

HAVE YOU A DIFFICULTY?

OR,

HELPS FOR THE ANXIOUS.

BY

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"HE SATISFIETH THE LONGING SOUL."—*Psalm cvii. 9.*

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HAVE YOU A DIFFICULTY?



INTRODUCTION.

F one thing more than another has weighed upon the heart of the writer in penning these pages, it is the thought of the apparent shallowness of exercise in the vast majority of those professing faith in Christ. In our anxiety to see souls brought into peace there is one special danger we need to watch and pray against, viz., that of intruding (however unintentionally) between God and the spiritual exercises of the awakened.

This danger was possibly never greater than in a superficial day like the present. It is easy now-a-days to attain a certain glibness of expression in religious things, without the soul having

been divinely awakened at all. Or if the root of the matter *is* there, it is of such a shallow character as hardly to be perceptible in their daily walk and ways.

At the same time there can be no doubt that through wrong impressions as to the very foundation truths of the gospel, by means of unscriptural habits of thought and expression current throughout the professing church, many a heart is filled with saddest bewilderment and perplexity which might otherwise be tasting the sweetness of "joy and peace in believing." And does not this also account for the unsatisfactory ways of many? for until we have a firm foundation under our feet our walk is never steady.

It is this consideration which has encouraged the writer in his aim at helping souls by placing these pages before them; and his prayer is that they may prove a blessing to many, an occasion of stumbling to none. What a comfort that "*He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.*" (Psalm cvii. 9.)

SOUL-TROUBLE.

THERE is no trouble in the world like *soul-trouble*. The torments of a guilty conscience, who can endure ? “A wounded spirit, who can bear ?”

Next to the anguish of waking up *in eternity* to find the soul is “lost,” is the bitterness of making that discovery *in time*, though the great gulf be not yet finally “fixed,” nor the soul’s doom eternally sealed.

Let a man be made alive to the truth that *the end of a sinful life is hell*, and that such is the very life he has led : let the Spirit of God remind him that the next pulse-beat, the next heart-throb, may be his last, and that the God against whom he has so long and so wilfully rebelled holds his breath in His mighty hand, and there will be little wonder if he go supperless to bed to spend the silent night-watches, not in peaceful slumber, but in fear and trembling, in tossing and groaning, in prayer and weeping.

The eternal damnation or the eternal salvation of the soul is no light issue, and how can he rest till it is settled? He richly deserves the one, yet he ardently hopes for the other. He seems to hope against hope, yet he does hope, and cannot help it. On one side stands "truth," shedding the light of her "lamp" upon the inevitable future and the undeniable past, and fully exposing both: on the other, so to speak, stands "grace," witnessing to him that in spite of his wickedness, and entirely on the ground of *Another's* merits, eternal blessing may yet be his.

Oh the intensity of such an inward struggle until pardon is known and peace possessed; until the soul's portion for eternity is beyond the possibility of doubt or question!

Then there is another important factor in this fierce struggle. *Satan*, with his suggestions and lies, is now all astir. He has long been able to "keep his goods in peace," but now he must use every effort that satanic craft can devise in order to thwart, if possible, the purposes of grace; or

else his once willing slave will be another witness of the value of the Redeemer's blood to cleanse, of His power to save.

At one time he whispers, 'You are too good to be lost at last'; at another, 'You are too bad to be saved; at least too bad to be saved just as you are; wait till you are better first.' It has been well said that 'Satan's clock is always either too fast or too slow.' There is, according to his dangerous counsel, either '*plenty of time* to think of these things,' or he whispers, 'God is too h rd and too exacting to shew mercy to such a sinner as you are, you are *too late* now.'

SOUL DIFFICULTIES.

1. How can I possibly escape punishment for my sins, since God is righteous and I am sinful?

This question is as old as the book of Job ("How can a man be justified with God," was his memorable enquiry, Job xxv. 4) and touches the very foundation of all solid rest and peace. God could not be otherwise than true to His own holy, righteous character. Sin put Him into the place of judge, and as surely as God is just, sin must have its full penalty. Men sentimentalize about the love of God and forget His justice. But God will be as righteous in taking a man to heaven on the ground of Christ's work, as He will be righteous in sending a sinner to hell for his own work.

When He exalted Christ to His own right hand in glory He declared His own *righteousness* in doing it. When He sends Satan to his eternal

doom in the lake of fire it will be according to the same righteousness. Indeed it cannot be too well understood that if any sinner is saved, God will be as righteous in doing it as He was in seating Christ in the brightness of heavenly glory, or as He will be in driving Satan to the darkness of eternal judgment.

How then, after stopping "*every mouth*" in the whole human family, and pronouncing "*every man*" guilty before Him, can God righteously save *any*?

Hear the blessed answer of the Spirit of God, "*It is Christ that died.*" (Rom. viii. 34.) "*He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.*" (Isa. liii. 5.)

Sin's penalty has been borne by the Lamb of God's own providing. Every question of the troubled conscience as to sin's righteous due, is answered by another question—one which will stand alone for eternity—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Who could answer that mysterious "Why?" of Calvary? Let us pause and enquire.

Demons had confessed Him to be the Holy One of God. Could the powers of darkness tell us "Why"? Impossible. Satan himself had been foiled at every approach to Him Who could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me."

Angels had ministered to Him after His temptation in the wilderness. Did they not know that God's good pleasure was in Him, and that He had always done the things that pleased His Father? But could they answer this momentous question? Again we say, impossible, "*Which things the angels desire to look into.*" (1 Peter i. 12.)

His disciples had seen how the mouth of every gainsayer had been stopped by His unanswerable challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Familiar they must have been with the words of David in Old Testament scriptures, "I have been young, and now am old; *yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.*" (Ps. xxxvii. 25.) Yet here

is the only absolutely righteous Man that ever trod this earth—"Jesus Christ *the* righteous"—and He is forsaken! (Oh, wonder of wonders!) Why? *Man* has no answer to that question; not even those most devoted to Him.

God the Father, Himself, had drawn the attention of heaven and earth, more than once, to the fact that in that blessed lowly One He found perfect satisfaction and delight. Will He throw open the heavens once more to furnish an answer to that mysterious "Why"? No. The blessed Sin-bearer is left to feel, amid the darkness of those three hours, as He only could feel, the awfulness of that word "FORSAKEN." Others had called in ages past: they had been heard; they had been delivered; but listen to *His* words as, from the midst of that terrible darkness, they reach and pierce our very hearts: "*I cry . . . Thou hearest not.*" Is there, then, no answer to the question? Blessed be God there is, or farewell to every hope of peace for you and me. Faith *has* found an answer. From whence, then, did she get it? If demons, angels, men,

couldn't furnish an answer ; if God *didn't*, from whence is it derived ? It came from the very lips of the Forsaken One Himself ! He justified God in forsaking Him. Oh, how precious ! beyond all conception precious ! Tell it o'er and o'er again, and let the story never die away. *He justified God in forsaking Him.* Listen to His blessed prophetic words in Ps. xxii. 3, "But THOU ART HOLY, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." As though He had said, 'Thou art so holy that Thou couldst not do less, in all righteousness, than turn Thy back upon sin, even when Thy beloved Son was the bearer of it.' No ; when sin is judged there can be no relief, no answer, until the cup of condemnation is drained. How solemn, yet how lovely, is all this ! How it draws the affections of a troubled sinner to that precious Saviour, filling his heart with peace, and making it overflow with praise. What greater proof could we have, then, that the sins of those who believe in Jesus have already been righteously judged—judged in the blessed person of their adorable Substitute ?

God can now be "just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.) They are not justified because nothing could be said against them ; but justified by the precious blood, which has, once for all, met every charge that God Himself could bring against them.

'Adore Him ! adore Him ! His glorious work is done.

On me sin's judgment ne'er can roll, 't was borne by
God's own Son !

' 'T is finished !' cried His suffering soul, and I my title
see ;

I was the guilty sinner, but Jesus died for me.'

Thus we see that the believer's sins have not *escaped* punishment. The gospel does not tell of a God whose love has been expressed in winking at sin, but of a God whose love to the sinner could only be expressed where His holy claims against sin were righteously met, and its penalty exhaustively endured.

' *Upon the cross* this record's graved,
Let sin be judged, the sinner saved.'

2. In trying to be good I have only got worse instead of better.

Perhaps there is no mistake more common than to suppose that by salvation is meant a gradual improvement in oneself, a growing better and better, until at last one becomes fit for the presence of God—ready for heaven.

But Scripture makes it plain that salvation is through faith in the work of Christ alone, a work which was finished on the cross once for all. We are told that the apostle Peter was “filled with the Holy Ghost” when, before the rulers and elders of Israel, he boldly testified, “Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts iv. 12.)

It cannot be too clearly understood that the Holy Ghost is never presented as our Saviour, as though *He* had died for our sins. It was through the Eternal Spirit Christ offered Himself without spot to God. (Heb. ix. 14.) It is through the Spirit's work in our souls that we

are made sensible of our need of Christ and His sacrifice. It is the Spirit who effectually points every awakened soul to what Christ has done. But the Spirit's work in us is not the ground of peace. "Being justified by faith, *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" because it was He "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." (Rom. iv. 25 ; v. 1.) Take the simple figure of "thirst," used repeatedly in Scripture to describe the felt need of a poor sinner, "If any man thirst," said the blessed Lord, "let him come unto Me, and drink." (John vii. 37.) Now, even a child could tell, if we required the information, that *thirst is the result of something produced inside of us* ; that what allays this thirst is something provided outside ; and that when this outside provision is applied to the inside need, the thirst is quenched.

When by faith the testimony of God's word, as to Christ's death, is received in the soul of a conscience-troubled sinner, the result is peace. 'I *deserved* death and condemnation,'

he will tell you, 'but Christ finished the cup of judgment, and died in my place ; my sins were without number, but God, Who alone knew *them*, laid them upon His beloved Son, as my substitute, and their undiminished judgment fell on *His* blessed head. All my badness has come out ; nothing has been left hidden ; nothing has escaped judgment.' "He was wounded for our transgressions," "He was delivered for our offences," God has raised Him from the dead, and it is faith in Him and the God who raised Him that brings peace to the soul.

It is no question of 'growing better and better' on our part. If God could not save us until we were good enough to deserve it, our case would be hopeless. But instead of setting us to attain a certain standard of merit, He has to teach us two very unwelcome facts about ourselves :

1st. Our sinfulness.

2nd. Our helplessness.

We must learn that not only are we guilty and

ungodly, but that we have no strength to be what we try to be.

It was after repeated efforts at reformation, after numberless broken resolutions, that the 6th verse of the 5th of Romans was applied to the longing soul of the writer; and just as water would meet the need of a traveller, dying of thirst in some trackless desert, that verse met his need. His past had afforded abundant proof that he was "*ungodly*," while all his fruitless efforts to be what a Christian ought to be only proved that he was "*without strength*." But since the Spirit of God had said that Christ died for such, this was enough. For "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. v.)

'My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.'

**3. Must I not grow in grace until I am saved ;
i.e., until I am fit for heaven ?**

This difficulty is near akin to the one just dwelt upon. The answer will be simplified if we remember that because our soul's salvation rests entirely upon the merits of what Christ did for us on the cross, there can be **no progress in the believer's security**, no progress in deliverance "from the wrath to come," since there can be no progress in a work already "finished."

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus ii. 11); "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2); "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke xix. 9); "Who hath saved us" (2 Tim. i. 9); "By grace ye are saved." (Eph. ii. 8.)

It should be noticed, however, that besides this present aspect of salvation, though not our subject here, there is the future salvation of the body at the Lord's coming (Phil. iii. 21), and the daily preservation of those who are reconciled. (Rom. v. 10.)

God had long before declared that He would allow

NO STEPS TO HIS ALTAR.

“Thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps to mine altar.” (Ex. xx. 25, 26.) Mark! *No skilful hand-work, no progressive foot-work*, is the teaching here! In typical language it is, “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” How well such an altar suited a dying thief! What could *he* have done had any activity of hand and foot been required? He could look to Him, that was all. His sin brought him face to face with the Lamb of God upon the altar. The Light of Life awakened his conscience; love attracted his heart; and without waiting for one day’s progress he was made fit for paradise there and then; and still more, on the best authority he *knew* it.

But it may be asked, Is there no such thing as Christian progress or growth? Thank God there is, but (and we repeat it with fresh em-

phasis) *no progress in our meetness for heaven, or our deliverance from judgment to come.* Who “delivered us from the wrath to come.” (1 Thess i. 10.) “Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.” (Col. i. 12, 13.)

Take an illustration. A man unable to swim falls into a deep river. A gentleman, unknown to the drowning man, hastens along the banks to where he is struggling and sinking. Throwing off coat and hat he boldly plunges to the rescue. His bravery is rewarded. The man is saved. A few words are exchanged of pleasurable congratulation on the one side and grateful thanks on the other, and the deliverer and delivered part company to pursue their different ways home.

A third person has witnessed the whole occurrence, and overtaking the rescued man thus addresses him: ‘Do you know who that person is who has just saved your life?’

‘He told me his name,’ the man replies,

‘but I should only like to know him a little better.’

‘Shall I call upon you, some time, and tell you more about him, then? He is a wonderful character.’

‘Do, please, by all means. Come and spend an hour this evening.’

The invitation, we will suppose, is accepted, and that it is renewed and accepted every night for a month, and each evening their one theme is the person who saved him from a watery grave. Would he not, at the end of the month, know a great deal more about his worthy deliverer than he did at the beginning? Certainly. But would there have been any progress in the actual deliverance itself? No. And yet there *has* been growth. *He has grown in the knowledge of the one who saved him.*

Now let us apply our figure. The blessed Son of God saw, in His foreknowledge, that, unless He interfered on our behalf, we should sink for ever into the depths of God’s judgment for sin. There was no eye to pity, no other

arm to save. But 'love moved Him to die,'
and in the fulness of time He came :

'Came from Godhead's fullest glory
Down to Calvary's depth of woe.'

He undertook the work of our salvation. He was baptized in death's dark waters. The floods of judgment lifted up their voice. The waves of wrath rolled all their crushing weight over Him ; so that for Him and His sheltered people there remains not another to roll. Justice is now satisfied : God is glorified in that sin-
atoning sacrifice ; and by that *finished* work, every guilty one, who trusts Him, stands as clear of condemnation as He does who bore it for him. He is "delivered from the wrath to come." He is made a son of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26), and *because* he is a son, God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into his heart, crying, Abba, Father. (Gal. iv. 6.) Notice, we do not receive the Spirit to *make* us sons, but "because ye *are* sons." Our bodies then become the temples of the Holy

Ghost. (See 1 Cor. vi. 19.) He takes up His residence in us, and seals us to "the day of redemption," i.e., the "redemption of our body." (Compare Eph. iv. 30 with Rom. viii. 23.)

He is not a mere visitor, making an occasional call, like the man in the illustration; He takes up His abode. He shall "abide with you for ever" was the faithful promise. (John xiv. 16.) And what is His one great theme as the constant Indweller? It is *Christ*. "He shall testify of *Me*." (John xv. 26.) "He shall glorify *Me* : for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 14.)

In the year 1888 a very aged Christian died in Lincolnshire. He was converted in 1813, and served as a local preacher for fifty years. He had walked in his Master's service, at the lowest estimate, about 15,000 miles. Yet he had no better title to salvation, after those many years of service, than the day he took the first step in it. No doubt in 75 years he had been safely brought through many a trial, saved

from many a snare, helped in many a difficulty ; and no doubt had learned a great deal, both of himself and his Master, that he didn't know at the beginning, but the *blood alone* was his title for heaven at the start ; the blood alone his title at the close. His growth in grace during those long years would depend upon the measure in which he walked in the fellowship of the Spirit ; but unless you could add to the value of the precious blood, His title to glory *could not* grow. Impossible. If the saved man in our illustration had kept his visitor, almost, if not fully occupied in correcting his own misconduct, there would have been very little growth in the knowledge of his deliverer. And, alas ! is it not so with many of us ? Our behaviour is such that the Holy Ghost is *grieved*, for He has to be more occupied with correcting our crookedness than in His delightful office of unfolding Christ's glories. Thus, we do not grow, and no wonder. But while the saved one ought to grow, *growth in grace is not salvation* from the judgment due to our sins.

It is noteworthy that the apostle Peter not only exhorts us to "grow," but tells us *how* to grow. "As newborn babes, *desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*" (1 Peter ii. 2.) And does someone ask, 'How is it that we grow by feeding on the word?' It is because the scriptures speak of Christ, "They are they which testify of Me." (John v. 39.)

Thus—

The Spirit testifies of Christ.

The Scriptures testify of Christ.

Both bring Christ before us, or rather the Spirit uses the word to do it, and thus causes us to grow in personal acquaintance with Christ Himself. But let us repeat. There is no progress in our security. In the water the man needed deliverance, and would have perished if he hadn't got it; out of the water and on dry land he was safe.

In our sins we are *unsaved*.

Out of our sins, through the precious blood of Christ, we are *saved*. Thenceforward the Holy

Ghost takes up His abode in us. And what greater witness could we have that we are fit for the presence of God than that the Holy Ghost can dwell in our bodies now. But, bear in mind, He does so, not because of what *we* are in ourselves, but *because of what the blood is*. The oil (figure of the Spirit) was placed *upon the blood* of the trespass-offering when the leper was cleansed (Lev. xiv. 17), not upon his bare flesh.

4. **I fear I am too great a sinner to be saved, too wicked to merit God's favour, not fit to have to do with Him in any way.**

Listen ! It is to be feared that there are thousands in hell who thought themselves too good to be "*lost*," until they tasted the bitter reality of that awful word beyond the sunset of their day of grace. But it is certain that out of the countless myriads of the redeemed in glory not one could be found to say, 'I am here enjoying heaven because on earth I was good

enough to be saved.' The apostle Peter is there, and he owned himself "a sinful man," unfit for his Master's presence. Paul confessed to being the "chief of sinners," and so for all the rest. "By grace," and by grace alone, they have been saved every one.

The fact is, the thought of *meriting* salvation is as natural to man's heart as the ugly weeds are to his garden; and Satan knows well how to take advantage of this, and to hide from his eye the lovely character of the "manifold grace of God," whereby alone he can be saved. Satan hates the story of God's grace; for it cannot be told without recording the redemption glories of Christ. It is "grace" that reigns through righteousness—a righteousness declared at the cross, where the judgment due to the sinner fell upon the voluntary Substitute. It is only because of that precious shed blood that free, unmerited pardon could be preached to guilty sinners.

Thus *the merit is all on His side, the guilt on ours*. We, bad enough to deserve the judgment;

He, good enough to come and take our death, good enough to drink the cup of judgment for us. And He drank it to its deepest dregs and said, "It is finished." God has only two ways of dealing with guilty men. He will either give them (standing on their own merits) all they deserve, and that to the very last mite; or, coming to Christ as guilty and lost, He will give them, in full, what Christ deserves. Happy, therefore, are they who can sing,

'I stand upon His merits, I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.'

If the reader only got a glimpse of what *grace* is, he would never again talk of being too bad to be saved.

Suppose a man were to put over his door (let us call it No. 2) these words:

'A FREE BREAKFAST PROVIDED EVERY MORNING
IN THIS HOUSE. TICKETS GIVEN AWAY NEXT DOOR
(No. 1) TO NEGROES ONLY. NONE ADMITTED
AFTER NINE O'CLOCK.'

What Ethiopian, old or young, bond or free, would be so foolish as to stand shivering outside that door until the hour of admittance was passed, fearing that he was 'too black' to be entitled to a ticket for the breakfast? Ah, no; the blacker the skin the more undeniable his title to the free ticket.

But suppose, further, that a certain negro, having refused to go to No. 1 for the ticket, goes up to door No. 2 and applies for the breakfast without it. Need he be surprised if he finds the door closed upon him? What avails it that he stands to argue, 'You have just admitted a blacker man than myself.' 'True,' would be the rejoinder, 'but it is not because of his blackness, and certainly not for his whiteness, that he was admitted. His black skin gave him the best possible recommendation for a free ticket—had he been whiter his title to be called a negro might have been questioned—but it is the *ticket* that gives him a title for the breakfast, and this you have presumed to refuse. Depart.'

Now there are many who seem to think that because all are sinners, and because they hear that God is going to take some of them to heaven, it must therefore be the *best* of them ; and from this they reason, 'If such and such get there, I shall *surely* stand a good chance of being admitted.' But mark this well, dear reader, *Your being a sinner gives you no title to glory*, even if you could claim to be the best of Adam's ruined race. Your being a sinner gives you the best possible recommendation to the Saviour, but it is the Saviour that gives you a title for glory.

"*This Man receiveth sinners*" (Luke xv. 2) is the inscription over the Saviour's doorway, and none can be *too bad*. Read again, "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me." "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." (John xiv. 6 ; vi. 37.) And again, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) "By Me if *any man* enter in, he shall be saved." (John x. 9.)

“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth.*” (Isa. xlv. 22.)

“*Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Rom. x. 13.)

Beware, then, lest, like the negro, you practically ignore No. 1, and presume that you can, through what you are, claim the needed blessing at No. 2. It is only because of what Christ is, and what He has done, that we can be saved. If you had as many good deeds to boast of as there are grains of sand upon the ocean shore, and your sins as few and far between as the mighty ironclads that plough her bosom, or as hidden as the deadly torpedos that lie covered in her bed, without Christ you have no title, save to the lake of fire. *One sin* would be your ruin—an idle word, a wicked thought, a single act of self-will would as surely be enough to shut you out of heaven, as one act of disobedience shut Adam out of paradise.

Waste not your precious time in ‘trying to do better’ before you come to Christ. The very fact that you need such reformation proves

the past is bad, and if you presume to stand upon your own merit, remember that it is written, "GOD REQUIRETH THAT WHICH IS PAST." (Eccles. iii. 15.)

To say that you are 'too bad' is to diminish the glory of the all-abounding grace of God, to limit the power of the all-cleansing blood of Jesus. It is as easy for the ocean to bear the 5,000-ton merchantman upon her bosom as the downy feather from a sea-gull's wing. And since it is our *hearts* He seeks for, and since those to whom much is forgiven love much, be assured He is as willing to welcome the worst as He is able to save the most sinful.

A few years since the writer called at the house of a well-to-do business man to see, if possible, his only daughter upon her dying bed. She was sinking without hope, and she knew it. The poor mother had tried in vain to soothe her daughter's fears, by telling her that there was no real cause for alarm as to the future; that though she had spent her last summer on earth amid all the gaiety of 'the

London season,' yet that she had been 'such a pure-minded girl in it all.'

After considerable reluctance on the part of the parents the writer was at last permitted to go upstairs to the sick-room.

The hired nurse being dismissed by the fond father, the visitor knelt down at the bedside and cried from his soul's depths for the eternal blessing of this dying lady. Rising from his knees, he read a few verses from Romans v., dwelling a little on verse 8, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

At this point the poor troubled one exclaimed, 'Ah! you don't know what *I've* been, or you would not talk to *me* about God's love. There can be no mercy for me!'

To this the writer replied: 'Miss —, I believe that if you saw yourself as God sees you, you would think yourself ten thousand times worse than you do. But you have, I think, made a great mistake to-day.' The aged father looked enquiringly through his tears

from the other side of the bed, as much as to say, What mistake has she made? 'Well,' continued the writer, 'I have not come these eleven miles to enquire whether you think you are sufficiently worthy for God to trust *you*, but to bring you the blessed news that God thinks His Son sufficiently worthy for you to trust *Him*. And upon this your blessing for eternity depends.'

In a moment her countenance changed, as though a ray of heavenly light had just entered. Nor can there be a doubt that it was so; for her father wrote shortly afterwards to speak of his daughter's blessing, and said that she soon would be

'Where no cloud could arise to darken her skies,
Or to hide for one moment her Lord from her eyes.'

The Lord give the rays of the glory of His grace to enter your troubled heart too, dear reader, and give you to see that God is not looking for worthiness in you as to the past, nor for any resolve that you will be worthy for the

future; but He has much to say to you about the worthiness of Jesus, His beloved Son.

He is the "Nail" fastened in "a sure place," and upon Him you may safely hang in calmest confidence. If the "Nail" come down all must fall that was hung upon it, whether vessels of burnished gold, or the coarsest earthenware. Their safety in hanging upon it depends not upon the quality of the cups, but the stability of the "Nail." (See Isa. xxii. 23, 24.)

Believe on Him, then, because *He* is worthy, and take the pledge of His own word, that the blessing is yours. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.)

5. I have tried to make my peace with God, but have never felt at rest about it. I fear I have not tried in the right way.

There is no such thing as ‘trying in the right way’ to make your peace with God. In the first place you need not if you could; in the second, you could not if you would. To make peace with God about your sins would be to meet His righteous claims about them, to bear His righteous judgment upon them. Who so bold as to undertake such a transaction? Surely not one. Nor, thank God, are they asked to do it. It was the work of Another. Christ “made peace by the blood of His cross,” and by the Holy Ghost, come down from the great Peace-Maker, the God of peace is now “preaching peace by Jesus Christ.” It is in believing what *He* has done that peace with God becomes ours. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. v. 1.)

What most men mean by ‘making their peace with God’ is appeasing Him by doing something

to commend themselves to His favour, as Jacob tried to appease the expected anger of a robbed and disappointed Esau. "I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me." (Gen. xxxii. 20.) They hope—but it is only a "peradventure" after all,—that, in consideration of their amended ways, He will pass over the sins of a past lifetime, and take them to heaven. But is sin and its atonement so light a thing as that? They are right in regarding it as a light thing, 'if,' as another has said, 'as my breath blows out the candle or a drop of water extinguishes it, a prayer, a penitent sigh, or a few dropping tears can extinguish the wrath of God.' Such people must know right well that a mere expression of sorrow, a slight repentance, would never be accepted as payment of a debt between man and man; yet they are blind enough to think that such would meet the claims of a holy God against a lifetime of sin!

Nor is it merely a question of making light

of sin; it is making light of what God is, both as "light" and "love." If sin must be met, according to *His* righteous demands, all the tears of all the weeping penitents this poor world ever knew could not meet it. It must be by *blood-shedding*, not *tear-shedding*. For "without the shedding of blood is no remission." But what, then, is the glad tidings of the gospel? It is this, "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (Peter iii. 18.) Mark, He "suffered"; for suffering was the righteous due of our sins. So that instead of our doings commending us to God's love, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) If a debt *must* be paid, an ocean of tears would not cancel it. Neither regrets for the past, however sincere, nor promises for the future, however honest, would settle this account. But if the debtor knew that a friend had stepped in and paid the debt in full, all thought of "trying to make peace" with the creditor would be at an end.

No doubt every anxious soul begins with the right thought, when he says within himself, 'If, with all my sins before me, I am ever to be put right with a holy God, *something* must be done!'

But it is then that Satan finds a fair chance of whispering, 'Yes, you'll find God hard and exacting enough, so you had better start and do it,' though no one knows better than Satan that this is not the gospel. It is not, 'Something must be done, therefore *I* must do it.' But rather this, 'The something which was necessary to be done, *has been done*. CHRIST HAS DONE IT; so that God has highly exalted Him in consequence.' It is as an enthroned Saviour that the apostle, by the Spirit of God, draws the believer's attention to Him and says, "*He is our peace.*"

'And His own wounds in heaven declare
The atoning work is done.'

Something like this has been said, As the returned soldiers of a victorious army display their bullet-riven, blood-stained standard, with their

various trophies and spoils of war, and thereby declare the cost whereby the foe has been defeated and silenced, and peace secured and established for their nation, so Jesus, the triumphant, risen One, returning from the place of conflict and death, announces the peace He had secured for His own (John xx. 19, 20); at the same time displaying His wounded hands and side to remind them of the mighty cost whereby their peace had been made, and Satan silenced for ever.

Can we, then, behold that glory-crowned Victor on "the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," and still talk of making our peace with God? Shall we not rather sing, "The Lord hath triumphed gloriously," and "hath given us the victory"?

' His be the Victor's name,
Who fought the fight alone ;
Triumphant saints no honour claim,
His conquest was their own.'

' We triumph in *Thy* triumphs, Lord.'

6. I quite see what Christ has done, if I could only accept it and feel satisfied.

Souls in this state may *think* that they see what Christ has done, but if they *really* understood the nature of His finished work they would not speak like that.

Take a supposed case by way of illustration : A city arab breaks a shop window. He is apprehended, and a righteous demand is made for repairing the same. But he has no money ; and, if the claim is pressed, therefore, there is nothing but prison or the reformatory for him. It so happens that a relative of the shop-keeper is on the spot at the time, and recognizes the boy as an occasional attendant at the ragged night school. His hand is in his pocket at once ; a few words of gentle rebuke, which almost break the boy's heart, and then comes the important question, ' What do you demand for damages ? '

' Ten shillings,' is the prompt reply.

' Here it is, then. Are you satisfied ? '

Taking the proffered money, he answers, 'Perfectly.'

'Now, then, for the receipt.'

The receipt is given, the shopkeeper is satisfied; and the boy is—— What? Left to beg for mercy? Left to wish he could accept what his friend has done? No. He knows that mercy *has* been shown, and *he is free*—free from all charge. He knows also that *he* is not the one to accept satisfaction. But he says, 'If the one whose window I have broken is satisfied, why should I not be at rest about it also?'

Now, if you could meet a boy in such a case, and ask him about the affair, he would tell you that he could never think of his own rash act without coupling the thought of his friend's kindness with it. Suppose you said, 'How do you know that the shopkeeper will not come upon *you* for the payment, after all?'

'Ah! he would never do that. He couldn't do it in justice,' would be his reply. 'Indeed he owes it to the one who paid the ten shillings

to forgive me. *It is due to my friend* that I should go free !'

'And do you mean to say, then, that you are depending on *his* righteous character?'

'Certainly ; he is too righteous to demand a double payment for the same debt.'

Now, is there any need to apply the illustration ? Did not Christ stand in the breach which sin had made between a holy God and sinful men ? Did He not offer Himself without spot to God for the satisfying of all God's righteous demands as to sin ? And was He not also the gift of His love, the Lamb of His own providing ?

The question, therefore, is not, 'Can *you* accept what He has done ?' but, 'Can God accept it as satisfying the infinite claim of His own justice against our sins ?' Do you not believe that God *has* accepted what His Son endured for our sins upon the cross ? If you do, begin at once to praise the One who suffered for you, and the God who gave Him in love to do it.

God's acceptance of the Substitute's work has

been abundantly proved. The rent veil, the open grave, the glory that came down to raise the once forsaken Sinbearer out of it, His present place of highest exaltation at the Father's right hand, the glory which shines in His face, the crowns which encircle His brow, all, all assure us that His work has been accepted. Then, added to this chorus of heavenly testimony, are the wondrous words which fell from His own blessed lips, ere He ascended to the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." (John xvii. 4.)

Then how cheering it is that it is *God's word* which appropriates this work to the sinner. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. i. 15; see also Rom. v. 6-8.)

Let us suppose the case of a prisoner lying in his condemned cell awaiting the fixed and fatal day. A messenger enters with news of importance. 'I am sent to tell you,' he says,

‘that someone outside has volunteered to die for you.’

How excited the prisoner looks all at once! How flushed! And no wonder.

‘Offered to die for ME! Who, who?’ he gasps out, ‘Who is it?’ Then follows question after question, in quick succession.

‘Ah! it sounds too good to be true. Do you think he *really* means it? and if sincere now, will he not, perhaps, change his mind after all?’

‘No fear of that,’ says the messenger. ‘It is my privilege to inform you that *he has already died for you!*’

‘But what of the Government authorities? Is the Queen satisfied?’

‘Yes; your friend was accepted as your voluntary substitute before he went to the scaffold at all; and now that the execution has taken place, Her Majesty has sent me to tell you that there is no bar between you and home and liberty. Forgiveness and freedom are, through him who died for you, graciously announced to you in the Queen’s name.’

Now, not only did Christ offer Himself without spot to God for you (see Heb. ix. 14 ; x. 9), but He “hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” (1 Peter iii. 18.) Why is it added “that He might bring us to God”? Because God wanted to have us near Himself. And now God has not only declared Himself *satisfied* with the work—doubly satisfied, His loving heart and holy claims both satisfied—but *glorified* also.

This is of the utmost importance ; for of what avail would any man’s death have been for the condemned man if the Throne had not accepted the act of substitution? [The *criminal’s* acceptance of the substitute is of course, here supposed.]

Now listen to the word of God (John xiii. 32), “*If God be glorified in Him*, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.”

This He did ; for we read :

1. “*He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.*” (Rom. vi. 3.)

2. That He was "*received up in glory.*" (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

3. That He is "*crowned with glory and honour.*" (Heb. ii. 9.)

What greater proofs, than these, could God give that He was satisfied with the work of Christ? And if *He* is satisfied, should not we be also? Satisfied, not with ourselves or our mean doings, but with Christ and the work whereby He brought eternal glory to God, in securing eternal blessing for man.

May the reader be no longer occupied with his or her feelings of satisfaction, but be able to say—

'Sweetest rest and peace now fill me,
Sweeter praise than tongue can tell;
God is satisfied with Jesus,
I am satisfied as well.'

7. Begging for forgiveness has not brought the pardon I crave for.

In considering the question of the forgiveness of sins it is important, in the first place, to see the real ground of it. If I get God's forgiveness I must surely get it in God's way. Now, it is plain in Scripture that God links our forgiveness with the redemption value of the blood of Christ. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. i. 7.)

Two great mistakes on this point seem to be common in the present day. One, that we shall secure forgiveness if we beg hard enough and long enough to induce God to give it us. The other, that we shall be made sure that it is ours through certain inward emotions. The truth is,

1. That it is *secured* for us by the blood of Christ.

2. It is *received* by faith.

3. That it is *assured* to us by the word of God.

Not that any sober-minded Christian could be other than glad to hear a cry for mercy from the heart and lips of a convicted sinner. But it is not the less important for an anxious soul to see that it is not by his tears and cries that forgiveness is *secured*, but by the blood of Christ, and by His blood alone. "Without the shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.) Nor, on the other hand, could we help rejoicing to see a forgiven sinner's heart overflowing with 'a joy too deep for words.' But we would remind him that he must have, for the *settled assurance* of forgiveness, something more solid to rest upon than the deepest feelings of joy could afford. How many thousands have found this out, to their sorrow, before now. While the joy and freshness of first love lasts they feel secure; but, in learning themselves their joy ebbs out, and they are left stranded in darkest uncertainty.

We must learn to link our forgiveness with the price which secured it. What solid rest it would give a poor debtor, if he had not only seen

the bill settled in his creditor's office, but the very £5 note, which a friend had paid for him, pinned to the page of the ledger where his account was recorded. How boldly he could say, 'I am clear of my debt, and haven't been *begged off* by instalments either ; nor, to use a common figure, "let out on bail" until a future reckoning. My account has been *cleared off* in full, once for all.'

'The trembling sinner feareth
That God can ne'er forget ;
But one full payment cleareth
His memory of all debt.
When nought beside could free us,
Or set our souls at large,
Thy holy work, Lord Jesus,
Secured a full discharge.'

This leads to another and very common difficulty.

8. If I could only feel happy, I think I should know that my sins were forgiven.

Perhaps there is no difficulty more general than this. Exercised souls hear Christians speak of the joy they experienced when they knew their sins forgiven; and sometimes, it is to be feared, in a way well calculated to mislead. An anxious one, listening to such statements, naturally gathers that it was by this flood of heavenly joy that these believers knew that they were pardoned.

Now would the forgiven debtor, just spoken of, tell us that it was *because he felt happy* that he knew his debt was cancelled? Would he not rather maintain that he had good reason for feeling happy, since *he knew his debt was cancelled*? And would he not have equal right to say, that his not feeling as happy one time as another, could not alter the value of that £5 note, pinned to his account.

But what would you think of a neighbour of this man's, who, being himself a debtor, is over-

heard saying one day, 'If I *could* but feel as happy as my neighbour, I should know that *my* debt was wiped out too'?

Could anything be more absurd? Yet how many anxious souls are making precisely the same foolish mistake.

It is beginning at the wrong end entirely. You must begin with God instead of yourself. *The Creditor's satisfaction must be secured* before the debtor's mind can properly be at rest.

Nor is it merely a question of righteous satisfaction, though nothing less could give settled peace; for behind Calvary's 'great transaction' we find the yearnings and aboundings of the love of God. The desire, wonderful to say, that our sins should be blotted out, originated, not in our hearts, but in His. Neither was the work of the cross the *means* of drawing God's heart toward us. It was the perfect expression, the overflowing outcome of it. It was "*by the grace of God*" that *He tasted "death for every man."* (Heb. ii. 9.) "The Father sent the Son." He knew that nothing but the infinite value of the

precious blood of Jesus could atone for sin. "*It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul,*" He had declared long years before; and more, "*I have given it to you upon the altar.*" (Lev. xvii. 11.) In the fulness of time, that blood was shed, and with the Spirit's declaration of what it can accomplish—it "cleanseth from all sin"—comes the announcement, "Be it known unto you . . . that . . . by Him **ALL THAT BELIEVE ARE JUSTIFIED FROM ALL THINGS.**" (Acts xiii. 38, 39.)

What a comfort to know that we are privileged to rest upon *God's* thoughts; not our own. If He tells me that He, who alone could understand the desperate character of my case, has met it in His own way, by the blood of Christ, I bow and believe Him.

If He gives me the pledge of what that blood can accomplish, I gratefully accept it. If He is pleased to declare what He thinks of all who have faith in that blood, I simply believe it. *I believe it because God says it*, and not because I feel it. Or, to put it more briefly, I believe—

1st. What God's thoughts are about my need.

2nd. What His thoughts are about the blood of Him whom He has given to meet that need.

3rd. What His thoughts are about all who believe His testimony as to it.

You cannot believe the first and second without being "justified from all things." You cannot believe the third without being sure of it. God says, "ALL that believe ARE justified from ALL things." And mark, it is the present tense, not future. It is "ARE," not *shall be*. All the evil things which God knew against them are no longer laid to their charge, and for the best of reasons, namely, that they have been reckoned against Him who died for them and rose again. There is nothing here about *feeling happy*. How can I be really happy till I *know* I am justified? And how can I know it but on the best possible authority? And what better authority than that *God says so?*

Upon the same authority the believer is privileged to go one step further in the assurance

of his blessing. God declares that "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Rom. viii. 30.)

So that if believing makes justification certain in time, justification makes glory certain in eternity ; and I know both on the authority of God Himself.

Two winters ago the writer saw, on the railway line side, a large sheet-iron advertisement which had evidently fallen from the wall where it had been placed. He observed that the masonry of the wall had been covered with thick plaster, and that to this plaster the advertisement had been fixed. When the frosts and rains of winter came, the plaster had broken bodily from the wall in large masses ; and when it fell the advertisement naturally fell with it.

Had the iron sheet been fastened to the wall itself, it would, in all probability, not have fallen till the wall did. Now here is a valuable hint for you, anxious reader. Fasten your assurance of pardon to the happy feelings of to-day, and when, by to-morrow, your happy feelings have departed, your assurance will have gone also.

But if you would have settled assurance you must fasten it to that which cannot be unsettled. "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." (Psalm cxix. 89.) "The word of our God shall stand for ever." (Isaiah xl. 8.)

David said, "I have stuck to Thy testimonies" (Psalm cxix. 31), and if you do the same, *i.e.*, if you stick to divine testimony, divine assurance will surely stick to you. You will not be "put to shame," either here or hereafter.

- 9. If God has given His Son must I not accept Him? MY fear is that I have not yet done so, though I know He is a worthy Saviour, and my heart goes out in longings after Him.**

Well, it is certain that no such difficulty could arise in connection with natural relationships, nor would they, as to spiritual things, if our souls were more simple and childlike.

Surely, when the effect of hearing of Isaac, from Abraham's servant, was that a wish sprang

up in Rebecca's heart for the one of whom he testified, the question of 'accepting Isaac' was disposed of!

Abraham was wishful to give Isaac to her; and when the moment arrived that *she* desired to have him, that part of the matter was settled.

Now, if through a sense of your guilty state before God, *you* wish to have Christ, surely in your heart of hearts you have accepted Him already, even though you may have been too timid to confess it, either to Him or to any one else.

The '*loving*' and the '*giving*' are on God's side; the gift is His only begotten Son; and you cannot really want Him without being welcome to Him.

Rebecca certainly could not weep because Abraham didn't want her to have Isaac, for did not his servant come that long and tedious journey because he had wanted it?

But think of her weeping in disconsolate sorrow because *she feared she hadn't accepted*

him! What would you have said to her, but that every tear she shed about it was an undeniable proof that, in her heart, she had? Alas! what self-occupation will reduce us to. The Lord grant us more child-like simplicity, and save us from the foolish reasonings of our poor hearts.

10. I know it is all in believing, and I try to believe, but cannot.

Let us examine this oft-repeated statement a little more closely. People little dream what is involved in it.

God has fully declared Himself in the Person of His blessed Son, and acted in this world in perfect consistency with Himself. In doing this He has, according to your making out, so far forfeited all claim to *your confidence* that you even '*try* to believe on Him, but cannot'!

More than this, He has sent a special message from heaven by the Holy Ghost—the gospel

message; but the tidings He sent is so unworthy of your acceptation, that though you have been good enough to *try* to believe it, you really cannot!

It is written that "Abraham believed God." (Rom. iv. 3.) How simple is that statement! We are told subsequently (v. 19), that he did not consider appearances, he did not look at himself, he had another Person before him, one so reliable that he believed He was able to perform what He promised. And thus, we are told, "he gave glory to God."

Suppose it had been written: '*Abraham tried to believe God, but couldn't,*' what a serious reflection it would have cast upon that Eternal God, who cannot lie!

Now compare your own statement with this, dear reader, and get upon your face before Him, and confess the God-dishonouring character of your unbelief.

Beside this, does not your statement manifest its own folly on the very face of it? Consider. It makes you out to be trying to trust an un-

trustworthy person ! If it were only the question of a few pounds, what business-man would *try* to trust such a person ?

‘ Oh, but I don’t think *He* is unworthy ! ’ Then your words do both you and Him an injustice ; for who would speak of *trying* to trust one in whom they really had confidence ? Has a child
• to *try* to trust its mother ?

It is to be feared that you are looking at faith as some great work that you are required to perform, in order to secure salvation for yourself. Is it not so ?

Ah ! but this is all wrong. We must learn to discern between faith and the activities of faith. A bank offers you good security, and you *prove* your faith in it by depositing your money there.

You are in a strange land, in company with friends who know the neighbourhood well. A deep dark stream has to be crossed, and only one solitary plank connects the two banks. You are told, by those best able to judge, that the plank will bear, and *because* you trust them you un-

hesitatingly place both feet upon it and walk across.

If you took your berth on board an American liner, it would *prove* your confidence in her seaworthiness. Your faith in her may be very wavering or very firm, but the moment, as a passenger, you board that vessel, you confess by action, if not by word, your confidence in her ability to carry you safely across the broad Atlantic. You heard of her, your confidence was inspired by that which you did hear, and then came the act which publicly expressed that your trust in her was a real thing. So we read: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

"Faith cometh by hearing,

Hearing by the word of God," and

The word of God testifies of an
All-worthy Saviour.

I get such a report of Him that, *without trying*, I do believe on Him. And when I go to Him

and tell Him so, and act accordingly, I am but confessing by lip and by life where my confidence is reposed.

Behold that worthy One in the place where righteousness has now placed Him, and the next time you say in your heart "I cannot believe," ask yourself the following questions :

- 1st. *Who is it that I cannot believe?*
- 2nd. *What has He said* that is so unworthy of my acceptance?
- 3rd. *What has He done,* and how has He behaved, to sacrifice my confidence so entirely?

11. I cannot believe that I am saved. I fear my faith is not strong enough.

Some souls speak as though God only bestows salvation upon those whose faith reaches a certain standard, the measure of it being this, that they are able to *believe themselves to be saved*. But this is making a Saviour of their

faith. An anxious soul once said to the writer, 'I fear I am not one of the elect.'

'Why do you say so?'

'Because I have not faith enough to believe that I am justified.'

'If you had, you would not thereby *be* justified. That is not what God asks you to believe for salvation. He does not say, If you can only *believe* that you are justified, you *are* justified; but if you believe on Him whom I gave to die for you and who rose again, you have the authority of My word for knowing that you are justified.' (Acts xiii. 38, 39.)

Great faith may bring great comfort to the one who has it, but it does not bring a greater salvation than little faith. "Go in peace" was the Lord's word, both to her who came with a timid touch, and to her who came with a bold touch. (Compare Luke viii. 48, vii. 50.) True faith, however feeble, always lays hold upon Christ. It rests upon His precious blood for safety, and allows no other trust to intrude. It flies for shelter to Him as the only door of refuge,

and will accept no other offer, however plausible it may be.

The manslayer who reached a "city of refuge" in the land of Canaan, was not secure because of the greatness or strength of his faith, but because he had reached a refuge of God's own providing. He might have entered and stood within its gates in greatest fear and trembling, or he might have been there without a shade of doubt or the faintest tinge of misgiving; but he had reached the refuge, and that was enough, in God's account, to secure his safety.

Neither did his safety consist in believing that he was safe. He might presumptuously have believed this, stayed at home, and perished. This would not do; but having availed himself of God's provision, he was as secure as that provision could make him.

It is truly solemn to think of the enemy's diligence in putting anything before the soul as an object of faith rather than Christ. But the blessed patient One speaks from on high and still

says, "*Look unto Me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." (Isa. xlv.)

Happy he who can say—

'I need no other argument,
I want no other plea ;
It is enough that Jesus died,
And rose again for me.'

12. Have I come to Jesus in a right way ?

There is only one right way, and that is with the sense in your soul that you have a need which none but He can meet. Don't get occupied with the act of coming. Look at that poor weak woman in the gospels, elbowing her way through the crowd until she was able to stoop down and touch the hem of His garment. With what is her heart occupied ? Not with the actual coming, but with the Person she is bent upon reaching. All other help had failed, and if another and more able physician had met her on the road, she had nothing wherewith to pay his fee. "She had spent all her living." But

she had “heard of Jesus,” and she believed that He was as *able* to heal the most hopeless as He was *willing* to heal the most helpless. Filled with the thought, that to reach *Him* would be healing and health, and that missing Him would leave her hopelessly incurable for the remainder of her days, she pressed forward till that timid touch brought all that her heart could wish for. What a circuitous path it must have been in that pressing crowd! No other could have come exactly by the same way. But, thank God, since then tens of thousands have come to the same Person, saying—

‘Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.’

Without Thee I perish for ever, but Thou wilt “in no wise cast out.”

‘O Lamb of God I come.’

Welcome they all have been, none were denied.

13. Have I the right kind of faith ?

This is a most perplexing difficulty with many, but in reality it is only another form of self-occupation.

We should like to ask, What would it avail if you *had* the right kind of faith, if there wasn't the right kind of Person to have faith in? And who, if you have any sense of your need, can this Person be but the One who is both able and willing to meet it?

What man, after being made sensible of some enormous debt, and his own utter inability to meet it, would talk like this after he had heard of a friend's generosity in paying it? Put yourself into such a position and see how such language would sound in your lips, 'I do believe my friend has paid all for me, but I wonder if I have believed in the right way?'

If a question arose at all, would you not rather enquire, 'Has the payment been made in the right way, and is my creditor satisfied with this way of settling my account?'

But it may be enquired, Is it not possible to believe with the head and not with the heart? Alas! it is to be feared there is too much of it.

What, then, is the difference?

To believe on Him in your heart, is simply to believe on Him with the consciousness in your heart, that He alone is the One who can meet your case, and that without Him you will perish for ever; and so to confide in Him. It is more than a mere assent to the historical fact that He died and rose again. It is to see yourself, without His precious sacrifice, hopelessly shut up to judgment, and so to believe in Him.

It is one thing for a man to say, 'I believe that, in a certain nook on the shore, a lifeboat is kept, with willing hands ever near and ready to man her'; it is another to find yourself on the shivering deck of some stranded, sinking vessel, sending up rockets as signals of distress, in order that *you* may be saved by that lifeboat, and eagerly stepping on board when she approaches.

It is one thing to believe that a certain skilled physician visits a fever-sick neighbour every day, and another thing—conscious that *you* have caught the same malady—to stand anxiously watching for his approach, in order to put your own case into his hands, and, when he comes, gladly and trustfully to submit yourself to his treatment.

A weakly mother hears, at midnight, the stealthy footsteps of burglars in the house. Her two children are in bed, the eldest, only a girl of nine. Which of them will she call, think you, to grapple with these ruffians? Neither of them. Her great fear is that they will be awakened by what is going on. She has no confidence in them to meet the difficulty, neither is she, in her weakness, equal to the task. What, then, is to be done? Well, she has long known that every night a policeman patrols the street in which she lives. Though she had not for years *doubted* that fact, yet how differently it is brought home to her now, as she opens the window and with

all the energy she possesses shouts, 'Police ! police !'

Does not her call to the police officer prove two things : 1st, that she has a real sense of her need of him ; 2nd, that she has confidence in him to meet it ? Now turn to Romans x., and you will there see that verse 10 says, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and verse 13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" and again, verse 14, "How shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard ?" The report which I hear of Him wins my confidence in Him. Then because I believe that He alone can meet my need, I call upon Him and get the assurance of His word that salvation is mine ; for He says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But do not let the reader get occupied with faith itself, as though, forsooth, God wanted us to have *faith in our faith*. What would it avail

you, we repeat, to have the right kind of faith, and plenty of it, if there was not the right kind of Person to have faith in?

For example, what would it have availed the woman just referred to, that she had very much faith in the man who lived next door, if, when she called and knocked, this man was either not at home or could not be awakened? The strongest faith in him would not have saved her from the burglars, while the call prompted by most trembling faith in the policeman brought instant deliverance. Yea, it was for this very purpose that he was on the watch.

Do you believe, therefore, that you are totally "without strength"—perfectly helpless as to meeting the question of your guilt and sin; that Christ alone, by His meritorious death, can save you; that God has righteously given to Him sin's full judgment, when in love He had given Himself to be made sin for us; and that God has declared His satisfaction in that sin-atoning sacrifice by raising Him from the dead and crowning Him with heavenly glory? Have you

called upon Him in the sense that without Him you are for ever undone, and that He is ready and willing to save you? Then take the sweet assurance, which His own faithful word affords, that salvation is yours. Do not hesitate to confess it, nor longer withhold the praise that is due to Him for it.

14. How may I know that Christ died for me?

In the South of England the writer once met a woman who was for some time in great trouble of mind, because some one had told her that her son, a soldier on foreign service, was dead; they had seen his name in the newspaper. The clergyman of the parish was kind enough to write to head-quarters to enquire if it was true. And it turned out that a soldier of *the same name* had met his death, but *it was not her son*.

Now, if God had published the names of all for whom Christ died, how long would it take you to examine all those names to see if your own was enrolled? A lifetime would be far too

short to accomplish such a task ; and should you happen to drop accidentally upon your own name, how would you be sure that it did not refer to another person of the same name?

Thank God He has not done so. He sets before us His own blessed, worthy Son. He presents Christ (as one has said) ‘in the glory of His Person, the tenderness of His love, the value of His blood, the power of His resurrection,’ and, believing on Him, He assures us we shall “not perish, but have everlasting life.” But how could I possibly have escaped perishing? What could have saved me from eternal death if Christ had not died for *me*? Nothing.

But more than this. I find in God’s own word this blessed declaration : “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” If the Son of God is so worthy that I may safely rely upon Him, here is the word of God, equally worthy of my trust—a “*faithful saying*,” and “worthy of *all* acceptance”—and what is it? It is this, that “Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners." Has the Holy Spirit, therefore, discovered to me that I am a sinner? This "faithful saying," then, gives me, before God, a divine right to say that Christ came into the world to save *me*, for *I know* that I belong to the class for whom He died, and only by His death could He save any.

15. I have been waiting for God to give me some inward token or sign of pardon and acceptance.

"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John iv. 48) is an old-fashioned bar to the blessing. It springs, in the unbelief of our hearts, from the desire to have something for sight or sense to rest upon, rather than the word of God, and the person and work of Christ. How soul-refreshing it is to see that nobleman, of old, turning from the reasonings of his own heart to lend a willing ear to, and find a satisfying sufficiency in, "*the word that Jesus had spoken.*" (John iv. 50.)

Sooner or later we have all to fall back upon that. When the well-known preacher—Dr. Chalmers—was dying, he said to some of his theological friends standing near him, ‘Give me a bit of the naked word of God to die upon.’

And who has not heard of the Christian boy who, when the cold hand of death had dimmed his natural vision, said, ‘Find me John iii. 16, mother? Now place my finger on the word “whosoever,” and let me die with my finger there. *Whosoever* means me, mother.’ The word of God was enough for him.

The writer knew a farmer, in the fens of Lincolnshire, who, in great perplexity of soul, besought God to give him some token of acceptance. He had a flock of sheep in the farmyard at the time, wandering about in various places within the farmyard enclosure, and he asked God, if there was any hope of salvation for him, that ten of these sheep might be in a certain wagon-shed when he went that way. Shortly afterwards he went to that side of the yard, and eagerly counted the sheep under that shed. To his great

relief he found exactly ten! Was this, think you, enough for his anxious soul? No; it only gave him a transitory flush of hope, which soon passed away. Was it a mere accident, or was it a genuine token from God in answer to his prayer? However, once more he made bold to repeat his request, and once more desired that ten sheep in another corner of the yard might be his token for good. With increased excitement, doubtless, he repaired thither to count the sheep; and once more, to his comfort and astonishment, found just ten! ‘And did this give you peace and assurance?’ we enquired. ‘No,’ he said; ‘nothing gave me the certainty of my blessing until I got the sure word of God for it.’ He was all in a fog of uncertainty until he planted his foot firmly on “Thus saith the Lord,” and took his bearings by the chart of Scripture.

If you open your Bible and turn to the 1st chapter of the Gospel of Luke, you will find a striking contrast between simple faith and sign-seeking unbelief. As soon as Mary heard

the heavenly message she said, "*Be it unto me according to Thy word*"; and the answer to her faith was, "Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." (vv. 38, 45.)

On the other hand, when Zacharias had heard Gabriel's message he said, "*Whereby shall I know?*" and was struck dumb in consequence. Instead of his mouth being opened in praise, as Mary's was, it was closed in dumb silence by the judgment of God.

Oh that you, dear reader, might be brought, like the centurion of old, to say to the Lord, "'Speak the word only" and that shall suffice.' For "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. xxiii. 19.) Let it not be said to you, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." What greater wonder could be shown than what has been shown at Calvary—the Son of God dying for a guilty rebel? What better token of safety than this, "*The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*"?

16. I am afraid of deceiving myself—presuming to think I am saved when I am not.

Of all forms of deception, perhaps self-deception, and especially *religious* self-deception, is most to be feared. The issues at stake are so tremendous that one cannot well be too jealous about it.

But there is one thing certain, namely, that you can only be deceived by the person or thing that you trust. Ananias and Sapphira sought to practise deception upon the apostles; but Peter was not deceived, for he did not believe them. The serpent whispered a lie into the ears of Eve; and, believing it, she was “deceived.” If, therefore, you would escape the terrible consequences of self-deception, beware of the too common snare of self-occupation. Self cannot deceive you if it is not trusted, therefore, we repeat, beware of it. What the heart of man is naturally has been declared by Him, who alone knows it, to be “*deceitful above all things.*” (Jer. xvii. 9.) Well did Solomon say, therefore,

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.”
(Prov. xxviii. 26.)

One of the West of England banks has adopted a capital motto, and has had it printed on their bank notes, ‘Weave *truth* with *trust*.’ The excellence of this motto lies in the fact that appearances cannot be trusted. When Eliab, the son of Jesse, came before Samuel, he said, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before me”; but “outward appearances” could not be trusted. “The Lord seeth not as man seeth.” (1 Sam. xvi. 6.) The captain of the *Dunbar* thought he was all right, no doubt, as he steered his vessel toward Sydney harbour. But, alas! he mistook the North Head light for the South Head light, and his gallant ship was speedily reduced to a helpless wreck. *Appearances* deceived him. The patriarch Isaac had his misgivings about the one who, with savoury dish in hand, and claiming to be Esau, sought his father’s blessing, but he thought he might at any rate trust his *feelings*. He did so, and was deceived thereby. Had the patriarch and the unfortunate captain woven ‘*truth*’ with

their '*trust*' they would not have been thus mistaken.

Does my reader ask, How is the truth to be arrived at? We let Scripture answer, "Thy word is truth." (John xvii. 17.) "Thy word is true from the beginning." (Psalm cxix. 160.)

Would you make sure against steering your vessel by a false light, and making eternal shipwreck? "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. cxix. 105.) "The entrance of Thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (v. 130.) Would you have the truth itself without any human adulteration? "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest *He* reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." (Prov. xxx. 5, 6.) "The truth is in Jesus." (Ephes. iv. 21.) He said, "I am the truth." (John xiv. 6.) "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John i. 17.) An old Christian once said, 'In coming to the word of God, you will do well to remember three things:

- '1. Add nothing to it.
- '2. Take nothing from it.
- '3. Change nothing in it.'

Three men in uniform stood talking together in the waiting-room of a country railway-station, a policeman, a soldier, and the station-master. The policeman looked up to the clock which was hanging there, and exclaimed at the same time, referring to a piece of paper pasted across the face of the clock, 'What does that mean?'

'She hasn't been keeping the time lately,' said the station-master, 'and being anxious that no one should be deceived by her, I placed that cover upon her face. But if you want the exact time,' he said, bringing his watch from his pocket, 'I can give it you. It is just three minutes to train time.'

What a sensible thing, I thought, as I stood by. He has learned by experience that the clock is not to be trusted, and he treats it accordingly. Oh, that many a self-occupied soul would learn a lesson by this railway official, and

write across the feelings and emotions of their own hearts, 'Not to be trusted.' It is not that our frames and feelings are always wrong. Indeed, we know they are not. A clock that never makes a tick is sure to be right *twice* in twenty-four hours. Nor would we say a word against happy feelings. Nay, there is something wrong in the believer's walk or ways if he does not feel happy. All we say is, If you do not want to be *self-deceived*, do not trust self in any way. Rest not your assurance upon the brightest frame of mind ever experienced, nor upon all your happy feelings put together. Be glad of them if you have them, but as soon as you get occupied with them instead of with Christ, all that is worth keeping about them will vanish, and you will be left chartless and compassless on a changing sea of doubt and misgiving.

17. But how can I believe I am saved till I feel it?

Feeling flows from faith, not faith from feeling. Take an illustration. A fond mother gets a letter from an unknown hand. It comes from a medical man in New Zealand, and the burden of it is the pleasing tidings that her only son, just recovered from a dangerous illness, is on his way home. How happy the news makes her! Indeed, so intense is her emotion that she even weeps for joy. But where did the feelings of gladness spring from?

She knew that her son was coming. *How* did she know he was coming?

She believed the doctor's letter.

Why did she believe the doctor's word?

She had heard how kind he had been to her son, and she knew he would not try to deceive her.

So you see there were four distinct things in connection with it.

1st. She got the letter.

2nd. She believed it, because of who it was that sent it.

3rd. She knew her son was better, and on his way home, because she believed the letter.

4th. She felt happy about it, because she knew he was well in health and coming home.

Do you not see that the happy feelings come last, while you would put them first? She did not say, 'I know he is coming home, because I feel so happy'; but, 'I cannot help feeling happy, since I know my boy is coming.'

And have we not got God's letter, telling us of Christ's accepted work, and what is true of those who trust in Him? Faith accepts the glad message and rejoices.

JESUS DID IT—on the cross.

GOD SAYS IT—in His word.

I BELIEVE IT—in my heart.

I believe it (not because I feel it, but) because *God says it*; and God has said it because *Jesus did it*.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the

Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x. 9.)

Faith boldly puts her Amen to what God says, BECAUSE God says it.

May my reader do the same.

18. Must there not be an inward work of grace? How can I be certain that God's work of grace and my repentance have been deep and real enough?

The Spirit of God does not occupy us with His work *within* us, but turns the eye to Christ and His finished work *for us*. It is true that unless there was a work of grace in our souls, we should never care to participate in the fruits of what the Saviour did for us on the cross. But peace rests, not upon *our satisfaction* in what we discover of the Spirit's work in our hearts, but upon *God's satisfaction* in Christ's work on the cross. If we could only get peace when we

were satisfied that the inward work of grace was deep enough, not a single honest believer would ever have it in this world. His cry would still be, 'Lord, deepen Thy work of grace in my soul'; and each succeeding day would but find the petition repeated, 'Deeper still, Lord, deeper still.'

A public drinking-fountain is placed by some kind benefactor in a certain market-place. Would you stand gazing longingly on that ever-flowing spring, wondering whether your thirst was deep enough, although you knew you wanted a drink? Why no, your *thirst* brings you there; but it is the *water* which quenches your thirst when you are there. If you so realize your soul's need, that the cry of your heart is, 'I must have Christ; I shall perish without Him!' be assured you are heartily welcome to Him. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." (Rev. xxi. 6.) "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.)

How simple, how encouraging, how graciously lovely, are these closing invitations to the thirsty one on the closing pages of Holy Writ!

"I will give"—"FREELY."

"Let him take"—"FREELY."

Repentance is the judgment of what we are, and what we have done in the light of what God is. It is the result of God's work of grace in us. A traveller, who falls into some dirty ditch in the darkness of midnight, may get *some* idea of his filthy state when the moon, from behind the clouds, sheds her rays upon him; and as the light of morning gradually dawns, he will get a still clearer and ever-increasing knowledge of his true condition. So the sinner, "by light from on high," is brought to repentance; and the longer he walks with God, the nearer he comes to the light of "perfect day," the deeper sense will he have of his own unworthiness. Never will he be able to say that his repentance is real enough, or the sense of his unworthiness deep enough. But this he

can say, 'The further I go the more I discover that I am bad enough to *need* such a Saviour, and with this, the more I wonder at the grace that could stoop to care for such a sinner !'

19. I am troubled because I cannot fix the exact day of my conversion.

That is a small thing compared with the fact that you *have* turned to God from your evil ways ; that you *have* trusted Christ, and are now seeking to serve Him. It has often been remarked that Paul did not say, when writing to his son Timothy, 'I know *when* I believed' (though doubtless he did), but "I know *whom* I have believed." As it has been said, 'I may not know exactly when I first awoke this morning, nor what awoke me, but *I know I am awake.*' God would not have us to have faith in our conversion, but in Christ. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh,

and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John iii. 8.) When the Spirit begins His gracious work in the soul, *He does not occupy me with His work, but with my need of Christ's work.* I bow before God as a repentant sinner. My one burning desire is to have Christ, yet I feel so vile that I fear He will not have me. I never dream at the time that all this is the fruit of an effectual work of grace in my soul; and I may, in my ignorance, even date my blessing from the day when I *found* Christ, and, trusting in His blood, found peace; whereas the work of grace commenced on the day when the Spirit so wrought in me as to turn my soul to *seek* Him. In the parable of the prodigal son, the work began when "he came to himself" in the far country, and said, "I will arise and go to my father"; not when the father was upon his neck kissing him. It begins when soul-thirst is *created*, not when it is *quenched*.

20. I do not love God as I ought. If I could only find in myself more of the Spirit's fruit I should feel some satisfaction in saying, 'I hope I am saved.'

Nearly half the difficulties of anxious souls are the result of confounding between *the work of the Spirit*, which will not be finished while we are in this tabernacle, and *the work of Christ* finished on the cross.

They read that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering," &c., and if they could but discover these fruits in themselves, they imagine there would be some just ground for considering themselves to be Christians.

They think, moreover, that the presence of the Holy Ghost would make them feel very good, and when they feel the very opposite they are ready to take it for granted that they have "neither part nor lot in the matter."

This is altogether a mistake.

Listen—

‘He does not make the soul to say
Thank God *I feel so good* ;
But turns the eye another way,
To Jesus and His blood.’

Moses was not occupied with his own shining face, neither was Stephen with his, though others saw the reflected glory on both. And the time when the fruits of the Spirit of God are most effectually produced in us will be when we are most engaged with what Christ is to us, and what He has done and is doing for us. It will be when our hearts are so taken up with Christ that we are neither thinking of good self nor bad self, but only of Him. It is in “beholding” His glory that we are “changed” into His image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

We have heard of a Christian lady who got so occupied with her own love to Christ that she finally came to the conclusion that she had none. A fellow believer trying in vain to comfort her, at last left the bedside, and walking to the

window recess, wrote upon a slip of paper these words :

'I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ,'

and handing the slip, together with a pencil, to the troubled believer, quietly said, 'Will you put your name to that?' With no small energy she immediately replied, 'I'd be cut to pieces first!'

How was this? What made her so suddenly change her tone? The truth was, she both believed in Him and loved Him, but she had been dwelling rather on what she was towards Him than what He was in His own personal worth.

The measure of our love to Christ is the measure of our appreciation of His love to us. (2 Cor. v. 14; 1 John iv. 19.)

21. How can I be "always confident" when my state of soul is so variable?

Our souls are never fully established until we see that our ever-changing practical state has nothing to say to our acceptance before God.

When Abel brought his offering to the Lord—"the firstling of his flock and the fat thereof"—we are told that "he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his *gifts*." It was not the personal excellence of *Abel* that God looked at in counting him righteous, but the *excellence of the sacrifice* he brought, and his faith in it. As when a business man takes a cheque to the bank, he gets in full what that cheque is worth. He would not get more if his character were ever so good, or less if it were *ever so bad*. It is not a question of what *he* is worth, either morally or commercially, but what the *cheque* is worth which he brings. It was thus with Abel, and it is thus with every sinner coming to God through Christ. God reckons to

the account of every such believer all that *He* knows the work of Christ is worth.

Is it *perfect*?

Yes.

Is it *for ever perfect*?

Yes.

Then the believer's place of acceptance corresponds thereto. Therefore we read, "*By one offering He hath perfected for ever* them that are sanctified"; *i.e.*, those who have faith in Him. (See Acts xxvi. 18.) Mark, it is not merely "perfect." There is no intermission, no break, no interval when it is not so.

A few years since the writer, in company with a few Christians, drove from the town of Penzance, in Cornwall, to the Land's End. Sitting on the box with the driver, the latter drew his attention to a church in the distance. 'That church,' said he, 'we shall presently pass, and I am told that, between this point in the road and reaching the church, we lose sight of it nine times over.' This made the writer curious to put his statement to the test.

Presently we descended a small hill and entirely lost sight of the church. Once more we rose to the crest of the next hill, and once more the building could be distinctly seen. Again we dipped into the valley, the church becoming hidden from view; again we reached the summit, and beheld again the church. Thus we travelled on, sometimes losing sight and sometimes catching a fresh view, until we came within a few yards of the ancient pile, with its peculiar crosses, &c., full in view; having, as the coachman had stated, lost sight of the old building nine times over within that three or four miles.

But why are you telling us this? the reader may enquire. Only for the purpose of asking you a suggestive question; namely,

How often do you suppose the church went up and down, in that short three or four miles drive?

‘The church up and down!’ you say. ‘Not once. The ups and downs were with *you*, not with the church.’

Exactly. And, let us add, in the variable conditions of soul which you speak of, the ups and downs are with you, not with Christ. There are no ups and downs in God's thought of Christ's personal worth, or of the value of His sacrifice; and if He accepts you on that ground, there can be no ups and downs in your acceptance either. There is no change in Him above. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"; and God "hath made us accepted in [Him] the Beloved." (Ephes. i. 6.)

If you would know what God thinks of the believer, you must turn the eye to Christ; for "as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John. iv. 17.)

A preacher of our acquaintance, who had spent long years in the hopeless endeavour of reaching a kind of perfection in the flesh, at last got set free, and thus expressed himself: 'I used to think that *I* must try to be good enough to be accepted; but now I see that it is *Christ* who is good enough to be accepted, and *God* accepts me in *Him*.' If our behaviour had

anything to do with our title to acceptance, then a flaw in our behaviour would necessarily mean a flaw in our title. But, thank God, the truth is that our behaviour flows from the knowledge of our place of acceptance before the Father, and not that our acceptance is based upon our behaviour. We are "called saints"; *i.e.*, constituted saints by the calling of God, and then asked to "walk as becometh saints." We are called to behold the manner of love bestowed upon us that we should be called His children, and then told, "as dear children," to "walk in love." (1 Cor. i. 2; Eph. v. 3; 1 John iii. 1; Eph. v. 1.) To use a figure, God first fills the purse, and then teaches us how to spend what He bestows.

22. May I not fall from grace, and perish after all? and is not that doctrine "dangerous" which teaches otherwise?

Perish! A true believer perish? Let the Person best able to answer that weighty question do so. He says, "*Never!*" "I give unto them eternal life; and they *shall never perish.*" (John x. 28.) Was it not God's object in giving His Son to be lifted up, that "whosoever believeth in Him *should not perish*, but have everlasting life"? (John iii. 16.)

Now if the Great and Good Shepherd has pledged His holy word that no sheep of His shall ever perish (and it is the *unbeliever* who is *not* His sheep. See John x. 26), why not honour His blessed word, and take the comfort for your trembling soul which such an assurance affords? Nay, we say more. We maintain that to do otherwise is to cast a slur upon His faithfulness! Let us explain, for it is to be feared that many overlook this. With the greatest sincerity they sing that line of the hymn—

"A charge to keep *I* have,"

and entirely overlook the fact that there is such a thing as another side to be considered ; namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in loving devotedness to His Father's will, has a precious and momentous "charge to keep." Did He not say, "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that *of all which He hath given Me I should lose NOTHING*" ? (John vi. 39.)

How, then, can any speak of the possibility of one of "His own" being lost, without suggesting at the same time the possibility of *His* being unfaithful to the perfect discharge of His Father's will? Ah! such Christ-dishonouring thoughts could never find a place in any heart that knew and loved that blessed One—the "Holy" and the "True." Impossible. Listen to His own words to the Father: "Those that Thou gavest Me *I have kept*, and NONE OF THEM IS LOST, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled." (John xvii. 12.) And again: "Of them which Thou gavest Me HAVE I LOST NONE." (John xviii. 9.) No. The great Captain of our salvation is "bringing many sons *unto glory*"—

nothing short of it is the Father's purpose for them—and when they surround Him there, He will, without exception, be able to say, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me." (Heb. ii. 13.) Not one, not even the *weakest*, will be *missing*; and He will get all the glory of bringing them there.

But does not Scripture say we may fall from grace? Yes, from grace as a principle of blessing in contrast to the law. The apostle writes to the Galatians thus: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, *whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*" (Chap. v. 4.)

Now grace means favour without merit, and when it is God's grace it is unlimited favour on His side, with no trace of merit on ours. Perhaps there is nothing that God, in His word, has expressed Himself more jealous about than an infringement upon His grace—a setting it aside—a frittering away of its beautiful character by the introduction of some meritorious reason in us why He should bless us.

Take the case of Gehazi, in Elisha's days.

What grace it was, that the commander-in-chief of the forces of Israel's powerful enemy should have to come to Israel's prophet for healing and cleansing, and that when his pride was humbled to bow to God's means of blessing, he should get all he sought for. Then, how that grace becomes doubly magnified when we consider that the very link between him and this blessing was that little Hebrew captive maiden who served in his household. Israel had been robbed of one of her daughters, that was evident, yet the very witness of the suffered evil becomes the link with the needed good. But there was even more than this. Not a coin nor a garment would the prophet of Israel's God receive in payment for this blessing. What the whole of the leper's possessions—goods and glory—could not have purchased elsewhere, he is to have free of charge in the land of Israel. What "grace upon grace" it was! 'Yes,' thought Elisha (God's prophet of grace), 'this Naaman shall return to Syria and say, "ALL THIS FOR NOTHING! and all from the very nation I helped

to oppress and plunder ! All that I took as a *means* to the blessing was unnecessary. My royal letter of commendation to the king was of no avail. My ten talents of silver, my 6000 pieces of gold, my ten changes of raiment, have all had to be brought back. Indeed the only thing I did not bring back was my filthy leprosy. This I left in the depths of Jordan's flood. And all this for nothing. How wonderful !

But now mark what follows. Alas for poor wretched Gehazi ! for he sets about, forthwith, to spoil all this. With ruthless stroke he robs this sweet fruit of heavenly grace of its lovely bloom ; and one mean, selfish sentence does it. " Give, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." He belies his master ; he mutilates the testimony of grace ; and God marks His displeasure by inflicting, next to death itself, one of the most severe punishments on record. " The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed for ever."

The Galatians, in the New Testament, were rebuked more severely than, perhaps, any of the

other offending saints to whom epistles were addressed. They had begun with grace, and were going back to merit. "Are ye so foolish?" writes the apostle, "having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Chap. iii. 3.) It must be grace all through. You cannot mix "law" and "grace." Sinai will never become a suburb of the Jerusalem which is above. "The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."

You cannot begin by standing on the merits of Another and end by standing on your own. You cannot get the blessing through *grace* and retain it through *merit*. Take a simple figure:

A rich merchant chooses to take a homeless, ragged urchin from the public streets into his own house. He dresses him according to his new station, and takes every pains possible to make him feel happy, and at home in his new circumstances, and right well does he succeed.

One day the rich merchant is astonished to find this boy in the bottom cellar, with coat off and apron on, busily blacking shoes!

‘What are you doing here, my son?’

‘Someone told me, sir, that if I rightly appreciated my new position I must begin to do something in order to be kept here, and that if I failed in this I should one day be turned out of house and home, and again become a miserable street wanderer. I didn’t want this to happen, so I thought I would start and do something as an inducement for you to keep me here’!

Now that boy had fallen from grace, *i.e.*, as far as the figure goes. Grace had placed him, as a son, without a single claim or merit, in the drawing-room, and he had now got into the lowest cellar and taken the servant’s place *in order to retain* his valued blessings.

This was what the Galatians were doing. Grace had called them to the highest blessings. *Sonship*, with the enjoyment of that relationship by “the Spirit of His Son” sent forth into their hearts had been given them, and with it *heirship* also. And instead of standing fast in the liberty *wherewith Christ had made them free*, they were seeking perfection in the flesh by being

“justified by the law.” (See iii. 3 ; v. 1-4.) In other words, they had “fallen from grace.”

Three motives may be assigned for the performance of good works.

The first is in order to *get* the blessing.

The second, to *retain* it when I have got it.

The third (and this is the gospel motive) is to serve, in loving gratitude, the One who died to secure the blessing for me, and who lives to keep me for the blessing.

The writer once noticed a striking inscription carved on the end of a beautiful row of cottages in Leicestershire. It was to this effect :

FOR THE POOR RELATIVES OF THOS. C——.
GOOD BEHAVIOUR ALONE TO ENTITLE POSSESSION.
WHEN IN POSSESSION,
DISORDERLY BEHAVIOUR TO CAUSE INSTANT
REMOVAL.

Here was an illustration of the first two motives above named, and, alas ! either with one or both, thousands are found to-day.

But what is the motive in such service ? It

is SELF. If I am working to get salvation, for whom am I working? For myself.

If I am working to keep it when I have got it, for whom am I working? For myself, to be sure.

Then what kind of service *ought* I to render? "He died for all, that they which live *should not henceforth live unto themselves*, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 15.) And what is the *motive* for this kind of service? It is love, as the previous verse will show; for "*the love of Christ constraineth us.*"

One of Her Majesty's bluejackets was once asked why he wore so much white cord round his neck. He immediately put his hand into his breast and pulled out a pocket knife, which was fastened by this cord. 'This cord,' said he, 'we call a lanyard.' And then, stretching out his arm at full length, he said: 'You see the cord is long enough for the knife to be used by us when the arm is at full stretch. We bluejackets sometimes say that we have one hand for Her Majesty and one for ourselves. With one

we have often, in rough weather, in the rigging to hold on for dear life ; with the other we serve our Sovereign.'

Now, such may be quite suitable for Her Majesty's service, but it won't do for the service of *our* Master. Yet how many thousands of professing Christians are doing it. That is, they are 'holding on' for salvation, so to speak, with one hand, and serving the Lord with the other. Then, it may be asked, What should it be? Is it not right to hold fast? Yes. But hold fast to what, and wherefore? Hold fast lest we should be lost? No. But, "*We receiving a kingdom which CANNOT be moved let us have GRACE, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*" (Heb. xii. 28.)

Be assured of this, that no service is "acceptable" that does not spring from a grateful sense of the grace on which I stand. Directly self becomes my motive, it is worthless. I have not to hold on for salvation with one hand, and serve Him with the other ; but

to enjoy the blessed truth that He holds me with both His hands, and loves me with all His heart, so that I can be free to serve Him with both my hands and all my heart. Nor is it a 'dangerous doctrine,' as they suppose who know not the constraint of love.

Ask some father to which of the two he would prefer entrusting his helpless child, during a month's absence from home, to the mother or to the hired nurse; and he will tell you that the question needs no answering.

But how is this? The mother has no fear of a notice to quit because of the known relationship—she is his wife: he fears not for his babe's welfare because she is the mother. The *hired nurse* might fear this, but the mother serves from the instincts, and with the tenderness and untiring patience, of a mother's love. And this makes all the difference. Alas, that any should seek to reduce Christian service to the restraint and bondage of a hireling!

We say it boldly, You will grieve the Lord's heart if you do, and rob yourself of one of the

greatest privileges your earthly pilgrimage can afford; viz., that of serving Him in the gratitude of a heart touched by the sense of His own precious grace to you.

‘I would not work my soul to save,
That work my Lord has done;
But I would work like any slave,
From love to God’s dear Son.’

23. I am a backslider, and fear I may have committed the unpardonable sin.

What is the unpardonable sin? The blessed Lord Himself distinctly answers that question in Mark iii. 29, 30: “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; *because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.*”

In Matt. xii. 28 the Lord says: “I cast out devils *by the Spirit of God.*” They said: “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but *by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.*” (v. 24.) So that in reality

they were calling the Spirit of God the prince of devils! And this was the blasphemy for which there was no forgiveness, ascribing the miracles of Jesus to the agency of the devil.

Now, it is evident that if a man still wants Christ to be his Saviour, whatever his backslidings may have been, he has not committed *this* sin. How could he want one, whom he believed to be energized by the very power of Satan, to be his Saviour? Why, if you knew of such a person you would not trust him with the charge of one of your horses for a single day, much less trust him with the salvation of your soul for eternity!

But some troubled one may say, 'I have sinned very deeply, and my course of backsliding has been long and aggravated.' We reply, you could not possibly feel this too keenly. Nothing could be more sorrowfully humiliating than such returns for love like His. But even this has not changed His heart. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John xiii. 1.)

‘Tis this that humbles me with shame,
To find that Thou art still the same.’

We naturally enquire, after doing something, or saying something, distasteful to a cherished friend, ‘Whatever will he think of me?’

.And it is usually the case with a poor backslider. ‘What must the Lord think of me now,’ he says, ‘when I even condemn and hate myself for my God-dishonouring ways’?

Well, He thinks about you as He *always* thought. “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” (Jer. xxix. 11.) He knew from the beginning how bad your history would be, yet He gave His precious life-blood to redeem you.

It was in view of all I was, and all that I should turn out to be, that He “loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

24. Then what about my sins since I was converted?

Remember, dear reader, that apart from the eternal judgment of the lost, God has only one way of dealing with sin according to His own righteousness, and that is by the sacrifice and death of Jesus. Take a sinning saint—say David, in the Old Testament—and one, like yourself, in the present dispensation. The cross of Christ met every sin for both, or else eternal damnation must be your portion. But in the two cases there is one marked difference. We may put it this way: When Christ hung upon the cross as a sin-bearer, He bore none of David's sins but his *past* sins; while He bore none of yours but your *future* sins. What is meant by this is, that when that Blessed One was actually bearing "our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24) David's sins were then *all past*, and yours were *all future*. As the little hymn puts it—

'God, who knew them laid them on Him,
And believing thou art free.'

Or, better still, as the Scripture expresses it. (See Isaiah liii. 6, margin.) "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the *Lord hath made the iniquities of us all to meet on Him.*" David's sins, and yours, and mine, nay, the sins of every saved soul in the world's history, all, all found a meeting-place there. What an attraction will that cross be for eternity to every redeemed one, in whatever dispensation his earthly lot may have been cast! It was *love unsearchable* that brought Him there; and until sin's full judgment was endured and exhausted, until that greatest of transactions was completed, and that mightiest of victories won, it was *love unquenchable* that kept Him there. Blessed Saviour!

What makes our sins after conversion, therefore, so iniquitous, is the dishonour we bring to such a Name, the grief we cause to such a heart as His.

But He, who thought of and met our case as ruined sinners, has not forgotten to provide

for us as ungrateful saints. He who took our place upon the cross and *died* for us, has espoused our cause upon the throne and *lives* for us. "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." (Romans v. 10.) That is, we get the divine guarantee, in the words "much more," of our preservation to the end. Sin ought not to come in, and there is no shadow of excuse for us when it does. "My little children, these things write I unto you, *that ye sin not.*" (1 John ii. 1.) But there is the gracious provision, notwithstanding, for the very same verse says, 'And *if* any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' It does not say, 'If any man *repent* of his sin we have an Advocate.' No; repentance and self-judgment, leading to confession, are the *results* of the Advocate's service for us. He does not plead because we are made sorry; we are made sorry because He pleads. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," was

His gracious word to Peter. He knew that his *conduct* would fail, but He did not wait until Peter “wept bitterly” before He prayed for him. “I *have* prayed for thee, that thy *faith* fail not.” He had once before proved to that then self-confident Peter that He was as well able to support a disciple beginning to sink, as He was able to attract a disciple beginning to walk; that if Peter took his eye off the Lord, the Lord did not take His eye off him; and that even his failing to walk by faith should only be the occasion for displaying fresh activities of his Master’s love—His outstretched hand should now be at the service of His faithless servant. “He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous.” (Job xxxvi. 7.) It is therefore by His prevailing intercession with the Father *there*, that I am, by the Spirit of God, brought to heart-broken confession *here*. And “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John i. 9.)

You may, therefore, approach the Father with

all confidence, and unbosom your whole heart before Him; and if you do, be assured that, in faithfulness and justice to Him who bore our sins, and who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us, He will freely pardon. And when He does, surely such grace will make you increasingly jealous lest another false step should again grieve such faithful, unchanging love.

25. If I am not one of the Elect I cannot be saved, nor can I believe unless God gives me the power.

This is the outcome of one of the most subtle devices of Satan, either to keep awakened souls in misery, or to leave hardened sinners hugging their chains, and casting upon God Himself the blame of their remaining in sin and unbelief. The enemy falsifies the truth by misapplying it.

Now God speaks to a sinner *as a sinner*, and to a saint *as a saint*. Man may level up and down, till he brings them together, but God does not.

God has righteous claims upon every sinner, and those claims He will never forego. Man is responsible to God, nor can he by any clever device shake himself loose from that responsibility.

Are you a sinner? Then God will have to say to you on that ground, either in time or in eternity. Think of the messenger of some king or queen visiting a murderer in his cell with an offer of pardon and liberty, and that, instead of gratefully accepting the grace held out to him, he coolly stands parleying with his sovereign's herald, as to the limits of the royal prerogative in granting pardons or signing death warrants! Amongst men the very idea would be counted as monstrously audacious; and, criminal, indeed, would he prove himself, who dared to venture upon such a course! What business is it of his what his sovereign may elect to do, or not to do? Sufficient for him that he is a criminal, justly condemned to die, and that in honour of a marvellous victory which the Heir to the throne has won, a free pardon has

been sent to every prisoner in the gaol, himself included.

When at last the day of execution comes round, where will he find the person to pity him? He dies with four distinct charges against him :

1. He has broken his sovereign's law by a capital offence.

2. He has proudly refused repentance and the proffered pardon.

3. In doing so he has refused to unite in honouring the Heir, through whom the pardon was held out.

4. He has had the audacity to interfere with the rights of the throne, when his own right to live had been criminally forfeited.

Now, dear reader, here is a sad but by no means overdrawn picture of many in the present day. Instead of honouring Christ by accepting the offered pardon (for Christ *is* honoured in every soul that is saved), they will stand and coldly discuss the doctrine of God's electing

grace ; they are, in reality, taking shelter behind what they profess to know of God's sovereignty in order to continue a course of hardened iniquity. (Matt. xxv. 24.)

Now, my reader, beware ! If you are a sinner, God's sovereign right to elect you for eternal blessing, or to damn you for your sins, is no business of yours. But that the Spirit has written, "*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" ; that "*every mouth*" must be stopped, and "*all the world*" pronounced "guilty before God" ; that God has commanded "*all men everywhere* to repent" ; and that His servants are now commissioned to go "*into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,*" and that "he that believeth not shall be damned"—this *does* concern you. (See also 1 Tim. ii. 4, 2 Peter iii. 9.)

Can you say that "all the world" does not take *you* in ? that the expressions "every mouth" of "every creature," "everywhere," do not include you ? You cannot. But then there is another sentence which fell from the Lord's

own gracious lips, and which concerns Him as well as you. "Him that cometh to Me *I will in no wise cast out.*" (John vi. 37.)

Now with such scriptures before you, let us earnestly entreat you to leave the doctrine of election with God, and think of His gospel of *salvation*. No one ever knew he was one of the elect until he was saved. Every *saved* one is an *elected* one. As long as you are unsaved, God will speak to you *as such*, *i.e.*, as unsaved, and never in any other way until, as a sinner under responsibility, you have humbled yourself before Him, bowed at the feet of Jesus as your worthy Saviour, and submitted to Him as your rightful Lord.

When the Spirit of God, in the Epistles, addresses the saints (or saved ones), He has much to say to them about election. But be sure of this, *He will never speak to you as a saint until you are one.* It has been well said, therefore, that election is like a family secret. You are not supposed to know it until you are part of the family.

As to the objection, 'I cannot believe unless God gives me power,' it must be well borne in mind, that while it is the Spirit of God who so sets Christ before us that the confidence of our hearts is drawn out towards Him, and we feel that such a blessed Person we *may* safely trust; yet that the Spirit does not believe *for* us; *we* believe on Christ for ourselves. "With the heart *man believeth* unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

A WORD OF COUNSEL.

There is one thing more to say to every anxious reader of this little book; and if it is put last as to position, do not think that the writer regards it as least in importance, for it is far otherwise. It is this. Do not expect to have the comfort of rest and peace in your soul, while some old idol remains unmolested in the secret of your heart—some old habit still indulged in, some worldly association still cultivated or allowed.

To be brought to God is to be brought to a "*holy Father*." Jesus our Saviour is the "*Holy One* and the True," and the Spirit of God is the "*Holy Spirit*"; and if you would be *happy* you must be *holy*. Happiness without holiness is not of heavenly origin, but earthly, sensual, and devilish.

The apostle could say, "Herein I do exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." (Acts xxiv. 16.)

May this jealous care be ours, dear reader.

Should the Lord, in His rich grace, be pleased to use this little book for your soul's blessing, kindly hand it on, and pray that others may share like favour.

GEO. CUTTING.



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