



* NIGHT SCENES *
OF THE BIBLE

BY REV. F. E. MARSH



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OF THE
BIBLE

By
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Sunderland, England

PUBLISHED BY
ALLIANCE PRESS COMPANY
NEW YORK CITY

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FIRST NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF CREATION.

Gen. i. 2; II. Cor. iv. 6.

THE Word of God is not only a telescope through which we may look and see the stars of God's purpose, but it is also a fruitful orchard in which we may pluck the fruit of truth to our satisfaction. In other words, the Word of God in its history, in its repeated utterance, in its recorded facts, in its personal references, in its wondrous structure, in its detailed adaptation, and in its dry genealogies, is meant to illustrate the things which relate to salvation and godliness, as the Holy Spirit says: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4).

As the light of the setting sun will light up the windows of the houses on the sea-front with a glowing brilliancy, and thus the glory of the sun will be reflected, so the Holy Spirit continually makes Old Testament incidents to glow with the light of New Testament truth, by taking the former to illustrate the latter.

And some of the most striking illustrations of this are found when there is no direct statement to this effect. Two statements may be taken to demonstrate this. The first is where we are told that God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, and the second is when we are reminded that we have the treasure of the Gospel in earthen vessels. The first is a reference to Abraham's offering up Isaac, and the second refers to the lights in the earthen pitchers of Gideon, and his three hundred men. My purpose in calling attention to these indirect references, is to call attention to one direct reference in the New Testament to Old Testament fact, viz., that as God commanded the light to shine upon the chaotic darkness in which the earth was found, so He causes the light of the Gospel to shine in the hearts of those who believe in Christ. For as there was darkness over the earth before the Spirit of God began to move upon it, and God said, "Let there be light," so there is moral and spiritual darkness in the heart and life till the Lord enlightens the mind and quickens the soul from the life of sin, and gives us to see the light of the knowledge of Himself in the face of Jesus Christ.

There are two questions which we shall seek to answer. (1) Did God create the earth in

chaotic darkness? (2) How did God remove the chaos and darkness?

I. DID GOD CREATE THE EARTH A CHAOS? I do not think the Lord created the earth a chaos, from which has evolved the present order of things, and that for three reasons. (1) *The use and meaning of the words which describe God's action in Creation.* There are four different verbs to express the creative work of God found in Genesis i. and ii. The first is used of the creation of the universe (ver. 1); of the great sea-monsters (ver. 21); and of man (ver. 27). Everywhere else in these chapters we read of God *making*, as from an already created substance (vers. 7, 16, 25, 26, 31; ii. 2, 3, 4); or of His *forming* the beasts of the field out of the ground (ii. 7, 8, 19); or lastly, of His *building up* (ii. 22, marg.) into a woman the rib which He had taken from man.

Bara, the first word, means to call into existence without the aid of pre-existing material, and leads our thoughts to God as the great Cause of all things.

Asah, the second word, means to fashion out of something which already exists. It is the verb which is used to describe the action of Adam and Eve, when they made themselves aprons out of the fig leaves (Genesis

iii. 7); and also of God's action when He made coats of skins for our first parents (iii. 21).

Yatsar, the third word, signifies the act of moulding and fashioning, as when a moulder fashions a piece of clay. It is used of a man forming an idol (Isaiah xlv. 10), and of God's skill in making the eye (Psalm xciv. 9), and denotes artistic skill.

Banah, the fourth word, is suggestive of building according to a plan, and is used in speaking of Ahab's action in making a house of ivory (I. Kings xxii. 39), and of the ship-builders of Tyre, who made their ships of fir-trees (Ezekiel xxvii. 5).

The above four words at once lead us to the conclusion that the first one only has reference to God's creative act, when He brought the earth into existence; and are we not warranted in saying that He did not create a chaotic mass, but a beautiful kosmos? and that the chaos was brought about by some act of rebellion (what that act was we have no record) which brought the judgment of God upon it; and hence, the other three words are employed to describe His act in re-constructing the earth, in making it an abode suitable for man's occupancy.

(2) *The description given of the earth.* The

earth is said to be "without form and void." The Hebrew word "*tohu*," rendered "*without form*," denotes a ruin or vacancy; and the Hebrew word "*bohu*," translated "*void*," signifies that which is empty. The first is used of a "*wilderness*" in Job xii. 24, of an "*empty*" place in Job xxvi. 7, of a "*waste*" in Deut. xxxii. 10, and is rendered "*confusion*" three times in Isaiah (Isaiah xxiv. 10, xxxiv. 11, xli. 29), in speaking of the desolation of a ruined city, and the uselessness of idols. The second word ("*bohu*") is rendered "*emptiness*" in Isaiah xxxiv. 11, in describing the effect of God's act of judgment upon Edom, in that it is seen as a place where confusion, disorder, ruin, and desolation reign. In fact, the words "*confusion*" and "*emptiness*" might be rendered "*without form, and void*." Surely God did not create the earth *tohu* (shapeless) and *bohu* (waste)? The *Student's Commentary* implies this when it makes the remark, "The meaning of the verse before us evidently is, 'In the beginning God created the universe; but at the time now spoken of, the earth was shapeless and waste.'"

(3) *The Word of God distinctly says the earth was not created a shapeless and waste mass.* We read, the "earth was without form," etc. The verb translated "*was*" is oc-

asionally used with a simple accusative in the sense of "to be made," or "to become." An instance of this may be found in the history of Lot's wife, of whom we read "she became a pillar of salt." This seems to point to the fact that the earth, which had formerly been a scene of material beauty and order, was by some great convulsion plunged into a state of chaos, or widespread disorder and desolation. Besides, in Isaiah xlv. 18, in speaking of Israel's sin, which led Palestine to become a waste, the Lord says, "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens: God Himself that formed the earth, and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord, and there is none else." The word "*vain*" is the same as in Gen. i. 2, hence when we have the emphatic statement that the Lord did not create the earth "*tohu*" (a waste) we cannot come to any other conclusion than this, the earth as created by God was perfect in its beauty, and complete in its order, but some act of sin (sin was in the world before our race), brought down God's judgment upon the earth, and before man could inhabit it God had to reconstruct it, and that reconstruction we have given to us in what is commonly called the "six days of creation."

The cases are exactly parallel when we come to the moral and spiritual state of man. Like the earth, he was created perfect, but by his sin he has brought himself into a state of ruin and disorder. "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccles. vii. 29). The darkness of sin and ignorance is over the deep of man's nature. The night of iniquity pervades his being, and the darkness of death has settled upon his mind, as we read in Eph. iv. 18, "the understanding is darkened." To be in a state of ignorance means to be in a condition of moral and spiritual darkness. "Ignorance," as one has said, "is not the mother of devotion, but of indevotion. If men knew God they would certainly love and serve Him. The debasement of the heathen world, Paul declares again and again, was due to the fact that it 'knew not God' (I. Thess. iv. 5; II. Thess. i. 8; Gal. iv. 8, 9). The Corinthian Church was corrupted, and its Christian life imperilled by the presence in it of some who 'had not the knowledge of God' (I. Cor. xv. 33, 34). At Athens, the center of heathen wisdom, he spoke of the Pagan ages as 'the times of ignorance' (Acts xvii. 30)."

As the Philistines put out the eyes of Samson, so ignorance puts out the eyes of the understanding. Further, sin has done this, for

the natural man cannot of himself understand the things of God. Spiritual things are beyond the ken of man. He cannot pierce into their hidden mystery by the aid of the telescope; he cannot penetrate into their secrets by the detecting microscope; he cannot scale their heights by the efforts of his wisdom; and he cannot sound their depth by the line of his investigation, for the ways of God are past finding out. This fact is strikingly illustrated in the following incident: A lady doctor, in California, who was noted for her sceptical views and agnostical tendencies, was talking to a Christian friend upon the subject of Christianity. The Christian found she had never investigated Christianity, and certainly had never found out the plague of her own heart. The believer asked her friend to grant her one request, namely, that she would endeavor to do the will of God for twelve months. The request was granted as far as giving the promise. The lady started upon her task to love God with all her heart, and her neighbor as herself. With what result? She found out how miserably selfish she had been, and was, and how utterly unable she was of herself to come to the ideal of loving God perfectly. Following this, she began to read the Gospels, and as she studied the character of Jesus as therein revealed,

what did she find? Two things. She discovered in Christ what was absent in herself, namely, that He did love God with all His heart, and man more than Himself; and further, she saw that He delighted in God's will, and that the one absorbing desire of His life was to glorify God. The second thing she found out was, that Christ could give her the forgiveness of her sins, and the power to do as He did, the very things she needed. The result was, she believed in Him, and became one of His followers.

The one thing about this incident which I would specially emphasize is this, the lady found her sin and ignorance through discovering the beauty and worth of Christ's character. It is the same still. When the light of Christ's holiness shines into our being, we discover the dust of filth in the rooms of our nature. The love of Christ makes known to us the enmity of our carnal mind. The unselfishness of Jesus makes the selfishness of our being to stand out like a black rock, around which the white crested waves are playing. The humility of Christ discovers to us the pride of our own hearts, even as the white garment upon a black person makes the darkness of his skin the more pronounced. The devotion of Christ in doing God's will but makes man's love of self-will

the more conspicuous, even as the lightning but makes the darkness more intense; and the cross of Christ, with all its manifested love and grace, but makes the sin and gracelessness of man the more evident, for the varied rainbow of His love is the more vivid as seen in the dark back-ground of man's sin. Whittier has put the same thought in the following lines :

O Lord and Master of us all!
 Whate'er our name or sign,
 We own Thy name, we hear Thy call,
 We test our lives by Thine.
 Thou judgest us; Thy purity
 Doth all our lusts condemn;
 The love that draws us nearer Thee
 Is hot with wrãth to them.

Our thoughts lie open to Thy sight;
 And, naked to Thy glance,
 Our secret sins are in the light
 Of Thy pure countenance.
 Thy healing pains, a keen distress
 Thy tender light shines in;
 Thy sweetness is the bitterness,
 Thy grace the pang of sin.

II. HOW DID GOD REMOVE THE CHAOS AND DARKNESS? The chaos and darkness were removed by the action of the Holy Spirit, and the Word of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is said to have "moved upon the face of the wa-

ters" (Genesis i. 2). The marginal reading of the Revised Version gives it, "brooding upon." He did not leave the scene of disorder and darkness. He watched over it with gracious concern. The same Hebrew word as is rendered "*moved*," is translated "*fluttereth*" in Deut. xxxii. 11, in speaking of the mother eagle watching over, caring for, and protecting her young. In Jeremiah xxiii. 9, the word is rendered "*shake*," where the prophet is intensely moved because of the wickedness of the prophets, and the holiness of God, and exclaims, "Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones *shake*: I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, and because of the Lord, and because of the words of His holiness." The word comes from a root which means to be trembling with love. Further, the Lord gives forth His fiat, and says, "Let there be light," and at once, light was. As in creation we have revealed the love and power of God, so in the Gospel we have the same, for as the Spirit of God in His gracious love was brooding over the earth in its darkness, so He in patient grace is moving on the hearts of men that they may know His saving grace and regenerating love. And as God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, so He still

shines in the hearts of those who receive Christ as their personal Saviour.

Where can God be seen? How can God be known? Only in one Person. "The light of the knowledge of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ." Let us ponder briefly two things, among others, which are seen in that Face of faces.

(1) *Humiliation.* In the past "His visage was so marred more than any man" (Isaiah lii. 14). Oh, how that holy visage was marred! It was marred by the insulting spittle of man, for they "spit in His face" (Matt. xxvi. 67); it was marred by the hands—the wicked hands—of men, for they "struck Him on the face" (Luke xxii. 64); but the worst marring was when in grief of soul, and in anguish of spirit, He "bowed His face to the ground" in Gethsemane's garden, and prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Further, when beneath the cross of Calvary, we see that holy face cold in death, we see that that marred face is our making. His pain means our peace, His crown of thorns, our crown of joy, His emptying, our filling, His poverty, our riches, His suffering, our glory, His forsaking, our welcome, His humiliation, our exaltation. Well may we say with Vinet, "August countenance of my Saviour."

(2) *Attraction.* All the while Mary Magdalene was occupied with the empty tomb of Jesus, and with the angels in it, she did not see her Lord, but suddenly she notes an expression of admiration upon the faces of the angels, and as Chrysostom says, "She was looking into the sepulchre, and saw the faces of the angels change. And there went such a look of rapture and wonder over the faces of the angels, that she turned quickly round to see what it was that made their aspect alter." And as she turns around, and begins to speak to the man, she soon discovers in Him her Saviour and Lord. Do we wonder that in the delight of her discovery, in the joy of her heart, she desired to embrace the Saviour! He was everything to her!

Do we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus? The glory of God's compassionate grace, the glory of His conquering love, the glory of His constraining mercy, the glory of His almighty power, the glory of His sanctifying truth, the glory of His satisfying beauty, the glory of His all-comforting tenderness, the glory of His sufficient strength, and the glory of His all-glorious Person.

If we do not see this glory, why is it? A right attitude of soul is *the* essential thing in order that we see the glory of God in the face

of Jesus. It is said that there is a bust of our Lord in a Roman Catholic Chapel on the Continent, before which a stool is placed, that the beholder may kneel and look. To the one who is standing up the bust has no beauty. It is essential to kneel in order to see the glory and beauty of the countenance. So, as long as we stand in self-satisfaction, we see no beauty in Christ, but the moment there is humbling of soul before God on account of sin, then we behold a worth of excellence we did not see before in Christ. Then His blood is precious, His love is joyous, His peace is gladsome, His grace is sufficient, His joy is unspeakable, His promises are sweet, and He is altogether lovely. He attracts us now; sin becomes bitter, and holiness is sweet, and we say with Vinet, as we gaze by faith in His lovely face: "Beneath Thy veil of ignominy, beneath Thy crown of joy, expect not that I shall deny Thee, august countenance of my Saviour."

SECOND NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF PROMISE.

Genesis xv. 5, 6.

SOME words of the Bible are important because of what they contain in themselves, such as "*Love*," for it is the soul of Christianity; or "*Grace*," for it is the act of love in blessing others; or "*Life*," for it is the backbone of the Gospel; or "*Power*," for it is the bestowment of grace to meet the necessity of the believer; or "*Peace*," for it is the atmosphere that keeps the orbit of our soul calm; or "*Truth*," for it is the element of sanctifying influence, in which the believer moves; or "*Faith*," for it is the medium, on the human side, through which blessing flows.

Other words have their importance, because of the time at which they were uttered, or the circumstances to which they relate. The subject before us is a case which illustrates the latter. Abram had refused to be enriched at the hands of the King of Sodom. The man of God would not touch the gold which had been associated with sin. Because of his

faithfulness, the Lord appears to him, and says, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and exceeding great reward." The Lord seems to say, "You shall be no loser by your faithfulness; you shall find in Me more than compensation."

The promises of God ever make faith bold, and more confident; hence, we find Abram reminding God that he has no child, and that there is no indication of the fulfilment of the promise already given to him (Genesis xii. 2). Then the Lord renews the promise to Abram, and emphasizes it by bringing him forth, and directing him to look on the starry hosts of heaven, He pledges Himself to make his seed as numerous as they. Is Abram staggered at this? No. He believes what the Lord says, and, as a consequence, his faith is reckoned to him for righteousness.

I. THIS NIGHT OF PROMISE WAS A NIGHT OF
BRINGING FORTH.

"He brought him forth abroad." Juke says of the Lord bringing forth Abram, "'He brought him forth' out of his narrow tabernacle; faith is led beyond those limits which flesh and blood throw around it, into that expanse where the breath of heaven may touch it, and the countless lights of heaven shine upon it,

and in this freer air God Himself speaks again, saying to faith, 'So shall thy seed be.'"

There is ever a bringing forth from the tent of carnal reason to the plain of humble dependence on God, before any blessing comes to the soul. Whittier well expresses it, in describing the question of reason, and the simplicity of faith:

"The same old baffling questions! O my friend,
I cannot answer them. In vain I send
My soul into the dark, where never burn
The lamps of science, nor the natural light
Of Reason's sun and stars! I cannot learn
Their great and solemn meanings, nor discern
The awful secrets of the eyes which turn
Evermore on us, through the day and night
With silent challenge and a dumb demand,
Proffering the riddles of the great unknown,
Like the calm sphinxes, with their eyes of stone,
Questioning the centuries from their veils of sand!
I have no answer for myself nor thee,
Save that I learned beside my mother's knee:
'All is of God that is, and is to be;
And God is good.' Let this suffice us still,
Resting in child-like trust upon His will,
Who moves to His great ends unthwarted by the ill."

Reason ever leads into the maze of doubt, into the fogs of unbelief, into the quagmire of agnosticism, and keeps the soul cabined and confined within the limits of the small taber-

nacle of the individual, while the light of God's Word brings forth under the calm of heaven's expanse of love, points to the starry host of God's promises, and to the seed of His purpose as summed up in the work and Person of the Son of His love.

Paul had to be brought from the narrow alley of self-righteousness, to the broad plain of self-condemnation, before he entered into the realm of peace with God. Naaman had to be brought down from his pedestal of his inflated pride, to the low position of humility before God, before he obtained the removal of his leprosy. Jacob had to be brought from the struggles of the flesh, to the clinging of faith, before he received the blessing of being a prince with God. Job had to be brought from the high ground of self-estimation, to the harrowing confession, "I am vile," before he was emancipated from the loathsomeness of his former position."

II. THE NIGHT OF PROMISE WAS A NIGHT OF LOOKING UP.

"Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be." It is no passing glance which Abram is to give to the starry heavens, but an attentive gaze, for, as Dr.

Young points out, the import of the word "look is, to *look attentively*. The same word occurs in Gen. xix. and Num. xxi. 9. In the former passage it describes the effect of the look Lot's wife gave, as she longingly looked back to Sodom and became a pillar of salt; and in the latter passage, we see when the serpent-bitten Israelites looked upon the brazen serpent, they obtained life. If there is one thing more than another which needs to be trumpeted forth in this age of listlessness and indifference, it is this, that men cannot expect to receive any spiritual blessing from God as long as they are listless. There must be careful attention to God's claims, prayerful concentration on His Word, and attentive faith in Himself, in order to enter the realm of His grace.

What is the effect as we look up to the starry expanse of heaven? The same as produced in the soul of the Psalmist, when he said, "When I consider Thy heavens what is man?" What, indeed! And since God's works produce in our hearts such awe and wonder, what must He Himself inspire? especially if we think of coming into His presence. When we look up to the unsullied light of the Divine Presence, and then look down into the unexplored depths of our evil nature, we are led to

ask, How can we get thither? How can we be fit to dwell in that light? C. H. M., in his notes on the book of Genesis, has given the reply:

“Where is the answer? In man himself? Nay, blessed be God, but in that blessed One, who travelled from the bosom to the cross, and the grave, and from thence to the throne, thus filling up, in His Person and work, all the space between those extreme points. There can be nothing higher than the bosom of God—the eternal dwelling place of the Son; and there can be nothing lower than the cross and the grave; but, amazing truth! I find Christ in both. I find Him in the bosom, and I find Him in the grave. He went into death that He might leave behind Him, in the dust thereof, the full weight of His people’s sins and iniquities. Christ, in the grave, exhibits the end of everything human—the end of sin—the full limit of Satan’s power. The grave of Jesus forms the grand terminus of all. But the resurrection takes us beyond this terminus, and constitutes the imperishable basis on which God’s glory and man’s blessing repose for ever. The moment the eye of faith rests on a risen Christ, there is a triumphant answer to every question as to sin, judgment, death, and the grave.”

Since such is the case, we may well look up to God in Christ, for in the starry expanse of His all-glorious being, we see the southern cross of His all-sufficient atonement.

III. THIS NIGHT OF PROMISE IS A NIGHT OF BELIEVING IN GOD.

“He believed in the Lord.” This is the first time the word “believe” occurs in the Bible, and it is of special interest for that very reason, for the first occurrence of any given word in the Bible, gives us the clue to its meaning in all the rest of the Book. What is the meaning of faith, as illustrated in Abram? *It is simple reliance on the word of the Lord, and absolute confidence in Him as to its fulfilment.* Some time since, when in Derbyshire, I was told of a cavern at Castleton, which could only be reached by a subterranean canal of nearly half a mile, and that in this cavern there is a tremendous gulf, whose roof and bottom are quite invisible. It is said that 40,000 tons of rubbish had been shot into the abyss without making any apparent difference, and that rockets of sufficient strength to ascend 450 feet have been fired without making the roof visible. I believed what was told me, and what was the consequence? I descended the long flight of steps, at the bottom of which a boat

was moored, got into the boat, and was soon being propelled along the stream by the guide. Some of the party, the ladies particularly, thought it was rather uncanny to be thus moving into the heart of a mountain. But what made us thus act? It was the belief in the word which had been given to us, describing the cavern, and believing it existed, we did what was necessary to reach it, and the consequence was, our faith brought us to see what had been told us, and we were rewarded. In like manner, the Lord assures us in His word that He loved us, that He gave His Son to die for sinners, and that sinners believing in His word of grace, they have on the authority of His word—

Forgiveness of sins (Luke vii. 48, 50).

Justification from all things (Acts xiii. 39).

Peace with God (Romans v. 1).

Eternal life (John iii. 36).

Position of children (John i. 12).

Victory over the world (1. John v. 5).

Possession of the Holy Spirit (Gal. iii. 2).

These are a few of the blessings which faith in the Lord bring. Faith, indeed, is a beneficial grace, as Sir Humphrey Davy used to remark :

“I envy not quality of the mind or intellect in others; nor genius, power, wit, or fancy; but

if I could choose what would be most delightful, and, I believe, most useful to me, I should prefer a firm religious belief to every other blessing; for it makes life a discipline of goodness; creates new hopes when all hopes vanish, and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence the most gorgeous of lights; awakens life, even in death, and from corruption and decay calls up beauty and divinity; makes an instrument of torture and of shame the ladder of ascent to Paradise; and, far above all combinations of earthly hopes, calls up the most delightful visions, and plains, and amaranths, the gardens of the blest, the security of everlasting joys, where the sensualist and the sceptic view only gloom, decay, annihilation and despair."

IV. THIS NIGHT OF PROMISE WAS A NIGHT OF COUNTING TO ABRAM.

"He counted it to him for righteousness." The Holy Spirit, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, lays special emphasis upon the fact that the faith of Abram was reckoned, or imputed to him for righteousness. The meaning of the word "*logizomai*," rendered "impute" and "reckoned," in Rom. iv., is to reckon anything to a person, to put it to his account, either in his favor or as some-

thing he must be answerable for. The word is used in the latter sense when we are told that Christ was "*numbered*" (Mark xv., 28), or "*reckoned*" *with the transgressors* (Luke xxii., 37); and it is found in the former relation when the believer is told that his faith in Christ is reckoned to him for righteousness. The reason for this is not far to seek. Christ was reckoned among the transgressors in dying in our stead, and we are reckoned as Christ in the worthiness of our Head.

THIRD NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF SACRIFICE.

Genesis xv.

AS in the Southern hemisphere may be seen the four stars known as the Southern Cross, so in the latitude of God's Word there shines out in its holy sky one prominent feature with unsurpassed and unmistakable brilliancy, and that is the truth that all blessing from God and all approach to Him is based upon sacrifice and all sacrifices find their completion in the great sacrifice of Christ, in His atoning death on Calvary. "The Cross," as some one has said; "is the sun of the spiritual universe, from which all our blessings radiate. The Cross is the Tree of Life to the world, and on it grow those leaves which are for the healing of the nations. Round the Cross are entwined all our hopes; from it flow the mercies of the present, the joys of the future, the grace that sanctifies the sinner on earth, and the glory that will crown the saint in heaven."

The light of heaven beams from the altar of Christ's sacrifice, and makes all the sacrifices

of the Bible proclaim His glory. This is seen if we take the early chapters of Genesis alone. The coats of skin prepared for our first parents were obtained at the expense of the animals' lives (Gen. iii. 21), and speak of that covering of righteousness which has been obtained by Christ being made sin for us (II. Cor. v. 21). The sacrifice of Abel whereby and wherein he is acceptable to the Lord (Gen. iv. 4; Heb. xi. 4), proclaims that greater offering which makes the believer "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. v. 2; i. 6). The burnt offering of Noah was that which brought a "savour of rest" (margin) to the Lord, and called forth His act in removing the curse, and giving the blessing (Gen. viii. 20, 21), and foretold the coming of Him who is the great curse-remover (Gal. iii. 13); and now, when the Lord prophesies of blessing to Abram and his seed, He pledges Himself in covenant promise to fulfill and His promise is ratified on the ground of sacrifice (Gen. xv. 9-17), which is but a type of that greater covenant of which Christ spake when He said, "This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke xxii. 20).

There are several things about the sacrifice which we shall notice.

I. APPOINTED SACRIFICE.

“Take Me,” &c. (verse 9). Abram is not left to himself to bring what sacrifice he will. All is directed by the Lord. This finds its parallel in the sacrifice of Christ. God’s ordainings, appointings, sendings, and preparings must never be overlooked. God appointed a time when Christ should appear (Dan. ix. 26); He prepared a body for Him in which He should suffer (Heb. x. 5); He sent Him in a given way (Gal. iv. 4); He instructed Him as to the work He was to perform (John xvii. 4); He endued Him with a power by which He was to act (Luke iv. 18, 19); He had a given end in view in sending Him (John iii.); and He had one fact to demonstrate in giving Him—namely, He loved man (John iii. 16).

II. SPECIFIED SACRIFICE.

Abram was to bring a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a pigeon. Each of these animals and birds are afterwards used in the Levitical offerings, and the passage must be read in the light of the connection in which they are there found. These sacrifices are typical of the great sacrifice of Christ. Let us briefly note this specified sacrifice.

Heifer. The ordinance of the red heifer is

given to us in detail in Numbers xix. The animal was to be without blemish, one upon whom a yoke had never been put; it was to be slain outside the camp, and wholly consumed by fire. Then the ashes of the sacrifice were to be gathered up and kept in a clean place. The ashes were used with water in purifying any one who had been defiled by touching a dead body, and are thus associated with cleansing. There is a reference to this in Heb. ix. 13, where we read of "the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh," and then the Holy Spirit goes on to say, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." We have been defiled by the contaminating influence of sin, and it is the blood of Christ alone, which can cleanse us from it.

Goat. On the great Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi.), there were two goats taken for the sins of the people. But the goats were presented to Jehovah; then the one which was "for the Lord" was killed, and the blood was taken within the veil, and was sprinkled on and before the mercy seat to make atonement for the sins of the people. This is typical of

Christ in the completeness of His humanity, and in the worth of His Deity, offering Himself as the Sacrifice to meet the claims of a holy God against our sin in dying on account of it. Then the scape-goat was brought, the hands of the High Priest were placed upon its head as transferring the sins of Israel to it, then it was taken into the wilderness and driven away. "The goat for the scapegoat," mentioned in Lev. xvi. 10-26, should be "*The goat for complete sending away.*" This reminds us of the fact that the effect of Christ's atonement upon them who believe in Christ is a complete removal of their sins from them, as the Psalmist says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm ciii. 12).

Ram. At the setting apart of Aaron and His sons for the priesthood, a ram of consecration was taken, and its blood was put upon the ear, hand and foot, denoting that they were sanctified for their holy office. This is typical of the fact that since all believers are priests unto God, they are separated to Himself by the blood of Christ (Lev. viii. 23, 24; Heb. xiii. 12).

Turtle dove. The turtle dove was brought as an offering, when the offerer was too poor to bring an ox or a lamb (Lev. v. 7). The

dove is the symbol of innocence and mourning, as it is written, we "mourn sore like doves" (Isaiah lix. 11; xxxviii. 14); and again, "Be harmless as doves" (Matt. x. 16). The dove, therefore, is typical of Christ in the harmlessness of His character identifying Himself with us in our mournful estate, and as such, being the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Pigeon.—The word does not necessarily denote a pigeon; it would better as Dr. Young, gives it, "a young bird." The original word is found only in one other place, and is there rendered young, in speaking of the eagle fluttering over her young (Deut. xxxii. 11). The young gives us the thought of weakness and dependence. Christ was dependent upon the Holy Spirit to accomplish the great work of redemption, for it was by the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God (Heb. ix. 14), and it was in weakness He was crucified, although He now liveth in the power of God (II. Cor. xiii. 4). We were "without strength" to redeem ourselves, and He became as we were to redeem us. His weakness is our might.

III. A NUMBERED SACRIFICE.

The number is five, viz., a heifer, a goat, a

ram, a turtle dove, and a pigeon. The number five speaks of need as found in relation to man, and of grace as associated with God. As illustrating the former, Jacob and his host needed the supplies of Joseph, during the five years of famine which were yet to run while they dwelt in Goshen. As he himself says, "There will I nourish thee, for yet there are five years of famine, lest thou and thy household, and all that thou hast come to poverty" (Gen. xlv. 11). When a man stole an ox, he needed to bring five oxen for the one he had stolen, before the requirement of the law was met (Ex. xxii. 1). When the host of Syria besieged Samaria, it was brought into such sore straits that "the fourth part of a cab of doves' dung" was sold "for five pieces of silver" (II. Kings vi. 25). As in each of these Scriptures there is the thought of need, so the cross of Christ's sacrifice tells out man's great and sore need of a Saviour. Take the first of the above illustrations found in relation to the numeral five as connected with the need of man. Unless Joseph had met the need of his relatives, they would, as he himself states, have "come to poverty." And is it not true that man by his sin has brought himself to poverty? Everyone who is out of Christ is a spiritual

pauper; poor as to the grace of God, which alone can save, like the man without the wedding garment, poor as to the love of God, which alone can brighten and bless the life, like those who are in the darkness of an Arctic Winter, poor as to the knowledge of God, which alone can enlighten the mind as to the unseen and heavenly secrets, poor as to the joy of Christ, which alone can gladden the spirit, poor as to the holiness of God, which alone can move us in His ways, and poor as to the hope of Christ, which alone makes the horizon of the future bright with immortality and life. Beattie says of poverty :

Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
 The steep where fame's proud temple shines afar?
 Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime
 Has felt the influence of a malignant star,
 And waged with fortune an eternal war?
 Check'd by the scoff of pride, by envy's frown,
 And poverty's unconquerable bar,
 In life's low vale remote has pined alone,
 Then dropt into the grave, unpitied and unknown.

“Poverty's unconquerable bar!” Yes, it is indeed “unconquerable,” if we apply the word to the state of the sinner in his spiritual destitution, for he cannot of himself bring deliverance from the condition into which sin has plunged him.

The number five as associated with God is the numeral which speaks of His grace. The Lord Jesus uses the number five in one of His parables, when He speaks of the two debtors, one of whom owed five hundred pence and the other fifty, but when they had "nothing to pay," they were both frankly forgiven (Luke vii. 41-42). The act of the creditor was an act of grace, and was used by Christ as illustrating His own act of grace towards the woman, who was a sinner, in forgiving her sins (Luke vii. 48-50). The number five is found in connection with grace again, when Christ fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes. The disciples would send the multitude away. Not so Christ. In His love and grace He supplied their need and met their want. He does the same still. He sees the sinner in his need, and has compassion upon him, and waits to be gracious in supplying the want.

After the battle of Shiloh, General Johnson was found sorely wounded. His surgeon, Dr. Yandell, was attending him, but when Johnson got to know that there were a large number of wounded men, including many of the enemy, he ordered the surgeon to attend to them, remarking, "These men were our enemies a moment ago; they are

prisoners now. Take care of them." Yandell remonstrated against leaving him, but he was peremptory. In a little time Johnson was dead, his life sacrificed to his care for the wounded enemy. A greater sacrifice was made, although Johnson's sacrifice is typical of the greater, when Christ gave Himself for us, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. As we watch the Son of the Highest, in the midst of the soldiers, and mark the indignities He endured at their hands, we see something of the sacrifice He made.

There are ten things they did to Him. They stripped Him, they clothed Him in a scarlet robe, they crowned Him with thorns, they mocked Him, they spit upon Him, they smote Him, they led Him to Golgotha, they gave Him gall to drink, they crucified Him, and they robbed Him of His clothes. He was stripped that we might be clothed with the spotless garb of His righteousness. He was clothed with scarlet—the world-colour—that He might deliver us from the world's condemnation and control. He was crowned with thorns, that we might be crowned with life and immortality. He was mocked by wicked men, that we might be waited upon by the angelic host of heaven. He was spit upon *that we might have the warm kiss of*

heaven's forgiving love. He was smitten, that we might be saved. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, that He might lead us to triumph in His grace. He was given gall and vinegar to drink, that we might have the wine of heaven's joy. He was crucified for our offences, that we might be justified from what we deserve as sinners; and He was robbed, that He might give us heaven's best bliss.

IV. COVENANTED SACRIFICE.

The animals for sacrifice were divided. It was usual in making covenants, for the covenanters to pass between the parts of the creature slain, signifying that should they break the covenant made, they deserved to be cut asunder as the creature was. (Jeremiah xxxiv. 17-20, confirms this). In the case before us the Lord Himself covenants with Himself to do certain things, hence He Himself passes between the pieces of the sacrifice as symbolized in the burning lamp (Genesis xv. 17). The covenant was an act of God's grace to Abram, even as the sacrifice of Christ was. An old Scotch woman aptly put the whole subject when she said, "The Father and the Son settled the matter between Them about my soul's salvation on

the cross, and I have received the benefit of the transaction.”

V. PROTECTING SACRIFICE.

The “smoking furnace” of Gen. xv. 17, is illustrative of the affliction through which the seed of Abram was to pass for 400 years (verse 13), but by virtue of the covenant based on sacrifice, his seed was to be protected amidst their affliction, and ultimately delivered out of it. Does not this suggest the great and glorious fact, that whatever the afflictions of God’s people may be, they are protected in them, and delivered out of them, by virtue of Christ’s atoning sacrifice for them.

VI. WATCHED SACRIFICE.

“When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away” (Gen. xv. 11). Juke’s comment is so much to the point here that we cannot do better than reproduce it, and let it speak for itself. He says:—

“No sooner are the bodies of the beast offered, and the parts laid open before the eye of God and the worshipper, than the fowls come down, to mar the offering if they can. So when the believer has set before him the sacrifice, and in the contempla-

tion of it would fain learn to see and feel with God, the fowls (Matt. xiii. 4, 19), evil spirits in heavenly places (Eph. vi. 12), powers within or without, subject to the wicked one, come to distract our communion, as far as may be. He that stood beside his offering knows what distractions these winged messengers cause, while we rise up like Abram to drive them away."

VII. PROPHEPIC SACRIFICE.

Based upon the covenanting sacrifice is God's promise to Abram that his seed shall inherit the land, that is, the whole region from "the river of Egypt unto * * * river Euphrates" (Genesis xv. 18). This promise was partially fulfilled under David and Solomon (II. Chron. ix. 21), but the whole of it awaits fulfillment. Tyre and Sidon were never conquered; therefore the complete fulfillment remains to be accomplished. This will not take place till the Millennium, when the "meek shall inherit the earth" (Psalm lxxii. 8-10).

FOURTH NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF ESCAPE

Genesis xix.

THERE are many characters which appear upon the scene associated with the destruction of Sodom. A pleading saint is seen in Abraham's pleas for its preservation. A vexed man is discovered in Lot, who had placed himself in the malarious district of sin. A judged woman is manifest in Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt. A group of sinners are beheld in the Sodomites, who would gratify their burning lust. Mocking children are seen in the sons-in-law of Lot deriding him when he speaks of the city's destruction. Ministering angels are revealed in Lot's deliverance, and a Gracious God is seen throughout, whether it be in listening to Abraham's pleading, in Lot's deliverance, or in Sodom's overthrow. There are three things we shall ponder in connection with this night of escape, namely, a saint lingering, a Saviour loving, and a sinner looking.

I. A SAINT LINGERING.

“He lingered” (Genesis xix. 16). We wonder that he should linger, for he had the distinct command to get “out of this place” (verse 12); hence his lingering was disobedience. Further, Lot had been told that the city was to be destroyed (verse 13); and he believed it for he had repeated the revelation to his sons-in-law (verse 14). Yet, for all this, he lingered, and had to be thrust out of the city by angelic hands (verse 16).

How like many of the Lord’s people still! They know they ought to give up some questionable practice, break off some unholy alliance, carry out some specific command, go out to some specific duty, or carry out some unpleasant instruction, and yet they hesitate and linger.

When our Lord commands, dare we linger in the path of obedience?

We cannot if we love our Lord, as he so plainly points out in John xiv. 21: “He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me.” Besides, want of obedience is always loss of blessing. There is an incident in Russian history which illustrates this. The Czar had died suddenly, and in the dead of night one of the counsellors of the

Empire came to the Princess Elizabeth and said to her, "You must come at once and take possession of the crown." She hesitated, for there were difficulties in the way. But the counsellor said, "Now, sit down, Princess, for a minute." Then he drew two pictures. One was the picture of herself and her court thrown into prison, racked with tortures and presently brought out to die beneath the axe, and the other was herself with the crown upon her head and all the nation doing her honor. "But to-night your Majesty must choose which it shall be." She was not long in choosing. Thus it must ever be with the child of God in the crisis of temptation, in the time of choice between faithfulness and unfaithfulness; for unless we side with the Lord, we cannot have Him on our side. In the crisis there must never be hesitation, but with the haste of faith we must turn away from Sodom, and turn to the mountain of blessing.

II. A LOVING SAVIOUR.

The love of the Lord is very manifest with reference to Lot and his family. We see the ministry of love in the actions of the angels. They pulled him into the house when he was in danger (verse 9, 10), they hastened

him when he hesitated (verse 15), they laid hold upon him and his when they lingered (verse 16), and they directed him where to go (verse 17). We little know how much pains the Lord takes with us in order to bring us from the place of danger to the harbor of blessing. We see the heart of love. "The Lord being merciful unto him" (verse 16), is the reason given why the Lord delivered His disobedient servant. The Lord had pity upon him. The word "merciful" is rendered "pity" in Isaiah lxiii. 9, where, in speaking of the Lord's dealings with Israel, we read, "In His love and *pity He redeemed them.*" Mercy is the hand of pity moved by the heart of love, supplying the need of the undeserving. As along the English coast there are flash-lights telling the mariner of the refuge that is to be found in the harbor beyond, so from the Cross of Christ there flashes forth the light of mercy, telling of the safety there is to be found in the harbor of His atonement; and when one has arrived there, and knows the blessedness of God's love and grace as therein discovered, it makes him sing:

"By faith I see my Saviour dying,
On the tree;
To every sinner He is crying,
Look to Me.

He bids the guilty soul draw near
 Come, come to Me, dismiss your fear;
 Hark, hark, these precious words I hear,
 Look to Me.

“Did Christ, while I was sin pursuing,
 Pity me?
 And did He save my soul from ruin?
 Can it be?
 Oh, yes, He did salvation bring,
 He is the Saviour, Priest and King,
 And now my happy soul can sing.
 Mercy’s free.

“How sweet the truth—ye sinners hear it—
 Mercy’s free;
 Ye saints of God, to all declare it—
 Mercy’s free.
 Visit the heathen’s dark abode,
 Proclaim to all the love of God,
 And spread the joyous news abroad—
 Mercy’s free.

“Long as I’m here I’ll still be telling,
 Mercy’s free;
 And ever on His love be dwelling—
 Mercy’s free.
 And when the vale of tears I’ve passed,
 When lodged above the stormy blast,
 His praise I’ll sing while ages last,
 Whose Mercy’s free.”

III. A SINNER LOOKING.

Lot’s wife is one who died an extraordi-

nary death, and who never died in the ordinary sense of the word. She never saw corruption. Her name is on record at least twice as "Lot's wife," and yet her name is never given.

There are three things we note in reference to Lot's wife looking back:

I. *It Was a Look of Disobedience.* The command of the Lord was very precise: "Look not behind thee" (Genesis xix. 17). The essence of sin is disobedience, and disobedience always brings disaster.

The ancients told a story of Orpheus—who could move men, beasts, trees and rocks with his wonderful music—that when his wife, Eurydice, was bitten by a serpent and died, then he followed her into the infernal regions and there played his music with such exquisite skill, that even Pluto, who was said to be the stern king of hell, was moved to give her up on condition that he did not look around while they ascended. As they were rising, however, from some cause or other he looked around. The result was he saw his much-loved wife for a moment, and then she vanished from his sight forever. The fable illustrates a divine principle, and that principle is, disobedience always brings loss. Let any one persist in a path of sin and neglect the heavenly vision of

Christ in the Gospel, and the inevitable consequence must be an eternal loss of blessing.

2. *Look of Desire.* The meaning of the word "look" is to regard attentively, to long for the object, and to consider with care. The same word occurs in Psalm xiii. 3; in Isaiah, v. 12, and in Psalm cxix. 15, where it is translated "consider," "regard," and "have respect." Lot's wife stood and gazed at Sodom, and longed for the things she had left behind. This must have been so, for the destruction of the cities of the plain did not begin till Lot was safe in Zoar. She must have lingered far behind. She went out of Sodom, but took Sodom with her. "She had become identified with her home there," as one has said; "and even the wrath of God, poured out in a storm of fire, could not avert her eyes or quicken her steps." She doubtless looked back, as the Israelites did toward Egypt, longing to return, more willing to stay there amid the sins of the Sodomites than to abide apart with God. And so her heart's wish became a fact; her real prayer was strangely answered; where she lingered, there she should stay. She would look back, and henceforth should never look ahead. So sins become habits, and habits encrust us with fixedness and transform us into pillars, monuments of wrath. God fixed and rooted

her where she was. His curse tranfixed her, as it blighted, blasted and withered the barren fig tree; and so Lot's wife, to this day, is the personification of Sodom, its sins and its punishments. The only safe obedience is a prompt, implicit and exact conformity to God's command. No part of His command can be unheeded without risk. We may run from one peril only to fall into another. A divided heart is like the double eye. Singleness of aim is as important as singleness of vision.

3. *Look of destruction.* "She became a pillar of salt." Undoubtedly there is a scientific explanation as to how Lot's wife became a pillar of salt. Sir W. Dawson says: "We learn from the narrative that the destruction was sudden and unexpected, that it was caused by brimstone and fire, that these were rained down from the sky, that a dense column of smoke ascended to a great height, like the smoke of a furnace or limekiln, and that along with, or immediately after the fire, there was an emission of brine or saline mud, capable of encrusting bodies, as that of Lot's wife, so that they appeared as mounds of salt."

Apart from the natural method as to how Lot's wife met her death, we know she perished under the act of God's judgment, Duncan Matheson, in the following solemn words, sums up her history and sad end:—

“Lot’s wife had many privileges, but she perished. Lot’s wife had a good husband, but she perished. Lot’s wife had often been prayed for, but she perished. Lot’s wife had a good example set her, but she perished. Lot’s wife had been warned of God, but she perished. Lot’s wife saw her danger, but she perished. Lot’s wife was led by the angels out of Sodom, but she perished. Lot’s wife was nearly saved, but she perished. Lot’s wife only looked around, and she was damned for the look. She lingered when she should have made haste, and God left her. Mercy drew her, but she grieved Mercy, and Mercy forsook her. Where Mercy left her Justice found her and Destruction seized her. She loved Sodom, and would love Sodom, and God gave her her bad love to the full. The Lord took her out of Sodom, but she took Sodom out of Sodom with her. Let me get a last look at my idol, she said, and she got a last look with a vengeance. She is joined to her idols, said the jealous God; let her alone. And she was left terribly alone; she became a pillar of salt. Sodom was more to her than her daughters, her husband, her soul or her God. In judgment she was wedded to her evil choice. She entered eternity in fellowship with those that ‘suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.’”

FIFTH NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF VISION.

Genesis xxviii. 12.

GOD speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose" (Job xxxiii. 14-17). Thus speaks Elihu, the man who is "in God's stead" (Job xxxiii. 6), in revealing to Job one means by which God communicates His will to His creatures. It was in a vision of the night God revealed His purpose to Jacob concerning his future, and gave to him in the ladder, or way cast up, a picture of what Christ would be in the coming day of His incarnation and atonement.

I. THE LADDER WAS SET UP AT AN OPPORTUNE TIME.

"Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went

toward Haran" (Genesis xxiii. 10). "Beersheba" means "the well of an oath" (Genesis xxvi. 33), and Haran means "barrenness," or that which is "parched." Is not the place to which he was going, illustrative of his experience at this time? Jacob had committed grievous wrongs against his brother (Genesis xxvii. 36), and his life was in danger from him in consequence (Genesis xxvii. 41). As we see Jacob leaving the home of his father—the well of comfort, love, and plenty—and going forth into the parched land of discomfort, labour, and trial—for Haran was all this to him, as he himself confesses in after years (Genesis xxxi. 38-42)—we behold the sorrow of sin and the tyranny it exerts. Is not this a picture of the fact that the way of transgressors is hard? Jacob illustrates in a remarkable manner the stern reality, he who injures another injures himself most. He robs the blessing from his brother, and he thus robs himself of his home. He deceives his father, and he in turn is deceived by his father-in-law. He obtained his brother's birthright, but he lost the birthright of a good conscience. He tripped his brother up, by taking him by the heel through his cunning, and thus fulfilled the meaning of his

name (Genesis xxv. 26-34), but he himself is envied, spoken against, and scowled at by Laban and his sons (Genesis xxxi. 1-2).

Yet, the Lord at this time graciously meets with Jacob, and manifests Himself to him. How true it is, the heat of our sin but calls forth the blessing of God's grace. A writer in *The Century Magazine*, some time ago, called attention to a new invention. He said: —“There has been recently invented an automatic fire-extinguisher. The idea is simple. A water-tank, on the roof of a building, is connected with a system of pipes, extending along the ceilings of the different rooms. At intervals of a few feet is a hose nozzle, kept closed by a plug of fusible metal. On the starting of a fire near one of these nozzles, the temperature rising, melts the plug, and a shower of water is released on the fire, putting it out without human supervision or aid. These automatic extinguishers have already saved property, and proved their usefulness.”

In like manner, the heat of man's sin has brought forth the water of God's great provision in the atonement of the Lord Jesus. The Lord did not desire man's sin, nor was He the Author of it; but, since it is evident, it gives Him the opportunity to deliver man

from it. The groaning of Israel in Egypt gave Jehovah the opportunity to deliver man from it. The hungry multitude drew forth the compassion of Christ to supply their need. The cry of the leprous man for cleansing was the attractive force which called forth Christ's cleansing and healing. The prodigal, in his degradation and misery, drew forth the compassion and grace of the Father towards him. Our misery calls for God's mercy. Our helplessness claims heaven's help.

II. THE LADDER WAS SET UP TO PROCLAIM A GLORIOUS TRUTH.

From Christ's own words we know that the ladder was a type of Himself. He said to Nathaniel, in speaking of Himself as the Mediator between earth and heaven, and as the Medium of communication between the two places, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John i. 51). There are four things suggested by Christ's words and the vision of Jacob.

(1) *Christ's Humanity.* The ladder is on the earth. It is said to be "set up on the earth" (Genesis xxviii. 12). The Hebrew

word translated "set up," signifies a given act which results in a fixed attitude. The same word is rendered "set" in Deut. xxxii. 8, where we read of the Lord's action in dividing the land to Israel: "He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." When Christ came into this world, He took up a new relationship, which is a permanent one, namely, He became Man, and He is what He became. When the engineers wanted to span the gulf which separates the Canadian and United States sides of the falls of Niagara, they did so by means of a kite and string; and when the two sides were connected by string, they passed stronger and stronger string and rope, till they had a cable, and ultimately the beautiful suspension bridge was made. So, before we could get over the great gulf which sin had made, Christ had to come to us and become one of us, that through His mediatorial work we might become one with Him.

(2) *Christ's Deity*.—The top of the ladder "reached to heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 12). The word translated "reached," is given in Isaiah v. 8, "join," in speaking of those who "join house to house." We therefore have the thought, the ladder not only

reached to heaven in the sense of coming up to it, but it was joined to it, and thus one with it. Christ is one with heaven, for He is from it; hence, we frequently find Him saying He is "from above" (John iii. 31; viii. 23).

(3) *Christ's Position.* — The ladder, or way cast up, is first said to be "set up on earth," and then, that it "reached unto heaven." Does not this suggest to us the thought, that He who was set upon earth in His incarnation, has reached to heaven by His death, resurrection, and ascension? There are many passages in the New Testament which proclaim the fact that Christ as Man occupies the highest place in glory, because He took the lowest place in obedience to God. Hence we read, He has—

A name "above every name" (Phil. ii. 9).

A position "above all principality and power" (Ephesians i. 21).

A glory "above the brightness of the sun" (Acts xxvi. 13).

An honour "above" His "fellows" (Heb. i. 9).

(4) *Christ's Meditation.* There are two persons seen in connection with the ladder. Jacob was at the bottom of it; and the Lord was above it (Genesis xxviii. 11-13). The

ladder was the means of communication between the two. It brought God from heaven to earth, and it brought the man on earth into touch with heaven. This is what Christ does. He brings us from the curse of sin into the blessing of grace; He brings us from the death of sin into the life of God; He brings us from the darkness of hell's gloom into the light of heaven's gladness; He brings us from the bondage of habit's sinful grip into the liberty of the Gospel's freedom; He brings us from the doubting castle of despair into the strong place of His assured love; He brings us from the sad state of children of wrath into the saintly position of children of God; and He brings us from the poverty of self's low aims into the riches of God's grace.

Further, Christ brings God to us as the God of grace to deliver us, as the God of love to inspire us, as the God of holiness to sanctify us, as the God of power to strengthen us, as the God of comfort to console us, as the God of help to sustain us, and as the God of hope to cheer us. As the God of grace, He makes us like a ship in harbour during the storm, safe and secure. As the God of love, He makes us like the altar fire in the tabernacle, bright and blissful. As

the God of holiness, He makes us like the burning bush in the wilderness, sacred and sweet. As the God of power, He makes us like an electric battery, powerful and useful. As the God of comfort, He makes us like the piping nightingale, glad in the darkness. As the God of help, He makes us like a river, kept in a given course by an embankment, strong and true; and as the God of hope, He makes us like the harp of Memnon, which gave forth melodious strains as the morning light touched the strings, glad with the prospect of Christ's day of coming glory.

There is one other thing which is worthy of notice, and that is the word "Hereafter," as used by Christ. He says, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open," etc. Our conception of the word "hereafter" is at some future time, but that is not the thought here. The better expression would be, "From this time and onwards." The word "arti" is translated "now," in John ii. 10; "hitherto," in John v. 17; "present," in I. Corinthians iv. 11; "this hour," in I. Corinthians viii. 7. The one thought suggested by this, is the presentness of Christ's mediatorship. He fills the position of Mediator, and is willing to act as such.

Thank God for the glorious truth of Christ's mediation. He is near to every needy soul who will take Him as the Mediator. "To the North of Scotland lies an island called Bressay. It is one of the Shetland islands, and its shores are very rocky. On the South coast of Bressay is a slate quarry. The workmen had to descend the cliff to it by means of a ladder. One evening a violent and sudden storm drove the quarrymen from their work. The ladder was left fastened to the cliff. A ship, which was struggling with the waves, was driven close to the island. Her crew beheld with terror the white foam of the breakers as they dashed against the rocks. They knew that if their ship was stranded they must be wrecked. Still, the howling winds drove her forward. The waves dashed over her, filled the cabin with water, and drowned the wife of the captain. The sailors now climbed into the rigging. They were at the mercy of the furious wind and of the raging sea. They gave themselves up for lost. Many prayers and cries for deliverance were uttered. On came the ship, and struck against the shore. The poor sailors felt that death was almost certain. On the summit of the cliff was safety, but how could they, who were help-

lessly dashed at its foot, reach it? But just as the ship struck, their terror was changed to joy. Close beside them, on the steep face of the cliff, was a ladder. It seemed as if placed there on purpose for them. In haste they sprang from the rigging, mounted the ladder, and reached the top of the cliff in safety. The vessel went to pieces so quickly, that, by the next morning, hardly a trace of her was left." As that ladder was the medium by which the sailors on the wrecked vessel got from the position of danger to the place of safety, so the Lord Jesus is the One by whom, and in whom, we escape from the wrath to come to the place of eternal salvation.

SIXTH NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF WRESTLING

ON the moors in Derbyshire, near to the villages of Calver and Curbar, may be seen a rock, which is known as "The Eagle Rock," standing about twenty feet above the level of the moor. The rock, being of a harder substance than the rock around, has stood the stress of the weather, and thus become a landmark. As the rock stands out above the level of the moor, so there stands out, with special prominence, in the history of Jacob, the conflict through which he passed at Peniel. Without retracing our steps to see what led up to Peniel, or going forward to notice what followed, let us concentrate our thought upon its story.

I. THE "WRESTLED" OF STRIVING.

"There wrestled a Man with him" (Gen. xxxii. 24). The Hebrew word for "wrestled" only occurs in this place. It seems to come from a word signifying "dust," and the allu-

sion is probably to the dust excited by the combatants in wrestling. There was a "dust" in more than one sense of the word, for, undoubtedly, the dust of Jacob's sin, his deceiving, his scheming, and his self-will, were disturbed by the Man's conflict with him.

Too often this incident is read as if Jacob was the aggressive one in this wrestling. It does not say, "Jacob wrestled with the Man," but, "there wrestled a Man with him." As has been well said, "This scene is very commonly referred to, as an instance of Jacob's power in prayer. That it is not this is evident from the simple wording of the passage. My wrestling with a man, and a man wrestling with me, present two totally different ideas to the mind. In the former case, I want to gain some object from him; in the latter, he wants to gain some object from me. Now, in Jacob's case, the Divine object was to bring Jacob to see what a poor, feeble, worthless creature he was, and, when Jacob so pertinaciously held out against the Divine dealing with him, 'He touched the hollow of his thigh.' "

The Man wrestled with Jacob in order to bring him to the place of absolute dependence on God. The ghost of Jacob's past sins rose up before him as he thought of

meeting with his brother, and fear haunted him in consequence (Gen. xxxii. 7). This made him cry, in humble supplication to the Lord, for deliverance from Esau, for he was afraid he would smite and rob him (xxxii. 9-12). Then, instead of waiting upon the Lord for deliverance, he commenced to scheme by sending a present to Esau to appease his anger (xxxii. 13-20). It was after this, in the loneliness of the night, the Lord met with Jacob and sought to crush out of him the spirit of self-dependence.

The Lord is doing the same to-day. He is striving, by His Spirit, to bring us into the place of absolute dependence upon Himself. Man thinks by his planning and giving he can accomplish his soul's salvation and blessing, but he cannot come up to his own ideal, leave alone meeting the requirements of God. Man wants to be something like Saul of Tarsus, to do something like Naaman, or to give something like Cain; but in every one of these cases God was excluded. Saul excluded God, in the righteousness of His saving grace, by his self-righteousness, as he himself confesses (Phil. iii. 4-6). Naaman excluded God, in the power of His cleansing and healing, by his pride, as he found out (II. Kings v. ii.); and Cain ex-

cluded God, in the provision of His sacrifice, in his self-gift of a bloodless offering. Man's self-conceived religion, whatever form it may take, is summed up in "Something in my hand I bring." God's religion is, as Toplady found, as he himself expresses it:—

*"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly:
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."*

II. THE "TOUCHED" OF POWER.

"When He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh" (xxxvii. 25). Jacob resisted the Man with all his might; hence, when He found Jacob was stubbornly opposed to Him, He had to touch his thigh and put it out of joint. The touch of the Lord was more than we understand by simply touching anything. The same word is rendered "plagued" in Gen. xii. 17, in speaking of the Lord plaguing Pharaoh; it is translated "stricken" in Isaiah liii. 4, in telling us what men esteemed Christ to receive at the hands of God; and it is given "plagued" with reference to Christ's suffer-

ings for sin (Psalm lxxiii. 14). The same word is used to describe the judgment of God upon Uzziah, when he was "smitten" with leprosy (II. Chron. xxvi. 20), and it is given "touch" and "smote" in Job i. 11, 19, when the Lord gave Satan permission to touch all Job had, and he smote accordingly. The Lord has to take extreme measures with us if we will not give in to Him, as David says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word" (Psalm cxix. 67). Afflictions may not be toothsome, but they are wholesome, for God, by them, seeks to separate the sin He hates from the soul He loves.

There are many thighs which the Lord has to smite in order to bring us down into the place of blessing. Many walk too fast, and have to be crippled before they are converted. Sometimes the Lord touches the thigh of our circumstances, and causes the riches in which we had trusted to take to themselves wings and fly away. With some the Lord touches the thigh of health. "I would gladly take your tract," said a soldier in a hospital, "if I were able, but I have lost both my arms in battle, and I would lose them again, if it were possible, rather than not enjoy what I now possess. While I was

away in the woods, and did not know I should ever live to get back to camp, I cried unto the Lord in good earnest, and He had mercy on my soul." Better to have the loss of limbs than the loss of the soul. Better to be scoured with the sand of affliction than to have the rust of sin corroding our being. Better to be plunged into the water of adversity than to have the leprosy of sinful prosperity. Better to have the pruning knife of discipline than have the wild growth of iniquitous habit. Better to have the dung-hill of pain as Job had, than have the palace and a God-forsaken soul, as the rich fool. Better to have the prison-house of persecution for God, as Joseph, than to have the throne of pride without God, as Herod had; and better the halting gait of Jacob's weakness than the self-content of Esau.

III. THE "LET ME GO" OF APPEAL.

We have to look again as we read these words to see if our eyes have deceived us. Surely these words were not used by the Lord? Yes, they were. And what wondrous grace we see in them! Why, He could have shaken Jacob off as a dog would a straw which had fallen on its back! Think of it! The Creator detained by the creature! The Maker hindered by man! The Almighty

held by a grasshopper! The Infinite overcome by the finite! One of the most patent and yet unexplainable facts in nature, is the law of gravitation. By that law a stone will fall to the ground when thrown into the air, but it is kept to the ground by that same law; the stone has no power to raise itself. Bury a stone, and it will remain where it is put. Bury an acorn, and it will rise superior to the law of gravitation. Why is this? Because there is in the acorn a power, which we call "vital force," which is superior to the other power. By the power of His touch the Angel was able to cripple Jacob, but when Jacob, in the helplessness of his weakness, clung to Him, then a greater power came into operation and detained the Heavenly Visitant.

If there is one thing which is writ large, like a sky-line advertisement, in the life of Jesus, it is this: He could not resist the appeal of human need and the cry of a trusting soul. Take but two illustrations among the many. When Christ saw the hungry multitude, He would not, and may we say He could not, send them away as the disciples requested. He broke the bread and supplied the great want. Did He not do the same when our great need, as sinners, ap-

pealed to Him? He was broken Himself in death for us, so great was His love for us.

“The ages show their garner’d sheaves of thought,
By all the gleaning generations brought,
Some secret mildew on them all hath wrought;
No food is there.

But in an upper room in Palestine,
Is One that giveth mystic bread and wine;
I reach out for that nourishment Divine,
And faint no more.”

“Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!” cries a stricken leper covered with leprosy; and at once, like the electric current which flashes forth as the button is pressed, He responds to the appeal of the man, and says, “I will; be thou clean.”

“A leper once to Jesus came,
Believing only in His Name,
And trusting in His love.
Thou seest, Lord, my direst need,
Unclean and dying! yet I plead;
Thou canst my curse remove!”

‘I will! Be clean!’ the Lord replied;
And straightway thrill’d the healthful tide
Of life along his veins;
His leprosy was cleansed away,
His heart was filled with joy that day,
Departed all his pains.

Lord, I, a suppliant, also bow;
For I thy power have need of now,
 To cleanse away my guilt;
The leprosy of sin I feel,
Its woe, its curse; but Thou canst heal—
 Thou canst, if but Thou wilt.

Oh, let Thy power again be seen!
Speak Thou the word—'I will! Be clean!
 On me let mercy shine;
My guilt be pardoned, heart be healed,
My soul for Thy salvation sealed;
 The glory shall be Thine.'"

SEVENTH NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF OBSERVATION

Exodus xii. 42 (Margin).

STANDING over the confined body of a brother, touched, no doubt, to the heart, Ingersoll the free-thinker, made the following statement, which sounds almost like the wail of hopeless man, as the ship upon which he stands, sinks into the engulfing waves. He said: "Life is the narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry." That is all the consolation an agnostical and atheistical free-thinker has to offer. A poor Gospel is his no-Gospel!

What a contrast is the following confession of General Schmidt. He was one of the bravest officers in the Prussian army. Dining in the palace with Frederick the Great, he was asked by the king, why he believed the Bible? "Because," he replied, "it reveals to me a Father who numbers the

very hairs of my head; because it reveals to me a Saviour who expiates every one of my sins; and because it reveals to me a heaven where I am to spend an everlasting and blessed eternity." What a difference between the two confessions! In the one we have the blinding sand of doubt and uncertainty, and in the other we have the rock-bed of certainty, and the vista of unspeakable glory.

I refer to the above confessions that I may call attention to one sentence by the General, namely, "The Bible * * * reveals to me a Saviour who expiates every one of my sins." These words are the more significant as we place them on the dark background of Ingersoll's sorry statement. The Bible does, indeed, reveal Christ, the Expiator of our sins. The water-mark of Christ's atonement is seen in every page. Especially is it so with reference to the Lord's passing over the children of Israel on the night of His passing through the midst of the Egyptians in judgment. That night was a memorable one in Israel's history, and it was ever to be a night of memorial in their life.

Several times we find the words "Pass-over" and "Pass over" in Exodus xii. and

xiii. I purpose calling attention to these as points in the subject before us.

I. JEHOVAH'S REQUIREMENT.

“Kill the passover (Exodus xii. 21). The lamb to be killed is called “the Passover,” and is a type of “Christ our Passover sacrificed for us” (I. Corinthians v. 7). There are many points of interest, which flash out like the facets of a beautiful diamond, with unmistakable brilliancy, as typical of Christ in the Paschal lamb.

The Paschal lamb was to be “without blemish” (xii. 5), in order that it might be fit to answer for those who were blemished. Israel was tainted with sin, smitten with the abomination of idolatry, groaning in misery, unable to help themselves, and unworthy of God's purposed acts of love. It is the same with mankind generally. All have sinned, and are smirched with iniquity. All have the poison of sin coursing through the veins of their moral being. All are in the bondage of Satan, even as all inbreathe the atmosphere by which the earth is surrounded. The bondage may, and does, take different forms, but sin in some form holds all. Some have the freckles of pride on their moral counte-

nance. Some have the blotches of lust on the skin of their life. Some have the foul breath of blasphemy in their mouth. Some have the disease of hate in their heart. Some have the blindness of doubt in their eyes. Some have the deafness of self-will in their ears. Some have the warts of rebellion on their hands. Some have the paralysis of unbelief in their limbs. Hence, the necessity that a sinless One should act for the sinful ones; that a Holy One should come forward on behalf of the unholy. Such an One is found in Christ, for earth could "find no fault in Him" (John xix. 6), Hell could not discover sin in Him (Matthew viii. 29), and Heaven was pleased with Him (Matthew iii. 17).

The Passover had to be separated for a given time. From the tenth day of the month until the fourteenth, the lamb was under inspection, that it might be demonstrated that it was "without blemish" (xii. 3, 6). For over three years Christ was under the eye of public inspection; and in spite of the lynx-eyed scrutiny to which He was subjected, He could look the world in the face, and say, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" He had the unsolicited testimony that He possessed knowledge no one else had

(John iv. 29); He spake as never man spake (John vii. 46); He did miracles no one else could perform (Luke vii. 15); He deserved honour of which no one else was worthy (Matthew xiv. 33); He was the Holy One of God (Mark i. 24); He was peculiar in the graciousness of His utterance (Luke iv. 22); and He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Hebrews vii. 26).

The Passover had to be killed as a substitutionary victim (xii. 6). The lamb was to be killed by the whole "assembly of the congregation," and its sprinkled blood was to be "a token" (xii. 13). A token of what? That the slain victim had been accepted for them, and they were free from judgment as a consequence. One of the most remarkable and living proofs of the truth of substitution may be seen any day in our streets. I refer to the Jew. Israel, as a nation, would not be in existence to-day, but for the fact of substitution. If the ram had not been offered up in the stead of Isaac, he would have been killed; hence, he and his descendants owe their existence to the ram of substitution. The same is true, in a deeper sense, with regard to the deliverance of man from sin's guilt, and condemnation. Those who receive Christ as their Substitute, are deliv-

ered from the judgment due to sin, and can say—

“In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood.”

It is said, there is a plant called “Adder’s Wort,” because it is supposed to cure the bite of a serpent. The Divine Adder’s Wort is the substitutionary atonement, for through faith in Him, who suffered on our account, we are delivered from the curse and consequence of sin.

The Passover was to be killed at a specified time, “In the evening” (xii. 6). The morning of man’s innocence had dawned, and had been clouded by man’s sins. The noon of man’s trial under conscience had ended in failure, and the judgment of the flood. The afternoon of Israel’s testing under law, had demonstrated the utter inability of the natural man to come up to the Divine ideal, and had closed with the Assyrian and Babylonish captivities, as expressions of the Lord’s displeasure; and now comes the evening time of “the times of the Gentiles,” and in that evening time, Christ is slain under the last of its powers. Thus, in the “end of the age, Christ is manifested” to “put away sin

by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews ix. 26, R. V.).

The blood of the Passover was to be applied to the houses of Israel by a mentioned plant, "a bunch of hyssop" (xii. 22). Hyssop was one of the commonest plants in the East; hence, we find Solomon speaks of the hyssop and the cedar (I. Kings iv. 33); the cedar being the finest of the trees, and the hyssop being the commonest of the plants. As the hyssop was the medium of conveying the blood of the lamb from the basin to the houses, so faith is the instrument which makes the atonement of Christ to be of personal benefit to us. A great many want to realize the blessings of the Gospel, before they receive the Christ of the Gospel. An old woman, who was known as Betsy, was such an one.

Old Betsy was a prey to all kinds of doubts and fears about her soul's salvation. She was waiting for happy feelings, instead of simply accepting by faith what God has said. Thus she robbed herself of the peace and joy which they possess who simply believe God.

A servant of Christ called to see her one day, and, speaking with her upon the matter, said:

“Now, Betsy, suppose your daughter had come in to-day, and said, ‘Mother, I’m going to send you a good bowl of broth to-morrow for your dinner;’ what would you say?”

“Oh!” replied Betsy, “I should say, ‘It’s very kind of you, lass; I thank you very much.’”

“But suppose,” said the Christian, “about an hour afterwards she said, ‘Well, mother, how did you like the broth?’ What would you say to that?”

“Say!” answered Betsy; “I should say, ‘How can I tell till I’ve got it?’”

“Just so,” replied the visitor; “and you’ll never know what salvation is, till you’ve got it; and you’ll never get it, till you take it from God’s hand as a free gift by simple faith, without any feelings or doings on your part whatever.”

The blood of the Passover was to be put on certain places. The blood was not to be put on the doorstep, but on the side posts of the door, and on the lintel (xii. 7, 22). The threefold application of the blood to the house, may be taken to illustrate three things which the atonement of Christ declares.

(1) *Condemnation averted*.—The blood of the slain victim spoke of the life taken. The atonement of Christ tells out the facts that

Christ was judged for our sin, and bare our sins in His own body on the tree.

(2) *Cleansing assured.* The only thing that can give peace to the "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Hebrews x. 22), is the blood, for that assures us that the conscience is cleared, and the burden is gone (Hebrews x. 2).

(3) *Claim avowed.* Israel henceforth were to be the Lord's peculiar people; hence, they had to pass over to Him (Exodus xiii. 12, margin), all the first-born, in recognition of His claim.

The blood of the Passover was to be applied in a significant manner. In Exodus xii. 7, and xii. 22, we are told the children of Israel had to "take the blood and strike it on the two side posts," etc. The word "strike" is given in verses 7 and 22, but the word is not the same in each case. The word in verse 7, is a softer word than that in verse 22. It is rendered "gave" in Exodus xii. 36, and "give" in Exodus iii. 21. The word in Exodus xii. 22, is rendered "plagued" in Psalm lxxiii. 5, and "smote" in II. Kings xv. 5. Taking these words in the light of the connections in which they are found as associated with the blood of the typical lamb, may we not say they suggest to us the

fact, that Christ's atonement demonstrates His love and justice, for the placing of the blood proclaims His grace, and the striking of it on the lintel proclaims the fact that it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.

II. JEHOVAH'S PLEDGE.

"When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (xii. 13). "The Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you" (xii. 23). Of the latter verse, Lowth's translation is very suggestive. He gives it: "The Lord will spring forward before the door;" and he gives by way of illustration a reference to Isaiah xxxi. 5, and renders that passage: "As the mother bird hovering over her young, so shall Jehovah, God of Hosts, protect Jerusalem; protecting and delivering, leaping forward, and rescuing her." The reference is to the danger to which Jerusalem was exposed, when the King of Assyria came against it. The verse might be freely paraphrased: "As an eagle, seeing an enemy approaching its young, would pass over them to the enemy and overcome it, and thus preserve them; so the Lord passing over the city of Jerusalem to the army of the Assyrians, would stand between them, defeat the latter, and thus protect the former." This is what the Lord

says He will do for Israel on the night of the Passover. He will stand before the door, and thus be between them and the destroyer. The pledge is, "I will stand between you and any — danger."

In Exodus xii. 13, the Lord is seen, not as the Protector, but as the Judge; and, as such, He says: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Not when I see your prayers, your repentance, your faith, your church connection, your alms-giving, your good resolutions, your good works, your ritual, your good wishes; but when I see the blood. The blood, and the blood alone, satisfies the holy eye of Jehovah. And note further: He does not say, "When you see the blood," but "When I see the blood." It is not our estimation of Christ's atonement, but God's appreciation of it, which is our security. He sees in Christ's atonement a satisfaction which meets the claims of His holy throne, a worth which more than answers the requirement of His righteous law, a depth which responds to the holiness of His Divine nature, a cure which effectually heals the disease of man's sin, a covering which hides from His view the evil of man's nature, a balm which cures the wounded conscience of the convicted penitent, and an oil which calms the water of Divine wrath.

EIGHTH NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF SLEEPLESSNESS.

Esther vi. 1.

HANNAH MORE says: "Trifles make the sum of human things;" and Young remarks, in a similar strain,

"Think nought a trifle, though it small appear;
Small sands the mountain, moments make the year."

Slightest causes have given rise to the greatest events. It was a small thing for a child to touch an electric button, but the button was connected with a dynamite mine, which blew to atoms the mass of rocks in the entrance to New York harbor, known as "hell gate." We must not gauge things by their size, nor their seeming insignificance, but by the issues which may result from them. Yea, in one sense, there is nothing little, for even the seeming little is associated with the greater, and helps to make it great.

"Truly, I reiterate . . . nothing's small!
No lily-muffled hum of a Summer bee,
But finds some coupling with the spinning stars;
No pebble at your feet, but proves a star;

No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim;
And—glancing at my own thin, veined wrist—
In such a little tremor of the blood
The whole strong clamor of a vehement soul
Doth utter itself distinct.”

Comparatively speaking, it may seem a small thing that a king, as the Persian monarch in the palace at Shushan, could not sleep, but yet momentous and mighty issues sprang from that night of sleeplessness. Two of these issues we may note, namely, a plot frustrated, and a person exalted.

I. A PLOT FRUSTRATED.

The heart of Haman was filled with hate against Mordecai and his kindred. Hate was burning in his heart like the lava in a slumbering volcano, and he only waited for a favourable opportunity to accomplish his hellish designs. Haman had been exalted to the highest position in the land by the king (Esther iii. 1); the consequence was, wherever he went the people acknowledged his position by bowing before him, but Mordecai would not do this. Haman was, therefore, “full of wrath” (Esther iii. 5). Haman thought it beneath his dignity “to lay hands on Mordecai alone;” he, therefore, plotted to “de-

stroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus," and, it is significantly added, "even the people of Mordecai" (Esther iii. 6). Haman would slay them, that he might kill him. Haman then made a misrepresentation to Ahasuerus, namely, that the Jews did not keep the king's laws, and "therefore it was not for the king's profit to suffer them" (Esther iii. 8). The diabolical petition of Haman was granted, and the decree went forth that all the Jews in all the provinces were to be slain on the "thirteenth day of the twelfth month" (Esther iii. 13). There were thus eleven months between the making of the decree and its execution (Esther iii. 12). Meantime, Haman was greatly elated because he was honoured by being invited to dine with the king and Esther, and he went forth, after the banquet, "with a joyful and with a glad heart," but his gladness was turned into bitterness when he saw Mordecai in the king's gate, who "stood not up, nor moved for him" (Esther v. 9). Zeresh, the wife of Haman, suggested he should erect a gallows, and hang Mordecai upon it. He was pleased at the suggestion, and caused "the gallows to be made" (Esther v. 14).

It is just at this point in the narrative we have the record of the king's sleeplessness.

Finding he cannot sleep, the king calls for "the books of the records" to be read to him, and then he discovers his obligation to Mordecai. Ahasuerus wants to know what "honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai," and, to his surprise, he finds that nothing had been done. The king therefore asks, "Who is in the court?" and he is told "Haman standeth in the court." Now, Haman had come to "speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him." Haman is invited into the king's presence, and he is asked by him what he should do to the man "whom the king delighted to honour?" Haman makes a proposal, thinking of himself, and to his chagrin he has to carry it out for Mordecai. We can well imagine how Haman lashes himself with anger, and how jealousy is tearing at his heart, as he tells his friends and wife what has happened. We may be sure he is not comforted as his wife and the wise men tell him, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him" (Esther vi. 13). The words of the wise men and Haman's wife are hardly uttered, when he is summoned to the second banquet, which Esther had provided

for the king and Haman; while at the banquet, the king again asks Esther what her petition is (Esther vii. 2). This time she clearly states it, telling the king of the danger to which her people are exposed, and how it is all come about through the plotting of an enemy. This arouses the king's indignation and curiosity, and makes him exclaim, "Who is he?" Adam Clarke says:

"There is a wonderful abruptness and confusion in the original words, highly expressive of the state of mind in which the king then was: *mi hu zeh vzey zeh hu ashev melao libbo laasoth kev*. 'Who? He? This one? And where? This one? He? Who hath filled his heart to do this?' He was at once struck with the horrible nature of a conspiracy so cruel and diabolic."

Then Esther, in all the dignity of her queenly womanhood and righteous indignation, lifts up her hand and points her finger in holy scorn at Haman, and says, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman" (Esther vii. 6). We need not dwell upon the sequel, other than to say the man who plotted to hang Mordecai was hanged upon his self-erected gallows, and he who schemed to destroy the Jewish people was destroyed himself. As in our mental vision we see the

form of Haman hanging on the gallows, we behold the consequence of evil plotting. He made a mine by which he might destroy others, and lo! he was destroyed by the mine of his own making. He sharpened a knife to kill others, and cut his own throat with it. He laid a trap for Mordecai, and was caught in it himself.

The one great lesson which we can see in the downfall of Haman is,

“Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all.”

There are many examples in history which are parallel to Haman's case. Nero, who slew thousands of early believers by violent deaths, himself died by his own hands with the aid of others. Maximianus, the peasant who rose to be Emperor of Rome, an odious tyrant, and persecutor of the Christians, was murdered by his own army while asleep. Valens, who caused eighty presbyters to be sent to sea in a ship, and then burnt them alive in it, was burnt alive in a cottage, to which he had fled from the Goths. Pharaoh caused the Hebrew male children to be drowned in a river, and he himself was

drowned in the Red Sea. Amnon schemed against his sister to her ruin in order to gratify his lust; and he was schemed against by Absalom to his death.

All these illustrations go to prove that sin does not pay, for "whatsoever a man soweth, that"—not something else—"shall he also reap," and should make us flee from it for our own sake, leaving out every one else for the moment, for sin is the sapper to undermine the house of our moral being, and will, if persisted in, bring it down upon us, to our hurt and ruin.

II. A PERSON EXALTED.

We shall take Mordecai, and the treatment he received from the king, in an illustrative sense: Mordecai illustrating Christ, and Ahasuerus as illustrating the sinner's conduct toward him. Mordecai is seen as the forgotten benefactor, and the honored deliverer.

1. *The Forgotten Benefactor.*—Mordecai had rendered the king great service in warning him of the plot against his life, which was purposed by his chamberlains. Ahasuerus had forgotten the benefactor, but through reading the records of the history of his own reign, his obligation to him had been recalled,

and now he wanted to know "waht honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai?" And, to his surprise, the answer was, "There is nothing done for him."

Is not this an illustration of what the sinner has done to Christ? Innumerable blessings have been conferred by Him. He spreads our table each day, and supplies our recurring wants. His sun warms us, His air refreshes us, His rain waters the seeds of the earth and causes them to grow, His loving-kindness crowns us, and His tender mercies wait upon us, He blesses our going out and coming in, our down-sitting and our up-rising . We are dependent, for every breath we breathe, upon Him; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being. And, above all, we are indebted to Him for the great provision He has made for our soul's great need, in His death on the Cross.

Count Zinzendorf owed his conversion to a seeming accidental view of a picture of the crucifixion, underneath which were the words—

"All this for thee; how much for Me?"

As our minds go back to that green hill far away, outside the city walls, and view the Figure upon the central of the three crosses, He seems to speak to us, and to say :

“All My strength is spent for thee, in order to make thee strong; how much strength hast thou given to Me?

“All My suffering is for thee, to save thee from the hell of sin’s suffering; what hast thou suffered for Me?

“All My sorrow is for thee—was there ever any sorrow like Mine?—that the sorrows of hell might never be experienced by thee; how much sorrow hast thou borne for Me?

“All My curse, which I am being made in bearing the curse of—a broken law, is for thee, in order that thou mayest be blessed with eternal life; how much ignominy hast thou borne for Me?

“All My shame is for thee, that the shame of thy nakedness may not be discovered, and that thou mayest be clothed in the best robe of My righteousness; how much hast thou borne for Me?

“All My intense anguish in being made sin is for thee, that thou mayest never know the bitterness of being forsaken by God; how much anguish hast thou borne for Me?

“All that I have been as the Man of Sorrows, all that I am now being made as the Sin Bearer, is for thee, in order to save thee from hell’s blackness, and bring thee into

heaven's blessedness; what hast thou done for Me? Hast thou believed in Me? Dost thou love Me?"

Oh, if up to this time you have not recognized the Benefactor which Christ is, honour Him now by your faith's trust in Him, and in the time to come in your love's ardour for Him!

2. *The Honoured Deliverer.*—Ahasuerus was not long before he honoured Mordecai. He is decked in royal apparel, and made to sit upon the king's own horse; and, much to the disgust of Haman, he has to lead him through the city in triumph.

Henry the Fifth of France was once helped by Madame le Clerc, when he was in dire straits after the battle of Troy, for he had no money to pay his troops; the noble woman unselfishly gave him several bags of gold, which met the necessity of the case. Afterwards, before a brilliant court, he pointed, and said: "You see this lady; she is a true friend of mine. To her I owe all the successes of my last campaigns. It was she who lent me money to carry on the war when the troops threatened to abandon me." Thus the king delighted to honour the woman who had been such a benefactress to him.

Thus does every true believer in Christ, love to honour Christ. We honour Him by a whole-hearted obedience to Him, by a constant reliance in simple faith upon Him, by an unceasing pleading in believing prayer to Him, by a bold confession in a true testimony for Him, by a holy walk in separation to Him, by a faithful adherence to His faithful Word in listening to Him in it, and by recognizing that His will is our blessing, and being content with it.

NINTH NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF DESPAIR.

“That Night” (I. Sam. xxviii. 25).

DR. YOUNG, in speaking of Swift, says: “I remember, as I and others were taking with Swift an evening walk, about a mile out of Dublin, he stopped short. We passed on, but perceiving he did not follow us, I went back and found him fixed as a statue, and earnestly gazing upwards at a noble tree, which, in its upper branches, was much withered and decayed. Pointing to it, he said, ‘I shall be like that tree; I shall die atop.’” Whatever Swift may have meant by his words we cannot tell, but at least we can stand with him in thought, and gaze at the decaying tree, for it suggests and is a picture of many lives, which beginning with fair promise as they bud and burst forth with the leaves of a grand moral and spiritual purpose, afterwards through the love of sin, and the pursuit of sinful pleasure, are blighted thereby, and their marred and miserable souls are but a testimony of the destructive

work within, and a prophecy of the hell to which they are hastening.

Such a life was King Saul's! He had been favoured by God in being called to occupy the throne of Israel. He had been counselled and prayed for by the man of God—Samuel, but his self-will and disobedience had withered the fair tree of his early life, and now, in the closing scenes of his career, he is prostrate with despair, like a mighty monarch of the forest lying on the ground, which is rotting in its own leaves, and devoured by creeping vermin.

In Saul's despair we see a chain of three links, namely, sin is the cause of despair, despair leads to desperation, and sinful desperation is met by retribution.

I. SIN IS THE CAUSE OF DESPAIR.

Martensen, in speaking of the nature and essence of despair, says:

“Despair is the last result of sin, except an escape from this hell can be gained by the means of repentance. Despair is the essence and proper meaning of hell, wherefore the Inferno in Dante bears this inscription: ‘All hope abandon, ye who enter here.’ That sin not repented of must lead to despair is evident in those men who have made greater progress in the path of sin. The farther a man pro-

ceeds in this path, the more a secret despair moves within him. False hopes may be conjured up; but at the bottom of the soul there exists a secret hopelessness in regard to his own person and future."

We do not wonder at the "secret of hopelessness" in the case of Saul when we remember the hateful down-grade-ism of his vile conduct. He had impatiently "forced" himself to offer up sacrifice, when he ought to have waited for Samuel to do it (1. Sam. xiii. 8-14). He had acted in direct opposition to the Divine command, when he was told to utterly destroy Agag and the Amalekites, in sparing Agag and the best of the cattle (1. Samuel xv). He had been fired by the cruel fiend of jealousy when he heard the women of Israel singing the praises of David (1. Samuel xviii. 8). Twice He had endeavoured to kill David with the javelin as he played to him (1. Samuel xviii. 11; xix. 10), thus evidencing that he was under the baneful influence of hate. He had schemed to accomplish the death of David in making a diabolical condition ere he consented to the marriage of his daughter with him (1. Sam. xviii. 25), and he had further sought to kill David when he thought he was sick in bed (1. Samuel xix. 15). Saul crowned his evil course by slaying, through Doeg, eighty-five priests

and the inhabitants of the city of Nob (I. Samuel xxii. 18, 19), and he had hunted David as a sportsman hunts a partridge (I. Samuel xxvi. 20), on more than one occasion (I. Sam. xxiv. 2; xxvi. 2). And now the ghosts of his evil deeds haunt him, and the terrors of them "make him afraid on every side" (Job xviii. 11). What a sorry condition he is in! God has left him, Samuel is dead, and the Philistines are harassing him. There is no help in heaven, and no aid on earth, therefore, he resorts to hell in consulting the woman, the witch of Endor, who is in league with the devil.

Do we wonder that Saul is filled with despair? Like the character described by Milton, he carried a hell with him.

"Which way shall I fly,
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I flee is Hell—myself am Hell;
And in the lowest deep, a lower deep,
Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,
To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven."

Sin is the wood which causes the fires of hell to burn. Sin is the undying worm which feeds upon the vitals of the sinner. Sin is the sting which poisons the moral nature. Sin is the blight which destroys the fair tree

of the soul. Sin is the germ from which is hatched the ill-brood of despair, and makes what Herbert says—

“If thou dost ill, the joy fades, not the pains.”

II. DESPAIR LEADS TO DESPERATION.

What a strange and striking contrast is found in 1. Samuel xxviii. 3, 7. In the former passage we are told “Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits,” and in the latter he is asking “for a woman with a familiar spirit.” Thus sin leads a man to do when he is maddened by it, what he would never think of doing otherwise, and makes him say with one of Macbeth’s hired murderers—

“I am one, my liege,
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
Have so incensed, that I am reckless what
I do to spite the world.”

There was one Francis Spira in the history of the Reformation, who professed to be converted to Protestantism, but he was unchanged. He turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and then recanted the Gospel truths he had professed to receive. He had

no sooner done it than remorse seized upon him, and he seemed to hear a voice say to him, "Wretch, thou hast denied Me! Depart from Me!" He died hopeless. One who was a witness of his death said, "If all the students of Padua do not forsake all their books to gaze at this tragedy, their sensibilities must be exceedingly obtuse." Thus despair drove Francis Spira into the blackness of hopelessness.

Sometimes despair drives its victim further into the quicksands of iniquity, like the man who made the following blasphemous utterance: "Knowing," he said, "that I am predestinated to damnation, I will give diligence to make my election sure."

III. DESPERATION IS MET BY RETRIBUTION.

Saul's desperation led him to seek communication with the dead, and the dead predicted his coming doom. How solemn and heart-searching are the words of Samuel, as he reminds Saul of the reason of his being forsaken by God, and no wonder he was "sore afraid" as the knell of his coming punishment is rung out (I. Samuel xxviii. 15-20).

All this goes to illustrate that sin is the train which leads to the magazine of explosive material, which sends the soul to its de-

struction. No amount of the veneer of religious profession can hide the worm-eaten character of sin. One of the most vivid pictures of a lost soul, who is depicted as being a religious professor, but who loved the world, is given in the following, which is an imaginary description of Demas after death: —“ ‘Impossible! I a lost soul! I separated from hope and peace for ever! It is not I of whom the Judge so spake! There is a mistake somewhere! Christ, Saviour, hold my hand one minute to explain it! My name is Demas; I am Demas, not Judas! What! Eternal pains for me! Impossible! It shall not be so!’ And the poor soul struggles and wrestles in the grasp of the mighty demon which has hold of it, and whose every touch is torment. ‘Stop, horrible fiend! Give over. I am a man, and not such as thou. I have been taught religion; I have a cultivated mind; I am well versed in science and art. I am a philosopher, a poet, a hero; nay, I have received the grace of redemption. I have attended sacraments for years. Nothing, nothing which I have ever been, which I have ever seen, bears any resemblance to thee. So I defy and abjure thee, O enemy of man!’ Alas! poor soul! while it thus fights with that destiny which it has brought upon itself,

and those companions which it has chosen; the man's name perhaps has been solemnly chanted forth on earth; men appeal to his authority, quote his words, write his history as so comprehensive, so keen, so profound! Oh, vanity of vanities! What profiteth it? His soul is lost, O ye children of men!"

Far be it from me to say a single word which would generate despair in a single soul, for I know—

"There are dark hours of sadness, dark hours of
hopeless pain,
When thoughts akin to madness flash wildly through
the brain;
When nameless anguish presses the heart beyond
control,
And deepest gloom possesses the faint and trembling
soul;
And every prop seems taken from life's receding
shore,
And the mind, tempest-shaken, obeys the will no
more.
But who, from yonder heaven, pities each earthly
woe?
Who yonder cross hath given for every grief below?
Thine arms around it twining, to hope and prayer
give room,
For there a flame is shining to light thy path of
gloom.
An angel form advances, and leads thee to that strand
Whence thy delighted glances may see the Promised
Land."

“Yonder Cross’ is indeed the remedy “for every grief below.” For in the stream of Christ’s atoning blood, is a flow which can quench; in the thorn-crowned brow, emblem of the curse, is the pronouncer of heaven’s forgiving grace; in the marred form of God’s own Son, is the means of making believing sinners, sons of God; in the cold body of Christ as He lies in death’s grasp, is found the warm stream of God’s reconciling love; and in the cross of Christ we see the beacon of heaven’s grace pointing to the haven of eternal rest. Verily, we find in the atonement of Christ’s death the remover of sin’s penalty, the discharge from sin’s debt, the release from sin’s bondage, the breaker of sin’s power, the overthrower of hell’s design, the stopper of sin’s accusations, the cause of Satan’s defeat, the extractor of death’s sting, the crusher of self’s ambition, the inspirer of heaven’s song, the incentive to Christ’s service, the unveiling of God’s love, the channel of eternal blessing, the passport to heaven’s glory, the basis of grace’s action, the answer to justice’s claim, and the key to unlock heaven’s storehouse of promise.

TENTH NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF VICTORY.

Judges vii. 9.

THE promise of the Lord to Gideon regarding the host of the Midianites which had come to impoverish Israel, was, "I have delivered it into thine hand" (Judges vii. 9); as to the instrumentality which He would employ to effect this end, the word was, "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand" (Judges vii. 7). As the man recounted his dream to his fellow, of the barley cake overturning the tent, the latter replied, "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel, for into his hand God delivered Midian" (Judges vii. 14). The interpretation of the dream encourages Gideon to go to the three hundred of his fellows, and say, "Arise for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian" (Judges vii. 15); and the complete rout of the Midianites, Gideon's victory and its result, is summed up in the

following statement: "Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more; and the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon" (Judges viii. 28).

There are two things we notice, as associated with this night of victory: It was an undeserved victory, and an unusual victory.

I. UNDESERVED VICTORY.

Israel was in a sad plight! The nation was oppressed and impoverished by the Midianites. The cause of all the misery which had come like a plague, was, as the prophet declared, because the voice of the Lord had not been obeyed (Judges vi. 10). Disobedience to the Lord is the propagator of every ill which comes to man. Disobedience is the robber of blessing, as the bleached bones of Israel in the wilderness testify (Joshua v. 6). Disobedience is the sapper which undermines and shortens existence in this life, as may be gathered from the disobedient prophet slain by the lion (1. Kings xx. 36). Disobedience is the octopus which throws its tentacles around its prey, and holds it in its enslaving grasp, as we have illustrated in the carrying away of Israel into Assyrian captiv-

ity (II. Kings xviii. 11, 12), and Judah into Babylonian slavery (Jeremiah xxxii. 23, 24). Disobedience is the blight which covers the soul with shame, and makes it hide itself in confusion, as Jeremiah confessed (Jeremiah iii. 25). Disobedience indicates there is a traitor which has got possession of the inner being. George MacDonald makes the following remarks upon one of his characters, who had risen from being a schoolmaster to a laird:—

“The sinking of the schoolmaster in the laird seemed to work ill for the man, and good only for the land. I say seemed, because what we call degeneracy is often but the unveiling of what was there all the time; and the evil we could become, we are. If I have in me the tyrant, or the miser, there he is, and such I am as surely as if the tyrant or miser were even now visible to the wondering dislike of my neighbors. I do not say the characteristic is so strong, or would be so hard to change as by the revealing development it must become; but it is there, alive, as an egg is alive; and by no means inoperative like a mere germ, but exercising real, though occult influence on the rest of my character. Therefore, except the growing vitality be in process of killing these ova of

death, it is for the good of the man that they should be so far developed as to show their existence. If the man do not then starve and slay them, they will drag him to the judgment seat of fiery indignation."

Mark the soul-smarting words, "The evil we could become, we are." The disobedience in the life, is the working out of the degeneracy of the heart. When the works of the watch of the inner being are wrong, it will show itself on the dial of the life, by the hands being wrong too. When the poison is in the blood, the blotches will be on the skin. When the fountain of the being is coloured with the iron ore of evil through which it passes, the stream will bear a corresponding colour.

Disobedience is the motor power which generates the steam of misery. Israel found it so in the time of the Judges. The splinter of their wilful way caused their being to fester with misery (Judges ii. 2, 3). King Saul found to his sorrow that the mill-stone of his disobedience, dragged him down into the sea of despair (1. Samuel xv. 19-26; xxviii. 20). To refer yet again to the laird in George MacDonald's story. He describes his death-bed. The laird had been a miser in his life, and he clings in his death agony to a costly

gold and gemmed goblet. In his delirium he speaks to his godly wife, who had passed into the unseen, and whom he imagines he sees in the glory of heaven. He exclaims to her in his intense agony. "Take me with you. I will go with you. There! slip that under your white robe—washed in the blood of the Lamb. That will hide it—with the rest of my sins! The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife. Take it; take it; I should be lost in heaven without it! I can't see what I've got on, but it must be the robe of His righteousness, for I have none of my own! What should I be without it? It's all I've got! I couldn't bring away a single thing besides—and it's so cold to have but one thing on—I mean one thing in your hands! Do you say they will make me sell it? That would be worse than coming without it!"

The quotation shows that the laird had been orthodox in his belief, but how heterodox he had been in his heart and life. He imagines that he can cover the lust of his covetousness with the robe of Christ's righteousness. "Terrible!" you say. Yet how many there are doing a similar thing. The sepulchre of an unclean life, white-washed with the white-wash of the profession of be-

ing washed white, does not do away with the death and defilement of the hidden iniquity. The paste-jewel of church membership, does not give the holder the diamond of membership in the Church of the First-born. To be in the company of Christ, and hold what belongs to Him, as Judas did, does not make us partakers of His holiness, love, and truth.

II. UNUSUAL VICTORY.

The means which were to be employed in overthrowing the host of the Midianites, were, from a human standpoint, utterly unsuitable to accomplish the purpose. Think of what was employed and spoken of, to obtain, and which got the victory—three hundred men, a cake of barley bread, trumpets, pitchers, lamps or torches, broken pitchers, and the shout of “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon” (Judges vii. 6, 13, 16, 20)! A man of the world would say that these instruments were utterly inadequate and insufficient, but not so the Lord, nor the man of faith. The fact is, they demonstrate that the Lord uses the weak things to accomplish His great purposes.

As we read of the pitchers being broken, and the lights flashing forth, we can almost hear and see them, and they remind us of

Him who came into the world to save men, for the pitcher of His humanity has been broken, and the light of His love has flashed out in consequence. Again and again we hear the Lord Jesus speaking in the Psalms, and crying to His Father as the Broken One. In Psalm lxix., 20, 21, He says: "Reproach hath broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." And He also speaks in the language of the prophet Jeremiah: "Mine heart within Me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of His holiness" (Jeremiah xxiii. 9). Christ died from a broken heart. Heaven in its righteousness, hell in its fury, and earth in its hate, were against Him. See Him in Gethsemane coming again and yet again to His disciples, but no help from them did He gain.

"Backwards and forwards thrice He ran,
As if He sought some help from man;
Or wish'd, at least, they could condole—
'Twas all they could—His tortur'd soul.

Whate'er He sought for, there was none;
Our Captain fought the field alone.
Soon as the Chief to battle led,
That moment every soldier fled."

When the aged Simeon took the infant Christ in his arms, he said, "This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many" (Luke ii. 34). The victory which Christ has achieved in the breaking of His death, is suggested in the prophetic utterance of Simeon.

Christ has been to the fall of many in His death. Sin has lost its claim to the soul, death has lost its sting, and Satan has lost his power. A Christian working-man, named Timms, had a very wicked master, whose ridicule of all religion was sad to hear. Coming up to his old servant one day, he said, "Timms, I hear you're converted."

"Yes, praise the Lord."

"Can you tell me who's the devil's father?" said the master.

"I dunno as I can, but I can tell 'e who's 'is Master, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. He clean licked him when He had the fight with him; and, master, master, I can tell 'e who's the devil's servant: you be, master, and accordin' to my knowledge of him, you be servin' a bad master."

The truth that Christ has by His death, conquered him who had the power of death, is not sufficiently recognized. Christ has defeated the Midianitish host of hell; as the Holy Spirit says, He has stripped principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them by His cross, so that He is, as the old man said, Satan's master. Christ has crushed the head of him who bruised the heel of His humanity, He has stooped to death, but He stooped to conquer. Into the victory of Christ the believer enters; and in, and through Him, we have power over the enemy.

Christ is for the rising of many. Gideon not only effectively crushed the power of Midian, so that they lifted up their head no more in his lifetime (Judges viii. 28), but he also raised Israel up, so that the nation had quietness for forty years. In like manner, as long as the believer recognizes the Lord Jesus as the Living One, who is able to cope with any enemy which may arise, so long shall there be, not only deliverance from Satan's power, and quietness of soul, but the Lord shall raise us up to the plain of holiness of life, and keep us in the way of devoted love to Himself.

The whole secret of a victorious life is

found in knowing, as an experimental reality, the Lord Jesus as the personal Saviour of the life.

One was once asked the question, "How were you saved?"

"The Lord and I did it," was the reply. "You and the Lord!" exclaimed the friend; "what do you mean?" "Why, the Lord saved me, and I let Him."

The Lord's people may learn a lesson from the reply. To let the Lord do what He will in us, means our blessing, as we may discover from the following "lets":—

We are to let our light shine before men in a consistent life (Matthew v. 16); we are to let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in its santifying influence (Colossians iii. 16); we are to let the grace of God so salt our speech that it may impregnate all we say (Colossians iv. 6); we are to let the peace of Christ arbitrate in our hearts in the calm of its ruling (Colossians iii. 15); we are to let the manner of our life be worthy of the Gospel (Philippians i. 27); we are to let the mind of Christ be our example (Philippians ii. 5); and we are to let patience have her perfect work (James i. 4).

ELEVENTH NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF WEEPING.

II. Sam. xii. 16, 21, 22.

Young, in his Night Thoughts, says:—

“Lorenzo! hast thou ever weigh’d a sigh?
Or studied the philosophy of tears?
Hast thou descended deep into the breast,
And seen their source? If not, descend with me,
And trace these briny riv’lets to their springs.”

THERE is a good deal of philosophy in tears, if we study the tears mentioned in the Bible, for like every true philosophy, they explain the cause which gave rise to them. Thus Hezekiah’s tears were tears of prayer (II. Kings xx. 5); Esther’s tears were tears of solicitude (Esther viii. 3); Job’s tears were tears of anguish (Job xvi. 16-20); the woman weeping at the feet of Jesus, wept “tears of repentance” (Luke vii. 38); the tears of Paul were tears of love (Acts xx. 31); the tears of Esau were tears of remorse (Heb. xii. 17); and the tears of Christ were tears of suffering (Heb. v. 7).

In thinking of the philosophy of David’s tears, as he lay in self-abasement and self-

condemnation on the ground, we may notice three, among other things, which are associated with them.

I. REPENTANCE OF SIN.

While David's special plea is for the recovery of the child of his sin (II. Samuel xii. 16-22), methinks it was at this time, too, he uttered those memorable words of confession, which we have given to us in Psalm li., and when he passed through the experience described in Psalm xxxii. 3, 4. The lash of conviction is making him smart with bitterness of spirit. The many-sidedness of sin points at him with overwhelming condemnation, and makes him bow his head with shame and confusion. Uriah had been murdered, Bathsheba had been humbled, God had been dishonored, Israel had been reproached, the enemies of David were elated, David was defiled, his posterity marked, and death has seized the child of his passion. Verily, "Ill deeds are seldom single." They propagate faster than vermin in a hot bed.

David confessed he had sinned, and loathed himself in consequence. "I have sinned against the Lord," was his confession to Nathan (II. Samuel, xii. 13), and his heart-felt cry to the Lord (Psalm li. 4). The word

“sinned,” which David used, is a primary one, and signifies to miss or to lead astray. It is variously rendered. In Solomon’s prayer, in speaking of sinning against a neighbor, it is translated “*trespass*” (I. Kings viii. 31). “*Committed*” is the translation which is given in Ezekiel xvi. 51. The word is rendered “*offended*,” in recounting Abimelech’s protest to Abraham, because he had deceived him in saying Sarah was his sister (Genesis xx. 9). “*The harm that he hath done*,” are the words given for the word “sinned” (Lev. v. 16), in speaking of what the man had to do when he had trespassed in any holy thing, and he was directed to add a fifth to the thing he had to restore; and the same word is rendered “*miss*” in Judges xx. 16, in calling attention to the left-handed Benjamites, who could “sling stones at an hair’s breadth, and not miss”

Let us use these five translations, and apply them in five relations to David’s sin. He had, in sinning with Bathsheba, trespassed upon the domain of Uriah, like one who goes upon forbidden ground and steals the fruit. David committed an evil upon Uriah’s wife, by polluting the temple of her being with his adulterous act. He had offended the godly in Israel, as Nathan’s words suggest, when he says: “Wherefore hast thou despised the command-

ment of the Lord?" (II. Sam. xii. 9). David had done himself harm by his acts of iniquity, like one who digs a pit for another, and falls into it himself; and he had missed the opportunity in the time of temptation; to overcome and thus glorify God. David feels all this now. His sin, in all its naked hideousness, stares him in the face and humbles him to the dust. But there is, on his part, a true repentance. He hates the sin, because it is sinful, and not merely because he is found out. Herein lies the difference between true and false repentance. False repentance is sorry that the sin is discovered, and the consequence of it has to be borne, like the cringing and convicted criminal; who is overwhelmed by the sentence passed upon him, and cries out with remorse; or, like Lord Byron, who wrote the following epitaph to the memory of his thirty-third birthday: "Here lies in the eternity of the past, from whence there is no resurrection of the days, whatever there may be for the dust, the thirty-third' year of an ill-spent' life; which, after a lingering disease of many months, sunk into a lethargy and expired January 22nd, 1821, leaving a successor inconsolable for the very loss which occasioned its existence."

How different are the words of Rutherford's

confession. He says: "When I think of it, it is a wonder that Christ maketh not fire and ashes of such a dry branch as I am. I would often lie down under Christ's feet, and bid Him trample upon me, when I consider my guiltiness."

II. REMOVAL OF SIN.

How assuring and soul-restoring were the words of Nathan, as he says to David: "The Lord hath put away thy sin" (II. Sam. xii. 13). Newberry renders the word "put away," "caused thy sin to pass over." The Hebrew word is rendered "*Pass over*," in the margin of Exodus xiii. 13, in speaking of the first-born being set apart for the Lord. The same word is translated "*Pass away*," in Job vi. 15. The reason why the sins of the believer have passed away from him, and the winter of condemnation is over for him, is, because the sins have passed over to Christ, and He has borne them in His own body on the tree.

As we read the words of God's gracious mercy in removing David's sin from him, and look at them, yet again through the red glass of Christ's atonement, as they apply to us, we see in them the beating of God's heart of love for guilty man. One of the most touching and

thrilling books ever written, is George Mac-Donald's *Sir Gibbie*. The hero of the story, Sir Gibbie, is ever looking after the helpless, and caring for the needy. In piloting his drunken father home, in doing the work of the farm, in tending the sheep, in thinking of Janet in the cottage on the mountain, in educating his friend Donald in lifting Mrs. Creale from the gutter of drunkenness, and in rescuing those in danger, he is ever forgetting himself. But perhaps one of the most pathetic scenes described, is, when he finds a poor woman sitting on the steps of a bridge racked with a consumptive cough, seeking to hush a half-starved, whimpering infant to sleep. He takes the infant in his arms, and takes them to his home, supplies their need, and shelters them from the cold. Does not such an ideal action remind us of the Christ, who ever went about doing good? Yea, who is still fulfilling His gracious mission, for—

“He goes where out-door wretches walk,
And outcasts under arches creep ;
Among them holds His simple talk,
He lets them hear Him in their sleep.
They who His name have still denied,
He lets them see Him crucified.
While standing on the palace stone,
He is in workhouse, brothel, jail ;
He is to play and ball-room gone,
To hear again the beauties rail ;

With tender pity to behold
The dead alive in pearls and gold."

Oh, look at Christ, as the great embodiment of love! His tears are *tears of love*. Look at Him as He stands before the charnel house of man's iniquity, as he is dead in trespasses and sins, and weeps, as He did of yore at the tomb of Lazarus. His miracles are *acts of love*. As He of old broke the bread to supply the hunger of the five thousand, who were as sheep scattered without a shepherd, so He reminds us to-day of the great fact that He has been broken in death for us, that He might supply the hunger of our great need. His hands are *hands of love*. As He stretched them forth to save Peter from sinking into the water, when he cried out, "Lord, help me!" so He responds to the sinner's "Lord, save me!" by laying hold of him with His nail-marked hand, and thus delivers him from sinking into the lowest hell. His words are *words of love*. "I will, be thou clean," were the words of mercy which fell from the lips of Jesus, as the leper sought cleansing from his leprosy; and a corresponding "I will" comes to every soul, torn by the disease of sin, and fevered by the anguish of doubt. "Come unto Me," He says, "and I will give you rest." His death is the

manifestation of love. "It is in His passion," says Besson, "that the Saviour shows Himself, like the sun at midday, in all the ardor of His love."

We read of the soldiers who crucified Christ, that "sitting down they watched Him there." Shall we emphasize the last words, "*Him there.*" "*Him!*" "*There!*" We may well exclaim, "*Him!*" "*There!*" What do we find in "*Him there*"? We find the *key of love* to unlock heaven's store house of blessing. We find the *lever of love* to remove the hindrance—sin. We find the *panacea of love* to cure every disease. We find the *magnet of love* to attract to all good. We find the *motor of love* to move along the lines of Divine truth. We find the *wand of love* to transform life in all its spheres; and we find the *well of love* to satisfy the deepest longing of the heart.

III. RETURN OF SIN.

While God in His grace removed the guilt of David's sin, He did not overlook his sin. David had to bear the result of his sin, in that the sword should not depart from his house, and that he should reap in kind what he had sown (II. Sam. xii. 10, 11). This was fulfilled in his own life-time, for his own son, Absalom, defiled his father's concubines (II.

Samuel xvi. 22). In this we are taught, that God's acts of grace do not interfere with His laws of government. Let any man break the laws of nature, and the laws of nature will break him. Let any one sow the seeds of immorality, and he will reap a harvest of immorality in himself, and in his posterity. Further, we reap more than we sow. Everyone knows that a great deal more is reaped than is sown. David found this out. He sowed the seed of his sin in secret, but he reaped it openly. Every sin that goes forth from our being, will return with an offspring, when it comes back.

There are many examples in Scripture, of men having returned to them, the very thing they had premeditated or done to others. Haman erected a gallows for Mordecai, and was hanged upon it himself (Esther vii. 10). The men who got Daniel thrown into the lion's den were afterwards cast into the den themselves to their destruction (Daniel vi. 24). The men who cast the three Hebrew young men into the fiery furnace were burnt to death themselves (Daniel iii. 22). Jacob deceived his father, and he in turn was deceived by his sons, when they lied to him about Joseph's coat. Adoni-bezek cut off the great toes and thumbs of seventy kings, and he in turn had his own thumbs and toes cut off (Judg. i. 6, 7).

TWELFTH NIGHT.

THE NIGHT OF FAITHFULNESS

THE great want of the age is *principle*, that is, doing the right because it is the right thing to do. How many there are who are swayed by the winds of secondary things. The maxim of the commercial world is, not, is it right, but will it pay. Even in the religious world we find that there are many, who, instead of seeking to glorify God, are ever conserving their own interests and looking after their own comfort by pleasing themselves. Our conception of advancement in life is, as Ruskin says, "We want to get into good society, not that we may have it, but that we may be seen in it; and our notion of its goodness depends primarily on its conspicuousness."

Tennyson speaks of rising by trampling self beneath our feet. That certainly is God's method of rising, for it is those who abase themselves, whom He exalts. The doctrine of the world is the "survival of the fittest," but the very pith of the Gospel is the uplifting of (6, 7).

the unfittest, and the spending ourselves out in the accomplishment of the task.

We must not judge of a man by the surface of his outward life, we must dig down beneath the crust, and find the hidden springs of his nature. If we only find the rubbish heap of selfishness, which has been shot down into the valley of his nature, like the filling in of some vale with all kinds of rubbish, to get a foundation upon which to build, then there is wanting the very thing which shall make and mould the life. But when we discover in a man's character the springs of holy purpose and God-likeness, then we have the secret of his behavior, for it has its rise in the Lord Himself. The secret of all Daniel's greatness is found in the fact that he was a man who was in touch with the living God.

Daniel was like a *rock* in the stability of his firmness, unmoved by the waves of man's hate. Daniel was like a *star* in the clear shining of his testimony, shining out in the darkness of unbelief. Daniel was like a *palm tree* in the uprightness of his conduct, contrasting with the barrenness of the sandy lives of his contemporaries. Daniel was like a *gladiator* in the courage of his bravery, unabashed by the frowns of his enemies. Daniel was like a *lily* in the purity of his character, perfuming all

with the sweetness of his behavior. Daniel was like a *straightedge* in the carrying out of the king's business, for he saw that Darius suffered "no damage"; and Daniel was like a *priest* at the altar of incense, for he offered up, upon the golden altar of his faith, the sweet frankincense of his prayers.

I. THOSE WHO HAVE DONE ANY GOOD IN THE
WORLD HAVE BEEN MADE TO SUFFER FOR IT.

There are testimonies in sky, and earth, and sea, which proclaim the fact, as Shelley says:

"Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong;
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

Before any one can "teach in song," he must "learn in suffering." The Gethsemane of suffering ever precedes the glorious eastern morn of success. The wood must have the carpenter's chisel before the useful piece of household furniture can be produced. The diamond must have the making of its facets by grinding before there can be the flashing out of its brilliancy. The tree must feel the sharp cut of the pruning knife before there can be the bringing forth of much fruit. The cable must bear the severe strain of the testing by hydraulic pressure before it can be passed as sufficient to bear the stress of storm. The

Covenanters of Scotland had to suffer untold privations and loss of life before they obtained the liberties their children now enjoy. Before the wife can have the joy of motherhood, she must have the pangs of travail. In like manner, those who have, like the Lord Jesus, done any good, have found, in the doing of it, that they have suffered misrepresentation.

Daniel was a man who was, both in person and practice, a blessing. In his business relations, he saw the king "should have no damage" (Daniel vi. 2). As to his personal character, there was in him "an excellent spirit" (Daniel vi. 3). He was pre-eminently a man of God. As to his outward life, his enemies scanned it with eagle eyes, but they could find no flaw in it. No "error nor fault found in him" (Daniel vi. 4), was the verdict, after their examination. Yet for all this, this man "beloved of God" was hated by men. He was persecuted by those who are called again and again "these men" (Daniel vi. 5, 6, 11, 15, 24). They laid a trap for him, and they were successful in their evil design, with the result he was cast into the den of lions.

Let not God's saints lose heart because they meet with opposition and persecution. Let the flail of persecution but knock out the corn of grace, and God shall be glorified. Yea, the

very tribulation shall make for blessing, as Rist, a German poet once remarked, "The dear cross has pressed many songs out of me."

II. THE SAVING AND SUSTAINING POWER FOR ANY ONE, IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, IS FAITH IN GOD.

Daniel's faithfulness got him put into the lion's den, but God went with his servant, and not only did He shut the mouths of the lions, but He saw there was "no manner of hurt" upon him (Daniel vi. 23). And the reason of his preservation was, "he believed in his God" (Daniel vi. 23). God was to him a living Presence, and an Almighty Power, One who could, and who would step in and do something peculiar and extraordinary.

There are many things which faith in God does. I note three.

1. *Faith in God lifts a man above reason.* What would be the reasonable thing to expect, when a man is thrown to hungry lions? Why, that he would be torn in pieces and be devoured by them; but the man of faith has an assurance from God that he will be delivered, and his faith is honored. Reason says, "It is unexplainable, and I, therefore, cannot accept it." Colonel Ingersoll once said: "I do not attack a religion which rests

upon faith, for a religion which rests upon faith is above argument and reason." Such a statement is tantamount to saying: "Anything which I cannot explain, or which I cannot grasp with my reason, I will not accept." Such a statement is absurd, for there are many things that are facts that cannot be explained. For instance, John Locke, in speaking of creation, says: "My right hand writes while my left is still; what causes rest in one and motion in the other? Nothing but my will, a thought of my mind; my thoughts only changing, the right hand rests and the left hand moves. This is matter of fact which cannot be denied; explain this and make it intelligible, and then the next step will be to understand creation."

Man's carnal reason may exclaim, I cannot explain the mysterious operation which came upon the men who wrote the Bible. Man is not asked to explain it. The inspiration of the Bible is a *fact*, and when God says so, it is for guilty men to bow to the authority of its utterance, and not to question the validity and reliability of the speaker.

2. *Faith is based upon what God says.* We have no record of the Lord promising to deliver Daniel, but he may have been spoken to by audible voice, or the angel who was sent to shut the lions' mouths may have informed him.

Anyway, the method of God's action in saving and blessing now is by faith. Romans x. 8-10 gives us, in detail, the blessing which comes to those who receive the Word of Faith. A few days since, I visited one of the Lord's people. She was a widow, and in needy circumstances. I asked her if a load of coals would be helpful and acceptable, and if she had a place where she could stow them. I need hardly say she was most grateful, but the one thing which impressed itself upon my mind was, after I had promised her the coals, she rubbed her hands and chuckled, "Why a ton of coal will last me a long time!" In her mind's eye, she already saw the coals stowed away, felt the glow of them, and was enjoying the warmth they gave. Why? Because she believed the promise which I had given her. She took me at my word, and the coals were as good as hers already. Faith in God is the same. It is believing what God says, because He says it. For instance, here is a word from Christ: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Let an anxious sinner, feeling the burden of sin, rest upon the all-sufficient atonement of the Lord Jesus now, and as he does it, Christ's own word is his, that he is a possessor of eternal life. How does he know it? On

one ground alone—the Son of God says so, and His word is reliable.

3. *Faith counts upon God to do what could not otherwise be done.* How calmly and confidently Daniel says, “My God sent His angel, &c.,” as if he expected it would be so. One of the most striking and suggestive illustrations of faith in the Lord, appeared in *The Christian* some years since. “On New Year’s Day, 1884, a little boy and girl, aged six and four, were spending the day with a number of orphan children gathered into one of those homes, where so many neglected ones are being rescued and trained for Jesus. It was such a pleasant sight to see some hundreds of boys and girls sitting down to their New Year’s dinner, full of joy and happiness, then to follow them upstairs, where two large Christmas trees were bending under the load of a great variety of fruits, suitable for children of all ages. It was quite a task to dismantle the trees, and get all supplied with some little gift; then came the tea, with singing and recitations afterwards; and when it was time to go home, the two little children were thoroughly tired out.

Arriving at their own home, they got out of the cab, and as there was some difficulty in getting the door of the house opened, their mother

laid down her umbrella by the side of one of the porch pillars, and in the hurry of getting into the house, forgot to take it with her. The little ones got off to bed, and the next day, when they were going out, the umbrella was not to be found. Then their mother remembered that she had laid it down in the porch, and, of course, it must have been carried off by some passer-by.

At tea that evening, some mention was made of the lost umbrella, when the following conversation took place between the little girl and her mother:

“Mother, are you sorry that you have lost your umbrella?”

“Yes, dearie.”

“But father could get you a new one?”

“Yes, I know that; but mother would rather have her own one.”

“Well, mother, Jesus could easily bring back your own one, if He wants you to have it.”

Nothing further was said till bed-time. When the little girl was kneeling in prayer, her mother heard her ask: “Please, Jesus, put it into the man’s heart to bring back mother’s umbrella, and don’t let him keep it.” The little boy, hearing his sister pray, asked Jesus in somewhat similar words to bring it back, and then they both went happily off to bed.

The next day, when going out, the little girl said: "Mother, father must not get you a new umbrella, but you can take mine till yours comes back." That same evening, about nine o'clock, the bell rang, and when the servant opened the door, the lost umbrella, all dripping wet, fell into the lobby. Some one had laid it against the door and gone off; and on looking out, no one could be seen. The little ones were very happy in the morning when they heard of the answer to their prayers, and said: "Yes, we knew He would send it." Bring everything to Jesus; He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, the Hearer and Answerer of prayer.