addressing you, is addressing me—with, "Do you love me?" What answer are we prepared to return? Let me endeavor to aid you, beloved reader, in this momentous inquiry by placing before you, first—

THE OBJECT OF LOVE. "Do you love ME?" We admire and adore the wisdom of our Lord in giving this mold to the question—in presenting HIMSELF as the one engrossing object of love. He knew what was in man—how idolatrous was the human heart—how easily the needle of its love was disturbed by some other and less true attraction—how far an individual could go in the expression of a feeling that bore a strong resemblance of true love to Himself, but which, when tested, would be found false, and if cherished, would prove fatal! He therefore fixes the eye upon Himself. It is quite possible to admire and feel an interest in that which has some relation to Christ apart from love to the person of Christ. We may feel a regard for the *minister* who preaches Christ, for the *edifice* which echoes with the name of Christ, for the *plans* which make Christ known, and yet be destitute of love to Christ! President Edwards, in his masterly work on the "Affections," has clearly and solemnly demonstrated this. A diviner pen has yet more clearly and solemnly taught us that we may, "speak with tongues, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries and all knowledge, have the faith that removes mountains, bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and give our body to be

burned," and yet have no love to God or Christ!

The world has its objects of love, various and many—objects suited to each order of mind and standard of taste. The object of one is learning, of another science, of another ambition, with yet another it is the sordid accumulation of wealth. Thus might we traverse the whole circle and show you that *every man has his idol*; and that if God and Christ constitute not the supreme object, his heart, burning incense to some 'created object' which he substitutes for the God who created him, has never felt the attraction of divine love.

We come now to the consideration of the OBJECT of the believer's love. Christ invests the subject with no perplexity. He leaves nothing for our speculation, but clearly declares who is the true object of the believer's love. It is HIMSELF. What are some of the features in Christ constituting Himself as the object of the supreme, divine, and absorbing love of the believer? He is an object of love inasmuch as He is the great Revealer of God. Here the theology of some is defective, the views of others dim and low. They regard Christ as a wonderful being, of vast power, of ineffable love, of transcendent excellence, and tender sympathy, and this awakens their admiration and even inspires their love, but there they rest. But we dare not rest here. We must see more than this. We must see the Lord Jesus as the great MANIFESTATION of the Father, the embodiment of all the perfections and attributes of Jehovah. We must see Him as the exponent of the Father's love, or we cannot rest in Him with perfect satisfaction. How could we find repose in Him for our agitated spirits, and yet cherish the dark suspicion that God did not look upon us with complacency, that there were perfections in God that were hostile to us; thoughts in the heart of God not reconciled to us? But the moment faith grasps the truth, "in resting in the love of Christ, I rest in the love of the Father; in finding a home in the bosom of the smitten One, I find a home in the bosom of Him who smote; and now I can travel as on the wings of light, up to the very heart of God, and feel in it the most perfect repose."

Sophistry and unbelief may urge me to cast away my confidence, but nothing can displace it, nothing can take from me the blessed assurance that, in resting in the atoning Savior, I am at peace with God himself. We ask you, then, if, as the great Revealer, He is not worthy of your supreme affection? You love the sun, for throwing his beams of light so gloriously over the face of nature. What enkindles that landscape with such beauty? What gives to the gems of the mine their luster, and to the flowers of the field their perfume and their tint? It is the glowing sun. How much more should we love Jesus, the Sun of

Righteousness, for showing us the Father, for revealing to us the glory of God; for blending all His perfections in their reconciliation and harmony. "He that has seen ME has seen the Father."

Equally is Christ an object of love for His own wondrous person. We love Him because He is GOD. We feel we are guilty of no act of idolatry when we bend the knee to Jesus, and offer Him worship and honor equal to the Father. We love to crown Him Lord of all, to trace His every display of power, and word of wisdom, and thought of love, to His veiled Deity. We love to feel that Deity atoned for us; we rejoice to know that Deity undertook, what humanity alone never could have accomplished, the full and eternal redemption of our souls. We love Him, too, for his HUMANITY—the humanity that was as real as ours, that was upheld by the indwelling Deity, that traveled to the cross, and hung and bled and died there. Oh yes! we love Him for all this. Who can contemplate Christ as the Eternal Son of God, exchanging the Father's bosom for the rude embrace of the cross to work out our salvation, and not feel "truly He is the object of my soul's supreme love."

We love Him, too, for His own work's sake, for what He has accomplished. Having voluntarily offered Himself a sacrifice for sin, He stood in our very place, entered into our prison-house, was bound with our fetters, assumed our debt, making Himself responsible to law and justice on our behalf. *Ought He not to be the object of supreme affection?* Is it not a wonder of wonders how we can contemplate His marvellous stoop, His atoning work for us, His self-sacrifice, and yet feel so little kindlings of love in return?

Nor must we overlook that which, perhaps, we are more prone to forget than anything else—we love Him, or ought to love Him, for His disciplinary dealings with us. This may be a hard truth for some to receive, who, with dark clouds draping their domestic hearth, toiling along flinty and dreary paths, borne down by care and anxiety and grief, are led to question the love of God in His dealings, and to inquire, "Can He love me and deal with me thus?" My reader, there is not a single event in your history, or shadow on your path, or crook in your lot, that is not the fruit of the love of Jesus to you? Does He love your person? Has He pardoned and accepted you? Then, no more question His love in His afflictive, chastening conduct. He is dealing with you in your present trials with that very same love that constrained Him to die for you upon the cross. But the Lord tries the love of His people. Nothing is more clearly revealed in God's Word than the truth that, "the Lord tries the righteous." It is not for Himself that He tries them, blessed be His name! "The

foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, the Lord knows those that are His;" and if the Lord knows you as one of His own, pardoned and justified, adopted and saved, He knows all your circumstances, there being nothing in your personal history of which the Lord who chose, because He loved you, has not a special cognizance. It is not for Himself that He proves His people, that He puts the precious ore into the crucible, tests and refines it. Oh, no!

Delightful thought! you sheep of the fold, whom the world knows not, whom the saints do not know, who scarcely know yourselves, delightful thought! "I *know* my sheep," I bear them on my arm and on the palms of my hands; I know their names, I wrote them in the book of life; I knew them in the dark and cloudy day, when my Spirit went after them; I know my superscription, my image, my work in their souls. Blessed thought! Lord, comfort us with it, make us glad with the sweet assurance, "I *know* my sheep."

And yet, He tries them, He brings to the test every grace of the Spirit in the soul. But especially He tries the grace of love. He tries it by the test of our obedience. "If you love me"—what will follow?—"keep my commandments." *Your obedience as my disciple is the proof of your attachment, the expression of your love to me.*" Is there a command of our Lord and Master irksome or distasteful to a true disciple of Jesus who feels his heart glow with love to the Savior? Not one! What would we think of the love of a child who would run in the face of parental authority, and yet protest that he loved that parent with an unfaltering attachment? Beloved, prompt, unquestioning obedience to any known command of your Lord and Master is a test of love to Him.

He tries our love, too, by service. *Love to Christ will constrain the disciple to consecrate himself to the service of Christ.* His is the love, not only of an obedient child, but of a faithful, dutiful servant; feeling that there are periods in his Christian life when he places his position as a servant even in advance of his dignity as a son. Thus we find the apostles commencing their epistles, "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ;" "Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ;" "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." Thus they placed their service in precedence of their apostleship, because they felt that a willing service for Jesus was a stronger proof of their love. If the Lord saw fit to place you in a position most obscure, or to assign to you a service the most menial, not calculated to catch the eye or win the applause, but rather the disregard and the rebuff of your fellows, it would be one of the sweetest tests of the reality of your love to Him. When Morrison, the Chinese missionary—the man of God who first gave the Bible to China in its vernacular—offered himself to the directors of the London Missionary

Society as a missionary to the heathen, his appearance was so uncultivated and unpromising, that, hesitating to accept him as a candidate, they inquired if he was willing to go simply as an assistant in one of the missionary schools? "Gentlemen," was young Morrison's noble reply, "while the temple of Christ is building, I am willing to be a hewer of wood or a drawer of water." In a moment they decided that a man who so loved his Savior, who was willing to undertake any service for Christ, was the fittest for the higher office of a missionary to the heathen. They accepted him as a missionary, and the result proved that they were not mistaken in their judgment. *If, beloved, you love Christ, you will be willing to undertake any service your Lord and Master may appoint you. Love will make drudgery for Jesus pleasant and welcome.*

Christ tries our love, again, by the test of suffering. "To you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." We know these are not days of great persecution for Christ's sake—alas! they are to come—yet we know there is a *moral martyrdom* which many a disciple of Christ has to pass through who would bear the cross after Jesus.

The Lord sometimes tries our love by physical suffering. Many a child of God may be now tossing on a bed of pain, languor, and restlessness. Jesus has sent this sickness, designed but to prove the reality of love in its endurance. Love to Jesus will sweeten every cup He minglest. It will give repose to restlessness, alleviation to pain, and make all our bed in sickness. Thus, whenever the Lord sees fit to place you in a position of suffering, be sure it is but to try the reality of your love.

He tries it also by the test of principle. When our own interests clash with Christ's, and we are led to say, "Lord, though the temptation is enticing, I dare not yield for my right hand. I love your honor too well to do that which would compromise my integrity as a man of God, and dishonor Your great and precious name." This is the test of principle, and the evidence and triumph of love.

THE APPEAL the believer is able to make to the Lord for the sincerity of his attachment demands our next attention. "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Here was first an acknowledgment of the Deity of Christ. Who can "know all things" but God? Have you, my reader, a latent doubt touching the Deity of Christ? In the solitude of your chamber weigh this argument, examine this evidence, and see if it is not irrefutable and conclusive—that He must be essentially Divine who knows all things? All

present and future events, all the hidden springs of action, all the concealed thoughts of the heart, all, all are known to Him who will one day occupy, clad in robes of majesty, the great white throne, unveiling every heart, and sitting in righteous judgment upon the actions of every life. He, then, who is to judge mankind in the last day must needs be essentially divine, must needs be God. We turn to His present knowledge of our love. Oh, what an entrancing thought! to be able to appeal to our Lord's Deity in proof of our love, and to say, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Have you not this conviction of the reality, if not the depth, of your love to Jesus? Dare you deny that you love Him? What! could you live without Jesus? Could you suffer without Jesus? Could you fence with the foe, vanquish and slay him, without Jesus? Could you do anything without Christ? do you feel no thrill of holy affection pulsating within your breast? What! do you not love His people, and love His truth, and love His service, because you love His person? Do you not say, "Lord, I dare not boast of the strength or constancy of my love to You; it ebbs and flows like the ocean's tide, yet, one thing I know—I do love you!" Then, deny not your love to the Savior, lest you wound His heart and grieve that Holy Spirit of love, by whose inspiration it was enkindled within your breast.

Having presented an outline of this subject, we return to the truth with which we commenced, and with which we close the chapter—love's place of nourishment and growth is the foot of the Cross. *Where should our Christ-loving hearts repose but where Christ's loving heart bled? Our hearts should feel no magnet so powerful as the cross of Jesus, no attraction like the Crucified One.* Look at this precious truth in two or three particulars.

The cross of Jesus inspires our love. It would seem impossible to be brought by the Holy Spirit to the foot of the cross, and not feel the inspiration of love. If love begets love, surely a believing apprehension of the amazing, the unparalleled love of Jesus, bending His look of forgiveness upon us from the cross, will thaw our icy hearts into the warmest glow of affection. Behold the source of your love to God! "We love Him because *He first loved us.*" No throb of love had dilated our hearts had not God first touched them with His own. Believe in the love of God, believe that Jesus loves you, and you shall be sensible of a new-born affection glowing within your breast. You are not called to believe in your love to God, but in God's love to you! Do not argue, "I cannot love God! I have striven to my uttermost to do so, but have failed in all my endeavors, until in despair I have abandoned the thought and relinquished the attempt." Be it so—*no effort of your own can strike a spark of love to God from your heart.* Nor does God demand the task at your hands. All

that He requires of you is *faith in His love, as embodied and expressed in Jesus Christ to poor sinners*. The new and living way He has opened to His reconciled heart, the ample promise He has made to save you, the willingness He has shown to pardon and accept you, the *love, the astonishing, the marvellous love, He has exhibited in giving you His beloved Son to die in your stead*, are cords by which He would draw your loving heart to Himself. Oh, will not this suffice? Have faith in God's love. *Believe that Jesus loves you, and your heart shall glow with a love in return which will bear it on in a willing obedience and unreserved surrender, in faithful service and patient suffering, enwrapped, consumed amid the flames of its own heaven-inspired and heaven-ascending affection.*

The cross of Jesus rekindles and restores our waning love. No grace of the Spirit is so sensitive to the influence of a chilling spiritual atmosphere as the grace of love. No divine principle of the soul sooner droops than it. "The love of many waxes cold," is not the lament of one age of the Church only, it is her lament now. What are some of the producing causes? *The influence of the world* will chill it; the encroachments of temporal engagements upon the study of God's Word, the devout transactions of the closet, the ordinances of the sanctuary, will chill it; the society of half-hearted Christians—cold, worldly, light professors—will chill it; unfitting levity of spirit, trifling with sin, carnal pursuits, will chill it; an idolatrous love of the creature will chill it; fretting against the Lord, murmuring at His dealings, rebellion against His authority and chastenings, will chill it. Alas! how much there is to produce deep and sad declension in the love of our hearts to the Lord, and how soon its warm, flowing current chills and congeals! Oh that our hearts should so soon grow cold in their affections towards Him whose love to us is ever so warm, who ransomed us from hell with His own heart's blood! Let shame and confusion of face cover us. Let deep humiliation, tender, holy contrition, prostrate us beneath the cross, that we should for one moment gaze coldly upon so divine and gracious, so lovely and precious a Redeemer. But here is the remedy—the foot of the cross! Bringing there our chilled affections, our cold hearts, we rekindle the dying flame at this altar of love, and again, and with more touching earnestness and deeper sincerity, we exclaim, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you!"

It is at the cross of Jesus we shall prove more intensely the constraining power of Christ's love in our hearts. The great impelling motive of our holy obedience to Christ, and of all faithful service for Christ, is love. God would have our hearts moved towards Him by the same divine impulse that moved

His heart towards us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This is to be the principle of our unreserved surrender to God—"The love of Christ constrains us." Desire we, then, to feel the all-commanding, all-persuasive, all-impelling power of love? Let us go to the foot of the cross and receive its inspiration there. Allow no motive to influence you lower than this. *See that love to self, love to the creature, love for some fond idol is absorbed and lost in love to Christ.* Yield your heart to the gentle yet irresistible force of love enkindled at the cross of Jesus. Love, there begotten, will give completeness to your obedience, cheerfulness to your service, sweetness to your cross. It will impart dignity to the most menial service, and pleasantness to the most toilsome drudgery for Christ. It will enable you to bow your head silently to the stroke that has laid you low—to drink uncomplainingly the cup from which perhaps now you shrink—resolutely to sever that tie that binds you to some absorbing idol and displaces your Lord—to relinquish, or take up, that which involves the honor and glory of Him who loved you unto death. Sit down, then, close at the foot of the cross—for there is nothing but *love* there—and love to Christ will attain the ascendancy; and, borne upon the bosom of its gentle, irresistible tide, obedience, service, and suffering for your Lord will be on earth your ambition, your joy and crown.

In conclusion. Do not be satisfied with vain and fruitless lamentations over the littleness and coldness of your love to Christ. *Your love to the Savior will never be nourished by feeding upon itself.* It has no power of self-inspiration.

Argument will not intensify it, reasoning will not increase it, lamentation will not quicken it. *Love can only be enkindled at the altar of love.* Look directly at the love of Jesus—get a more believing apprehension of His great love to you—leave the shallows of your own love, and descend into the depths of His love—light the torch of your affections at the flame which glows upon Calvary; and you then shall no more doubt the existence or lament the chill of your love to God in Christ, but, with a depth of feeling and a power of emphasis unknown before, you shall awaken the sweet echoes of heaven with your exclamation, "Lord, you know that I *love* you!"

It is only at the cross of Jesus that your heart will be perfected in love. And less than this is unworthy your aim. "We have known and believe the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect." Thus perfected in love, knowing and believing of a truth that God loves you, the slavish fear that has produced so much torment will be cast out, and the sunshine of love will fill your whole

soul with its divine radiance. And oh, how many beauteous rainbows will then pencil the dark, watery clouds of your earthly pilgrimage! You will see nothing but love in your trials, nothing but love in your sorrows, nothing but love in your losses, nothing but love in all your Father's dealings—for love's rainbow, arching and encircling all the children of God, bends its smile on you.

Remember the cross of Jesus is the place where we learn to love one another! Do we discover in our hearts any decrease of love to the saints? Do we detect a lack of charity, forbearance, forgiveness, fellowship, and communion towards God's people? Do we find sectarianism separating us, bigotry contracting us, misunderstanding alienating us, jealousy chilling us, misrepresentation prejudicing us, selfishness collapsing us? In a moment, without hesitation or debate, let us repair to the foot of Christ's cross, and before that marvellous spectacle of disinterested self-sacrifice, and bleeding, dying love, let the blush of shame crimson our cheek that we should ever look coldly upon, or speak uncharitably of, a brother or a sister enfolded in the arms that love extends, ransomed by the blood that love has shed! Beneath the cross of Jesus our shibboleths are lost in the music of love, our exclusiveness is enlarged in the expansion of love, our coldness, alienation, and distrust are dissolved and consumed in the heat of love—the love of Christ filling our hearts with affection to Himself, fills them with affection to His people. Prostrate before that cross, and reading your pardon there; surveying the price with which your ransom was secured, contemplating your deep obligation to the great love with which God has loved you, weighing what you owe as a debtor to the mercy that tides over all your transgressions; what sentiment other than *love, forgiveness, and sympathy* can you cherish for the saints who, though they may have wronged and wounded you, who, though they belong not to your communion, and differ from your creed, yet love the same Savior whom you love, and cling to the same cross that saves and shelters you?

Keep in constant remembrance the love of Jesus. "We will remember Your love," (Song Sol. 1:4.) Avail yourself of every occasion of trial, and sorrow, and temptation, and need to recall it to memory. Do not neglect the ordinance He has especially appointed to keep us in remembrance of Himself. "Do this in remembrance of ME." Remember all that His love has done and is doing for you now. Remember it in prosperity, to keep you humble; remember it in adversity, to keep you from desponding; remember it in loneliness, to sweeten your solitude; remember it in the night-watches, to raise your song; remember it in service, to animate and strengthen you; remember it in

sickness and in death, and it will bear you home to that pure and bright world where, having learned to sing Christ's love at the cross, you will now chant its praise eternally before the throne!

**"Oh! let me all forget but Thee,
And Your deep love, my Savior God!
Let every fond remembrance flee,
But that which points me to Your blood.**

**"The fleet—the false—the fading dreams
Of earthly joys, forever past!
Which came and went like sunny beams,
Too bright—too beautiful to last.**

**"Oh! let them all forgotten be,
And You alone possess my heart,
For I have all that life can be,
If You Yourself to me impart.**

**"Who from the dazzling realms of light,
Where hosts of angels owned Your sway,
To bring me there, bore Sin's dark blight,
And lowly came—a Child of clay!**

**"Who in my lost and rebel state,
Forgetting You—asleep in sin,
Raised me from death!—oh, love how great
That I might life eternal win.**

**"That as a gem set in Your crown,
I through Your grace might ever shine
Oh! when I bow before Your throne,
I'll think upon this love of thine.**

**"Yes, when I join the holy throng;
I'll think of all Your love to me,
And swell the sweet, the joyous song,
In telling what I owe to Thee!**

"I'll think upon Your dealings here,

**How I was kept from hour to hour;
How You did chase each trembling fear,
And saved me from the Tempter's power.**

**"I'll think of days of sorrow too,
When midst their darkness You did smile,
And changed earth's sad and sable hue
To holy light, for me the while.**

**"When piercing thorns pained my heart,
And I had none my grief to share,
I'll think how You did heal the smart,
And calmed the grief that rankled there.**

**"Remember You! and all Your love—
Changeless, when I too often have changed;
Oh! memory, never let it remove,
Until faith is into sight exchanged.**

**"Lord, so would I remember Thee,
That, by Your love constrained to live
Apart from earth, the world might see
That heart and life to You I give.**

**"And while eternal ages roll,
Your love shall be my ceaseless song;
You who have saved my guilty soul,
Praises to You alone belong.**

**"Who is there, Lord, on earth below,
That I would with Your love compare?
And when above Your saints I know,
I'll love You still supremely there."**

Prayer at the Foot of the Cross

**"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place
by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the
curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of
God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,**

having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:19-22

"And so, dear friends, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. This is the new, life-giving way that Christ has opened up for us through the sacred curtain, by means of his death for us.

And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's people, let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:19-22

If there is one exercise of the believing soul which more than another finds its appropriate place at the cross, it is communion with God. *Prayer is God's ordained channel of making known our requests to Him, and of communicating His blessings to us in response to those requests.* It is that holy engagement by which God and man are brought into the closest and holiest transaction. He who enters into the Holiest must be employed in the holiest exercise of the soul. This is prayer, real prayer—entering into the Holiest and standing in the immediate presence of the Holy One. Nor this alone. It is *not* a silent, awe-struck posture of the soul. Pavilioned within that holy place, prostrate in the presence of God, the believer is in sweet, holy, filial communion and fellowship with the invisible God—that God standing to him in the relation of a *Father*. Wondrous privilege of the believer! What can surpass, yes, what can equal it? The privilege of drawing near to God, of penetrating within the Holiest, of pouring out the heart in confession, supplication, and praise—oh, it distances in its solemnity and its preciousness every other privilege and enjoyment of the renewed soul. But the sacred and solemn topic which will more immediately engage our present thoughts is, the *relation of prayer to the sacrifice of Jesus*; in other words, *communion with God at the cross*. We shall contemplate in their order—the *place* into which the believer enters—the *door* through which he enters—and the *liberty and encouragement* he has to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.

THE PLACE INTO WHICH THE BELIEVER ENTERS.

We have, in the outset of the subject, the most sublime and solemn idea of access to God, of fellowship with the Invisible, found in the Bible. It is nothing less, it could be nothing greater, than entering into the Holiest. The typical reference will be familiar to the Bible reader. It points us to the inner shrine of the tabernacle, "the holy of holies," the place of the Shechinah glory,

representing the visible glory of the invisible God, where the awful presence of the Holy One was felt, and into which the high priest alone entered once in the year. We have here a shadowing forth the *true nature of prayer—of access to God*; it is communion with the Invisible, which the believer experiences, and is privileged with, under the new and more gospel economy. When we approach God in prayer, in the fullest and most gospel sense, we enter into the Holiest. And yet, how few individuals there are, professing to be believers in Christ, who penetrate into this sacred place—who realize that, *when they approach God in prayer, they are actually in the presence of the Most Holy!*

Now, look at the illustration of real prayer suggested to us by this "entering into the Holiest." In the first place, we have presented to us the holiness of the act itself. By faith we penetrate into the inner shrine; and nothing gives us a more vivid and impressive view of the solemnity of prayer, of the awesome holiness of access to God, as this. What really is prayer? It is standing before the holy Lord God! It is "dust and ashes" entering into the presence of the Infinite! It is a poor, sinful, hell-deserving sinner in audience with the Righteous One! It is the finite, in its fallen, infirm, and necessitous condition, holding fellowship with the Infinite! Can you conceive of an engagement, can you imagine an employment of the soul more solemn, more holy than this?

Yet, beloved, what superficial views do most of us have of the sanctity that attaches itself to prayer! Oh, with what little solemnity we rush into the presence of the Holy One, as the horse into the battle, unprepared, reckless, and inconsiderate! What little composure of mind, what slight preparation of the heart, what imperfect calling off the thoughts and affections from the trifles of this world, is there in us when we rise and draw near to God! And yet those angels in heaven that stand in His presence, hearkening to the voice of His word, ever poised on the wing to obey His mandate, to do His will, never engage in a service more holy, never approach God so near, so filial, as when you, a sinful, needy, yet believing sinner, approach the throne of grace, standing in the Holy of holies, and in the presence of the Holiest of Beings!

The second idea suggested is, that of the DIVINE PRESENCE which encircles the believer in prayer. *When a child of God approaches his Heavenly Father in devotion, he is supposed to turn his back upon all other beings, and to realize that he is in the presence of the Lord of hosts, the King of glory; that he is encircled by the Divine perfections. The true, simple definition of prayer is, fellowship with God; the consciousness that God is present with us. It is to feel that you are with God, and that God is with you; that you are breathing forth the*

utterances of a humble, penitent, contrite heart, and the deep—felt necessities of your soul; and that God's ear is listening to your voice, bowed down to your feeblest utterance.

What a mockery were you to go to the Queen of these realms with a petition which involved your most precious interests, and were to be satisfied with occupying an 'waiting-room' of the palace in which the sovereign was not seen, her voice not heard, the royal presence not felt! Would you be satisfied by thus going and returning without an audience, and thus without having accomplished the object of your mission? Apply the illustration! *Prayer is entering with our requests "into the Holiest," where the Lord of heaven and earth occupies His throne, to hear and answer our petitions. It is a believing apprehension that He is there; it is a realization of His solemn yet precious presence, the consciousness of being encompassed by the God of love.* Oh, do not be satisfied with any prayer except this—"You, God, see me. You, my Father, are near me. I am breathing the atmosphere of Your holy, loving presence! I am conscious that I am in audience with the Invisible One, and that I stand in the presence of the great Searcher of Hearts."

The third idea is, the close proximity of the Holiest on earth with the Holiest in heaven. Communion with God now, is preparatory to communion with Him hereafter. Fellowship with God in time, is the commencement of an communion perpetuated through eternity. No believing soul that ever held fellowship with God on earth, that ever penetrated into the Holiest, and there felt the spell of the Divine presence, shall be banished from that heaven of glory where communion with God shall be perfected and eternalized. If you have walked with God along these *dark lanes below*, you shall walk with God the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. The broken, stammering accents of prayer here shall be perfected in your communion and communion with God hereafter. *Prayer links man with God, the present with the future, heaven with earth, the Holiest now with the Holiest to come.* And when your soul is conscious, "You are near, O Lord! I feel Your presence, I know Your voice," your experience is like unto that of the patriarch, and you exclaim, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

We are now conducted to THE DOOR by which we enter into the holiest. You will observe, my reader, that it is twofold—by the death and by the life of Jesus—that we enter into the Holiest in prayer. It is by blood-shedding—the death of Jesus; and it is a "living way"—the resurrection-life of Jesus. Let us

see how these two views of Christ harmonize, and are indissolubly entwined with your access to God.

First, there is the cross of Christ—"by the blood of Jesus"—the blood He shed when He died upon the cross possessing all the dignity and efficacy of His Godhead—"by the blood of Jesus." Now, in what sense, beloved, do we "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus?" In other words, what is the connection of the cross with prayer? In the first place, the blood of Jesus removes sin from us in the sight of God. We could not enter into the Holiest unless there were the removal of the great interposing barrier which sin presents. How could we, as sinners, unwashed by blood, presume to enter into the Holiest? It would be like the moth rushing into the candle-light. "*Our God is a consuming fire," and it is an awful thing to rush uncleansed, unsanctified, into His presence.* Beloved, the blood of Jesus removes this barrier, annihilates this obstruction, by taking away our sins, by blotting out our transgressions; and so washed, we enter into the Holiest! Oh, you who have a humble hope in Christ, whose only foundation is the sacrifice He has offered, behold here the great difficulty, the grand impediment to your access to God totally annihilated! The blood of Jesus Christ has accomplished it. And now, between God the holy and you the sinful there is no impediment, no obstruction, no barrier. Nothing shall obstruct your coming to God as a pardoned sinner, and holding the closest, sweetest, holiest communion with Him, because the blood of Jesus Christ has washed away your sin, has blotted out your guilt, and removed the only obstruction to your closest communion with God.

"The blood of Jesus," too, gives us access to God by purifying the conscience. What is it that prevents the approach of many into the Holiest? It is the guilt of unremoved sin upon the conscience. When a man of God has sin upon his conscience—sin unconfessed and uncleansed; he then knows but little what it is to enter into the Holiest. But let him take a fresh hold of the sacrifice of Jesus, let him bring the conscience beneath the cross of the Crucified, let him wash in the fountain, look by faith anew to the blood, and that which intercepted and blocked his approach is removed; and with a heart sprinkled with the blood, he draws near to God, and holds communion with the Invisible. This my reader, is the grand secret of nearness to God and of communion with Him by prayer, bathing the conscience in the fountain; getting, as it were into the very wounds of Christ. And, strong as may be your conscious unworthiness, great as may be your backsliding, you shall realize that the blood purifying the conscience has brought you into fellowship with God.

There is still one more view. The blood of Jesus supplies us with the merit that gives us access and boldness to enter into the Holiest. We have no other merit but that supplied by an atoning Savior. The blood of Jesus has secured our access. It merits the acceptance of our *persons*, it merits the success of our *petitions*, and it merits and receives the Divine response to our *prayers*. The only merit you have, on the ground of which you can approach God in prayer, is the divine merit which the blood of Jesus Christ supplies; having no other, and conscious that you deserve nothing but the Divine anger, you throw yourself upon "the blood of Jesus," and your faith possesses all the merit that constitutes the ground of your access to God.

To this I would add, the blood of Jesus supplies you with your plea and argument. When you approach God, a thousand arguments may arise in opposition to your approach, a thousand difficulties interpose themselves in the way of your access. In view of the sad memories that crowd around you, your sins and shortcomings, infirmities and imperfections, like so many haunting spectres staring you in the face and defying your approach, the moment your faith can take hold of the blood of Jesus, instantly, like the accusers of the poor woman who stood in the presence of the Lord, all go out, and you are left alone with God! The blood of Christ has answered and removed all the arguments, and with that one plea—the blood of the spotless Lamb of God, the blood that cleanses from all sin, the blood that has sprinkled the mercy-seat, the blood that intercedes for you within the veil—you approach the throne of grace, and in a moment, guilty and vile though you are, you find yourself standing in the presence of the Holy One! Oh, how precious should that blood be to us! Is there one blessing we ought to prize above every other, I hesitate not to say it is the *blood of Jesus*! Does this page address a poor trembling one, lingering on the sacred threshold of the most holy place, not daring to enter or lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven? Let me remind you of the efficacy of the blood of Jesus; it is sufficient to cleanse you from all sin. Pleaded by faith, it ushers you into the presence of God, secures your pardon, will bring peace to your sin-disturbed conscience, and give you a loving approach and access to God as your reconciled Father.

Then there is THE LIFE OF JESUS, associated with prayer "by a new and LIVING way." We approach God, beloved, under a new dispensation when we approach through the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus. "New," as it is opposed to the works of the Law; "new," because revealed in the glorious gospel of the grace of God with greater distinctness and vividness; "new,"

because it possesses a deathless freshness. Come to God, when, where, and with what you may, yet coming by Christ, approaching through the Crucified One, you tread the "new and living way."

Another idea suggested by this expression is, we approach God by a LIVING Savior, we come to God through Him who is "alive for evermore," who is at the right hand of the Father, who also makes intercession for us. Yes, He has passed into the heavens, personally to appear in the presence of God for us. And now Christ is *interceding* for us before the golden throne in heaven—a living Christ-sympathizing, with our needs, difficulties, and fears; a living Christ, imparting vitality to our soul, power to our prayers, and life to our fellowship and communion; a living Christ, bearing us upon His heart, and so entwining all our personal interests with His never-failing intercessions. Thus it is by the death of Christ on the one hand, and by His life on the other, that we are saved. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." With these two arguments—Christ's atoning death and Christ's resurrection life—who dare obstruct your coming to God? Who shall interpose an obstacle to your access into the Holiest? Shall sin, with its deepest crimson? shall Satan, with his countless accusations? shall the world, with all its specious arguments? shall unbelief, with its presumptuous suggestions? shall any one or all of these dare to say, "Stand back!" when the death of Christ, on the one hand, and the life of Christ, on the other, open wide the door into the presence of God, and sweetly allure us in—where we lose all our burdens, sorrows, and needs, while leaning in hallowed communion upon the very bosom of Ineffable Love?

It would be an essential defect in this imperfect outline of the medium of prayer—the atonement and intercession of the Great High Priest—did we omit in this place to introduce briefly the part which the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, takes in this holy and sublime engagement. The Spirit is as essentially and as closely associated with true prayer as is *the Father the Object*, and *the Son the Medium*, of worship. All true prayer is the Holy Spirit's inspiration and help. "Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Oh, then, recognize and honor the Spirit in prayer! He is a *divine Object* of prayer—worship Him! He is the *gracious Author* of prayer—invoke Him! He is a *loving Answerer* of prayer—wait for Him! Exalt and honor and

vindicate the Holy Spirit, and your mind will be more heavenly, your prayers more spiritual, your hopes more bright, your whole life more deeply sanctified and sanctifying. Blessed with the fulness of the Spirit, you shall be a blessing to others through the anointing of the Spirit; and upon your tomb shall be the epitaph, "Those who be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

"O Holy Spirit! now descend on me
As showers of rain upon the thirsty ground;
Cause me to flourish as a spreading tree;
May all Your precious fruits in me be found.
"Be my 'teacher'—to my soul reveal
The length, breadth, depth, and height of Jesus' love;
And on my soul Your blest instructions seal;
Raising my thoughts and heart to things above.
"Be my 'comforter'—when I'm distressed
Oh gently soothe my sorrows, calm my grief,
Help me to find upon my Savior's breast,
In every hour of trial, sure relief.
"Be my 'guide' into 'all truth' divine;
Give me increasing knowledge of my God;
Show me the glories that in Jesus shine,
And make my heart the place of His abode.

"Be my 'intercessor'—teach me how
To pray according to God's holy will;
Cause me with deep and strong desire to glow,
And my whole soul with heavenly longings fill.
"Be my 'earnest' of eternal rest,
And 'witness' with me I am God's own child,
With His unchanging love and favor blest,
By Jesus' blood be fully reconciled.

Be my 'sanctifier'—dwell within,
And purify and cleanse my every thought,
Subdue the power of each besetting sin,
And be my will to sweet submission brought.
"Be my 'quickener' —in me revive
Each drooping grace, so prone to fade and die;
Help me on Jesus day by day to live,

And loosen more and more each earthly tie.
"Blest SPIRIT! I would yield myself to You,
Do for me more than I can ask or think;
Let me Your holy habitation be,
And daily deeper from Your fulness drink.

The third point is the LIBERTY with which the believer enters by the blood of Jesus into the Divine presence. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness"—or, as the margin renders it, "LIBERTY to enter into the holiest." Liberty is a precious pearl. What will a man not give or imperil for his liberty?—liberty of body, liberty of action, the yet higher liberty of the soul! But what is all this compared to the liberty of drawing near to God as our Father? of looking up into His face as a reconciled God, conscious of filial relation to Him, great and holy though He be?—the privilege of calling Him Abba, Father, of reposing our heaviest burdens on His arm, of pouring our plaintive utterances of sorrow into His listening ear? Yes, my reader, there is no liberty like this! And this holy liberty is yours.

Now, *what are some of the blessings to which this privilege introduces us?* First, there is the liberty of prayer, which the cross of Christ gives. It gives us warrant of approach to the mercy-seat. It dissolves the legal chain that too often would bind us. It removes the servility of spirit with which we too much approach our Heavenly Father. The cross of Jesus does all this, and so it gives us liberty to draw near to God. Who can truly prostrate himself at the foot of the cross, except in the spirit of a penitent child, who through the blood of that cross—the new and living way—looks up to God as a sin-forgiving Father?

Then there is the liberty in prayer which the cross of Christ inspires. We can have no liberty in prayer but as we entwine our petitions around the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us but *see the cross to be the medium through which our prayers rise acceptably to God*—the glorious mystic ladder upon which our spirit ascends into the presence of the Holy One—and we feel ourselves disenthralled from the chains that bind us; and, upheld by God's free grace and the spirit of adoption, we enter into the presence of Jehovah, and feel ourselves at home with God.

Then there is the liberty procured by prayer. Beloved, prayer emancipates us from Satan's assaults, unbinds the chain of guilt, and bursts the fetters of unbelief. *There is no spiritual exercise of the believing mind which so completely emancipates the soul from its bondage as communion with God beneath the*

cross of Jesus. Be your fetters what they may—enthralled by your fears and doubts, by difficult and trying circumstances, by sins and temptations, by the world's potent spell—only give yourself to prayer, only approach the foot of the cross in earnest supplication, and you are free! Such is the 'boldness' of a man of prayer, asking and pleading and wrestling in Christ's name and with Christ's blood.

"Boldness" in prayer suggests the idea of heroism. A praying man is a hero. He is clothed with a coat of armor, grasps an invincible shield, wields a two-edged sword. *He only is a true hero who knows what it is to obtain the mastery over indwelling corruption, victory over every besetting sin; foils Satan, overcomes the world, and fights his way to God through a host of spiritual foes.* That man is a hero in the noblest sense who has boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

We approach now the EXHORTATION AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER. "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." "Let us draw near," that is, let us recede from the distance and the shyness, the coldness and the formality, which have too much prevailed to restrain prayer within us, and *let us take a closer position by the cross, and so draw near unto God.* Oh, how much closer in our communion with God we may walk than even Noah and Enoch! They approached by the blood of bulls and of goats—we, by the blood of God's slain Son! Then draw near, saint of the Most High, and keep no longer at a distance. Your God invites you, the golden scepter invites you, the blood upon the mercy-seat invites you, the Great Intercessor in heaven invites you! Oh, avail yourself, without hesitation, of the costliest, the holiest and most soothing privilege this side of glory—that of close, confidential, child-like communion with God. Allow no conscious unfitness, no sad memories of the past or depressing circumstances of the present, no seasons of unbelief or suggestions of Satan, to keep your soul at a distance from God. With the cross of Jesus, streaming with His precious blood, confronting you—with the Great High Priest before the throne of heaven—with an indwelling Spirit inciting you to prayer and aiding your infirmities—with a pressure of guilt which confession to God alone can lighten, of needs which supplications to your heavenly Father alone can relieve, of sorrow which prayer to Jesus alone can soothe—will you yield to a moment's hesitation in arising and drawing near to God with a true heart and in full assurance of faith? Oh, how precious is prayer beneath the cross!—there, where God and the sinner meet—there, where He has opened His heart and we may open ours—there, where the voice of Christ's blood silences every

voice of accusation and sin—there, where no utterances are heard but those of mercy, no sounds but those of love, no sign is seen but His encircling bow! Oh the blessedness of falling beneath the sacred, solemn shadow of that cross, and losing ourselves in God! Draw near, then, you weary ones, you tried ones, you tempted ones, you needy ones, you backsliding ones, draw near! "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

But if, my unconverted reader, you live and die a stranger to prayer, *you live a life of wretchedness, and you will die a hopeless death, and will enter unprepared upon an awful eternity*; and of you it will be said, as you go down to the shades of endless woe, "This is the man who never drew near to God." What can the world do for you, O you careless ones, when you come to die? Its pleasures, its possessions, its honors, its delights, what will they avail you when you lay your head upon a dying pillow? It is an awfully solemn thing to die without an interest in the merits and intercession of Christ! To die without having entered into the holiest here—what is it but to be exiled forever from the Holiest hereafter?

Child of God! approach the throne of grace. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." "Whatever you shall ask in My name that will I do."

"Oh, what a privilege is prayer!
It calms the careworn breast;
It flies from earth to heaven
It makes the wretched blest.
"Prayer—mighty prayer has power
To reach the Eternal Throne;
While there, to claim Almighty aid,
And make it all our own.

"The weakest saint may thus overcome
The strongest of his foes;
He prays—His God a wall of fire
Around the suppliant throws.

"He prays—and all his enemies

**Away like smoke are driven;
He prays—and to the fainting one
Jehovah's strength is given!**

**"Whatever his wrongs, whatever his needs,
He pours them forth in prayer!
And, soon as uttered, they have reached
His loving Father's ear.**

**"Is sin the burden that he feels,
While struggling to be free?
Helpless, he prays—but grace divine
Gives him the victory.**

**"Is holiness the prize he seeks?
He can obtain it there;
For nothing is impossible
To wrestling faith and prayer.
"The Spirit teaches him to plead
The merits of the Lamb;
And feeblest prayer acceptance gains
When perfumed with His name.**

**Prayer, ushered by that precious One,
Enters the court above;
Where shining hosts the answers bear
On rapid wings of love.**

**"Prayer is the weary heart's desire.
The sure relief of care;
It is to plead with God his word,
And find deliverance there.**

**"Prayer is to whisper every wish
To Him who can fulfil;
A beggar coming to a King,
To ask whatever he will.**

**"Prayer is not airy eloquence
Of word and phrase high wrought,**

**With mind still groveling here below:
Prayer is the heart's deep thought."**

"Forgiveness of Sin at the Foot of the Cross"

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them." Luke 23:34

The only question worthy a moment's serious thought is, "Am I pardoned? Are my sins forgiven?" The chief controversy between God and man is touching sin; if sin is pardoned—pardoned in a way that upholds the honor of God's moral government—the controversy ceases, and God and the sinner are in a state of perfect friendship. Now, it is the cross of Christ which alone exhibits at one view this truth in its fullest light. Oh, what marvels of love, what wonders of mercy, what prodigies of power meet in the cross of Jesus!—all illustrating the infinite riches of God's grace, the exceeding greatness of His pardoning mercy to sinners. In attempting, in the process of our discussion, to unfold the forgiveness of sin, we lead the reader at once to the place where that forgiveness was procured, where it is spoken and experienced. There is no forgiveness of sin but what was procured by, and there is none but what is found at, the cross of Jesus. It is a remarkable fact, that the only Divine prerogative exercised by Christ upon the cross—the only blessing of grace entwined with His dying accents—was the forgiveness of sin. "Then said Jesus, Father, *forgive them.*" Never did this Divine prerogative appear so illustrious; never did its exercise appear so gracious, never did its objects appear so unworthy, as now! May the Divine Spirit aid and hallow our meditation on a theme so momentous and entrancing—*the forgiveness of sin found beneath the cross of Jesus.* Let us take the present instance as illustrating the pardon of all who repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The points which suggest themselves for our study are—the clients, the Advocate, the prayer, and the response.

THE CLIENTS.

On whose behalf was this prayer of the dying Savior addressed? Who were the individuals in whose interest He was breathing, in the midst of His unknown agonies, His indescribable tortures, oblivious of Himself, this petition to God? Around that cross there clustered a class of men, types of our own common humanity, and specimens of our fallen nature. In the first place, we remark, they were sinners. In that crowd of malignant foes surging

beneath the cross there was not found one righteous, godly man. They were sinners. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understand, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:9-18 Awful portrait!

But here is our consolation and hope. Sinners though we are, it does not exclude us from the salvation which is in Christ, because *it is for sinners*. Our moral wretchedness does not place us outside the pale of mercy, since mercy is for the *miserable*. It does not put us beyond the reach of Divine grace, since grace is for those who are bankrupt of all righteousness. If you will but prove to me, my reader, that you are a sinner, (and the proof is easy,) with some spiritual sight and sense and consciousness of the fact, then I will prove that you are among the number for whom Christ prayed. Convince us that you are of sinners the chief, then we will show that you are within the range of the Savior's grace. What Cain-mark is there upon your brow which excludes you from the free pardon of your sins procured by the precious blood of Christ? Who dare to say that you were not included in the blessed number on whose behalf Christ was now, amid His unknown agonies, breathing this prayer to heaven? Only be divinely convinced that you are a *sinner*, and *not a righteous person*; that you feel yourself to be guilty and undeserving, and then we will point you to One through whom alone you can be saved—saved now, saved freely, and saved forever.

Not only were they sinners by nature, but there was a peculiar stigma, a deep turpitude of guilt attaching to their character and their crime. They were sworn foes of Christ, openly, avowedly, and to the death. And such, too, are we! Not born again of the Spirit, not called by the sovereign grace of God, whatever may be our outward morality, our form of Christian worship, our punctilious attendance upon ordinances, we are sinners; we have not passed from death unto life, have not been renewed in the spirit of our mind, and must be reckoned among the rejecters of the Lord Jesus, and classed with those who crucified the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. They were not only the sworn foes of Christ, but a deeper dye attached to

each—they were the veritable crucifiers of the Lord of life and glory. In other words, *they were Christ's murderers*. Their hands entwined the crown of thorns, and placed it on His brow; *their hands plunged the nails through His sacred body*; and now, gory with His blood, they mocked His dying agonies on the cross. Are we by nature less guilty than they? Not one whit! So long as we persist in a life of sin, we virtually indorse the crimes of these slayers of the Lord, and practically arrange ourselves among His very murderers. With what force and solemnity is this fact brought home to the child of God when grace renews his heart! Who then appears to his view the true, the real murderer of Jesus? Himself, perchance, the chief! Seeing his sins all laid upon Jesus, tracing his pardon to the atoning death of the Savior, the fact comes home to him with overpowering solemnity, "*My sins murdered the Lord of life and glory! It was I who virtually entwined the thorn-crown, who drove the nail, and who pointed the spear!*"

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins—
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.

"'Twas you that drew that vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head
Break, break my heart, O burst my eyes,
And let my sorrows bleed.

"Strike, mighty Grace, my flinty soul,
Until melting waters flow,
And deep repentance drown my eyes
In undissembled woe!

Such were the clients on whose behalf the dying Savior now prayed. They needed forgiveness. And so do we—oh, how deeply! We are sinners, and as such imperatively need Divine forgiveness. We have precious, deathless interests at stake. We appear in the court of Divine justice indicted with the crime of condemning to death the Son of God. By our impenitence and unbelief, by our hatred and rejection of the Son of God, by our perverted course of sin and rebellion, we justify the men who originally and literally imbued their hands in His precious blood. We ask, is there a being in the universe that stands more in need of the forgiveness of sin than you? And unless your sins are pardoned, your crimes cancelled by the blood His murderers shed, you will stand before His bar side by side with those whose cry rent the air, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Ah, perhaps, many who then

washed in the fountain their own hands opened, will witness against you in that day!

Consider THE PLEADING ADVOCATE. And who is now pleading for them with His Father? *It was the suffering Savior, the dying Christ—it was the very Being whose sacred body they were tormenting*, the very individual in whose face they were casting their cruel taunts—"If you be the Son of God save yourself." "Come down from the cross, and we will believe you." "He saved others, himself he cannot save."

A marvellous and precious page in our Lord's official relation to His people unfolds to the eye here—the relation He sustains to them as the ADVOCATE. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He had, previously to ascending that cross, poured out His heart in a sublime intercessory prayer on behalf of His one and entire Church. His present appearance as an Advocate portrays Him in a new and novel light—praying on behalf of sinners, those sinners His crucifiers. Who, with this striking and impressive fact before him, dares assert that we have no spiritual concern with the unconverted? that it is impious to regard them as interested in the Savior's death? that they are to have no interest in our sacred sympathies and efforts, in our warnings, entreaties, and prayers?

The solemn scene of Calvary goes to disprove conclusions so directly opposed to the entire genius of the gospel. Christ loved sinners, warned sinners, prayed for sinners, died for sinners. And he who wraps himself in his theological creed and religious selfishness, and affects to look with cold indifference upon the conversion of souls, treads a path in which he will follow not a single footprint of the Savior! Oh to have more of the sympathy and compassion of Him who rained tears of lamentation over Jerusalem!

Two or three points, illustrating the nature of Christ's advocacy, invite our attention. The first is, His filial relation to God. "Father," said the dying Savior. Mark the confidence which, in that awful hour, existed between the Son of God and the Father. Though the Father was veiling the light of His countenance, was withholding the manifestations of His love, abandoning Him to the power of His enemies, who, like dogs of war, were let loose upon His 'darling' one, yet Jesus never lost sight of the truth that God was still His Father. Impressive and precious the lesson taught us here. Forget not, chastened and afflicted child of God, when the cup of trembling is in your hand, and you fear to press it to your lip; when, visited with afflictive

dispensations, He veils the light of His countenance, and leaves you to tread alone and dreary path, that He is your Father still! And that, *be the cloud never so dark, the chastening never so severe, it is your privilege to cleave to Him as your Father, and to nestle your weary, sorrow-stricken soul in the parental bosom of that loving, gracious God.*

Then, observe the bar at which Christ the Advocate pleaded. Jesus was now affixed to the cross. From amid the darkest shadows of His closing life, impaled upon the accursed tree, stretched upon the rack in inconceivable agonies, dying the painful, lingering death of crucifixion, He yet sent up His prayer to God for the forgiveness of His enemies. *The altar at which He stood, the bar from which He pleaded, was the cross all streaming with His blood!* It was the spot most appropriate for such an Advocate pleading for such clients. He could not have made advocacy at any other bar than the bar of Calvary. He could not have stood in any other court than that of Divine justice. What a truth beams forth from this! Beloved, it was the cross that laid the basis of our Lord's advocacy. The precious mercies He implores for you are all asked and secured on the basis of His expiatory sacrifice, on the ground of His sufferings and death for sinners. This it is which invests with such authority, and imparts such power, tenderness, and efficacy to His intercession—the glory brought to the moral government of God by His sacrificial death. "Father, I will that those whom you have given me may have their crimes effaced, their sins pardoned, their souls saved. That those for whom I have poured out my atoning blood, may behold my glory." Oh, is it within the range of possibility that such an Advocate, sending up to heaven such a prayer, and from such a bar, can fail in securing the blessings He asks? Never! This is just the plea of our Advocate in glory. The ground of His present intercession in heaven, is the perfection of His atoning work on earth. "By His own blood He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

No longer pleading at the bar of His blood—impurpled cross on earth, He pleads before the golden throne in heaven—but the hands He uplifts are scarred, and the argument He employs is the death to which those scars testify. The ground of His intercession for us before the throne is the sacrifice He offered for us upon the cross when He offered up Himself.

There is another view of the Advocate inexpressibly touching. We refer to the fact of His love, the deep love He had for His clients. It is true they were enemies, but He loved them; they were sinners, yet He loved them; they were murderers, still He loved them notwithstanding all. From where that prayer,

do you think, my reader? From what fathomless depth in the heart of Jesus did that petition rise? What was the power that impelled it heavenward? What were the wings that bore it to God? Oh, it was love, and nothing but love! He loved them, and the expression and the embodiment of His love was the prayer, "Father, forgive them!" *Beloved, what a marvellous, unparalleled love is the love of our Jesus!* The scene around that cross was such that we do not wonder that no artist's pencil has ever succeeded in its delineation. It would seem as if our fallen humanity had concentrated its deepest, darkest elements of depravity upon that hallowed spot. But there was that which flowed over it all. Oh, it was the love of Christ! that love which has heights and depths, lengths and breadths, which surpass all measurement. His love seemed to veil the dark crime of His crucifiers. Forgetting His insufferable agonies of body, the more insufferable agonies of His soul, in the ineffable depths of His love He prays, "Father, *forgive* them, for they know not what they do." Believer in Jesus, as you stand before this marvellous spectacle, relinquish all your doubts and misgivings as to the reality and vastness of Christ's love to you. Descend into this infinite sea, and exclaim, "Oh the depths of that love that floods over all my transgressions, drowning all my sins, so that not one shall ever be found!" If such is the love of Christ to His enemies, what must His love be to His friends! Love is bearing you in its heart in heaven—love is interceding for you in glory—love asks that your faith may not fail, that your enemies may not triumph, that all the blessings of the upper and the nether springs may be yours—love pleads the causes of your soul.

But what was THE BLESSING for which Christ pleaded? It was FORGIVENESS. "Father, *forgive*." And what a blessing! It is the highest exercise of the Divine prerogative, and the richest gift of Divine grace—the forgiveness of sin! Such is the state of all the Lord's people. According to the tenor of the New Covenant—the covenant of grace—God says, "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and *their iniquities will I remember no more.*" Oh, what an oblivion of sin is this—the Divine forgetfulness! What! are His people's sins so fully pardoned, so entirely forgiven, so completely annihilated, as to pass forever from the Divine remembrance? Will He legally remember them no more? So says God, and so we believe. Seek earnestly the Holy Spirit's, witness to this in your conscience. Believe it without a single reservation. If God laid your sins upon Christ, then they are all taken off from you, charged to Him, punished and condemned in His person. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not sin—for God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven

us all trespasses. Oh, walk in the sense of pardon; it will dissolve your heart in penitence, fill you with joy, and yet with shame, self-abhorrence, and sin-hatred, when you know that God is pacified toward you for all that you have done. When is the heart of the poor criminal the most deeply touched and dissolved? Is it when he stands beneath the awful beam? Oh, no! it is when he reads his pardon and acquittal! Then it is he weeps! Seek a like emotion, springing from a like cause. Get a sense of pardoned sin, and you will walk softly with God.

To whom was the appeal of Christ on behalf of these sinners made? To the sin-forgiving God—God, who had declared Himself "ready to pardon," who had revealed Himself as one with whom there was forgiveness; a God, who had from eternity provided a channel for the down-flow of His love through a Savior; who, uniting the Divine with the human. Could by one offering—the offering of Himself—render it righteous in God, and in view of His intelligent universe, to exercise the highest Divine prerogative towards the guiltiest of the human race. Oh, we are but little aware how the pardoning grace of God pants to gush forth towards every humble, contrite, guilt-confessing soul! What in the human breast is the sweetest sentiment—revenge or forgiveness? You do not hesitate. Transfer the thought to God. Forgiveness with Him is so delightsome a feeling—a sentiment so consonant with His loving, gracious, beneficent nature—we are told, that while judgment is His strange work, "He delights in mercy." Since, then, the full equivalent which Christ has made to the claims of His moral government renders it honorable and glorious in God to pardon sin, we are fully prepared to receive the next illustration of the Divine forgiveness which this marvellous prayer of Christ upon the cross presents—namely, *That the forgiveness of God is for the greatest crimes*, extending to the chief of sinners. If, as we have observed, all the elements of moral evil were concentrated around the cross, it would seem as if God so permitted it that He might more impressively illustrate the exceeding riches of His grace—that, "where sin abounded, grace should much more abound."

Penitent soul! behold the encouragement you have that, though your sins are never so enormous or aggravated, you may bring them to the cross, throw down the burden at its feet, look by faith to the Crucified, wash in the blood that flowed from His pierced side, and taste the sweetness of God's forgiving love. "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Standing beneath Christ's cross, and in its light reading this Divine declaration—will you—can you hesitate to believe that,

though the vilest of the vile, there yet is *forgiveness* with God for you, yes, even for you?

We now pass on to consider THE DIVINE ANSWER to the Savior's prayer. This brings us to the memorable day of Pentecost. Upon that great day of the Jewish festival the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended "like a mighty rushing wind," and beneath His Divine influence three thousand souls were convinced of sin, believed in Jesus, and were saved. Among these were the murderers of the Lord. Listen to the words of Peter: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And what did they do? They repented, they believed, they washed in the blood their own hands had shed, they accepted Christ, and they were saved. "And the same day there were added unto them the about three thousand souls." Thus was the Savior's prayer answered—"Father *forgive* them."

That prayer has been answered ever since, is being answered now, and will continue to be answered until the last elect child of mercy has been gathered to Him who breathed it, and who now beholds from the throne with infinite satisfaction its accomplishment. Penitent soul! that prayer flings from the cross its arms of love around you. It embraces you in its ever living, ever prevalent intercession. In view of all your past and present sins—sins unmentionable and immeasurable—sins aggravated and exceeding—the Savior of sinners prays, "Father, forgive!" The prayer that rose from the summit of Calvary fills the courts of heaven—and you, a poor, penitent, mourning soul, are included in its earnest, touching, successful petition. Never had the Holy Spirit produced this conviction of sin, wrought this godly sorrow in your heart, were not your name upon the heart of Jesus when He sent up that marvellous prayer from the cross. Oh, what encouragement this to look above the Alpine heights of your transgressions, piercing the very skies, to that yet higher mount bathed in the radiance of forgiving love, where your glorious Advocate with the Father asks and obtains the full and free forgiveness of all your transgressions.

This prayer of Jesus meets the case of all conscious, penitent, backsliding disciples. On the strength of this plea of Christ, return to the Lord, taking

with you words of confession and feelings of penitence, and say, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." *The foot of the cross is the wanderer's place of return.* There can be no real retracing our steps, no true restoration of pardon and peace and hope, that the bones we have broken may rejoice, until we find ourselves there. Then will our wanderings be arrested, our backslidings be healed. Then will we hear the words—oh, what music floats from the cross of Jesus!—"I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him."

And what shall be the conclusion of the whole matter? Once more we repeat, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Beneath the cross the pardon of sin is found. Come to it, you sin-burdened; approach it, you guilt-distressed; return to it, you backsliding penitents! Nothing but forgiveness—full and free and changeless—will you find at the foot of the Savior's cross. Weep there, mourn there, confess there—there lay down your sins, renounce and forsake them forever, and you shall hear the words of peace, "Your sins are FORGIVEN you, go and sin no more!"

"Father, I bring this worthless child to You,
To claim Your pardon once; yet once again
Receive him at my hands—for he is Mine.
He is a worthless child; he owns his guilt.
Look not on him—he cannot bear Your glance.
Look on Me; his vileness I will hide.
He pleads not for himself—he dares not plead
His cause is Mine—I am his Advocate.
By each pure drop of blood I shed for him,
By all the sorrows engraved on My soul,
By every wound I bear, I claim it due.
Father Divine! I cannot have him lost,
He is a worthless soul, but he is Mine.
Sin has destroyed him: sin has died in Me
Death has pursued him; I have conquered death
Satan has bound him; Satan is my slave.
My Father! hear him now—not him, but Me.
I would not have him lost for all the worlds
You for Your glory have ordained and made,
Because he is a poor and contrite child,
And all his every hope on Me reclines.

I know My children, and I know him Mine.
By all the tears he weeps upon My bosom,
By his full heart that beats against Mine
I know him by his sighings and his prayers,
By his deep trusting love which clings to Me.
I could not bear to see him cast away,
Weak as he is, the weakest of My flock
The one that grieves Me most, that loves Me least
I measure not My love by his returns;
And though the stripes I send to speed him home
Drive him, upon the instant, from My breast,
Still he is Mine. I drew him from the world.
He has no right, no home but in My love.
Though earth and hell against his soul conspire,
I shield him—keep him—save him—we are one."

"O sinner! what an Advocate have you!
Methinks I see Him lead the culprit in,
Poor, sorrowing, shamed, all tremulous with fear,
Prostrate behind his Lord, weak, self-condemned.
Clad with his Savior's spotless Righteousness,
Himself to hide, and hear the Father's words!
My Son! his cause is Yours, and Yours is Mine
Take up Your poor lost one—HE IS FORGIVEN."

The Conviction of Truth Beneath the Cross

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Truly he was the Son of God!" Matthew 27:54

Among the great blessings found beneath the cross of Christ, to which the attention of the reader has been directed, we know of none exceeding in its importance *the conviction of Divine truth which is brought to the mind of the humble, believing student of the Bible.* The cross, as we have reminded you, is the central fact of God's moral universe. All Divine *truth* meets in Christ's cross. All *glory* beams from Christ's cross. All *spiritual blessings* distill from Christ's cross. It is at its feet that the studious, earnest mind receives the most luminous, comprehensive, and glorious revelations and views of the Divine

Being; and from thence he draws the sweetest and richest blessings to his soul.

The subject of our present meditation is—the Divine instruction, the perception and conviction of truth, received by the humble, spiritual disciple who carries his spiritual ignorance, perplexities, and doubts to the foot of Christ's cross, for solution. The words we have quoted will at once suggest to the mind this train of thought. While all around the cross were reviling the Savior, indulging their scepticism and their hate, here was a lonely group, bending with pensive sadness at its foot; and, as the strange phenomena were transpiring—the earth trembling, the sun darkening, the rocks rending, and the graves opening—there darted the conviction of truth into the mind of the wondering centurion; and, overwhelmed by its convincing and irresistible force, the exclamation bursts from his astonished soul, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

The grand error of many earnest inquirers is, they mistake the place, the position, and the spirit in which Divine truth is really learned. They will go in quest of truth to every quarter but the legitimate one. They will be the followers of every teacher but the Divine One. They will be the earnest students of every book, but the Book of God. They see not that the true skill of a spiritual learner is to unlearn; that *the true posture of a Christian disciple is with his mouth in the dust before God*; that, while natural theology will unveil many a glorious attribute of Jehovah, while the physical world will present many a grand view of the Divine power and goodness, yet that moral truth, spiritual, gospel, soul-saving truth, can only be found in the cross, and can only be truly, experimentally learned in the believing, humble spirit of a true disciple, sitting where the devout centurion sat; with him gazing upon the spectacle that filled his mind with light, his soul with astonishment, when, under the conviction of truth, he exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Let us proceed to quote some of those great, vital truths of Revelation which are only properly learned at the foot of Christ's cross.

I begin with the first revealed truth, the Being of God. Not that other evidences of this truth are lacking. The *creation* is one vast volume of evidence to the being of God. We hesitate not to aver that no man shall stand acquitted at the bar of God of the crime of having denied His existence from a lack of evidence. He may never have heard of a God, or of His revelation to man; upon his ear may never have chimed the glad tidings of the gospel; he may never have heard of the cross of Calvary, with all its wonders; yet, we hesitate

not to affirm that the granite rocks, the cloud-capped mountains, the flowery valley, the starry heavens, the burning sun, and the natural intuitiveness of the human soul, constitute one vast library of evidence, all testifying to the being of a God; and that man, chargeable with the awful crime of atheism, who dares to deny His existence, with such demonstrative and overwhelming evidences of His eternal power and Godhead, will be without excuse. But *where do we find such demonstrations of the being of a God as are exhibited on the cross of Calvary?* Where has God revealed Himself as here? Where has He demonstrated the solemn fact of His being, of His Divine perfection, as He has done on that accursed tree to which His own hand bound His beloved Son, in order that He might not only harmonize in redemption His infinite perfections, but demonstrate that those perfections were the perfections of an eternal, self-existent, and righteous Being? Study, then, devoutly, believingly the cross, and be no longer an atheist!

The character of God is exhibited, and learned only by the spiritual and believing student, at the cross of Christ. There the Divine character, or, in other words, there God is exhibited in His completeness, His perfect symmetry. We learn something of God's character in other departments of His magnificent and extensive operations. We trace a penciling of God's goodness here, we behold a demonstration of His power there, a magnificent illustration of His wisdom yonder; and thus, as we traverse the circuit of the world, we gather something of what God's character is in these partial developments and unfoldings. But we need the full, complete, focal portrait and representation of His character. Where shall we find it? Where but in the cross of Christ? There, my reader, God stands before you complete—not an attribute of His nature, not a perfection of His being, not a trait of His character but is embodied, expressed, and unveiled; and the man who bends before that cross as a humble, believing student; one spiritual, believing glance will discover more of God's character in its glory, perfection, and harmony, than did he absorb the entire volume of creation's evidence.

The grand truth concerning God's relation to us as a reconciled God and Father, is nowhere learned but in the cross of Christ. Nowhere can we find anything of what the heart of God is, what His pardoning mercy to us is, what His thoughts of peace to us are as sinners, but as we learn it all in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We may travel the circuit of creation, and behold His marvellous and glorious works and goodness, which, as with a lavish hand, He has scattered all around, but we find no relief to the anxious yearnings of our bosom oppressed with a sense of sin. We ask the sun—How may I obtain light

to this my spiritually darkened understanding? and not a beam floating from that glorious orb responds! We ask the rocks—How may my heart, cold and insensible as marble, dissolve into penitence and love? and they are silent! We ask the winds—How may the life-giving breath enter my heart, and I become a living soul, living henceforth to, God? and not a zephyr answers! We ask the mountain stream and the ocean's waves—How may my sins be washed away, and not the shadow of a stain remain? and all are silent as the sea of death! No oracle in nature meets the momentous inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Oppressed with guilt, crushed beneath a load of sin, conscience lashing us as with scorpion-sting, hell staring us in the face, we wend our mournful footsteps to Calvary, and stand beneath the cross of the incarnate God. We gaze upon His wounds, look at His flowing blood, hide within His pierced side, and embracing in faith the doctrine of the cross—Christ dying for the ungodly, suffering the Just for the unjust—in a moment the great question is answered, the burden of guilt is removed, and we learn how God in the suffering Son of His love can be pacified towards us. There we read God's love, and in embracing the crucified Savior, we feel we are embraced in the arms of our reconciled Father. Oh, you who are wandering in quest of an answer to the anxious inquiry, "How may I know that God is reconciled to me, the vilest rebel that ever trod the earth? How may I know that my innumerable sins are pardoned, that my soul is saved, that God regards me propitiously, and looks upon me in forgiving mercy?" *Go to Calvary, travel to the cross, gaze in faith upon that wonderful spectacle*—the spectacle of Christ suffering and dying, the Holy for the unholy, that He might bring you to God, and your questions shall be answered in the peace and joy of assured forgiveness.

Another doctrine especially learned beneath the cross of Christ is the doctrine of His Essential Deity. We believe that nowhere is there such a demonstration of the Deity of the Son of God, as is found in the cross. Our Lord never appeared more really man than when in indescribable soul-agony, and in unparalleled bodily suffering, He traveled through those lingering hours of pain on that accursed tree. And yet, never did the *deity* of Christ appear more evident than when the sun of His humanity was setting in darkness and in blood; never were there such demonstrations of His Godhead, such seals to the doctrine of His divinity, as when, suspended upon that cross, He bowed His head and died. If, my reader, there lurks within your breast the slightest suspicion of His Godhead, and you desire your faith in this cardinal doctrine of salvation confirmed, fall at the foot of the cross, sit and gaze upon that wondrous scene, mark those astounding prodigies of nature which transpired

at the moment that Christ expired! and we ask, if your mind is sensible to conviction, and you are really anxious to know the truth as it is in Jesus, whether the exclamation of your soul will not be an echo of the convinced centurion, "Truly this is the Son of God!"

Observe, again, it is only in the cross of Christ that the essential, saving doctrine of our faith—the atonement is seen, learned, and received. A man may be a student of the most able treatise ever penned by human hand on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and yet close the book with a very vague, imperfect conception of the marvellous truth, or with a very faint conviction of its reality. But let him travel to the cross, become a lowly student there, a humble, earnest, believing inquirer after truth, and he shall not leave that awful spot without an overwhelming conviction of the fact, that those sufferings were expiatory, that that death was sacrificial, and that the mystery of the whole scene can only be explained, the problem of the Sinless suffering as the sinful only solved, by the doctrine of an expiatory offering; that all those mental and bodily sufferings were in consequence of His bearing our sin and curse; that His death, thus voluntarily and freely offered, was a satisfaction to the justice of Jehovah, and designed to unite and harmonize all the moral attributes of God in the salvation of man. Go my reader, in faith and lowliness to the cross, study its Victim, dwell upon its unparalleled scenes, and you will rise with the firm conviction that Christ died, not as a hero, nor as a philosopher, nor as an example of virtue and fortitude, but to redeem and save lost and ruined man.

Nowhere, except here, can the doctrine of the atonement be learned; nowhere but beneath the cross can it be received into the believing heart; nowhere but upon Calvary can these marvellous predictions of prophecy be understood—"He was wounded ['tormented,' marg.] for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquities of us all." "Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Approach, then, in faith the foot of the cross; in its light read, by its spectacle interpret, those marvellous passages, and see if your conviction of the great truth will not be as deep and devout as that of the centurion, "Truly, Christ died for the ungodly!" Thus accept the atonement, thus believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!

And have we a stronger proof and illustration of the doctrine of the Trinity

than is found beneath the cross of Calvary? The moment an inquiring mind after that truth is led to receive the doctrine of the cross in simple faith, which is, the doctrine of the Atonement made on our behalf by the death of Christ, it finds no difficulty in accepting the doctrine of three distinct People in the one Godhead. No individual can fully understand the doctrine of the Trinity who rejects Christ's Atonement. The light that beams from thence invests with radiance every other revealed truth. Where the light of the cross is not, the light of reason is as Egyptian darkness. Nature is wrapped in midnight gloom, unenlightened by one ray that flows from the cross of Calvary. But let an inquirer for truth stand at this focal point, let him place himself beneath the beams of the Divine glory concentrated in the crucified Savior, and he will find no difficulty in embracing every doctrine of God's revealed Word. Here is the grand mistake men make, in not commencing their study of God's Word, their inquiries after the truths of revelation, at the cross of Jesus. Do you think that the skeptics of the day would be found, in this advanced age of Biblical research, questioning the truth of the Bible, ignoring the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, and, with effete weapons borrowed from the dusty arsenals of error, whose edge had long since been turned, attacking the integrity of the Pentateuch, involving in its fall the destruction of the entire fabric of truth, had they made the cross of Christ the starting point of their investigations, the foundation of their inquiries? Alas! men, for the most part, commence at the farthest circumference of truth, and endeavor to work their way to the center; thus reversing God's order, which is to commence at the center and so reach the circumference. Now, with regard to the profoundly mysterious doctrine of a Triune God, we admit that the mode of the divine existence transcends the power of human reason to explain; and yet, no revealed doctrine of the Bible is more consonant with reason than it. And he who will receive the Atonement of the cross as a little child, as a humble disciple at the feet of Jesus, shall know of this doctrine whether it be of God, or whether we speak it of ourselves. In the light streaming from Calvary he will read and understand these remarkable words, "For through Him [Christ crucified] we both [Jew and Gentile] have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father." Could the doctrine of the three Divine People, in their essential unity and official relations, be more luminous?

The way of salvation is only clearly seen in the light of the cross. All the mystery and complexity and crudeness which, in the view of many, gathers around the way by which a sinner is saved, is the result of studying redemption from every stand-point but the correct one—the cross of Jesus. If an individual looks at salvation through his favorite creed, or church, or early

education, it will, in all probability, receive a complexion unfavorable to a simple, lucid, believing apprehension of the way by which God saves the sinner. But let him approach the cross as a sinner, as a learner, as a penitent believer, divesting himself of all ecclesiastical, traditional, and educational trammels and prejudices, and receive the simple yet sublime truth, "In due time, when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly," and he is saved! Salvation can be conveyed by no church or minister; its nature must be studied through no ecclesiastical or priestly medium. Passing by every other object, we must pause not in our search for the priceless, precious treasure until we confront the naked cross, and stand in the immediate presence of the crucified Nazarene. The spectacle may be appalling, the posture humiliating; nevertheless, while all self-righteousness, all human merit, all pride of intellect, all hatred and opposition to the truth pales and expires in the pure effulgence of the cross. On the other hand, full salvation is found—the *blood* that effaces the guilt of sin, the *righteousness* that justifies the person of the sinner, the *peace* that tranquillizes the troubled conscience, the *hope* that expels the demon of despair, the *heaven* that supplants our hell—in a believing reception of the doctrine of Christ crucified, in the humble position of the soul studying at the foot of Christ's cross. Come, then, you perplexed searchers for truth—come, you anxious inquirers after salvation—come, you weary and heavy laden—come, you sin and sorrow-stricken, come, you self-destroyed and bankrupt—come, you who have resisted evidence and stifled conviction, who have effaced impressions and quenched hopes, approach the cross of Jesus, believe, and be saved!

We may add, and it is a solemn conclusion, that at the cross of Christ the justice of God, in the final condemnation of the impenitent, is fully exhibited. *Hell itself, with all its untold and inconceivable woe, exhibits no such expression of God's holiness, justice, and power as confront us in the sufferings and death of the Son of God!* Finding the sins of the Church charged to Christ, their Surety, Divine justice drew its sword and slew Him. Bearing the curse of His people, the holiness of God extracted from Him the death-penalty they had incurred. What is the true, the solemn, the awful conclusion? It is this—if the pure, the sinless, the innocent Son of God endured the Divine wrath due for His people's sins, what must be the certain and the righteous doom of those who die in their sins, unsheltered by the Atonement of the cross from the wrath that is to come? Sin found charged to the account of the Savior was the cause of His death. Sin found upon and charted to the account of the sinner, when his soul goes hence, will expose him to just and eternal punishment. From this logical but appalling inference there is no avenue of escape. If your

sins are pardoned by Christ, then you are saved; but if you die impenitent and unbelieving, then must you endure the inevitable and equitable condemnation of those sins. Despising a Savior so divine, scorning a sacrifice so complete, and neglecting a salvation so great, how shall you, how can you, escape?

"There remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. O man! O woman! I put it to your conscience, I appeal to your judgment, if God will not be righteous, His throne guiltless, His justice, holiness, and truth awfully severe, yet eternally glorified, in condemning to endless woe the soul who wilfully rejects Jesus Christ, His beloved Son? Spurn and thrust from you the *life-boat* which a God of love has launched upon the dark, surging waters of the curse, for the rescue and salvation of poor lost sinners buffeting amid its billows, and you sink into the yawning gulf of the bottomless pit, the *author and the architect of your own just and everlasting destruction*—a moral suicide! He who said, "He that believes shall be *saved*," also said, "And he that believes not shall be *damned*."

We gather from the subject of this chapter, HOW IRRESISTIBLY FORCIBLE AND CONVINCING IS DIVINE TRUTH! Confronted by Essential Truth, around whom were accumulating the witnesses of His Divinity—creation in sympathy with the death of her Creator—the centurion, before perhaps a skeptic and a scorner, now exclaims, "TRULY this was the Son of God!" We hesitate not to affirm that an individual, be his ignorance, scepticism, and prejudice what it may, who will take his lowly place at the cross, study the gospel in its light, shall find no difficulty in accepting all its essential, precious, and sublime truths. In what way?

In the first place, there will be the reconciliation of his mind to all that is mysterious in Divine truth. He will not cavil at a doctrine, or reject a truth, or disbelieve a fact, because it transcends the grasp of his intellect. He will not ask for mathematical demonstration in proof of moral truth, but, accepting the greater mystery of godliness—"God manifest in the flesh"—he accepts all other mysteries in it—the faith that embraces the Savior equally embracing the salvation. Thus, when the humble and believing heart receives Christ Jesus the Lord, it receives the whole truth, because it receives Him who is essentially and emphatically "*the truth*"; and then, all the scepticism, perplexity, and opposition which previously enshrouded the mind in its investigation of revealed truth disappears as the gray mists of the morning which wreath the mountain's brow dissolve into sunshine before the ascending orb of day. "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Again, receiving into your heart Christ crucified, there will be a moral molding of the life to the gospel of Jesus. The conviction produced by Divine truth is not simply intellectual, it also emotional; while it enlightens the judgment. It penetrates and sanctifies the heart. It was one of our Lord's petitions in His sublime intercessory prayer, "Sanctify them through the truth." The "truth which is after godliness," thus insinuating itself into the heart, becomes an element of holiness; and thus those who receive Christ crucified are emphatically numbered among "the pure in heart, who shall see God."

The intensifying of our love to God will follow. One of the effects of a spiritual conviction and a believing reception of the truth as it is in Jesus is *love*. No embers will enkindle upon the altar of the human heart such a fire and flame of divine love as those which we take from off the altar of the cross. Do you want, my reader, a "burning heart?" Take your heart, all dark and icy as it is, and bring it in contact with the cross of Calvary, and while you are musing upon its stupendous spectacle of love, the fire will burn and your lips will praise. Our love to God and to Christ and to the saints will be proportioned to our walks in Gethsemane and our visits to Calvary. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God!"

Lastly, there will be the happiness and comfort of a full assurance. There is no assurance like that which is found in close proximity to the cross of Jesus. Oh, with what of earthly good would not many a child of God part to be fully persuaded of a personal interest in Christ! But why should there be a moment's doubt? Approach the cross, look in simple faith to Christ, the Crucified, accept Jesus as the Savior, believe in Him as a sinner, learn of Him as a disciple, follow and glorify Him as a saint, and the conviction will be as true, and the joy will be as thrilling, and the hope will be as bright, and the exclamation will be as loud as the centurion's. "Truly, Lord, I am your servant, your child, your disciple! bought with blood! and henceforth, whether I live, I live unto the Lord; and whether I die, I die unto the Lord; whether I live or die, I am the Lord's!"

A Life-look at the Foot of the Cross

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." John 3:14-15

It was a prominent and beautiful feature in our Lord's ministrations, that He never expended a single moment in disputation upon the mere outworks of Christianity. His whole life intent upon saving man, not a second of that life was spent in discussing ecclesiastical questions, sacraments, and forms. They never came within the scope of His ministrations save as positive institutions, and gospel commands. And when, through the subtlety of Satan and of error, men sought, by speculative questions, to divert His mind from His grand purpose—for example, inquiring, "Are there few that be saved? "-with a skill and adroitness peculiar to Himself, the heavenly Teacher, He instantly concentrated their thoughts upon the great essential and personal matters of their salvation, and exclaimed, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." The narrative before us is a striking instance of this. There came to Him a ruler of the synagogue under the veil of night, evidently with a mind under deep religious excitement. Our Lord did not give a direct answer to the admission of His divine authority as a Teacher, but instantly brought to bear upon the mind of the inquirer the great question of his regeneration, and pressed him with that most momentous of all momentous truths, "Unless a man be *born again*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Confronted, in communicating this doctrine, by apparent obtuseness of mind and hardness of heart in Nicodemus, the Savior cites a fact in the history of his own nation which would be familiar to his mind, and which would at once illustrate the truth. To Nicodemus's inquiry, "How can these things be?" our Lord instantly recalls to his memory the fact of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, and by that well-known and impressive incident He sought to elucidate to the mind of the Jew the divinely appointed way by which a poor, serpent-stung sinner could be healed, justified, and eternally saved. The subject is replete with gospel truth, yes, it is the very marrow of the gospel itself. May the Spirit of truth be our Teacher!

We will, in the discussion of the subject, consider the points of coincidence between the emblem, and the gospel truth it is designed to illustrate and teach. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

We commence with THE SERPENT'S STING. We need not remind the reader that in this particular the parallel is complete. The sting of this fiery serpent was venomous. The virus, instantly it was produced; insinuated itself into the system, and certain and almost immediate death was the consequence. With the speculative question touching the origin of sin we have nothing to do.

I believe it to be one of Satan's subtleties for withdrawing attention from the actual existence, sinfulness, and fatality of sin itself, the progress of which, if not arrested, terminates in all the bitter pangs and miserable horrors of the "second death." The natural fascination of the serpent is proverbial. The moral fascination of sin is yet more so. Its spell binds men's souls in its serpent coil; and if Satan can but succeed in entangling men's minds with the question, "Why was sin introduced into the world?" he has succeeded in diverting their thoughts from the solemn and momentous fact of their personal fall and actual apostasy from God. Beware of attempting to be wiser than the Bible, wiser than the God of the Bible. You have to do, not with the question, why sin was permitted, or where its mysterious origin? The matter you have to do with is, the momentous one of your personal sting by the great serpent the devil; and that if that sting is not extracted, its moral venom arrested, the deep wound healed, then the blackness of despair will brood around your deathless soul forever. O sin, it is a terrible thing! It has left no part of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man untouched. Man is *originally* a sinner. "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." In sin he lives, in sin he grows up, in sin he dies, if God's grace is not interposed, if Christ's salvation is not received, welcomed, and believed in. The saints of God feel it. Ask them what wrings the bitterest tear from their eye and the deepest sigh from their hearts? All will acknowledge, "It is sin that dwells in me. Rid me of this, restore to me my original purity, make me perfectly holy, and you make me perfectly happy. It is not the loss of property, nor the sadness of bereavement, that shades and furrows my brow; it is that I feel rankling within my breast the virus of sin, prompting and inciting my wicked heart of unbelief to depart from my God."

We must not here overlook the utter failure of *Moses* to cure that wound. Stretching far around the camp lay these bitten, dying Israelites. Moses had no power to meet the case. What a gospel truth is illustrated here! There are many sensible of the poison of sin in their hearts, convicted of sin by the Spirit of God, who yet are looking to the *law* for justification, to their *works* instead of their believing; going to *Moses* instead of Jesus; attempting to transform the instrument of condemnation and death into an instrument of justification and life; merging the gospel into the law. But no healing, my reader, will you find here! Were you to give all your goods to feed the poor, and your body to be burned, the law of God could never give you healing; you must come away from Mount Sinai, before which Moses quaked and trembled, and you must travel to Mount Calvary, where the Incarnate God offers pardon and whispers peace to every humble penitent.

A second point of coincidence is found in THE INSTRUMENT OF HEALING. The first question is, *With whom did this mode of healing originate?* Was it with the wisdom and benevolence of Moses, or was it with the wisdom and benevolence of God? Was it human or divine? natural or revealed? There cannot be a moment's reasonable doubt. The whole expedient, so simple and unique, so improbable yet effective, carries with it the evidence of its own divine origin. *It was of God!* Such a method of healing, such a mode of rescue from death of the entire camp of Israel could never have been the conception of a *human* mind. It transcends the loftiest thought of Moses. We here combat an important error common to many pious people, that the atonement of Christ originated the love of God to man, rather than that the love of God originated the atonement of Christ. *The atonement was the effect of a cause, and that cause was the everlasting love of God to His Church.* It is a perfect satire upon Christianity to represent the death of Jesus as the *procuring cause* of God's love to man, as if that could be love in God which was not essential and spontaneous. Had not God first loved us, and had not that love embodied itself in the gift of His beloved Son, there had been no expedient by which He could, with honor to Himself, have justified the sinner and remain infinitely holy and just. Listen to that familiar passage, familiar as a household word, yet, we fear, falling like an icicle on the heart of many, "God so loved the world"—Oh, that monosyllable "so"—eternity will be occupied with its depth—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here you see the *origin* of the atonement—namely, *the everlasting love of the Father.* Human philosophy, in its happiest discoveries, could never have devised an expedient which should unite the two extremes of being—God, the Holy One, and man, the sinner—brought into a state of friendship and love. To God, then, we ascribe the scheme of redemption, the uplifting of the crucified Savior, as the only means by which the sinner, dying from the sting of the serpent, could be saved.

Another point of coincidence was, THE APPARENT INADEQUACY OF THE MEANS TO THE END. To the eye of a passing observer, the lifting up of that cold, lifeless serpent would seem like a mockery. What relation could there possibly be, sense would have reasoned, to the case of the Israelites? So does the salvation of God appear in the eye of this world. "To the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The redemption of man was achieved by the unparalleled humiliation of the Son of God; and that brazen serpent—not of gold or of silver—was the expressive and appropriate symbol

of the humble and lowly appearance of Jesus, by whose work man should be raised from the dunghill of his fall, to a throne in glory. The Son of God humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death. Let the atonement of the Son of God be our study—it will heighten and ennable our views of the glory from where He stooped to save. *The Son of God humbled Himself to our nature, robed Himself with suffering humanity, endured our curse, bore our sin, and paid to justice the penalty of our transgressions.* And, as to the eye of the bitten Israelite, *that brazen serpent had no form or loveliness, and yet was the instrument of his life*, so did it set forth this great truth, that the highest life and deepest glory of the Church springs from the humiliation of the Son of God; and from those depths of poverty and lowness and sorrow to which He sank, our noblest life and richest hope springs.

Look, too, at THE SIMPLICITY OF THE REMEDY. It was but a *pole*, upon the summit of which stood the form of a serpent. There were many splendid and costly pieces of temple furniture, but God selected *the most simple and least ornamental and costly instrument* to effect the mighty cure. All this was purposely significant of the simplicity of the gospel. Another illustration of the simplicity of God's plan of saving suggests itself in the case of Naaman the leper. When commanded by the prophet to go and dip himself three times in Jordan, he was angry, and exclaimed, in the pride of his heart and in the consciousness of an imaginary insult, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?" He stumbled at the simplicity of God's cure. But he lived to know that God's mode of dealing with man is designed to humble human pride, that no flesh should glory in His presence; and that to obey Him is better than earthly sacrifice, and is the secret of all blessing. Such is the simplicity of salvation! It is but to believe and be saved. A simple look, an empty palm outstretched, a trembling hand touching the border, one drop of atoning blood applied by the Spirit, and the moral virus is arrested, the wound is healed, the sinner lives, the soul is saved! No great thing, O man, is required of you. No self-torture, no, long pilgrimage, no wasting hunger, no costly self-sacrifice. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, wash in the blood of the slain Lamb, look to the uplifted cross, and a nobler life than you did forfeit in Eden will flow back to your soul, and bear you to an endless life of glory.

A third point of resemblance—THE REMEDY WAS PERFECT. Nothing was to be added to it. So complete, that anything of human device supplementing this God's means of life would but have neutralized its influence and rendered it of none effect. Solemn is the truth illustrated here! So perfect is the

atonement of the Son of God, so complete the work of Christ, the law so fully honored, justice so completely satisfied, and the glory of God so fully vindicated, that that holy Lord God, who sees flaw and imperfection and spot in everything else, says to a poor, believing soul, stung by that old serpent the devil, yet robed in the righteousness of Jesus, "You are all fair, my love. I see no spot in you." Hold fast, beloved, to the perfection of God's remedy of saving sinners. Be jealous of everything that would dare seek to supplement it. What a lesson to God's ministers is this! When Moses lifted up the serpent on that pole, he lifted up nothing else with it. Away with baptisms, and sacraments, and apostolic succession, and strifes about orders and polity, forms and ceremonies—let them not be once named in the same breath that bids the dying sinner look to the Crucified and live! Talk to a poor sin-distressed soul about baptism, ritualism, and the sacrament, and churches, and religious duties, and you are a cruel mocker of his woe. Put all these things in the shadows, and tell him of Jesus only, of His love and grace to poor sinners, of His willingness and ability to save to the uttermost, of the blood that cleanses, and of the righteousness that clothes, and of the Spirit that anoints, and that all this is the gift of free grace without a single work of human merit, and you have brought him glad tidings of great joy. Angels' chimes not half so sweet as the melody with which you fill that soul. "We preach Christ crucified," is the echo of every true minister of Christ. Beware, then, of mixing up anything with your salvation. I care not how sacred it may be, if you place it side by side with the Savior, if you exalt the Church and its ordinances above Christ and His cross, or even to a level with Him, you rob your soul of joy, peace, hope, and fatally mislead the souls of others. Look to Jesus only. Look away from your baptism, and your church, and your own doings, to Jesus only! I would risk the eternal happiness of my own soul upon the assertion that that look of faith will take you to heaven. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul."

Another point of resemblance is—the serpent was LIFTED ON A POLE. Some have interpreted it of the gospel. I adopt the interpretation. The gospel is a revelation of Jesus the Crucified. It uplifts Christ. It is full of Jesus, all about Jesus, and nothing but Jesus. And whenever and by whomsoever the gospel is truly, simply, and lovingly preached, then Christ crucified is uplifted. The gospel is thus the divinely appointed instrument of making Jesus known, of uplifting Christ, of pointing the sinner to the Lamb of God. O glorious gospel of the blessed God! your form is divine, your voice is music, your breath redolent of heaven! You are fairer than all the systems of men, for words of free, pardoning grace flow from your lips!

But we reach a vital point. WHAT WAS THE ACTION? It was to LOOK. Nothing less, nothing more. It was simply to raise the languid eye, perchance dimming with death, and rest it on the object; and, distant and shadowy as was the glimpse, that glimpse instantly rolled back the cold chill of death, roused the sinking pulse, and brought back life to the dying patient. Oh, what a glorious truth is this! It is but in faith to *look away from our wound to Jesus*, and, looking, we are healed. We speak to you who are always poring over your wound. You argue that you are so vile; we believe it; but this we tell you, poring over the depth and blueness and aggravation of the wound will never bring you healing. You must look to Jesus. Bring your soul to His blood, and, so coming, what shall be the result? Oh, most blessed! "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life;" the result will be, you are *saved*. You have two situations before you—life and death, heaven and hell. Perish you must, if you do not look in faith alone to Christ for salvation. Perish you will, if you turn your back upon the Son of God, and apply to your wounds the remedies of human invention, and refuse the remedy a God of love has provided and revealed in the cross of His well-beloved Son. "Behold the Lamb of God." "Look unto me, all you ends of the earth, and be you saved." "Looking unto Jesus." Such is the unity of God's Word in its revelations of this great and precious truth—look and live, look and be saved. Approach the cross, raise those eyes which smite the ground, and rest them, swimming with tears, and dim with unbelief though they are, upon Jesus the Crucified, and everlasting life shall be yours.

And WHERE DID THIS GREAT EVENT TRANSPIRE? In, the WILDERNESS. What is *this world* to us who feel the pangs of sin, but who yet have believed in Jesus? It is a wilderness! But oh, we have found grace in the wilderness of our own hearts and in the wilderness of this world, in finding a Savior full of grace. The Lord, my reader, may be leading you into the emptiness, poverty, and dreariness of yourself, of the creature, and of the world; that, amid its nothingness, you may find Jesus. To this end God often deals thus with the children of men. When He has removed the creature you loved, blighted the health you prided in, scattered the wealth you boasted of, and has brought you very low, in that desolate wilderness state you have found Jesus.

Overlook not the privilege which these Israelites had of a RENEWED APPLICATION TO THE BRAZEN SERPENT. If they were again stung, they were privileged again to look, and again they were healed. It is the

privilege of the child of God to be *constantly looking to Christ*. In every fresh assault of temptation, in every fresh surprisal of sin, if, in penitence and faith, he repairs to Jesus he shall know what David's experience was—"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack; He restores my soul." *Look again*, O believer, if you are wounded by Satan or wounded by sin, wounded by the world or wounded by the saints, and you shall feel that the blood of Jesus has still power to give you peace, and the sympathy of Christ sufficient to give you comfort!

And HOW GRACIOUS WAS THE REMEDY! Did they *ask* for it? Did they *merit* it? Not a petition rose from their lips, not an act *deserving* such an interposition had they done! Such is our salvation!" By grace are you saved." "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." Embrace this precious truth, that your salvation is "without money and without price," that "whoever will may come and take of the water of life freely," and you shall be saved. The brazen serpent could convey but *one* benefit, but *we have in the Lord Jesus all fulness of blessing*. Not only have we the salvation of the soul, but comfort and solace, guidance and wisdom, does Jesus vouchsafe for all who live by faith upon Him, the Son of God. You have not a difficulty, nor a sorrow, nor a need which you may not take to Christ. Live upon Jesus, "in whom it has pleased the Father all fulness shall dwell."

Once more—the Israelite, thus healed, at last died; but THE BELIEVING SINNER, ONCE HEALED AND SAVED, NEVER DIES! Jesus says, "Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." Saved, his soul shall wing its way to eternal glory the moment it has shaken off this mortal coil, the instant it has disengaged itself from the frail tabernacle of sin, suffering, and death, and shall mount with pinions swifter than eagles, to be at rest forever. This would I say for the comfort of some who may bend over this page—Do you feel your days are numbered? The inroad of disease, the approach of mortality, the shadows of eternity gathering around you? Lo! I bring you a message from God. Look to Jesus Christ, and when you depart hence, you shall sleep in Him, and you shall not die the death that is eternal. It may be late—the eleventh hour of life—yet not too late. Your view of Jesus may be dim, still, if you look in simple faith, that look will save your soul. Saints of God! live for the glory of Him who bought you with His precious blood! Looking unto Jesus, run the race set before you, and pause not until you exchange the telescope of faith for the beatific vision of Jesus in glory.

"Look unto Me, and be saved

**From all your depths of sin,
From every crimson stain without,
And strongest power within.**

**"Look unto Me, and be saved
From all your earthly care;
Alike I grasp eternity,
And number every hair.**

**"Look unto Me, for I am God
To Me belongs all power,
At once to give eternal life,
And guide each passing hour.**

**"Look unto Me, and be saved
From every doubt and fear;
Your warfare is accomplished,
Your path to glory clear.**

**"Look unto Me—'tis no great deed,
A humble look to cast;
This is enough—the power that saves
Is Mine, from first to last.**

**"Look unto Me while life endures,
I give each fleeting breath;
Look unto Me when death is near,
I hold the keys of death.**

**"Look unto Me, for I am God;
Whatever to Me is given,
Whatever committed to My care
Is safe for earth or heaven."**

Bearing the Cross

"And He, bearing His cross, went forth to a place called Golgotha." John 19:17

There is no incident in our Lord's passion which, to a heart quickened with spiritual sensibility, is more replete with holy instruction, or more deeply, tenderly touching than this—*Christ bearing to Calvary the cross upon which He was to suffer*. It unveils such a profound abasement, and yet such a depth of love—it portrays a stoop of the Majesty of heaven to earth's lowest degradation—so marvelous, and yet, is the measurement of grace, so vast, the fact stands out, amid the many marvels of our Lord's death, one of the most touching and significant of all. To compel the criminal to bear the wood upon which he was to be impaled, was one of the severest elements of degradation in the Roman punishment of crucifixion. To this our Lord was subjected, "And He, bearing His cross, went forth." Little did they dream, as they bound the fatal wood upon His shoulder, by whose power that tree was made to grow, and from whom the beings who bore Him to the death drew their existence. So completely was Jesus bent upon saving sinners by the sacrifice of Himself, *He created the tree upon which He was to die*, and nurtured from infancy the men who were to nail Him to the accursed wood. Oh the depth of Jesus's love to sinners! Lord! the universe in its accumulation presents no love like Yours! Your love, eternal as Your being, saw from everlasting the cross of Calvary, and yet You did not falter in Your purpose, nor modify Your plan of saving lost sinners by the sacrifice of Yourself. You saved others, Yourself You would not save!

Our present subject, while it presents one of the most affecting portraits of our Lord, equally delineates what should be the portrait of His disciple bearing the cross after Jesus. We proceed to guide the reader's thoughts first, to the study of the Divine Original, and then, to the consideration of the human copy.

THE DIVINE ORIGINAL.

The burden borne by our Lord on this memorable occasion was the literal, actual cross upon which He was to agonize and die. What a touching proof have we here of His literal and actual humanity! The bearing of that cross upon His chafed shoulders, His weariness and fainting beneath its weight, proved Him to be (sin always excepted) very man of very man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Replete with consolation is this fact to the burdened believer. Perhaps Jesus has laid upon you some cross—it may be the shame and the loss of His own; your heart is sad, your spirits sink, you stagger and swoon beneath the burden. But study this touching incident in your Lord's life, and receive the instruction and accept the soothing it affords. Your Lord knew what it was to droop beneath the cross, and do you think

that He has no regard, no compassion, no sympathy with you at this moment, as, weary, exhausted, and faint, you bear the load God has laid upon you, carry the cross Christ has imposed, toiling on in obedience, suffering, and service?

We have already adverted to the humiliating aspect which this fact in our Lord's history presents. It is too significant to pass superficially over. Every view of our Lord's humiliation is a view of His love. The greatest indignity, as we have remarked, in the death of the Roman malefactor, was to compel him to carry the gibbet to the place of execution. To this degradation did Jesus voluntarily subject Himself. "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." *But why this degradation?* That He might illustrate the depth of His love, and teach His followers that in all the humiliation they pass through in confessing His name and bearing His cross, He enfolds them in the robe of His sympathy, and sustains them by the arm of His grace. If such the humiliation to which our Lord cheerfully submitted, and such the springs of sympathy which gush from His compassionate nature, who would shrink from the shame and the loss of bearing the cross after Jesus? What assuring words has He spoken! "Whoever confesses me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." But we pass to the more spiritual and gospel truth involved in the incident of Christ bearing His cross.

IT WAS THE SYMBOL OF A HEAVIER BURDEN THAT HE BORE—THE BURDEN OF HIS CHURCH'S SINS. But for sin there had been no cross. When our blessed Lord traveled to Calvary, weary and faint beneath the cross, there was a sorrow in His heart, a moral crucifixion of the soul, greater and severer far than this—the sorrow and the weight which the transfer of all His people's transgressions to Him, as their Substitute and Surety, involved. Listen to His touching language—"My soul is sorrowful, even unto death." What was the cause of that grief from which He would not escape? The bearing of sin! Nothing but sin supplies a solution of the mystery of His deep, unparalleled soul-sorrow. The sorrow had not been His by *experience*—had not the sin been His by *imputation*. Thus our Lord endured, not the punishment only, but the actual sins of His people. What injustice would there be in punishing the innocent for the guilty, had not the innocent party stood in the place of the guilty party. This our Lord did. Substitution is the great doctrine of the gospel—the substitution of the innocent for the guilty. "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Behold then, beloved, your sins laid by transfer

upon Jesus. The teaching of the Bible is not, as some suppose, that *we* lay our sins upon Christ—that were a difficult, an impossible act, but the teaching is, that *Jehovah* laid our sins upon Him. "The Lord [JEHOVAH] has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." The Father did this in His everlasting love, from all eternity. In the eternal purpose of the Triune God the sins of the elect were laid upon Jesus, and He undertook to bear and die for them. If God the Father had not laid our sins upon God the Son, no power of ours had ever prevailed to effect the task. In accomplishing our reconciliation, Christ acted for God on the one part, and for man on the other. And if God had not consented that His people's transgressions should all meet upon Christ, actually binding upon the sacrificial victim with His own hands the burden, there had been no reconciliation. Hence our salvation, with all the blessings that flow from it—Jehovah the Father laying upon Jehovah the Son His Church's sins.

And now your faith has to do with an accomplished fact, and not with an impossible task. It is to accept the truth that God Himself laid your sins upon the soul of Jesus, as Aaron the priest took all the transgressions of all the children of Israel and laid them upon the head of the goat, and then sent him away into the wilderness. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions and all their sins, putting them [the actual iniquities and transgressions] upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not in habited." (Margin, a land of separation.) You have, perhaps, under an enlightened and spiritual sense of sin—distressed and despairing—for months endeavored to uplift the crushing weight and lay it upon Christ, and every effort has failed. Let me gently lead you to the foot of the Savior's cross. Behold in faith the sinless, spotless Lamb of God as having already borne that weight, as having suffered for those sins, as having died for those transgressions, and accept the precious truth that it was God's eternal love that laid them all on Jesus, and that nothing is left for you to do but to believe in Jesus, that He saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

Thus, as we have remarked, you have, in the momentous matter of your soul's salvation, to accept an attested fact, and not to propose a hopeless task. *Your soul-distress for sin, your spiritual consciousness of guilt, is to impel you, just as you are, to the cross, there to look and believe and be saved.* If you lose sight of the truth that God laid your sins upon Christ, you lose sight of the love of God

towards you; and, losing sight of the love of God, you lose sight of the fountain from where flows all your springs of peace and joy and hope. The comfort which this view of Christ's bearing sin imparts, distances all measurement. If God has laid your sins upon the Son of His love, you may rest assured that He will never lay them a second time upon you; since, if Christ has borne them and atoned for them to Divine justice, they never again can be found. What, then, are you to take to Jesus? For what are you to repair to the foot of His cross? You are to take to Jesus the conviction of sin; the spiritual, enlightened confession of your guilt—that terrible and crushing burden that weighs you to the earth—you are to take to Him your sense of condemnation, your dread of death, your fearful apprehension of eternal wrath. Brought by the Holy Spirit to see and feel your condemnation under the law, you are to repair to the cross and behold Jesus "made a curse for us," and *see your sins all laid upon Him, condemned in Him, pardoned through Him, and by Him cast into eternal oblivion.*

While all Christendom admits the fact that Christ died upon the cross, how widely different the interpretation of that fact? We accept the only scriptural and rational one which supplies a solution of the mystery, "Christ died for the ungodly." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "Who His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree." Can any truth be presented more forcibly, or in a light more luminous, than the doctrine which these touching words convey—the sacrificial nature of our Lord's death? Hold fast this essential doctrine of your faith—it is for your life. There is no present spiritual life, and there can be no future eternal life, apart from a humble, believing reception of the *atonement* Of the Son of God. God will not save the sinner at the expense of His honor, or exercise mercy at the sacrifice of justice. The atonement of the Son of God so harmonizes His perfections, as to render it easy, honorable, and illustrious on the part of God to embrace in His love, extend His mercy, and exercise His grace towards the greatest sinner. Were He to save the sinner on the basis of mercy without an equivalent to His moral government, it would be an outrage on justice, and a dishonor to holiness, and a violation of truth. But the atoning work of the Son of God—the God-man, Christ Jesus—meets the whole case—it honors the Holiest and it saves the vilest. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

And how resplendent does the love of Jesus appear from beneath this dark cloud of His profound humiliation. The marvellous fact of His bearing His

own cross can only be understood in the light of LOVE. It was, in fact, LOVE bearing the instrument of its own torture and death. The cross of Jesus is the symbol, the badge, the expression of Divine love. It is love's manner and escutcheon. Love died to save, confronting death in its most painful and degrading form. God the Father so loved that He gave His Son—God the Son so loved that He gave Himself—and God the Spirit so loves that He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them to us. Love, and love only, supplies the solution of all that Jehovah has done from everlasting in the covenant of redemption. Behold, then, your Savior bearing His cross, trembling and fainting the place of suffering, and doubt not His love to you. Has He laid upon you a burden beneath whose pressure your tender spirit faints? His love bore a far heavier one for you; and will sustain you while you learn the lesson and reap the blessing of this discipline. *Would you know the heart of Jesus? Track His footsteps as, bearing His own cross for you, weary and mournful, He traveled to the sepulchral gloom of Golgotha.*

Many are THE BLESSINGS which flow from this touching incident of our Lord's passion. We mention a few. Confirming, as it does, the fact of our Lord's nature as a man, it equally illustrates His human sympathy. Sinking from weariness, faint from exhaustion, and ready to succumb beneath the burden that you bear, let the thought of Christ's sympathy soothe and sustain you. No other being can sympathize with your present position—the mental depression, the bodily infirmity, the spiritual despondency—as Christ. His bearing the burden of His cross schooled Him for this identical path you now tread. It may be tortuous in its windings, cross-like in its shape, traced by tears, shaded by gloom, nevertheless the discipline of your Lord, when He went forth bearing His cross, has prepared Him for this your present path. Take your cross to the foot of His, and the spectacle of *His suffering love* will make your affliction light and momentary; and you shall declare with the Psalmist, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

Few lessons gleaned from this incident in our Lord's life are more practical and precious to the believer than the assimilation into which it brings him with Christ. How frequently, in His conversations with His disciples, did the phrase occur—"taking the cross." For example—"He that takes not his cross, and follows not after Me, is not worthy of Me." "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." An illustration of this high, spiritual privilege of the disciple of Christ is touchingly presented in the instance of Simon the Cyrenean, of whom it is

recorded, "him they compelled to bear His cross."

What is it to bear Christ's cross? It involves three ideas. The first is, the public confession of Christ crucified before the world. It is due to our Lord, if we are really His disciples, that the world should know it. There are many who are not Christ's true disciples, who yet presumptuously assume and wear His badge. And there are not a few who are His true disciples, but who are only secretly so. "Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly." But the religion of Jesus imposes an open, public, and avowed profession of His name and truth before men. Christ was not crucified in secret, but openly in the sight of heaven and earth; and His true disciples, not ashamed of Him and His cross, of His truth and of His people, but coming out of the world, separating themselves from its worldliness and its religion, are openly, manfully, and meekly to take up His cross and follow Him; not ashamed to own themselves the disciples of that Savior whose life was poverty, whose kingdom was not of this world, whose first apostles were fishermen, and whose death was that of a Roman slave upon the cross. Oh, then, if you love Jesus, confess Him where His person is despised, His gospel hated, His name reviled; and count it your highest distinction on earth, like Simon, . to "bear the cross after Jesus."

Another idea involved is, a willing and cheerful endurance of whatever sufferings, afflictions, and trials our Lord may see fit, in His infinite wisdom and love, to lay upon us in the profession of His name and the service of His kingdom and truth. The religion of Jesus involves the bearing of a cross. We should keep in mind the sentiment of Augustine, "My Love was crucified." All service, therefore, for Him whom our souls love imposes a cross, demands a self-denying spirit, the abnegation of our own will, and the doing and the suffering of our Lord's. And oh, how pleasant a thing it is to make any sacrifice—if we dare dignify our poor service by such a term—for Him who sacrificed Himself for us! Love to Jesus—love enkindled at the altar of His own—will impart lowness to the loftiest service, and dignity to the most common things done in His name.

The third idea is that of crucifixion of sin. "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh." "I am crucified with Christ." The sacrificial death of our Lord upon the cross not only obtained for us reconciliation with God, but it supplied a personal and effectual motive for the mortification of sin and the subjugation of the powers and passions of the soul to the supremacy of Jesus. And he who, by the power of the cross, thus crucifies sin, may appropriate to

himself spiritually the language which Paul employed literally—"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." "I have in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." As Owen observes, "Nothing but the death of Christ for us, will be the death of sin in us." In bearing thus the cross of Jesus, the believer dies unto sin and lives unto holiness. It is a dying daily, or daily crucifixion. And never can the child of God look simply to the cross, beholding His sins all nailed there, without associating the crucifixion of Jesus for his sins with the crucifixion of his sins. In the solemn light of that cross he reads, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father."

Thus may we be found, like our Lord and Master, bearing the cross, though the path lead us to the solitude, the suffering, and the sorrow of Golgotha. It will not be that we bear this precious load alone, nor bear it long. Christ carries with us its heaviest end, and in a little while we shall lay it down for the "rest that remains for the people of God."

The Solitude of the Cross

He said unto them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." John 4:32

The cross of Christ, like the light of God, stands in its own awesome and sublime solitude. Viewed in this aspect, it appears in perfect sympathy with a peculiar stage of Christian experience. His was a *lonesome* way. No foot had left an imprint upon its path; no echoes answering to His grief had ever broken its deep solitude; the cup He drained no other lips had ever pressed. From Bethlehem to Calvary, from Calvary to Olivet, from Olivet to heaven, He traveled in loneliness. He was thronged, and yet alone. He had many friends, yet lacked one. This but added keenness to His sense of desolateness. *There is no solitude so painful or profound as that which is experienced in a crowd.* To feel, amid the hum of a thousand voices, not one chimes lovingly on our ear—to feel, amid the beatings of a thousand hearts, not one throbs in sympathy with our own—to feel, amid the bright and happy homes of earth, the head has no where to lie—this, this is desolateness indeed! Such was the path trodden by our Lord! It is true there were hearts that loved Him, sympathy that soothed Him, kindness that relieved Him, and yet withal He

could say, with an emphasis of meaning deep and mournful, "I have food to eat which you know not of." I have a mission to perform, a work to finish, suffering to endure, a path to tread, unapproached and unapproachable by angel or man. Viewed in this light, the cross of Jesus is in full sympathy with a peculiarity of the believer's experience—*Christian solitude*. The life of God in the soul is a *concealed* life. Its seat, its principle, its actings, all are profoundly *veiled*. This being so, the path of the believer must necessarily partake much of this page of our Lord's life. Next to his Lord, he is the only being who can say of his service and suffering, "I have food to eat which you know not of." Let us study these remarkable words of our Lord, first in reference to Himself, and then as they bear upon Christian experience.

THE SOLITUDE OF JESUS.

We could scarcely have expected any other path more appropriate to Christ than the one which this passage indicates. Any other would have been incongruous with the character, the mission, and the life of Jesus. He was a Divine Sun revolving in an orbit peculiarly His own, an orbit so vast that Deity alone could fill it. The path He took was too elevated for any to walk beside Him—His object, His sorrow, His joy too unique for a stranger to intermeddle with. The human nature of Christ was keenly sensitive. *Naturally of a pensive mind, He loved retirement, courted solitude, sought the quietude of the desert, that there He might converse alone with God.* With the nature of the work which He came to accomplish neither men nor angels could sympathize or aid. Deity, united with a sinless humanity; absolute God, yet in union with perfect man, He alone could accomplish it. No *creature* could share the curse, divide the burden, or tread a step with Him the wine-press of woe. Ah, no! with the accomplishment and the honor of our salvation *man had nothing to do*. It is the work of the God-man alone, and stands, in its own transcendent glory, the unaided achievement of the Incarnate God. While yet none ever lived so solitary a life as did our Lord, it yet was not a selfish, unloving life. Never did one live so entirely for others as He did. "He went about doing good." He loved the solitary glen, but He loved man more; and to heal and soothe and bless man He would often exchange the calm, sequestered shade of the mountain, for the noise and the strife of the crowded city. And yet, amid the turmoil and engagements of public life, His spirit was often as lonely and desolate as though He trod the profound solitudes of the desert. He had food to eat of which none knew but Himself.

Then there was loneliness around the character of Christ. It was never fully known even by His beloved disciples, so constantly in His presence, sharing

His love and admitted to His confidence. His words were misunderstood, His actions misinterpreted, a false complexion often put upon the most simple and transparent doings. And why this? Because *He moved in an orbit unknown to all but God!*

Equally lonely were the sorrows and sufferings of our Lord. The cross, in this respect, stood alone. There was no sharing of the cup which He drank, no dividing the sufferings which He endured, no partnership in the work which He finished. The scripture was fulfilled to the letter which said of Him, "I have trodden the wine-press *alone*, and of the people there was none with me." Not only did He endure in lonely, uncomplaining silence, *the petty trials and annoyances of daily life*, (for to whom could He repair with the woundings of His sensitive, loving spirit?) but the deeper anguish His soul endured in working out the redemption of His Church. Truly might He say to His disciples, "I have food to eat which you know not of." This explains to us the one purpose of our Lord's life. His food and His drink was to do the will of His Father, and to finish the work given Him to do. For this He lived and labored, for this He suffered, bled, and died. It was His food—the sustenance of His life. He only lived as He lived to accomplish this sublime end—the glory of God in the salvation of man. What a solemn lesson does this teach us! Does our life have an adequate object? Are we doing or enduring the will of God? Is the object for which we live, in which we employ our talents, expend our time, use our influence, devote our worldly substance, worthy of life's present obligations and future award? Oh, beware of a blank life! What, reader, is your food and your drink? Is anything done for Jesus? anything for the glory of God? anything for the well being of your fellows? Remember that for all your abilities, God holds you accountable, and that before long death will cite you to his bar! Child of God! be up and doing. Say to the world, its enchantments, pleasures, and repose, "I have food to eat of which you know nothing. My food is to live for God." Christ's cross of suffering pledges us to a life of labor for Him. Service for Jesus is to be our daily food. There must be no pause, no succumbing to difficulty, no fainting beneath opposition. Life is a real, a solemn thing, too closely linked to a momentous future to be trifled with. Again, we ask, what is your object in life? Are you living for your Lord and for your fellow men? Do you carry within you a Christ-loving, man-loving heart, seeking the glory of God in the good of all with whom you come in contact, aiming to set a precious gem in the diadem of your Lord? Is it Christ for us to live, and do we feel as if life only were precious as we offer to Him all we hold most dear and valuable? Is it an object of our life to advance Divine truth, to enlarge Christ's kingdom, to bring our fellow sinners to partake of

His Divine redemption? Let us who hope through grace we are purchased with His blood, are saved by His resurrection, find our rest in toil, our joy in suffering, our food in service for Christ.

"The captive's oar may pause upon the galley,
The soldier sleep beneath his plumed crest,
And peace may fold her wings over hill and valley,
But you, O Christian, must not take your rest."

Oh, no! who would wish for rest here in Christ's service, with an eternity of repose before him? His love constraining us, labor for Him is delectable, service for Him perfect freedom, His yoke easy, His burden light. Let the inquiry be, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" Thus honestly looking up to Him, the sphere of labor in which He would have you engage will be made plain, "And to every man his work." Seek by prayer to know what the Master has assigned to you, and keep busy until He comes. And as you toil, perchance in pensive loneliness, uncomplaining suffering unnoticed, and unknown, cast your eye earthward and exclaim, "This is the place of labor;"—then raise your eye heavenward and exclaim, "Yonder is the place of rest!"

THE SOLITUDE OF HIS PEOPLE.

In instituting a resemblance between the solitariness of our Lord's life and that of His people, we plead not for a religion of asceticism. The religion of Christ partakes nothing of this element. It is contemplative, but not monastic; sympathetic, but not sentimental; veiled, but not invisible; studious, but not inactive. And yet the solitariness of Christ's cross, the hidden manna which sustained His brief but laborious life, finds a counterpart, in some faint degree, in the life of His disciples. The true Church of God is not a *visible* but an *invisible* body. What is termed the "outward and visible church," describes not the people of whom the apostle says, "The world knows us not." Take for example the nature of the Divine life in the believer—the life of God in the soul of man! The expression is emphatic—"Your life is *hidden*." Not only is it invisible to the world—except in its outward actions, and these are often misunderstood and misinterpreted—but very much so to the saints also. It is often but dimly perceived, and we are slow to recognize it. It is of all things the most deeply veiled—its existence and aspirations, its depressions, defeats, and victories, are known only to Him in whom that life emphatically lives and moves and has its being. And, then, touching its advance—it is *in the solitude of the Cross that it derives its strongest impulse, and exhibits its mightiest development*. It is a divine plant which only grows beneath this sacred shadow.

If we would advance in grace we must recede frequently from the sun's heat of this world, and dwell amid the solemn shadows of Gethsemane and the deeper solitude of Calvary. Viewless as the wind, silent as the dew, is that influence which the most vitalizes and promotes our real sanctification. Oh, how blessed to sit there, with myriads like ourselves, silently growing in heavenliness near that marvellous Center—frail and feeble tendrils entwining around the stem of that glorious Tree of Life. Let us often heed the invitation of our Lord, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."—gently led by His outstretched hand to the solitude of His Cross.

Some of the most potent, vitalizing agencies of nature are the most gentle and unseen. The moral analogy is perfect, the greatest growth of the believing soul is from a spiritual influence the most deeply hidden. Retirement for heart-communion, for the scrutiny of actions and words incapable of a faithful investigation amid the excitement which called them into being, for the calm study of God's word, and for confidential transactions with God Himself, seems essential to our heavenly-growth.

"Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
From strife and tumult far;
From scenes where Satan wages still
His most successful war.

"The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And scenes of Your sweet bounty made
For those who follow Thee.

"There, if Your Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her calm abode,
Oh, with what peace, and joy, and love,
She communes with her God!"

Most soothing is this view of Christ's life to those who, by the providence of God, are much isolated from others. Is it God's will concerning you, that in the midst of friends you should feel friendless; that amid the activities of life your spiritual life should be solitary; and that, like David, you should often feel as a sparrow alone upon the house-top? This is just the discipline your Heavenly Father sees the most needful. You are now treading the path your Master trod; you have closer communion with the isolation of your blessed

Lord. And are you really alone in this solitude? Impossible! Isolated you may be from man, you are all the nearer to Christ. The less we have of the creature, the more we have of God. We do not undervalue, in speaking thus, the sweetness and the solace—for which our intellectual and social being often craves—of human companionship and sympathy. Jesus Himself asked it, and the disciple must not be above his Lord. It were pure pretense to regard ourselves as totally independent of its influence. This were to ignore one of the sweetest, holiest privileges of our Christianity, "the communion of saints." But, if our Father ordains for our feet a path of much solitude, we may depend upon a deeper teaching of the Spirit, and a more personal experience of the blessings which flow from a closer contact with the Cross.

Truly have all such believers food to eat which others know but little of. And while many are feeding upon mere excitement, these are eating of the hidden manna. Christ is with you then. He who brought you into the experience of this solitude, is present to sanctify and sweeten it. Losing Him amid the crowd and excitement of the city, you have found Him in the calm solitude of the desert. His voice, drowned in the loud roar of the world's merriment, is heard in the sacred stillness of prayer. You have gone, perhaps, unblest with a vision of your Beloved from the exciting worship of the public sanctuary—its dazzling eloquence, and its entrancing music—to the hallowed solitude of the closet; and amid its awful stillness Jesus has drawn near, and in the calm repose of your spirit you have heard the still, small voice of His love. You *toiled* for Him in the activities of His vineyard, but you *communed* with Him amid the solitude of His cross.

We have been pleading, most imperfectly, in these pages for more of that spiritual retirement—for frequent and close communion with God—which distinguished primitive Christianity, and was a marked character of the early Christians. We believe that the religious character of the age demands it, and that a religion permeated with such an element will be found one of the most effectual correctives to the evils of that 'religion of activity', which is so prevalently the religion of the day. We see no reason why the two should be divorced. Our Lord was a singular example of the union of both. He felt infinitely more deeply the need of activity than any of His disciples possibly could. He had come to bless mankind, and the world lying in wickedness rose before His view in all its vast solemnity, and He gave Himself to the work of its redemption. And yet we read of Him, that, "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Thus "while He went about doing good," His food and His drink

doing the will of His Father, *He yet found time, by early rising, to retreat to a solitary place to hold communion with His God.* We too much forget that the vast machinery of Christian effort which the Church of God has erected, can only be put and kept in operation by the motive power of prayer. Nor do we hesitate the opinion, that *were there more of a reflective, prayerful Christianity, there would be less of a speculative, theatrical Christianity than exists in the present day.* There might, indeed, be fewer separate organizations—often aiming at the same object—but there would in their place be more united and concentrated effort, with more efficient, laborious, and real, palpable fruit. The Church of God needs to depend less upon human agency and more upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. This power is called into action by the irresistible might of *prayer*. It is a great mistake to suppose that they are the most efficient who are always out in the world and in a constant state of bustle and excitement. Christians are apt to gauge their usefulness, and calculate the success of their plans by the numbers engaged in carrying them forward, and the degree of excitement attending their operations. How often do they measure God's blessing by the amount of money contributed towards their prosecution! But this is a delusion! The humblest Christian in his closet may be more powerful than the greatest organization. "See yon mighty vessel ploughing the ocean, dashing the spray in clouds around its resistless prow; hear the thundering roar of its machinery, the rush of that leviathan—he who governs it at will and directs its course through the stormy, trackless deep, and controls its hidden forces, is, in that retired spot upon deck, the quietest being in the ship; it is he who has his eye fixed upon the compass, and his hand upon the helm." (Gigar).

Such is the power of the man of closet prayer! The gospel of Christ, like a gallant ship ploughing its way through foaming billows and beneath tempest-swept skies, receives its mightiest impulse from the power of believing prayer. That paralyzed saint—that sick one couched for months upon a bed of suffering—that retiring believer walking in secret with God, may be more instrumental in furthering the Lord's kingdom in the world by the mighty wrestling of prayer—grasping thus with a steady but powerful hand the helm of the Divine ark, and guiding her over the shoals and through the storm—than the most powerful visible agency employed. We have already observed that the most potent and fruitful agencies of nature are the most unseen and quiet. The analogy holds good in the more illustrious kingdom of grace. The influences and agencies which are the most powerful, efficient, and productive in diffusing the gospel, stemming vice, removing ignorance, and bringing sinners to Christ, are those which deal much in secret with God, and are

perhaps less attractive in man's eye, but are more honorable in His.

In conclusion. Let us imitate our Lord. His food was to do the will of His Father. Let us labor for the food that endures unto eternal life. We may eat our meal alone, mingled with tears, in paths sequestered from human notice, aid, and sympathy—food which the saint and the worldling may know nothing of—nevertheless, our God is with us; and encircled by the hallowed solitude of Christ's cross, we are pavillioned with Christ Himself.

**"And do you seem forsaken,
Poor weary one of woe?
Are all your loved ones taken
Your fairest hopes below?**

**"Are you a lone one waging
The bitter war of life?
While sore temptations raging,
More dreadful make the strife.**

**"Oh! hapless, helpless lone one,
Just turn your eyes above,
Then on His Love depending,
To One who won't abandon—
To One of boundless love.**

**"To Him who watches over you,
While passing through the fire;
Who bore it all before you,
And sees your heart's desire.**

**"To Him, the Lord of glory,
Who knows your feeble frame;
However sad your story,
Oh! trust you in His Name.**

**"The Eternal God won't fail you,
However dark the storm;
Though fearful foes assail you,
Your strength shall be His Arm.**

"Tell Him your soul's deep sorrow,
Tell Him your griefs alone;
Whatever ills may harrow,
Spread all before His throne.

"He'll give you strength, you weak one,
And take you to His breast;
Will be your all, you lone one,
He gives the weary rest.

"And soon, life's struggles ending,
Will take you to His home;
Then on His love depending
Fear not, whatever may come."

"The Believer Crucified"

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14

A brief allusion to this subject was made in the preceding chapter. We propose to present it more fully as the topic of the present one. It must ever be an attractive and sanctifying theme to the true believer, seeing that God has implanted in his heart the love of holiness; and that holiness involves a spiritual crucifixion, and that that crucifixion is alone effected by the moral power of Christ's cross. This will explain, in some measure, the ground of the apostle's exultation and boast—"I glory in the *cross!*" It would seem to some a strange object to boast of, to glory in. It was a gibbet, it was ignominious in the eyes of men, it crucified his Lord and Master; and yet it was his boast, his glory, and his triumph. All other glory faded before it. The glory of His birth, the glory of His ancestry, the glory of His intellectual attainments, the glory of His ritualism, the glory of His own righteousness, all, all paled before the luster of Christ's cross. He assumes, as it were, the solemnity of an oath. "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The cross of Christ was in his view the grand consummation of all preceding dispensations of God to men—it was the meritorious procuring cause of all spiritual blessings to our fallen race—it was the scene of Christ's splendid victories over all His enemies and ours—it was the most powerful incentive to all evangelical holiness—it was the instrument which was to subjugate the world to the supremacy of Jesus—it was the source of all true peace, joy, and hope—

it was the tree beneath whose shadow all sin expired, all grace lived—it was the spot at whose foot bloomed the loveliest flowers, sparkled the purest springs, and grew the sweetest fruit that made glad the city of God.

We marvel not, then, that, whether he stood amid the classic scenes of Greece, or the imperial grandeur of Rome, encircled by its sages, its poets, and its statesmen, Paul should exclaim, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes." "The Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified." "God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." But it is to one aspect of this subject we wish, in the present chapter, to restrict the attention of the reader—the believer's moral crucifixion by the cross, "By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Our blessed Lord illustrated this great spiritual principle in His personal history. He could accomplish man's redemption in no other way than by crucifixion. He must die, and die the death of the cross. Apart from His death, His gospel, divine as was its nature and holy as were its doctrines; His religion, heavenly as was its origin and sublime its principles; His miracles, supernatural as were their nature and convincing their testimony, could not renew, purify, and save the soul. The central cross of Calvary stands alone in its moral power—the death of sin, the life of holiness. Nothing does man know, and nothing can he know, of the dethronement in his soul of enmity to God and the reign of love, of the crucifixion of sin and the life of holiness, until faith has bound his heart to Christ's cross. Then, and then alone, the glorious and triumphant language of Paul will awaken its echoes in every cloister of his heart, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom I am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me." We are about to illustrate this truth by the experimental Christianity of the true believer, showing that there is no true mortification of sin, no real death of its principle in the heart by the power of moral persuasion, or the lodgment of the truth in the intellect, or even by the conviction and enlightenment of the conscience; but, by the moral influence the cross of Christ introduced into the heart by the Spirit of holiness. The subject presents itself in two leading points of light—the instrument of the believer's moral crucifixion; and the twofold crucifixion of which the cross is the instrument—the believer to the world, and the world to the believer.

THE INSTRUMENT OF A BELIEVER'S CRUCIFIXION is the cross of our

Lord Jesus Christ. What a volume of meaning is there in these few words, "The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ!" What light and glory beam around it! Of what prodigies of grace is it the instrument, of what glorious truths is it the symbol, of what mighty, magic power is it the source! Around it gathers all the light of the Old Testament economy. It explains every symbol, it substantiates every shadow, it solves every mystery, it fulfills every type, it confirms every prophecy of that dispensation which had eternally remained unmeaning and inexplicable but for the death of the Son of God upon the cross.

Not the past only, but all future splendor, gathers around the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It assures us of the ultimate reign of the Savior, tells of the reward which shall spring from His sufferings; and while its one arm points to the divine counsels of eternity past, with the other it points to the future triumph and glory of Christ's kingdom in the eternity to come. Such is the lowly yet sublime, the weak yet mighty instrument by which the sinner is saved and God eternally glorified.

But let us turn from the cross to THE CRUCIFIED. And who is He? It is the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. We emphasize this because the perfection and efficacy of our Lord's atonement depends upon the perfect sinlessness of His nature. If He had not been sinless we must have taken His place of suffering, as He, the righteous One, was capable of taking ours. We must have endured the wrath, the condemnation, the woe, which were concentrated on Him. And yet sin was there, suffering was there, hell was there. Solemn thought! All this lay upon the holy soul of the Sin-bearer—for as such our Lord was crucified upon the accursed tree. "Who His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree."

The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! What a holy thrill these words produce in the heart of those who love the Savior! How significant their meaning, how precious their influence! The subject they illustrate is vastly comprehensive. We have in a preceding chapter dwelt upon the cross as the instrument of our Lord's deepest ignominy. He died the death of a bond slave. It was enjoined in the Levitical economy that when a servant bound himself to his master his ear should be bored to the door as a token and seal of his servitude. When our Lord was transfixed to the cross, He was fastened there as a bondslave. To this the Messianic Psalm refers "My ears have you opened;" margin, 'dug'. Our blessed Lord bound Himself as the servant of the Father to save His Church, and this service involved the nailing of Him to the tree. But there are

other points of light in which we would desire to place before the pious reader the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We may regard it as unveiling the character of God. Nowhere is the Divine character so presented as in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. There the cloud-veil is withdrawn, there the Divine portrait is uncovered, and we learn what God is as we could learn from no other source. All other manifestations of the Deity astound, appall, and overwhelm us. Apart from the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no portrait of the Divine character which presents God in His full-orbed majesty, nothing which quells our fears, wins our confidence, inspires our love. Do we contemplate His power?—we tremble. Do we contemplate His truth?—we are awed. Do we contemplate His holiness?—we are overwhelmed. Do we contemplate His justice?—we despair. Poor religionist of *nature!* gathering all your knowledge of God from mountains and rocks, from oceans and suns and stars, will this meet your case as a fallen being, as a sinner, as a rebel against Jehovah? Will this answer the momentous inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Will this tell you of sin pardoned, your person accepted, your soul redeemed? Will an acquaintance with God, derived from such an impartial source, from such an imperfect volume as the book of nature, enable you to confront death with composure, and eternity with hope? Never, never! But, behold God's character completely, gloriously unveiled in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. There all His perfections are displayed in their most perfect and beauteous harmony. Justice, holiness, truth, mercy, wisdom, grace, and love all are there united—and united to save! No jarring, no collision, no compromise. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Approach the cross, then, and study in its holy light the just, yet sin-pardoning character of God. Behold, how He stands before you divested of not a single perfection, but all blended and embodied in one" *God is love!*"

Again, we may study the cross of Jesus as a grand manifestation of the Three people in the Godhead. There is no such unfolding of that deeply mysterious, yet truly scriptural doctrine of the Trinity as here. We have before referred to this. Here is the *Son* of God suffering, here is the *Father* slaying the Son, and here is the *Holy Spirit* making His atoning; death effectual in its application to the soul. Where do we find such a visible display of the unity of the three people in the one Godhead as is presented in the cross of Calvary? Think not lightly, my dear reader, of this glorious doctrine, the doctrine of the Trinity. Our salvation involves its full acceptance, its firm belief. It may be to our reason an unfathomable mystery. Were it not so, we might hesitate to accept it

as Divine. But come and learn to bow your reason to revelation, your faith to the cross, and receive, as a little child, the doctrine, which teaches you that God is light and that God is love, and that both are engaged to bring the soul to heaven. He, then, who receives the cross into his believing heart, as the Holy Spirit reveals it, has found the clue to all the mysteries of redemption. Above all, he has solved that most stupendous of all stupendous mysteries—the love of this *Triune God*, in saving lost, rebellious man. "God is love"—and this truth appears, transparent as the sun bursting through an electric cloud, as it shines out in resplendent glory from beneath the cross of Jesus.

But what a hiding place is the cross of Christ! This presents it in another and most precious light. Ah, you can tell who have fled to its shelter in the storm. It was sin's deep conviction in the soul that brought you there. It was guilt upon the conscience that drove you there. It was the swift footstep of the avenger of blood that hastened you there. It was the fear of death, the dread of judgment, the terror of hell, that impelled you there. All other refuge failed you, until at last you found the one place of safety, the appointed city of refuge, the only shelter beneath which the curse could not touch you, the avenger of blood could not arrest you—it was the cross of the Son of God. *Oh, what a refuge have you found it to be!* When affliction has overtaken you, and sorrow has overwhelmed you, and temptation has assailed you, testify what a delightsome shelter you have found the cross of Christ to be. It has been to you like an oasis in the wilderness, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land—just the spot where, worn and faint, your spirit has found perfect safety and repose.

We reach now THE TWOFOLD CRUCIFIXION OF WHICH THE CROSS OF JESUS IS THE INSTRUMENT. Marvellous and irresistible is the power of the cross. It has subdued many a rebellious will, has broken many a marble heart, has laid low many a vaunting foe. It has overcome and triumphed when all other instruments have failed. It has transformed the lion-heart of man into the lamb-like heart of Christ. And when lifted up in its own naked simplicity and inimitable grandeur, it has won and attracted millions to its faith, admiration, and love. And by the preaching of the cross alone shall this vast empire at length be subdued to the supremacy and reign of Jesus. Reader, has it subdued and won your heart to Jesus?

But I am to illustrate the power of the cross by a reference to its effects in the soul of the regenerate. The apostle presents THE WORLD to us as the great antagonist of the believer; and a powerful foe it is. I do not say it is the only

one, or that it is the greatest one, but it is a powerful, subtle, and never slumbering one. Our Lord felt it so. The world was His antagonist. What did He say? "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." If the world had not been His foe He had not overcome it. The world was in league against the Son of God. It confronted Him wherever He went. Every step He took brought Him in collision with the powers of this world. But He overcame it.

The world is our enemy, beloved. We are passing through it to glory. Our Christianity does not bid us go out of it. It is a false view of the religion of Jesus that teaches us to leave the world entirely and become a hermit, to relinquish our lawful calling and isolate ourselves from the position of influence and duty and service which God in His providence has assigned us. God could, at the first moment of conversion, take the believer to heaven. But why does He leave him in the world? For many and obvious reasons. Among these, that the world might be the theater of his conflicts, and the school of his graces, and the sphere of his testimony for God. The believer needs the world as a *school*, as the world needs the believer as a *light*. How much may a child of God learn in it, and how much is the world blessed by his holy influence! But what is the moral position of the world to the believer? Is it friendly? Far from it! it is antagonistic. It is impossible that the world should love our religion, or help us heavenward, since it crucified our Lord. We live separated from it, are witnessing against it, testifying of it, that its works are evil. Do all who profess the religion and name of Jesus so regard it? Alas! ensnared by its specious appearance, and won by its religious pretensions, they are wont to view it as a *friend*—its fair speech, its kind offices, its soft, insinuating address, its offered hand to advance the kingdom of Christ by its patronage and liberality, blinding and seducing them into a friendship and confederacy. But the word of God is most clear and decided on this point. It teaches us that the world is the *enemy* of God, and is therefore opposed to the Christian. But there is nothing in it in sympathy with the religion of the soul, nothing favorable to its state of holiness. How clear and comprehensive its statements on this subject: "Know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

But the apostle speaks of a CRUCIFIXION TO THE WORLD by the cross of Christ. His argument is, that the cross, lodged in the heart by the Holy Spirit,

and faith constantly looking at, and dealing with it, the world becomes to him as a dead thing—a thing that is crucified. "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which I am crucified unto the world and the world unto me." Has the cross lost anything of its power? Eighteen hundred years have passed since it uplifted the Son of God, and yet it is as attractive and potent at this hour as when wet with the blood of the Crucified. When our faith deals closely with the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, can we love the world? can we form a covenant with it? can we drink its pleasures? can we sun ourselves in its smiles? When we solemnly view our Savior suspended there amid the ribaldry, the taunts, the insults, the blasphemies of that very world which woos us to its embrace, can we make it our friend? *Can a fond parent caress the sword of the assassin which in cold blood slew his beloved child?* All this is impossible. Here is the test of our real position—our crucifixion to the world, and the world's crucifixion to us. *Beloved reader, with the spiritual power of the cross in your heart, the world will become to you as a dead thing.* The sentence of death will be written upon its principles, its policy, its pleasures, its religion. You will pass through it as through a cemetery—the place of death. *Is this world crucified to you?* Is it, again we ask, as a dead thing? Has it lost its charm, its power, its influence over you? Has the cross of Jesus broken the spell and set you free? Only then is the believer crucified to the world.

What a marvellous power does this cross of Jesus possess! It changes the Christian's entire judgment of the world. Looking at it through the cross, his opinion is totally revolutionized. He sees it as it really is—a sinful, empty, vain thing. He learns its iniquity, in that it crucified the Lord of life and glory. His expectations from the world, his love to the world, are changed. He has found another object of love, the Savior whom the world cast out and slew, and his love to the world is destroyed by that power which alone could destroy it—the crucifying power of the cross. We are dealing with a great truth, my reader. Let us inquire for what purpose did Jesus Christ thus give Himself to die? Was it not that we might be spiritually crucified with Him? How beautifully the apostle brings out this truth, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Savior." And what was the apostle's experience? "I am crucified with Christ." Oh, how holy and sublime his decision; "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For me to live is Christ." And what was John's exhortation? "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." And what is the weapon by which faith combats with and overcomes the world? What but

the cross of Jesus? It is the cross which eclipses, in the view of the true believer, the glory and attraction of every other object. Just as the natural eye, gazing for a while upon the sun, is blinded for the moment, by its overpowering effulgence, to all other objects; so to the believer, wont to concentrate his mind upon the glory of the crucified Savior, studying closely the wonders of grace and love and truth meeting in the cross, the world with all its attraction fades into the full darkness of an eclipse.

Does not your experience, believer, testify to this? When has your heart been most weaned from its idols, withdrawn from the world, crucified to the flesh? Has it not been when bending beneath the cross, the splendor, bursting from beneath the cloud of humiliation, darkness, and woe which enshrouded it, has risen like a new created sun upon your soul—Jesus crucified filling the entire vision?

**"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend,
Life and health and peace possessing,
From the sinner's dying Friend.**

**"Truly blessed is this station,
Low before the cross to lie;
While I see Divine compassion
Floating in His languid eye.**

**"Here I'll sit forever viewing
Mercy's streams in streams of blood;
Precious drops! my soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God."**

A crucifixion involves SUFFERING. We dare not speak of this separation from the world as though it were to nature an easy and delectable thing. There must of necessity be sadness, pain, and loss. There will, in some cases, be the wrenching of many a fond tie, the relinquishment of many a loved bond, the abandonment of many a fleshly enjoyment, and the extinguishment of many an earthly hope. There will be the chilled affection, the estranged friendship, the cold reserve, the alienated confidence, and, perhaps, the sacrifice of worldly interests. But be it so. Your Lord and Master forewarned you of this. "Think not that I have come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and

the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loves father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loves son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me."

But, oh, the gain of such a sacrifice! *Are not Christ and His cross infinitely better than the world and its love?* What can compensate for Christ as your portion, your Friend, your Redeemer? Welcome suffering, welcome separation, welcome loss, with such a treasure in your possession as Jesus. Listen once more to His words: "Every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Yes, the sacrifice—if sacrifice it be—must be made. The right hand must be parted with, and the right eye plucked out. You must dare to be singular, isolated, and separated from your brethren according to the flesh. Nature must yield its claims to grace, sense to faith, earth to heaven, the creature to God. You will be misunderstood, misrepresented, and maligned. Natural affection will be congealed, confiding friendship withdrawn, earthly supplies cease—nevertheless, one sight of the cross, one smile of Jesus, one moment's enjoyment of God's love, one glimpse of glory will outweigh it all! "Therefore, come out front among them, and be separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

"The Repose of the Cross"

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." John 13:23

There is but one place in this fallen world where perfect repose is found. It is where God rested in the harmony of His perfections, and where Jesus rested in the completion of His work—*the cross of Calvary*. The world is peopled with a race which has lost its spiritual center—God! and, so displaced, is as the troubled sea, ever moving, ever restless. All are inquiring for some good, all in search of some repose—they cannot tell what, and cannot tell where. The schism in the soul which God's departure created is a schism still, and will

remain so until He returns, re-enters, and makes it once more His abode. And so long as that void remains unoccupied and unfilled by God, restlessness and dissatisfaction will be man's heritage and woe. Man, ever since his fall, has been building his happiness and his hope below God; and he who builds his present and his future being below God, builds upon the sliding, sinking sands, which must, eventually, involve the fabric they sustain in irremediable and woeful ruin. "And great was the fall of it."

But there is within this circle a smaller one, composed of individuals brought, by the gracious influence of the Spirit, to an enlightened, spiritual consciousness and conviction of sin and condemnation; and who, sighing for that rest which the world, itself a troubled sea, can never give, are, with but dim perceptions of the truth, with vague ideas of salvation, and still dimmer views of Jesus, searching for it where it never can be found. To them this chapter of our work is devoted. Its object will be to show where the true rest for the sin-distressed, sorrow-stricken, weary soul is found—even in the cross of Christ. We cite a touching and expressive incident in the history of John as illustrating this. It is true, it transpired before our Lord's passion; nevertheless, His death was *virtually* an accomplished fact, for He could say, in His memorable intercessory prayer, "Father, I have finished the work which you gave me to do;" and in thus presenting the portrait of the beloved disciple—a picture inimitable in its beauty, and touching in its pathos—we present figuratively the portrait of *a weary and sad, yet confiding and loving disciple, seeking and finding his perfect repose on the bosom of his Divine and loving Lord*. The two points which arrest our devout study are the expressive attitude, and the perfect rest.

There is in the posture of this disciple an implied weariness, which speaks to us volumes. We portray a large class of our species. We hold up a glass in which every individual of the human race may see himself reflected. We speak advisedly when we limit our picture to the earth's inhabitants. The *angels* in heaven are not weary, and therefore need no rest. Their only burden is the burden of doing God's will, and this is to them as the wings of a dove. Nor do the *glorified spirits* of heaven need repose. They have cast off the burden of the body of sin and death, and, emancipated from all ill, delivered from the bondage of the flesh, weeping and sighing and sorrowing no more, "they rest from their labors," and the only burden they feel is the burden of God's love. *Who would wish to recall them to earth's sin and woe and weariness?* What love so selfish as to disturb that unruffled peace, mar that deep joy, taint that perfect purity, becloud that bright sunshine, to which their happy spirits have

fled?

But we return to the world, so full of weary ones. First, there is social weariness. We cannot move in human society without experiencing those woundings and slights and disappointments which contribute so much to the weariness of our spirit. Then there is what may be termed the political weariness of our race—the oppression of tyrants, the crushing cruelty of despots, the bonds and imprisonments, the tortures and bloodshed of human governments. It is impossible to cast our eye over the continent of Europe and not feel convinced that there exist, apart from the restlessness common to our humanity, masses crushed beneath political bondage and despotism. Life to them is a burden from which they pant to be delivered. Again, there is a religious weariness to which many nations are subjected. Look at the crushing burden of *heathenism*, with all its vile and degraded rites; *Mohammedanism*, with its oppressive ceremonies; *Popery*, with its galling, senseless mummery. Contemplate millions of our race wearing the oppressive chains of *ignorance* and *superstition*, ground down by religious thraldom, ceremonies, and rites, and say if there exists not a large portion of our race groaning beneath the weight which false religion everywhere imposes, and from which many sigh to be delivered.

Need I quote the myriads of the world's weary ones? The world is like an ever-troubled sea—all who cleave its restless waters, more or less, partake of its restlessness. "There are many who say, Who will show us any good?" They travel from continent to continent, from spring to spring, from flower to flower, and then comes the deep, deep sigh, and the mournful exclamation, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" Oh what restless beings are earth's sons and daughters! "The wicked are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest."

But are *the Lord's own people* totally exempt? Is there no weariness, no restlessness among them? Far from it! It is the existence and the consciousness of this which brings them to the only repose found on earth—the repose of the cross. We turn to the Church of God. We would first refer to the physical weariness and suffering of which numbers of God's people are the subjects. This may at first sight seem insignificant; and yet they who have traced the close relation of the mental with the spiritual, and the spiritual with the physical, in Christian experience, will give this part of our subject a prominent place in their study. God does not overlook the bodily infirmities of His saints. He "knows our frame;" He "remembers that we are dust." And, when *spiritual despondency* is occasioned by *mental depression*, and mental

depression by *physical disease*; He who constructed our frame can trace to their subtle and mysterious influences the spiritual infirmities of His saints.

Not less conspicuous or painful is the legal weariness of those who are striving for gospel rest by an earnest and sincere, but mistaken and fruitless attempt at the obedience which the law imposes, but which Christ alone can give. Oh the sad, sickening feeling of the soul disappointed a thousand times over in its strivings after perfect obedience! The hopelessness of the task no tongue but inspiration can adequately portray. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." "Work, work!" is the cry of the soul longing for salvation; and as each duty is followed by yet more disastrous failure, and each round of legal observance followed by disappointment yet more bitter, the heart sickens and dies.

But let us speak of a class more limited, as it is more blessed. We refer to those who are burdened with a spiritual conviction and sense of their sinfulness.

Talk of the burden of political oppression! talk of the burden of religious ceremonial! talk of the burden of a suffering body! *The burden of burdens is the burden of sin!* When the Divine Spirit removes the moral cataract from the soul's eye, uplifts the veil from the heart, and all that looked so lovely and so fair and so commendable now appears nothing but sin and darkness, and loathsome, then comes the true soul—weariness—just the weariness Jesus delights to meet! But one word of encouragement. Are you sensible of your sinfulness? Are your sins weighing down your spirit to the dust? Is there the felt burden you cannot carry? Then, we reply, there is spiritual sensibility; and spiritual sensibility is the evidence of spiritual life, and spiritual life is the breathing of the Holy Spirit in your soul. Lay the heaviest weight upon a dead body, and it is insensible of the pressure; pierce it, and it feels not the wound. *From where does spiritual feeling spring?* From where but from spiritual life in the soul. Thus, then, may your faith gather down from the thistle, extract honey from the gall, and glean food from the eater! These spiritual exercises, through which, as a sin-convinced soul, you are passing—sad and mournful and despairing—are among the most conclusive and hopeful evidences that God has breathed into your dead soul the breath of life. Saint of God, you need not to be reminded of this. In many a stage of past experience, in many an hour of weariness and rest, of depression and hope, you have learned this truth—that none know the plague of their own hearts, none see their sinfulness, and seeing deplore it, and, deplored, seek unto Christ for rest, but those who are the happy subjects of the Holy Spirit's quickening grace. You have been instructed, therefore, to accept *a broken and a contrite heart as one*

of the Spirit's most precious gifts, and God's most acceptable sacrifices. Such is the spiritual state of the soul expressed by the attitude of John. It is one of weariness and need, of weakness and sorrow. In a word, it includes whatever condition of life, mental and spiritual exercise, through which the child of God may pass, who, like the beloved disciple, lays down his weary head upon the Savior's bosom.

This conducts us to THE DISCIPLE'S POSTURE.

And who was that disciple? Emphatically described as, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Jesus loves all His disciples, and all alike; though John, from a closer assimilation of the human copy to the Divine Original, seemed an especial favorite of our Lord, winning to himself the distinctive and honored appellation of the "the beloved disciple." But such are all the disciples of Jesus. All alike share in His love. There may be degrees of *manifested* love, but no degrees of love itself. The small vessel and the large vessel may partake of different quantities, but the same love supplies and fills them both. Bind, then, this precious truth to your believing heart, and accept the comfort, the assurance it gives—that you are a disciple whom Jesus loves. Do you ask, How does He love me? He has chosen you—He died for you—He bore your sins—He has called you by His grace—He keeps you by His power—He comforts you with His love—He has gone to prepare a place for you in heaven—and by all His present leadings and dealings and teachings, through adversity and temptation and sorrow, He is preparing you for this prepared place. Oh, then, doubt that the sun shines, that the earth moves, that seasons revolve, that you yourself exist, but, in view of blessings and achievements like these, doubt not that Jesus loves you! If love derives its inspiration from itself—if affection begets affection—then, your simple, unquestioning belief in the marvellous and free love which the Lord Jesus bears you, will enkindle in your breast, in return, love to the Lord Jesus.

Nothing more tends to damp and chill and check our responsive affection to Christ, and consequently to render our obedience and service defective, than the latent suspicion in our hearts of the Savior's love to us. Cruel unbelief! to suggest a thought so dark, a suspicion so cold, a doubt so Christ-dishonoring! Where on earth or in heaven, where within this illimitable universe, will you find a being who loves you like Jesus? Oh, challenge every being whose eye has beamed love, whose lips have breathed love, whose hands have conferred love, and see if there be love like unto the love with which Christ has loved you! Summon the peopled universe to listen to its story, and exclaim, "Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what he

has done for my soul."

**"What You have done, my God, for me,
Is more than I can tell;
This world had closed my heart to Thee,
But You did break the spell.**

**"I cannot tell one-half Your love,
Which daily, Lord, I See;
Countless Your tender mercies prove,
Wondrous Your love, to me.**

**"But I would tell to all around
That Jesus died for me;
That when in sin's dark bondage bound,
He set my spirit free.**

**"Yes, I would tell how His pure love
Unchanging does remain;
And how He pleads for me above,
In His most precious name.**

**"Would tell how, in my heaviest grief,
He calms my soul to rest;
How He can give that heart relief
Which leans upon His breast.**

**"Would tell, how in life's loneliest hour,
When every joy below
Seemed withered like the fading flower,
He soothed me in my woe.**

**"Would tell, how in perplexing care
He turns my thoughts above;
And makes me see that He is there,
Appointing all in love.**

**"Would tell, when weary often with sin,
And pressed beneath the load,
He, by His Spirit's voice within,**

Points to my peace with God.

"Lord, I would tell—how loudly tell
There is no love like Thine!
You ever will do all things well,
You Mighty One, Divine."

Upon WHOM did the beloved disciple lean? He leaned upon a personal Savior. *He reposed on the bosom of the incarnate God.* The truth here taught to us is of marvellous moment. We can only deal, in the great matter of salvation, and in the minor matters of everyday life, with a personal Savior—and a personal Friend. The world is too replete with the unrealistic, to meet the real needs of our humanity. All is shadowy, except our present being, our sin, and our woe. These are solemn realities! We have personal needs—we crave a personal sympathy. We have personal yearnings—we crave a personal love. The "great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," just meets our case—is just the provision a God of love has made. We need repose; we cannot find it in a *dogma*, in a *principle*, in a mere *fact*—we find it in a person—the person of the Son of God. It is from ourselves, we wish to be detached from. Our happiness and repose are found, not in or from ourselves, but, extraneous to ourselves—only in Christ. As the solar beam is absorbed in the sun, and the dew-drop is lost in the ocean, so, with all his sin and woe, his neediness and weariness, the believer sinks into Christ, and is absorbed in the infinite plenitude of His power, in the fulness of His grace, and in the boundless ocean of His sympathy and love. Not more truly did the gentle and loving John lean upon the yet more gentle and loving Savior, than by faith do we, with all our mental and spiritual thoughts, and feelings and needs.

Here, in *the cross of Christ*, or rather in *the Christ of the cross*, perfect rest is found for every species of weariness of which the believing soul may be the subject. Here is rest from *the galling yoke of sin*—for the power of the cross breaks it. Here is rest from *the dreadful guilt of sin*—for the blood of the cross cleanses it. Here is rest from *the condemnation of sin*—for the death of the cross has slain it. Here is rest from the obedience of the law—for the work of the cross supplies it. Here is rest from the sting of death—for the death of the cross extracts it. Here is rest from the dread of hell—for the love of the cross has closed it. And here is rest from the chafing of sorrow—for the sorrow of the cross soothes it.

It was in the cross of Christ that the Divine perfections found repose. Until

that cross was reared, and the Divine Victim impaled upon its wood, there was no rest or harmony in the attributes of God concerning the salvation of the sinner. But when the Son of God was affixed to the accursed tree, and gave Himself up as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor, "then, "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other;" and so God rested in His love when He rested in the cross of the Son of His love. There must we rest, beloved of God, leaning upon Jesus the crucified; and so *the sin-pardoning God and the sin-forgiven soul* meet in affection, friendship, and fellowship in the same Divine and glorious center—the "Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world."

Come, then, sin-distressed, self-weary, world-wounded, sorrow-smitten soul, and lay down your weary spirit upon the bosom of the Savior. There is room enough and love enough and sympathy enough for you. The heart of Jesus is as capacious as the infinitude of His being. There can be nothing in your case—take the most gloomy, despairing view of it you may—which interposes a real objection to your rest in Christ. The cross, while *it unveils the soul's repose*, supplies both its *merit* and its *plea*. Jesus provides all, is all, and is in all. We have nothing to do but to receive out of His fulness grace upon grace—grace to answer all the present demands of grace—grace commensurate with all the past communications of grace—and grace to meet all the future requirements of grace. Yet again and again we repeat the Savior's gracious invitation—unconditional and unlimited—and, oh! heaven's belfry breathes not a sweeter chime—"Come unto Me, All You That Labor and Are Heavy Laden, and I Will Give You Rest." Accept the invitation—it is for you. "In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

"My Savior, You have offered rest,
Oh! give it, then, to me;
The rest of ceasing from myself,
To find my all in Thee.

"This cruel self, oh! how it strives
And works within my breast,
To come between You and my soul,
And keep me back from rest.
"How many subtle forms it takes
Of seeming verity,
As if it were not safe to rest

And venture all on Thee.

**"And yet it was no little price
That bought this rest for me;
'Twas purchased at the mighty cost
Of Jesus' agony.**

**"I only enter on the rest,
Obtained by labors *done*;
I only claim the victory
By Him so dearly won.**

**"And, Lord, I seek a holy rest,
A victory over sin;
I seek that You alone should reign
Over all, without, within.**

**"In quietness, then, and confidence,
Savior, my strength shall be;
And, 'Take me, for I cannot come,'
Is still my cry to Thee.**

**"In Your strong hand I lay me down,
So shall the work be done;
For who can work so wondrously
As an Almighty One?**

**"Work on then, Lord, until on my soul
Eternal light shall break;
And in Your likeness perfected,
I, 'satisfied,' shall wake.'**

This subject will at once meet the inquiries of the earnest searcher for truth. All truth essential to our eternal well being is embodied and presented in the cross of Christ. He who was crucified upon it was Essential Truth—gospel truth—divine, saving, sanctifying truth. Let there be but a believing sight of the cross, a spiritual perception of its doctrine, a simple, unquestioning, child-like reception of its God-like scheme—salvation by its Divine expiation, heaven by its one sacrifice—and every theological difficulty will be met; and out of the chaos of the mind—tortured with doubt, enshrouded with gloom,

agitated with fear, perplexed with difficulty—will arise a divine system of truth, a perfect scheme of salvation, a sure hope of heaven, reasonable and harmonious, as suitable to man's necessity, as honorable to God's government.

Approach, then, you who are earnestly asking, "What is truth?" and find your answer at the cross. Take your place, a lowly disciple, at its foot, and listen to the soothing words uttered amid its dying agonies, its streaming blood, its deepening gloom, its supernatural wonders," I Am the Truth,"—repent, believe, and be saved!

Once more we invite to this rest, the spirit of the weary—weary with sin, weary with sorrow, weary with the creature, weary with self. *Imitate the beloved disciple, and recline your head upon Christ.* It is the attitude of confidence, it is the expression of love. *Come and bury your heart in the heart of Christ.* Repose in Him your profoundest secret, unveil to Him your deepest grief. He has revealed to you the secret of His covenant—reciprocate this marvellous act of His friendship—*tell Him all, trust Him with all, draw upon Him for all.* Not more dear to Christ was the disciple who nestled in His bosom than are you. Precious and lowly as was his attitude when he literally bowed his head on Christ, your repose of faith upon Christ is a yet more precious and honoring act. Blessed as was John, more blest are you. "Jesus says unto Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Let this be your believing posture when partaking of the communion of the Lord's Supper. It was *at the Supper* the beloved disciple leaned on Christ; "who also *leaned* upon His breast at supper." What a befitting season does this Feast of love and fellowship present to rest in Jesus, reposing every thought, feeling, and want—every trial, temptation, and sin—in His heart. The Lord's Supper brings us closely beneath the shadow of the cross, in the immediate presence of the Crucified. It is a source of especial inter-communion between Christ and His people. If the weary, languid head ever truly reposed upon the loving bosom of the Lord, surely it is at the festival that commemorates His love. *Hasten to disclose all to Him, and be eager to receive all from Him.* The hallowed hour is short, the holy season brief—waste not its favored moments in vagrant thoughts, in wandering affections, or in listless gaze; but concentrate all on Christ, who, at this precious moment, *concentrates His whole heart upon you.* While the King sits at the table, present and urge your petition. "Ask what you will, and it shall be granted unto you."

Above and beyond all, seek closer manifestations to your soul of "the King in His beauty," for your eyes shall then see Him. *He presides at the feast* to grant especial discoveries of His loveliness and love. And there is no *window of His grace* in which He more delights to reveal Himself to His saints than in the uplifted window of this expressive and precious ordinance.

"Happy the ones that eat this bread,
And doubly blest was he
That gently bowed his loving head,
And leaned it, Lord, on Thee.

"By faith the same delights we taste
As that great favorite did;
And sit and lean on Jesus' breast,
And take the heavenly bread."

And where, in sickness and in death, can we, would we lay our head but on the bosom of Christ? We carry the cross with us in the embrace of our faith to life's last, closing hour. On the cross death was conquered *for us*, and with the cross we shall conquer death *in us*, and like our Lord, in dying, live; and by death, overcome death. Oh, the sweet, the perfect repose found in the cross of Jesus on a sick and dying bed! The cross has made the bed of suffering a bed of roses, and the pillow of death a pillow of down, and the gate of the sepulcher the door of heaven! And if ever the aching, restless, languid head of the saint of God finds repose, it will be when heart and flesh are failing, Jesus approaches, unveils His bosom, and soothes our departing soul to perfect rest in His ineffable love.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, you weary one, lay down
Your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting place,
And he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give

**The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in him.**

**I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto me, your morn shall rise,
And all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk,
Until traveling days are done. (Bonar)**

The Cross of Christ the Christian's Weapon

**"They overcame him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death." Rev. 12:11**

What an impressive illustration is presented in these words of another equally inspired and instructive declaration of the Bible—"God has chosen the *foolish* things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the *weak* things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and *base* things of the world, and things which are *despised*, has God chosen." That 'foolish thing,' that 'weak thing,' that 'base thing,' that 'despised thing,' *in the world's estimation*, which God has chosen as the instrument of saving His elect Church, of conquering the enmity against Him in of the human heart, of extending His kingdom in the earth, and of ultimately subjugating this revolted empire to His supremacy is *the cross of Christ*. This weak, this rude, this ignominious and despised instrument—the preaching of Christ on the cross—is destined to overthrow sin's empire in the soul, wrench the scepter from the grasp of the god of this world, overturn all false religions, and subjugate the empire of the world to Christ's glorious reign.

But we must limit our discussion of this entrancing theme to the case of the *individual believer*. The words, which primarily refer to the "noble army of martyrs," involve a principle which will apply with equal force to any age of Christianity, and every form of spiritual opposition to which the Church of God collectively and individually may be exposed.

The Christian life is a moral conflict, the Christian a spiritual combatant. To no single fact did our Lord give greater prominence than this "I came not to send *peace* on earth, but a *sword*;" indicating thereby that the heavenly and spiritual religion He descended to introduce, while it was designed to bless and save the world, was essentially antagonistic to its principles and its spirit; and that all who professed His 'unearthly religion' would awaken hostility from every quarter, and array against themselves the most sacred and endeared relations of life, so that "a man's foes should be those of his own house."

But the great truth before us is, **THE WEAPON OF OUR HOLY WAR**. It is not of man's forging, of earth's temper, of carnal might—it is of God's providing, heavenly and divine; and although in the eyes of men simple and lowly, it is allmighty, all-conquering, and irresistible—the weapon of Christ's cross.—"*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.*" The subject is one of the profoundest interest, inconceivably important and precious. *The weapon that is to conquer the world for Christ, is to conquer the world of evil in our hearts;* and, wielded by the arm of faith, is to vanquish and overcome all the spiritual opposition by which our path to heaven is intercepted. *We are to overcome, as the martyrs overcame, by the blood of the Lamb.* Heavenly and invincible is this weapon. No foe can cope with it, no opposition resist it, no confederacy overcome it. The blood of Jesus, as an offensive and defensive weapon, is all-powerful and irresistible in our holy war, feeble though the arm may be that wields it.

But it is proper that we should in the outset briefly notice a few of these forms of **OPPOSITION**, in the experience of the believer, which this invincible weapon especially meets and overcomes. And should I not, my reader, specify the exact form of opposition with which in your personal experience you conflict, permit me yet to remind you that, whatever may be the foe with whom you wage this holy war—within or without—whatever the obstacle to your advance in the divine life, faith, looking to the blood of Jesus, wielding the cross of Christ, drawing its supplies from the resources of Christ, will enroll you among those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb!

In the Christian conflict we are engaged, first, with the forces of error. The Church of God is composed of all who hold and love the truth. Truth is everything to the man of God. With not one iota of God's revealed truth can he part, not one doctrine or command can he regard with indifference or relinquish without a struggle. By these divine and precious truths his soul has been quickened, sanctified, and comforted. Wherever the Church of God meets with any form of spurious Christianity, or with those who deny any one of the essential tenets of our faith, it meets a foe; and, if we are loyal to Christ, if true soldiers of the cross, it behooves us to buckle on the whole armor of God, to take the sword of the Spirit, and act valiantly for the truth, "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints."

Our second foe is the world. In every age of the Church the world has been one of its most subtle and ensnaring enemies. In a variety of forms it seeks to throw the spell of its fascination around the saints of God by its many disguises, its specious arguments, its lawful engagements, its aims to draw from the simplicity of Christ. No little skill in this holy war is required to explode the sophistry and resist the blandishments of this ungodly world. How many religious professors are conquered by its reasonings, won by its friendships, vanquished by its pleasures, swallowed up by its temptations! Like Demas, they forsake Christ for the love of an ungodly world. And yet the world is the sworn foe of the Church of God. It crucified its Head, and would crucify its members. The more closely His followers follow Him, the more unearthly their religion, the more decidedly and deadly will the world regard itself their foe. We have more to fear from the smiles of the world than its frowns, more from its bewitching charms than its contemptuous sneer, more from its specious promises than its disdainful irony. The *persecution* of the world has never really injured the spiritual life of any Christian professor, but the *caresses* of the world have slain its thousands.

Then, then is the Christian's great foe—the god of this world. And yet how invisible his form, how noiseless his tread, how subtle his temptations, how unsuspected his approach, how artful and successful his designs! He is "the accuser of the brethren," "the prince of the power of the air," "the god of this world," "the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." Such are his titles, and if they mean anything, they are significant of much. Such is the foe we daily, hourly confront.

Sin in the world, and sin in the Church, and sin in the individual believer, must be classed among our strongest antagonistic foes. *We can not take a step*

without coming in contact with sin. The privacy of our closet is not exempt—sin is still there in our sinful hearts. What a solemn thought it is for the child of God, that the Divine standard of Christian holiness, the Scripture measure of Christian consecration, so far transcends his highest attainments! We are compelled to own that we are but partly renewed. We scarcely deserve the name of saints, so perpetually is sin marring all we do for Christ. Filled with shame, and at times tempted to give up the conflict and yield to the foe, we place our mouth in the dust before God, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

In addition to all this must be quoted the discipline of trial. Trials are, what the word implies, tests of character and Christianity. What a severe conflict when the afflictive providences of our God are seized upon by Satan and sin as an occasion for stirring up the corruptions of the heart, and of rousing the latent rebellion of the will against God. And yet, O Lord our God, by this You teach us! By this painful discipline, by these humiliating circumstances, do You instruct us in the art of warring against sin, to be better soldiers of the cross, more mighty and successful in the holy war. There is no experience like *the endurance of trial*. The man of God best adapted to lead the van of Christ's army, who should take front rank in the conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is he who has been instructed by trials, who has endured a great fight of afflictions. *The valiant and successful soldier of the cross is he who has been taught and trained in God's school of sorrow.* The most eminently holy saints have been the most victorious saints; and the most victorious saints in the great fight of faith have ever been the most deeply tried saints. Eminent affliction is essential to eminent holiness, to completeness of Christian character. No believer's Christianity is fully tested until it passes through this crucible. The *activities of religion* bring into play a part only of our religious character; affliction is needful to develop and exercise the *passive graces of the Spirit*—both essential to form the character of the Christian warrior.

But we must now consider THE WEAPON used by Christians in this great and holy conflict. Of all those Christians who laid down their lives for Jesus in the early Church, none obtained the victory but by THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB! In this holy war, the Christian is ever portrayed as a *victor*, so certain, so sure, so triumphant is the issue. "Overcome!" Mark that word! A most encouraging truth this for you who may now be in the heat of this spiritual conflict! Well might you tremble at the skill and strength and subtlety of your foe, but for this assured truth that, having put on Christ's armor, you are engaged in a conflict, you are prosecuting a war, of the victorious result of

which there is no more doubt than that Christ Jesus is your Leader. Often foiled and wounded in the strife, you yet follow victorious legions, led by a triumphant Captain.

It is by the blood of Jesus we overcome error. Religious error is plausible, reasoning, and subtle. It is seldom presented but in connection with some portion of truth; and to eliminate that small portion of truth from the mass of error in which it is embedded, often demands no little art in this holy war. But no form or onslaught of false doctrine can withstand the power of Christ's cross. Our wisdom, when confronted by the many specious and subtle forms of false doctrine, is not so much to argue and reason, to unveil the sophistry and expose the hollowness of the error, as to confront it with the Divine doctrine of the cross. Truth and error can never coalesce. They may be mixed, but they cannot co-mingle. No two opposite elements in chemistry are so irreconcilable. Truth may float upon the surface of error, as oil upon the water, but no act of sacred alchemy can unite them. "Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." See, then, the weapon by which you may dissolve the enchantment and repel the assault of error. Bring every doctrine, principle, and practice which men would foist upon you to the light of the cross and to the test of the Bible. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Seek by the Spirit's teaching to be so rooted and grounded in the doctrines of which the cross of Christ is the center and symbol, as to prove invulnerable to the shafts of error, feathered though they may be by all the charms of human learning and philosophy, poetry and eloquence.

It is by the cross we obtain the victory over sin. The instrument by which sin was condemned, and through whose channel its pardon flows to us, is the only effectual instrument of its crucifixion in us. A believing, experimental apprehension of the death of Christ is death to the ruling, reigning power of sin in the regenerate. The sense of its pardoned guilt, the conviction of its annihilated condemnation, begets in the soul a loathing of its nature, a shrinking from its commission, and arms us with rebellion against its supremacy and power. "There is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared." The language of the Church is: "I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" That of the apostle is equally significant of this truth: "I am crucified with Christ." Take, then, beloved reader, the existence of indwelling sin in your heart—its easy besetting forms, its ever-wakeful, ever-working power—to the cross of Jesus; and as the Holy Spirit unveils and reveals it to your soul, *seeing Jesus crucified for your sins and by your sins, that fresh*

discovery, that renewed sight of the cross of Calvary, will enable you to mortify the deeds of the body, and to present it a holy and a living sacrifice to God.

The power of atoning blood to *subdue* our iniquities is not less than its efficacy in *pardoning* them. In either case, we can only effectually deal with sin as we deal with Him who was slain for sin. Jesus the crucified is as much our sanctification as He is our redemption. The Spirit's sprinkling of the blood that has pardoned all, cleansed all, cancelled all our sins, intensifies the motive and energizes the soul to repel its attacks, and to rest not from the conflict until the nail has been driven home which *fastens every lust to the cross of Jesus*. Oh, what motive, what power, in the great, the essential work of personal holiness does the cross of Jesus supply! How should we hate sin, battle with sin, resist and overcome it, who have a personal and saving interest in the great and solemn transactions of Calvary! If the spot where the blood of the victim fell was so sacred, if the temple furniture touched by sacrificial blood was so holy, oh, what words can depict the solemn consecration to God of that soul washed in the atoning blood of God's beloved Son! Lord, if he that is washed in Your blood is clean every whit, wash me! not my feet only, but also my hands and my head, that my obedience may be more unreserved, my service more complete, my mind more deeply sanctified—each part of my being purified, sanctified, and dedicated by Your blood.

Faith, wielding the invincible weapon of the cross, skillfully repels and effectually vanquishes the attacks of Satan. The only weapon in the believer's armory which Satan most dreads, is the cross of Christ. He can glibly quote Scripture, and so press into his own deceitful purpose a weapon of divine temper; but the cross of Calvary he dreads. Well does he remember the words, spoken by the Eternal One while yet a measure of the bloom and the fragrance of paradise rested upon the bowers and glens of Eden, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." The great battle of Satan is not so much with the Body as with the Head; not so much with the Church as with the Savior of the Church. Upon Christ all his virulence concentrates, around Him all his opposition gathers. To wound Christ through His members is one of his master strategic arts. But how is the believer to meet and overcome this arch-foe of his soul, this deceiver and accuser of the brethren? Simply and only by the blood of the Lamb. Skillful and mighty to wield the weapons of the cross, no onslaught of the foe, however fierce; no dart taken from his quiver, however flaming; no snare of fowler,

however concealed; no gleam of the serpent's eye, however soft and fascinating, shall overcome the weakest saint. The devil hates the cross, fears the cross, is cowed and impotent before the cross of Jesus; in which he beholds the instrument of his past ignominious defeat, and the sign and the pledge of his future and final overthrow. Satan-tempted soul! fly to the foot of the cross. Satan dare not bring a railing accusation against you there. Faith reading its pardon and acquittal, realizing that "there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," can confront and boldly challenge this subtle, sleepless foe of his soul, "Who are you that accuses and condemns me? My sins are all forgiven, my guilt all cancelled, my debt all paid by Jesus, my Divine Surety, on that cross which to you is death, but to me is life." Thus, beloved, shall you be numbered among those who overcame by the blood of the Lamb.

And this, too, is the victory that overcomes the world. The world is Satan's seat, his empire, his throne. No marvel, then, that it becomes one of his most powerful, and, alas! too successful instruments of drawing the saints from Jesus. We have already, in this work, indicated some of the forms of worldly temptation by which believers are assailed. It will suffice if, in the present chapter, we simply refer to the weapon by which these temptations are successfully repelled. *The weapon is the cross upon which the world crucified Christ.* This was the spiritual equipment of Paul, this the invincible sword by which he triumphed. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." Clad with this armor, wielding this weapon, we too must conquer. Study the world in the light of Christ's cross, and how will it look? Survey it from this elevated and impressive stand-point, and what is its appearance? In no other light can you regard it than as the crucifier of your Lord. It was the world that slew Jesus. He came to save it, and in return for love so marvellous, so self-sacrificing, it maligned and despised Him, rejected and crucified Him, because He testified of it that its works were evil. And still it is His implacable, unslumbering foe—ever seeking to bruise the Head through the members. Oh, think not that the world which entwined the thorn-crown around His brow, will sun you with its smile. Let, then, your dealings with this ungodly world be a constant battle, and the cross of Jesus, wielded in faith and by prayer, your victorious weapon. *The cross must separate you from the pleasures, the religion, and the spirit of the world. It is utterly impossible that you can love the cross and love the world too.* Faith in the cross, and confederacy with the enemies of the cross, are totally irreconcilable. We cannot carry Christ's cross upon our shoulder and the world in our hand at the same time. We cannot be truly

crucified by the one and yet live to the other. Either Christ's cross will be to us the death of the world, or the world will be to us the death of Christ's cross. But, oh, what an *honor* is it to be crucified with Christ to this ungodly world! to bear its burning shame, to be subjected to its offence, to endure the pain of its moral crucifixion. As the holy Rutherford beautifully remarks, "The cross of Christ is the sweetest burden that ever I bore; it is such a burden as wings are to a bird, or as sails to a ship, to carry me forward to my desired haven. To be crucified to the world is not so highly accounted by us as it should be. How heavenly a thing it is to be deaf to, and dead to, this world's sweetest music! It is little the world can take from me, and as little can it give me."

The cross of Christ, too, is the only effectual weapon of the Christian ministry. It is a great, a supernatural work, the work of dethroning Satan in the heart, and subjecting it to Christ. "Who is sufficient for these things?" By no instrument can a work so mighty, so divine, be accomplished, but by the instrument with which Jesus triumphed—the cross of Calvary. "We preach Christ crucified"—literally, Christ on the cross—was the simple but sublime declaration of the chief of the apostles. "The preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness; but unto us which believe it is the power of God." "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." And how significant yet touching the words of the Crucified Himself: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Such is the doctrine the revealed Word of God teaches, such the truth the Holy Spirit owns, such the weapon the minister of the cross wields, and such its marvellous power and result. Are you a Christian minister? Beloved brother, behold your divine, invincible weapon! The Cross of Christ! Preach Christ, and Christ only! Lift Him up higher and higher, exalt Him more and more, and you shall not have mournfully to exclaim, "Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" *The Holy Spirit will the most honor that ministry that the most honors Christ's cross.* He who preaches the Church and not Christ, who puts ordinances in the place of the atoning blood, or who veils the cross by human learning and philosophy and the traditions of men—the power and the wisdom of this world, which is weakness and foolishness with God; stands in a position of terrible responsibility, is accumulating a fearful amount of guilt,

and is laying up a solemn and awful account of his stewardship unto God. But preach Christ crucified, and the results, for which you are not responsible, you can safely leave to them unto whom alone they belong. No other preaching will meet the case of our hearers. No other theme will the Holy Spirit bless to the conversion of sinners, and to the instruction, comfort, and sanctification of the saints. All other preaching—preaching which has not Christ crucified for its beginning, its center, and its end, is solemn trifling with souls and with eternity—a splendid impertinence, a burlesque of the gospel, a dishonor to God, the murder of souls, whose blood, staining our garments, God will require at our hands. Oh, whatever you do, preach CHRIST! Preach Him in His Godhead—preach Him in His manhood—preach Him as the Revealer of the Father—preach Him in His finished work—preach Him in His personal beauty—preach Him in His love, grace, and sympathy—preach Him as the all in all of the soul bound to His judgment-seat—preach Him scripturally and intelligently, lovingly and winningly; in the pulpit, out of the pulpit, living and dying, oh, raise high the cross of Christ!

"Woe to the men who tear away the cross
Sole prop and pillar of a sinking world.
If its foundation by unhallowed hands
Be undermined, what, what can give support?
But hush, my fears! it rests not on the sand;
The raging waves that dash against its base
Sink harmless, after foaming out their shame.
It is when the *cross* is preached, and only then,
That from the pulpit a mysterious power
Goes forth to renovate the moral man.
He that without it wields
The sacred sword, at best in mock display,
A useless weapon flourishes in its sheath,
None feel its edge-none fear it."—Wilcox.

Christ Crucified the Center of Christian Union

"You are all one in Christ Jesus."—Gal. 3:28.

The unfolding of our subject approaches its close. Imperfect as the discussion manifestly is—as imperfect, indeed, must be the most elaborate unfolding of such a theme—it would be yet more—marked in the omission of the topic which in the present chapter will engage the reader's attention—Christ crucified the center of Christian union, and of holy fellowship to all true believers of God's one Church. Our subject is in perfect and beautiful harmony with one of the most touching petitions in the intercessory prayer of Jesus when on earth. "That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you have sent me." This clearly was the great truth which the apostle seeks to illustrate. "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There [that is, in Christ] 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." His argument is—the Lord Jesus is the Center, and in Him all national, ecclesiastical, and religious differences subsisting in the one Church of God are merged and lost, as rays in the sun, as rivers in the ocean—and Christ is all and in all. The union of the Lord's people is a subject dear to His heart, closely connected with His glory, and inseparable from their own holiness, happiness, and usefulness. May the Divine Spirit aid and bless the presentation of this delightful truth, while we consider the *center*—the *unity*—the blessings and the *obligations* which result therefrom.

THE CENTER of Christian union is the center of Christianity—*Christ Crucified*. Destroy the focus of any system, and the system itself is destroyed. Remove the center, and you have broken up that which held the whole in cohesion and unity. For example—taking our illustration from Divine truth—deny the Deity of Christ, and you deny the Atonement of Christ, for the two cardinal articles of our faith stand or fall together. The sacrifice of Christ, as a vindication of God's moral government, and as the only expedient of the soul's salvation, reposes wholly upon the Essential Godhead of His person. If Christ is not God, He is not a Savior. A mere human savior could not bring a sinner to heaven. Destroy, then, the Atonement, ignore the sacrificial death of Christ, and you have destroyed and rejected the only foundation upon which a lost soul can build his hope of glory.

Now, a great and essential doctrine is placed before you here. All believers are

ONE in Christ Jesus. They have a vital union with Jesus Himself. This is a higher truth than that which affirms that they know Him, love Him, and have faith in Him; that they put their trust alone in His blood and righteousness, and have confessed Him before men. All these are precious truths—God make them yet more precious to our hearts. But, the grand truth, the source of all the rest, is this—I, as a believer in Christ, am in Him *eternally*, in Him *spiritually*, in Him *indissolubly*, in Him *vitally*. And because I am thus one with Christ Jesus I know Him—knowing Him, I love Him—loving Him, I obey Him—and obeying Him, I find my heaven begun on earth. All these living, precious springs have their origin in this grand truth—"I am one with Christ the Lord."

As long as a man is out of Christ Jesus, he is in a most awful and perilous condition. We ask not what ecclesiastical form of government he may prefer; or what his creed is. If he has no spiritual union with the Lord Jesus Christ, he is in an unsaved and imminently perilous state. Do you inquire who are out of Christ? I answer,—and God grant that you may apply the statement to your own conscience—if you have never repented of your sins—if your heart has never been broken by the blessed Spirit—if you have never placed your mouth in the dust, and cried, God be merciful to me a sinner!—you are out of Christ. All unbelievers are out of Christ. And who are unbelievers? Perchance you are thinking of the bold, unblushing infidel; the man who denies the inspiration of the Scriptures, and laughs to scorn the divine revelations of the Holy Spirit. Little do you think that you, in your 'practical' rejection of the Lord Jesus, may be virtually that infidel, that unbeliever! If, in faith, you have not received Jesus, though He has been standing knocking at the door of your heart until His locks are wet with the dew of the morning; you are that unbeliever, that infidel; and as an unbeliever, rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, you have no union with Christ—you are out of Christ! Poor Pharisee! wrapping around you *the wretched figment of your own righteousness*, looking at your own works, trusting in your religious duties, going about to establish a righteousness of your own, never having been brought to know your condemnation under the law, never having been brought to see that *all your virtues are but splendid sins*, that all upon which you do pride and plume yourself is in God's sight obnoxious and loathsome—you are out of Christ!

And you, poor religious formalist! who has put on Christ *outwardly*—perhaps

has gone to His table, and yet are holding an empty lamp of Christian profession, destitute of one particle of saving grace—with all your splendid profession, your outward zeal, and religious formality, you have no oneness with Christ! And how shall I describe to you *the awful condition* in which this state of separation from Christ places you? To be out of Christ is to be exposed to the condemnation of the law; to be out of Christ is to have no hiding-place, no Savior, no Redeemer; to be out of Christ is to be unsheltered from the wrath to come. It is to live a godless life, and to die a hopeless death! Think of the antediluvians! Perhaps many of them assisted to construct the ark, while they yet laughed to scorn the warnings and entreaties of the righteous man of God. But when the ark was complete, and the chosen vessels of mercy had entered it, and God had shut them in, the heaven was darkened, the lightning flashed, the thunder pealed, the waters descended, the floods came and swept them all away, and they were lost, because they were not in the ark! Yearning for your conversion, we warn you of the wrath to come, and tell you that, unless you have a spiritual union with the Lord Jesus, unless you are enclosed in Christ, you have no refuge from the storm, no hiding-place from the wind, no covert from the tempest of the wrath of the holy and the just Lord God!

But now we turn to the converse of this truth—a far more precious and delightful theme. All believers are in Christ Jesus, loved in Him, and eternally elected in Him. Deem not this a dry doctrinal truth, having in it no sanctifying influence. We believe it to be one of the most Christ-exalting, God-glorifying, soul-sanctifying truths that a minister of Christ could possibly bring before you. Trace up all the precious springs of grace and love to the fountain-head from where they flow—God's eternal love to, and choice of, you in Christ Jesus your covenant Head. Let your faith and love thus follow these precious springs of grace until they bring you to the fountain—*God's everlasting love to you in Christ Jesus your Lord.* It is delightful to think how God treasured up from eternity in this very act of His own love all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus our Head. When God called you by His free and sovereign grace, He called you in Christ, and to Christ. *You could not resist the blessed call, because it was the effectual call of the Holy Spirit which brought you to see your worthlessness and vileness.* The great office of the Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and in nothing does He more glorify Christ than in *calling a poor sinner away from his own righteousness, his religious formality, to accept Christ*

Jesus the Lord as all his righteousness and all his salvation.

There is included, too, this great and precious truth—acceptance and justification in Christ Jesus. What is justification? It is our union with Christ Jesus. If we are in a state of acceptance—in a justified state—standing before God in a state of completeness—it is because we are one in Christ Jesus. "Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." *If we stand before the Holy One pardoned and justified, it is because Jesus has washed us in His precious blood, and has invested us with His imputed righteousness.* Some of my readers may have been for months looking at their own selves. Would you know a true believer's experience? Then may the Lord take your eyes away from your *sinful* self, and your *righteous* self, and *empty* self, and give you to see that in Christ Jesus, washed in His blood, clothed in His righteousness, you have passed into a present state of full forgiveness and complete acceptance, and God rests in His love and rejoices over you with singing. There is for you now no condemnation.

Again, this being in Christ involves our preservation. The child of God is kept not by any power of his own. If God were to leave us to our own keeping, before we reposed our head upon our pillow we would fall to the breaking of our bones and the destruction of our peace. Child of God, God is teaching you every day the great truth, "KEPT by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." "Preserved in Christ," through all the long years of our rebellion, impenitence, and unbelief; and since we have been brought to know Christ, still each moment kept by the power of God unto eternal salvation.

And when the solemn hour comes, as come it will, that shall terminate this brief existence and summon you into the invisible world, oh, what a delightful truth will it then be to lay your dying head upon—"I am in Christ Jesus. I am a dying man in a living Savior. Why need I fear to die? Why need I shrink from the separation of the spirit from the body? Why need I tremble to enter upon a world unknown?" Oh, to die in Christ is but to languish into life. You who have been for years trembling in the anticipation of death, all your lifetime subject to its bondage, cast to the winds all your doubts and fears. When you die, you will die in the Lord—in a spiritual union with the Lord, from which neither death nor life shall separate you, and so you shall be forever with the Lord.

And then comes the consummation—in Christ now, and with Christ hereafter! We hardly know whether we are right in unveiling the solemn sacredness of a dying room, and yet we find it hard to resist quoting a striking and impressive remark recently made by a suffering and dying prelate, Archbishop Wheately. He had made the science of botany a study; and when a clergy man pointed to some beautiful flowers by his bed, asking him if he thought there were flowers in heaven, the reply of the dying saint was, "I cannot tell; I suppose that we shall find when we get to heaven a total reverse of many of our previous notions of what it is; but this I know, as I get nearer to it, the heaven of heavens to me is, to be with Christ." Oh, it is a heaven in itself to be with Christ, to fall at His feet, to be raised in His arms, to repose on His loving breast. If you are in Christ now, *however feeble your grasp, or dull your perception of Christ*, or fluctuating your hope of being with Christ may be, the feeblest faith that takes hold of Christ, *the dimmest eye that sees Christ now*, insures your being forever with Christ when He shall send His chariot to waft you to Himself.

THE UNITY.

But we pass from this consideration of the oneness of all believers with Christ to the consequent **UNITY OF ALL BELIEVERS WITH EACH OTHER**. The unity of the Church of Christ does not spring out of anything in that Church, but out of the oneness of that Church in Christ. Unity pervades all God's works and operations—unity, not uniformity. We find a marvellous richness of diversity in all the creations of God. Study, my reader, this diversity in God's operations. If we address anyone who has doubts touching the fundamental doctrine of revealed religion, the being of a God, we ask him to take up that one evidence, the vast diversity of God's operations, unfolding the infinite affluence of God's mind, heart, wisdom, and power; and see if it will not bring him to the logical conclusion that *this vast wealth, this infinite diversity, must spring from an Infinite Being*. And yet, there is unity—unity of design, of purpose, of action, all springing from the unity of His being. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord."

We see this unity that pervades God's works and operations, marvelously exhibited in the essential oneness of His Church. God has but one Church. "My beloved is one." Many sections, but one Church; many apartments, but one house; many stones, but one temple; many tents, but one camp; many

flocks, but one fold. There is unity and there is diversity. The family of God is essentially one, and yet constituted into different households.

Now, we would remind you, in the first place, that the unity of the Church of God grows out of the unity of all believers in Christ the one Head. All true believers hold Christ the one Head of the Church. There may be diversities of judgment touching minor points in the interpretation of God's Word, but all believers in Christ hold the *headship* of Christ. The apostle speaks of some spurious religionists as not "holding the Head;" but all true believers hold Christ to be the Head of the Church—the Head of her *vitality, of her strength, of her power, of her glory*. Does not this, then, place before us, in a most striking point of view, the essential oneness of the Church of God?

Then, again, the essential unity of the Church consists in the indwelling of the same Spirit. Every believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit. All believers in Christ, then, are essentially one. The same Divine Spirit who brought you to see your lost condition and led you to Jesus, who is carrying on the work of grace in your heart, leading you on higher and higher, to a state of fitness for heaven, is the same Spirit who dwells alike in all God's people; and this recognition of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every converted soul ought to draw us closer and closer in fellowship and love to the brethren. If I stand aloof from a brother—if I withhold my fellowship—refuse to co-operate with him in the work of the Lord Jesus—to refuse to admit him to my communion, because he does not belong to my section of the Christian Church—I grieve, wound, and dishonor that same Divine Spirit that dwells in my soul, I bring a leanness into my own spirit, I quench, in a great measure, the gracious influence of that Spirit in my own heart. Lay to heart this thought. Turn it into prayer. We believe through the power of the Spirit it will annihilate all the *jealousy, envy, coldness, and distance* that so much separates us from our brother in Christ.

And what a glorious view of the essential unity of the Church does salvation present to the eye! Look at the one Church of God. On what platform does it stand? What is its foundation? Where do all believers look for pardon, for acceptance, for sanctifying grace? Where do they wash day by day the constant contractions of guilt? Where do they look for present peace and future hope? Are they not all *hanging* on Christ? Are they not all *clinging* to

Christ? Do they not all *wash* in the blood of Christ? Do not all put on the one *righteousness* of Christ? Are they not all *living* on Christ as their sanctification? Surely this were enough to place in the background, all those ecclesiastical systems that sever and sunder us from our brethren, and unite them in Christian union and fellowship. This were enough to make us say, "The minor points on which we differ are of no importance in comparison, and they shall not be allowed to sunder us in love, in sympathy, in labor. But the grand essential points on which we are agreed, shall be a bond of union and fellowship from this time forth and for evermore."

And how much is there in the circumstances of a child of God to unfold the essential unity of the Church of God! We have the same *trials, afflictions, temptations*; we tread oftentimes the same dreary, lonely, toilsome path. Oh, how much is there in God's providential dealings with us in our *trials, our sorrows, our temptations*, to knit the saints of God more closely to their Head!

THE OBLIGATIONS.

In conclusion, let us remark that there grows out of this great and precious truth some solemn obligations and precious blessings. First, with regard to obligations set forth in the Scriptures. If we are in Christ, and Christ is the center of our union, then we are bound to recognize the unity of God's Church. We are to hail a brother in Christ as a brother wherever we find him. We are to recognize his Christianity, his relation to the family of God, his faith in the Savior. We are to recognize him—whatever his ecclesiastical position may be—as no longer a stranger and alien, but a fellow-citizen of the saints and of the household of God. *Recognizing* this, we ought to *express* it. I think that this was the meaning of the petition our dear Lord breathed to heaven. He did not ask the Father that His Church might be one; it was one. He did not pray that they might be more one with each another; they were essentially so. But, what the Great High Priest asked of God was, that this unity, this oneness, might be *manifested*, that this union might be *visible*, that the world, beholding it, might believe in the divinity of His person and His mission. The world is a keen observer of the Church of God. The world cares not one iota how much we differ on points of church government, or of doctrine, but the world looks at the Church of God, in its union. It expects to find oneness, brotherly love, sympathy, co-operation. Therefore we earnestly implore you first, to recognize the unity of all God's dear saints with one

another, and then manfully and unhesitatingly to express and illustrate it.

Added to this, we would earnestly implore you, as another obligation springing from this truth, to promote and remove the stumbling-blocks out of the way of Christian union. It may occasion you some self-denial. You may have a cross to take up in doing this. You may lose the confidence, the affection, the friendship of some. But it is worth a sacrifice to remove a stone out of the way of the glorious work of Christian union. Oh, what were the chilled affection and weakened confidence of a fellow-Christian compared with the promotion of brotherly love and Christian union among all God's dear saints! To heal the divisions in the rent robe of our blessed Emmanuel, to draw brother to brother, minister to minister, church to church, oh, think of the glory, honor, and praise that will accrue by that act of yours to the blessed name of our wondrous, glorious Emmanuel! And when you place your dying head upon your pillow, and are about to stand in the presence of Jesus, do you do you think will for a moment regret having made some sacrifice of feeling, friendship, or affection, in order to draw closer and closer the bonds that unite the members of the one elect, redeemed, and saved Church of God?

THE BLESSINGS.

We advert for a moment to the blessings that will accrue from your recognition and manifestation of this great and glorious truth—the essential unity of the Church. Let me remind you that your happiness will be promoted by it. You cannot be happy so long as you stand aloof from a Christian church, a minister, or a brother, because he utters not your shibboleth, kneels not at your altar, because his form of worship or of church government assimilates not to your own. No! you cannot be happy. But, oh, the sacred delight of realizing our oneness! We have augmented our happiness in drawing around us closer the cords of love in a brother's heart—in having secured *his confidence, inspired his love, and acquired an interest in his prayers*. Oh, the happiness of soaring above denominational differences, and breathing the purer, holier, serener atmosphere that floats around the cross of Calvary, where all ecclesiastical and denominational distinctions are entirely lost.

And not only your happiness but your holiness will be promoted by your recognition of brotherly love. It is not a holy and healthful state of mind to stand aloof from a church, a minister, or a private Christian, because they

belong not to our own section of the Christian Church; but it is a holy and healthful state to be walking in love with all who love Christ, rising above these outer forms of separation, and recognizing only our common salvation, our common Lord, our union to our glorious and blessed Head. Do you want to be more holy, more happy, more useful? Do you want to assimilate more closely to the image of your Lord and Master? Then, *extend your arms of love, sympathy, and companionship, and embrace, as He embraces, irrespective of party or ecclesiastical distinction, or form of worship, all those who own the one living and glorious Head.*

We will only add that usefulness is another blessing that springs from the recognition and manifestation of Christian union. Beloved, we are useful for Christ, not so much as we stand apart in our individual, isolated condition; as in combination—combination of judgment, of heart, of purpose. This promotes our usefulness. Do you want to be useful in Christ's Church? Do you want to augment your practical influence in the service of your Master? Then, we beseech you, co-operate with all the Lord's people in advancing the kingdom of Christ, in circulating God's holy Word, in distributing religious tracts, in promoting Christian missions. Co-operate with every church organization in His blessed work. Link and unite yourselves with them, and you will augment vastly that usefulness in the service of Christ, to which, we trust, the Lord by His grace has called you.

We have adverted to the solemn hour of our departure, when, standing in a near view of the eternal world, we look back upon the past. *Oh, then, how low, pitiful, and contemptible will appear all the little divisions that sundered us from God's dear saints,* when we are about to stand in the presence of the Holy One, and spring into the fellowship of the "general assembly and Church of the First-born which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." God has seen fit to take to the Church above, some of the earliest and most devoted friends of Christian union. Do you think that in heaven they repent of having crossed the threshold—of having overlooked their ecclesiastical walls—and of having united in sympathy and co-operation with God's dear saints? Oh, no! The Church of God on earth and in heaven is but *one* Church; and we believe that the glory and happiness of our friends in heaven is immensely increased in the recollection of having when on earth, done something to promote brotherly love and union in the Church of Christ.

Oh, let us live more in vivid realization of that solemn hour that shall transfer the Church on earth, freed from all its imperfections and deficiencies, to the Church of the glorified in heaven, where we shall be *perfectly and eternally one!*

**"One army of the living God,
At His command we bow;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.**

**"The Church triumphant in Your love,
Their mighty joys we know;
They sing the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in hymns below."**