



STRENGTH
AND COMFORT

FOR
THE CHILDREN OF GOD.



MRS YAPP



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AND

COMFORT

For the Children of God.

FOOTINGS FROM BIBLE READINGS

BY

MRS. YAPP.

"THEY THAT KNOW THY NAME WILL PUT THEIR TRUST IN THEE."
Psalm ix. 10.

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INTRODUCTION.



OUR “strength and comfort” depend entirely upon our knowledge of God and subjection to His will. If we know but little of Him, the devil is able to make us distrust His love, or grace, or power, or wisdom; and the result is anxiety and fear. And if we are not *subject* to His will we lose His smile, and oblige Him to withhold many indulgences from us.

Grace and peace are multiplied to us through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord (2 Peter i. 2); not only increased, but *multiplied*. He is so loving, so wise, so good, so patient, so gentle, so tender, that as we know Him, we are constrained to love and trust Him.

“It is His great delight to bless us!”

And in His amazing grace He brings out all His treasures of wisdom, love, and power, to meet our need, and enrich and satisfy our souls.

But we must not trust our own thoughts about the Lord. We can only learn to know Him through the written Word. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" But through the written Word, we may behold His glory as in a *mirror*. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) We can learn His *ways*, by carefully pondering over the record of His dealings with others; we can learn His *will*, by reading all the precepts and warnings which He has given us; and we can read His *heart*, by feeding upon the earnest pleadings, and ardent expressions, which so abound in the written Word.

"Every word of God is pure"—"as silver tried [or refined] in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." There is no exaggeration, no hyperbole, in that blessed book. We may trust it perfectly, and believe it implicitly. If we would steadily gaze into that perfect mirror of the heart of God, we should so learn to know Him, that our faith and love would grow exceedingly; and if we would humbly and diligently search out its hidden treasures, we should so discern His mind and will, that we should be able to unfold His thoughts about everything, and also prove that they are *His* thoughts by His own word.

But we must beware of twisting the word of God.

We should treat it fairly, and always read it in connection with the context; and also be careful to compare spiritual things with spiritual.

The devil even sought to beguile our Lord Jesus by partial quotation of the word of God; and this is one of his most successful snares for those who desire to please the Lord. How often, alas! has he thus bewildered and entangled devoted children of God, and not only marred their joy and weakened their souls, but also made them teachers of things which are not good!

Much of the teaching of the present day would lead us to trust to *internal* feelings, impressions, or emotions; but the Spirit of God always leads us to the written Word. "We walk by faith, and not by sight." "The question is *not*, "What do I feel?" or, "What do I think?" but, "What does God say?" "To the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

Again, the Lord would not have us wade through error to discover truth. The devil feeds our self-conceit by telling us *we* have power to discern truth from error; and in most cases the result is a tangled mess of erroneous thoughts, and consequently an uncertain walk and confused teaching. The Lord's command is, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction which causes to err from the words of know-

ledge." He would no more have us tamper with error than with poison ; and if we should refuse to drink poison as an experiment, how much more should we refuse to torture our souls with the deadly poison of perverted and distorted truth!

The Lord entreats us to "desire the sincere milk of the Word." He has written us "excellent things in counsels and knowledge," and would have us so "know the certainty of the words of truth," that they might be fitted in our lips, and we "might answer the words of truth to them that send unto" us. (Prov. xxii. 17-21.)

May He graciously use these few pages to minister "strength and comfort" to His children, by leading them into a fuller acquaintanceship with Himself, and teaching them to correct their thoughts about everything by His *written word*!



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THE FULNESS OF JESUS.

Read Job xxii. 21-30 ; John xvii. 3 ; 2 Peter i. 2 ; Phil. iii. 8.

THE offices of the Lord Jesus are so numerous, and His beauties so varied, that they cannot be reckoned up in order ; but the more we know of Him, the fuller our joy and the richer our peace.

1st. We receive Him as our SAVIOUR, and all fear of death and judgment should be at once removed.

2nd. We also need Him as our SHEPHERD, to tend and feed and care for us.

3rd. We ought to take Him as our EXAMPLE.

4th. Our oft-repeated and grievous failures make us need Him as our PRIEST.

5th. His patient, priestly service constrains us to serve and worship Him as LORD.

6th. When we own Him as Lord, He becomes our COMPANION.

7th. Companionship with Him empowers us to learn Him as our HUSBAND.

Oh, what a golden chain of truth! What treasures of precious and pleasant riches! (Prov. xxiv. 4.) Let us ponder a little on their fulness and sweetness.

1st. Our Saviour.

Sin is a very deadly thing. It not only deserves the wrath of God, but it is so defiling in its nature, that it unfits us for the presence of God. Thus we need *cleansing* as well as *atonement*. But even if our sins were put away and our souls completely cleansed, we should still be devoid of *righteousness*, and be naked and ashamed. Still more, we also need a new nature. We are so rotten at the very core, that nothing short of *regeneration* will do. We must be born again.

But, oh, the rich grace of our precious Lord! He took our place. He bore our sin, and gave Himself a ransom for us. His life for ours! His soul for ours! (Isa. liii. 10.) Oh, what a price He paid! He poured out His soul unto death, and thus obtained *atonement* (Rom. iii. 24, 25), *cleansing* (Rev. i. 5), *righteousness* (Phil. iii. 9), and *regeneration* (John iii. 3-5) for us.

1st. *Atonement*. "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvii. 11), and the precious blood of Christ is a perfect atonement for all our sins. Thus the holiness of God is completely met, and He can be just, and the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus. (Rom. iii. 22.)

2nd. *Cleansing*. The Lord Jesus Himself washes

us in His own blood, and makes us whiter than snow. (Ps. li. 7; Rev. i. 7.)

3rd. *Righteousness.* Our Lord Jesus has provided a beauteous, and glorious robe—a perfect, divine righteousness—which fits us for His own eternal glory. Christ, in resurrection, has become our federal Head, and all His perfections and beauty and moral glory are reckoned to us. We are so truly made one with Him, that we stand before God arrayed in His righteousness, to receive from the hands of God what Christ Himself deserves.

When Adam and Eve fell, the Lord God made coats of skin and clothed them; and they stood before God in the skin of the sacrifice which had been slain for their sin. (Gen. iii. 21.) Thus *we* stand before God in all the wrought-out perfections of our risen Lord, gloriously arrayed indeed; and shall we not rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory? (1 Peter i. 8.)

4th. *Regeneration.* By nature we are unfit for heaven, and totally incapable of fellowship with God; so that heaven would be no heaven to us unless we were born again. But the Lord Jesus imparts His own life to us. He makes us one with Himself, partakers of the divine nature; and thus we are made the real children of God, born out of God. This new nature has spiritual instincts, desires, and capabilities. “Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John i. 16); and the seed of every grace and beauty which fills our precious Lord is planted in us.

At first this new life is only in its infancy, and its manifestation may be feeble ; but if we will seek to walk with the Lord, each lovely fruit will be gradually developed, and we shall grow up into Christ in all things. Thus righteousness is not only imputed to us, but also planted in us. First we are *clothed* with it, and then it *springs out* of us. (Isa. lxi. 10, 11.)

Thousands, probably millions, depart to be with Christ very soon after their conversion, and there is no time for the development of this new life in them while living in this world. But having received these four precious gifts from Christ—atonement, cleansing, righteousness, and regeneration—they are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Let us now consider the Lord Jesus as

(2nd) Our Shepherd.

Oh, how tenderly He leads His sheep! How gentle, how gracious, how considerate He is. “He carries the lambs in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young.” (Isa. xl. 11.) He brings us out from the people, and feeds us in a good pasture. He makes us to lie down in a good fold (Ezek. xxxiv. 11–16), and leads us beside the still waters. (Ps. xxiii. 2.) He seeks that which is lost, and brings again that which was driven away. He binds up that which is broken, and strengthens that which is sick. Oh, what a cluster of rich and precious blessings!

Can we truly say, “The Lord is *my* Shepherd”?

Are we allowing Him to lead us? He never drives His sheep; and if we are proud and wilful, we must lose the joy and comfort of His shepherding. But He is faithful still. Ah! yes, so tender, so pitiful; and when He cannot walk with us, because of our waywardness, He still hovers over us, keeping His eye upon us, listening, waiting for the first cry for help, and ready in a moment to put forth His hand to deliver.

Our Shepherd always gives us good, fresh food. He leads us into good, fat pastures. Not poor food, but rich food, which will satisfy and make us glad. "Green pastures." Sheep pick out the young, fresh grass. So Christ will feed us with His own fresh-spoken words; His *present* tender, loving thoughts and feelings about us; fresh love flowing from His heart, fresh smiles gladdening us.

Do you thus feed upon the green pastures of His word? Have you enjoyed any of His smiles to-day? Have you read your Bible at His feet, looking up into His face, and, as it were, hearing the words flow from His gracious lips? If not, why not? Is your Shepherd dead, asleep, or tired of you? Then why should you eat stale, dry food? hay, instead of green pastures?

The manna would not keep. It soon bred worms and stank. God sent it down fresh from heaven every morning. And the Lord Jesus loves to lead us day by day to the exhaustless treasures of wisdom, grace and love, which are ever flowing fresh from Him.

Again, our Good Shepherd seeks to lead us up into the "high mountains" (Ezek. xxxiv. 14) of fellowship with God—into His very presence, into the secret of His tabernacle. If sheep feed upon low, damp, marshy land, they get foot-rot, and even worse diseases, so that in wet seasons farmers have sometimes lost nearly all their flock.

Dear child of God, *where* do you feed? Have your feet become rotten? Are you too lame to walk? Is disease and weakness creeping over you? If so, your soul has been feeding down in the poisonous marshes of this poor evil world, instead of feasting in your Father's presence. Oh, hear your Shepherd's voice, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength; put on thy beautiful garments. . . . Shake thyself from the dust." (Isa. lii. 1, 2.) "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." (Cant. ii. 13.) He will heal all your diseases, bind up all your wounds, and restore health and strength to you. Yea, more, He will lead you into the good fold, where you may lie down and rest safely.

The fold is mentioned in Ezek. xxxiv. 14. The eastern fold is surrounded by high walls and fires to protect the sheep from the wolves; and there is an inner fold where some of the sheep are put. The fold is a place of safety, comfort, and warmth. The Lord delights to see us come there and rest whenever we are weary and sad. (Ps. cxvi. 7.) It is His secret presence-chamber (Ps. xxvii. 5, 6; xxxi. 19, 20; xci. 4); and who can tell the joy, the peace, the shelter of that holy place?

We may nestle there, in the very bosom of Christ Himself, covered with His feathers (Ps. xci. 4), and take our place as His loved ones, His joy, His darling. What can harm us there? The very wings of the Almighty are our defence. Truly we may lie down, and none shall make us afraid. (Prov. iii. 23, 24 ; vi. 22.)

Oh, let us heed our Shepherd's voice! Let us give Him our hand, and be subject to Him. He will lead us in "paths of righteousness," in "ways of pleasantness" and "paths of peace;" and should the way be difficult, He will both go *before* and *with* us, and uphold us every step. He will feed us with the goodness of His house, and satiate our souls with fatness. (Jer. xxxi. 12-14.)

Let us now consider Him as—

(3rd) Our Example.

God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. (Rom. viii. 29.) He cannot be satisfied with any lower standard. He delights exceedingly in His beloved Son ; and He is working in us, and will not rest until He has made *us* what He can perfectly delight in. Now is not this a glorious prospect?

He entreats us to be fellow-labourers together with Him ; to purify ourselves even as Christ is pure (1 John iii. 3); to measure everything we do or say by the words and ways of Jesus ; to seek to be holy even as He is holy (1 Peter i. 15, 16)—holy in thought, feeling, desires, acts, words, deeds, &c., *separated unto God.*

Our Lord Jesus has trod the path before us. He took the place of perfect subjection to, and dependence upon, His Father. We hear Him say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." (John iv. 34.) "I live by the Father." (vi. 57.) "I do nothing of myself . . . I do always those things that please Him. I seek not mine own glory." (viii. 28, 29, 50.) "I speak not of myself." (xiv. 10.) "I delight to do thy will." (Ps. xl. 6.)

His whole life went up to heaven as a sweet smelling sacrifice; and if we will follow in His steps, our common every-day things of life may also all go up to heaven as a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God. (Rom. xii. 1.) Now is not this worth labouring for?

True, it will not be all joy. Our constant failure will lead to sorrow of heart, and humble confession before God; and as we measure ourselves by Christ, our high thoughts will be brought down, and our self-sufficiency will melt away.

If we are satisfied with ourselves, it proves that we are not walking closely with Him. It is the light that makes manifest, and if we habitually study the Lord Jesus as our Example, we must increasingly discern our unlikeness to Him.

He has left us an example how we should walk and act in the family, in the business, in the world, and towards God (1 Peter ii. 21-23); and the slightest deviation from this spotless life is *sin*. How this cuts at the root of sinless perfection.

There need be no great besetting sin, but little weeds will be continually cropping up, and they are *sin*. Thus self-sufficiency and pride are effectually kept under.

But, oh! the blessing, the rich, full blessing, which will be ours as we grow up into Christ. Oh, the bliss, the unspeakable bliss, of being filled with the fruits of righteousness! To be meek and lowly, patient, gracious, loving, faithful, as Jesus was!

4th. Our Priest.

The more we take Christ as our Example, the more we need Him as our Priest. The sense of sin and failure oftentimes comes over us with bitter, bitter poignancy, especially when there are results we cannot alter, or when in some way or other we have injured others. But the priesthood of the Lord Jesus is the sovereign balm for every wound. It soothes and comforts, calms and strengthens, and sends us on our way rejoicing.

In olden days the high priest wore a golden plate with "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" engraved thereon; and we read: "It shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the children of Israel . . . that *they* may be accepted before the Lord." (Exod. xxviii. 36-38.)

Thus all our iniquity rolls upon Christ, and is atoned for with the precious blood once shed; so that we continually stand accepted in His perfect righteousness.

But, oh! the matchless grace of our blessed Lord.

Think of the floods of iniquity, transgression, and sin which have continually poured forth from His redeemed people. Think of the wilfulness, pride, and ingratitude which have tried and pained Him week after week, month after month, for well-nigh six thousand years. Oh, what a drain upon His patient, forbearing, and faithful love! And yet He never wearies of His priestly work. Ah, no; He is the true "minister [servant] of the sanctuary," and is continually occupied for us. (Heb. iv. 14-16; vii. 25-28; viii. 1-6; ix. 11-15, 24.)

He sits as a Priest upon His throne (Zech. vi. 13), and makes reconciliation for our sins. (Heb. ii. 17.) He makes and keeps us clean, and brings us near to God. He makes us happy and at ease in our Father's presence; and, as our great Melchisedec, He brings forth bread and wine, and feasts us with the fatness of His house. (Heb. vi. 20; vii. 17.)

As our Priest, He also presents our fruit and gifts to God. (Deut. xxvi. 1-11; Heb. v. 1; xiii. 15, 16; 1 Peter ii. 5.) He gathers up all the fruit (Cant. v. 1) which we bring forth from morning to night; He does not suffer any of it to fall to the ground or be forgotten. He treasures up every outcome of love, or faith, or meekness, or patience; every little act of self-denial or self-sacrifice, every effort to do His will; and with delight and joy He feasts on it with our Father and our God.

On the other hand, He must be truthful in His service; and though He will make the very most of all our obedience, and love, and praise; yet He

can only present that which really flows from us. Oh, who would not set his heart upon continually yielding the Lord Jesus a rare and lovely basket of first-fruits?

Look up, dear child of God, and see your living, loving Priest thus occupied for you! See what a wonderful place you fill—how important your every act, your words, your ways! Your thoughts all touch the heart of Christ. You *can* be such a joy to Him. If you but seek to do His will, He rests in His love, and joys over you with singing. (Zeph. iii. 17.) But if you are wilful, careless, or disobedient, you grieve and shame Him. Your sins all roll upon Him. He will not disown or cast you off. Ah, no; He puts them all away, but they deeply pain His heart.

Oh, will not such love, such grace, constrain you to live in such a way that henceforth His priestly service for *you*, may be one of constant joy and gladness, and not of grief to Him?

Again, “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” (Heb. vii. 25.) Every word, and thought, and act of the Lord Jesus is sweet incense to God. It delights and gratifies Him; and He loves to give Jesus continual fresh tokens of His fond approval. Our precious Lord is exalted far above all power and glory. He needs nothing for Himself; but He brings *us* near—the poor and needy ones—and asks for blessings for us. He asks for blessings which we are unconscious that we need, and also for blessings which we forget or neglect to ask for

ourselves. Thus unnumbered mercies flow down to us—all the fruit of His precious intercession.

Surely such boundless grace will constrain us to fall down before Him, and gladly say He shall be

(5th) Our Lord.

To receive Jesus as my Lord, is to be subject to Him in everything; to take His *written* word as my rule and guide in every minutia of life; to let Him be Lord of every thought and feeling, desire and act. It implies a thorough surrender of will, and a determination to obey Him at all costs. It is mockery to call Him Lord, unless I am prepared to do His will. (Ps. xlv. 10, 11.)

Self-will, self-seeking, and self-glorying must fall before Him. We put *Him* first, and *self* second. We prefer *His* gratification, *His* glory, *His* gain, to our own; and thus the roots of sin are weakened. Our one aim will be to get something for Jesus—souls for Jesus, fruit for Jesus, love for Jesus, glory and praise for Jesus.

As our Lord, He gives commandments, precepts. But He is so good, so kind, that He never gives a harsh command; He is so wise, that He never makes a mistake; and so tender, so considerate, that He always gives all needed help. He is the meek and lowly One; the gentle, patient One. There is no resentment, harshness, nor roughness in Him; no impatience. He never keeps the slightest feeling of displeasure in His heart; seventy times seven He will forgive and receive us gra-

ciously, and be ready to help and strengthen us again.

Do you long to be thoroughly submissive to Him, and to gratify His slightest wish, and yet find it difficult to give up your own will? But He *loves you*; He loves you intensely, and only wants to bless you. He is all-wise, and *you* are foolish. *You* do not know what is good for you. He is longing to gratify you, and will indulge you to the utmost in anything which He knows will not hurt you. If He says, "Do not touch that," it is because it is poison to your soul; or, "Do not go there," it is because it would injure you. And He desires to save you from pain and make you supremely happy.

If you will only believe this *certain* truth, it will break down your will, well-nigh without a struggle.

He is worthy! worthy indeed of all power and glory; for He will only use it to enrich and bless us. Worthy to be exalted as Lord of every thought and feeling; for He will lead us in the good and right way, and compass us about with songs of deliverance. If we receive Jesus as our Lord, He will be able to be

(6th) Our Companion.

How wonderful that the Lord Jesus should wish to have us always with Him! To think that He cares for companionship with us! that He is ready and willing to be our companion all day long—in the household, in business, in cares and anxieties,

in everything we have to do or see to! True, He cannot go with us into sin of any kind; and so we lose His company unless we are subject to Him.

If we keep company with Him, we may continually *enjoy* His presence—His conscious presence, and smile; and *use* His strength and wisdom. We may realize His presence, and yet be too much occupied to talk to Him. How often has it been thus with an earthly friend? You are in the same room, and too busy to talk to her; still you are conscious of her presence, and at any moment can turn to her for help or counsel.

May we learn thus to abide with Jesus, and then how sweet and real will be those words, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Isa. xli. 10.) Yes, we shall get His strength; we shall know His upholding power.

When thus walking with Jesus, how easy and natural it is to cry out for help! A temptation comes, a sin arises—you look up, and just say, “Help, Lord!” and at once the needed grace flows forth from Him, and you are more than conqueror.

The flesh within us, urged on by the devil, is too strong for us; and if we fight in our own strength, we are sure to fail. But Christ is far stronger than the devil and our old nature combined; and so if

we get His help, we prove we can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us. (Phil. iv. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 9.)

Again, thus walking with Jesus, we enjoy *His smile*. We can look up in His face, and know that He is pleased with us. He reads our hearts, and accepts our desire and effort to do His will; and in His tender love and rich compassion makes every allowance for all our weakness.

His wisdom too—ah yes, when close to Him, He will surely instruct and teach us in the way we should go. (Ps. xxxii. 8.) He will be our Counsellor, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, will not err (Isa. xxxv. 8), if he will only cleave to Christ. Oh for the loving, subject heart that could not rest away from Christ; that habitually walks with Him, and thus learns to know Him as

(7th) Our Husband!

The Church has been chosen by God to be the eternal Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ—His companion, His helpmeet, His delight, His joy. We hear God say, “It is not good that the man should be alone.” (Gen. ii. 18.) And the Church is being formed and trained by God that it may be “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” (Eph. i. 23.) Wonderful, amazing truth! *He* creates, sustains, and fills everything; and yet His purpose is to make *us* capable of yielding fruits which will gratify and satisfy His own heart to all eternity: not so much by our being great, or doing great things, but

by the unceasing outflow of a grateful, clinging, and adoring love.

Such love is not natural to us; it must first flow out of God *into* us, and we can only give it back as we receive it from Him. "We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.) This love will only increase and grow as we enter into and enjoy *His* love. It is a *responsive* fruit, and therefore He entreats us to *continue* in His love (John xv. 9)—to live in it, to bask in its sunshine, and be rooted and grounded in it. (Eph. iii. 17.)

The Lord Jesus loves *us* with an *enduring, faithful* love. The waters of sin cannot quench it, neither can the floods of iniquity drown it. (Cant. viii. 7.) Nothing can dim or deaden it.

It is also an *ardent* love. He loves us even as the Father loves Him. (John xv. 9.) Picture the ardent, fervent, intense, fond love with which the Father gazes upon Christ. How He delights in His perfections and beauty! how He enjoys His company! how He revels in His love! What pleasure He takes in enriching Him! And such is the love of Christ to *you*, dear child of God.

He loves you with an intense, fond, personal love. He gazes on you with pleasure (Cant. iv. 1-5); and cannot rest when you are at a distance from Him. (Cant. ii. 10-15; v. 2-4.) He *wants* your love; He values it (Cant. iv. 8-15), He craves it, and takes immense pains to win it; He seeks to draw it out, and treasures it up and remembers it. (Cant. v. 1; Jer. ii. 2.)

It is a kindly, genial love, which delights to see us bright and happy—"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." (Phil. iv. 4.) He would cheer us when dispirited—"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." (Isa. xl. 1.) He would deliver us when we are oppressed—"I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people . . . and am come down to deliver" (Acts vii. 34); and would supply our every need according to His own riches in glory. (Phil. iv. 19.)

We never *need* be poor and needy; for we are married unto Christ, and all His resources are ours, and He delights to see us use them.

We never *need* be weak; for Christ is our strength, and He is always ready to uphold and help.

We never *need* be lonely; for He always delights to have us come *with* Him (Cant. iv. 8), and loves to see our face and to hear our voice (Cant. ii. 14), and He is ever at leisure to commune with us and bless us.

We never *need* be sad and weary in heart; for He has provided a blessed resting-place, where we are always welcome, and where He will soothe and comfort us. (Cant. ii. 3-6.)

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast;
There, by His love o'ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest."

Oh, may we daily prove the reality of this blessed rest, this full provision for all our need! If wo

thus learn to use and enjoy our precious Lord as our Husband, we shall never be carried captive by the devil; his power will be broken indeed. We may possibly slip, or be overtaken for a moment; but we shall quickly recover ourselves, and prove the truth of those words: "When my foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." (Ps. xciv. 18.)

Go on in sin? Impossible! Our whole being would turn from it. Be careless about grieving Him? Ah, no! If we thus believe and enjoy Christ's love as our Husband, our joy will be to give Him pleasure, and the one object of our lives to do His will. He is indeed a satisfying portion, a goodly heritage; and when we thus learn His fulness, *our will is yielded*, the *struggle* ceases, and we no longer ask, "Which shall I please, myself or Christ?"

I did not say there would be no *effort*. There will be continual *effort*, because we shall always be striving to bring forth more fruit. But the struggle ceases. The heart is satisfied, the will yielded, and you walk on with Him, delighting in *His* smile, using *His* strength, and conscious that you are pleasing Him. Happy indeed is that people that is in such a case. (Ps. cxliv. 15.)

2 Cor. iv. 10, 11 signifies a deep inwrought sense of the sufferings of Christ, so filling us with grateful love, that we seek to have the very life of Jesus manifested in our *mortal* bodies.

“GOOD WORKS.”

EPIHESIANS ii. 10.

THE Lord has marked out our pathway for us, and nothing comes to us by chance. We are here at school, to be fitted for our future position in heaven. Our great lesson is to grow like Jesus.

“Like Him in faith, in meekness, love,
In every beauteous grace.”

These fruits are sown in our hearts as *seed*, and need very careful culture; and every little trial in daily life may be turned into an opportunity of cultivating one or other of these lovely fruits. The Lord has ordained our varied circumstances for this very purpose. They are like so many daily lessons. One hour a lesson of meekness, then one of obedience, then of courage, then of self-sacrifice, &c.

If we are wise we shall hail our lessons, and instead of fretting because they are painful or disagreeable, just make the most of them, and try to grow up into Christ as fast as we can. Our future and eternal personal glory, beauty, and capability, depend upon the progress we make here. Who would mind a little extra suffering for this little while, when the result will be exceeding and eternal gain?

The Blood. In scripture the blood of Christ implies all the laid up value, and abiding efficacy of His finished work.

DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN.

1 CHRON. xi.

MOST of the mighty acts of valour recorded in this chapter were performed when Saul was king, and the rewards were given when David came to the throne.

Saul is a type of self-will ; and many of the Lord's children allow their own will to oppress and hinder them from coming out to our true David, and seeking to do some mighty acts for Him.

Verses 4-9. Joab believed in David as the anointed king of Israel, but he always sought his own glory. He obeyed when it suited his own ends, and when he could secure position for himself (*v.* 6); but he made no sacrifice for David, and cared not how much he grieved him. Mark his conduct in respect to Abner (2 Sam. iii. 20-29), Absalom (2 Sam. xviii), Asahel (2 Sam. xix. 13 ; xx. 5-10), and Adonijah (1 Kings i. 5-8).

He was a naturally wise man, and did everything for *self*. He had his reward while he lived, and died a shameful death. (1 Kings ii. 28-34.) Let us look to ourselves. Are we like Joab? Are we working for self or for Christ? Are we seeking our reward *here*? If so, our works will be burnt up, and ourselves saved so as by fire. (1 Cor. iii. 11-15.)

Some of the mighty acts recorded in this chapter are beyond our power, but that which David valued most of all is within our reach. We cannot lead

three hundred people to Christ in one day (*v.* 11); nor recover some lost truth to the Church of God (*vv.* 12–14); but we can be like the three mighty men mentioned in verses 15–19.

They had intense personal love to David. He *longed*—and they could not bear that he should long for anything he could not have. He could have done without that special water; it was not an actual necessity to him; but *he longed*—and they “brake through the host of the Philistines” to get it for him.

The Philistines typify the natural evil of our hearts; and if we would be a joy to Christ, we must determinately resist it all. We can bring Him something which will cost us a great deal; something which He longs for, something which He *could* do without, but which He values greatly.

Oh, how He does value the love which will go through anything to gratify Him, and which seeks nothing for itself! He longs for self-sacrificing, devoted *obedience*; a heart that says, “I do not care what it costs me; the Lord wishes it, and I will try and do it.” People may say, “The thing is so small, it cannot matter; or it will cost you so much; or it will be of so little use to others, that it is not worth the trouble.” But the loving heart says, “He longs for it, and I will do it for *Him*.”

David well knew the time was coming when he would drink to the full of the water of Bethlehem; *but he longed for it then*. So there is a time coming when our Lord Jesus will be satisfied to the full with

the grateful, responsive love of His redeemed ones ; but *He longs for it now*. Let us seek to gratify Him. The devil may tell us it is not worth much, that it is only water ; but He accepts it joyously. He counts it as wine, the best wine, and delights to drink it with His Father in heaven.

David could not protect his men while they were fetching the water for him ; but though we may have a host of Philistine foes, both within and without, to hinder us, we need not fear ; our precious Lord will take care that no real evil happens to us.

Nor will He disappoint us, as David did these mighty men. I believe he greatly failed in pouring *all* the water out before the Lord. He should have drunk a little of it himself, and shared it with the Lord. In pouring it out to the Lord, he treated it as strong drink, the best wine, a drink-offering (Num. xxviii. 7-14), good enough to be presented to God ; but it must have pained them intensely, and proves a want of due consideration for their feelings. True, when he came to his kingdom he put them *first*, and took them into his inner circle, and made them his chosen companions (*vv.* 21-25) ; but at the time it must have disappointed them sadly.

Our Jesus will never treat us like this. He knows exactly how to repay us for our love ; He accepts all our poor efforts to gratify Him. We may count them but water ; but He esteems them as strong wine, and presents it as something very

choice to His Father, and joyously drinks it *with* Him.

This is our highest calling, our highest office—to gratify the heart of Jesus, to satisfy Him, to yield Him “royal dainties.” What does it matter what it costs us, if we only get the consciousness that He comes into the garden of our hearts, and gathers His myrrh with His spice, and eats His honeycomb with his honey, and drinks His wine with His milk? (Cant. v. 1.) Is not this repayment a thousandfold for all the self-sacrifice, self-denial and effort, which these fruits may have cost?

And then when He comes to receive us to Himself He will give us the sweetest, richest recompence, even a place of special nearness to Himself, of special companionship with Him for ever, and special power of ministering to Him and gladdening Him.

STEWARDSHIP.

“**E**VERY one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Rom. xiv. 12.) Salvation is the free gift of God through Christ Jesus our Lord; “not of works, lest any man should boast.” But after we are saved we are no more our own; we are bought with a price, and everything we have belongs to Christ.

Thus we are *stewards*, and responsible to Him for the use we make of everything He commits to us.

Health, wealth, time, strength, influence, position, powers of mind, &c. &c., are all so many talents, of which we shall have to give an account in the day of Christ; and our eternal position and capabilities, will depend upon the way in which we use these talents.

We have no hard Master to deal with. He knows exactly how much He has committed to us, and it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

If He has given us *money*, we are responsible to use it for Him; and if we are unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon, He will not trust us with the true riches, nor make us eternal stewards. (Luke xvi. 2-11; xix. 24-26.)

So with *time*. If the Lord has so ordered for us that we have our time at our own disposal, He asks for our time. We have no right to spend any of it merely for self-pleasing. It is the *Lord's*, and should be laid out most carefully and industriously in His service.

So with *strength*. It should be taken care of and used for Him; not wasted, but husbanded and spent for Him.

So with *influence, position in life*. All may be used for *Him*. They *belong* to Him, and we are *robbing* Him, if in any way we use them to exalt and glorify ourselves.

Mental gifts and powers the same. If we use them for self, to get praise from man, we are

wasting our Lord's goods, and we shall be eternal losers.

Let us judge ourselves, our circumstances, our powers, and see whether we are being good stewards; whether the Lord will be able to say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant;” and if not, let us gird our loins at once, and seek henceforth to spend and be spent *for Him*. We have only a little while left. Let us make the most of it, and see how much time, strength, money, influence, powers, we can send up to heaven. (1 Tim. vi. 17-19.)

“I WILL SEND THE HORNETS BEFORE
THEE.”

Exod. xxiii. 28; Deut. vii. 20; Josh. xxiv. 12.

THE Lord promised to send the hornets among the children of Israel as a blessing. His object was that their half-conquered enemies might thus be driven from their hiding-places, and be destroyed, instead of being allowed to increase secretly. Hornets would typify anything which reveals to us some sin which hides itself from us in some corner of our hearts.

New trials or surroundings often bring out a fresh manifestation of some sin which we had hoped we had conquered, and we are prone to think the circumstances have caused it; but no, they only *revealed* what was in us.

34 "I WILL SEND THE HORNETS BEFORE THEE."

If you fill a sponge with water you cannot squeeze milk out of it; and even when you think it is dry, you can often get a little more water by extra pressure. Thus when we are trying to please the Lord, He often brings some extra pressure upon us, that the secret remains of some old besetting but half-conquered sin, may be brought to light, and we may again drag it into the presence of the Lord, and hew it in pieces before Him. (1 Sam. xv. 33.)

We only get true victory over sin by thus hewing it to pieces. As we examine it in His presence we find that it is foolish, injurious to ourselves and others, despicable and mean, abominable and loathsome, ungrateful and hateful. This enables us to cast it from us, or trample it beneath our feet. Let us thank the Lord for the hornets, and receive them as a token of His approval.

In Isa. lxi. 10, righteousness is spoken of as a *robe*; in verse 11, it is spoken of as *seed*; and in lxii. 1, we read that Christ will not rest until it *shines forth*.

Thus righteousness is *put upon us* as a garment, *sown* in our hearts as seed, and the Lord Jesus earnestly desires and labours to see it developed and *perfected in us*; and when it shines out in our lives, we become a *crown of glory* to Him, and He is able to delight in us. (vv. 3, 4.) Is not this worth labouring for?

THE LIGHT OF THE BODY IS THE EYE.

WE have no light in our natural body ; it all comes from outside, and we must keep our eyes open if we desire light. The eye is the window of the body, and lets in the light ; and if we shut our eyes we are instantly in darkness, however much light there may be around us.

So is it spiritually. We have no light of our own, and can only see as we look outside ourselves to Christ. He is the true Light, and we must keep our eye upon Him, asking what He thinks, what He says, and what He would do. A single eye seeks to see everything as Christ does, and thus our whole being becomes "full of light" (Matt. vi. 22); which means, that while the eye of our soul is fixed upon Christ we see clearly, even as when our eyes are open, the bright shining of a candle gives us light. (Luke vi. 34-36.)

An evil eye is one that turns away from Christ—the *light*—and gazes into darkness, and thus gets deceived by Satan's false lights, and led captive by him at his pleasure. Truly such an one walks "in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth." (John xii. 35.) The devil is always seeking to deceive and ensnare us, therefore let us take heed to the warning, "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." Wilful sin brings darkness by blinding our eyes, and then how great is that darkness.

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST.

Read 1 John 1.

THE fourth verse is the key-note to this epistle: "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." This joy is the fruit of fellowship with the Father and the Son. John had proved it for himself; he knew its sweetness, it satisfied his heart, and therefore he longed to lead others into it.

"That which was from the beginning"—that which has been always true of Christ, but which we only enjoy as we learn to know Him. It is not enough to hear about Him; we need to see Him with the eye of faith; to fix our earnest gaze upon Him; to read His ways, His heart, His feelings, as shown in His life down here. Still more, we need with humble, reverent hands to handle Him, to make Him our own, to lay hold of Him for ourselves, and enjoy Him.

We have heard of His love; we have seen it; but how much have we gazed upon it? how much of it have we handled, and taken into our own hearts? How much of His tenderness, His fondness, His fulness? Hearing will make us glad for a season, but it will not satisfy, nor make us strong, unless we lay hold of the truth, and hide it in our hearts.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." We need not wait for full experience

of any truth before we tell it to others, but may speak of that which we have heard, and know to be verily true. "We preach *not ourselves*," nor our own experiences, "but Christ Jesus the Lord." (2 Cor. iv. 5.)

"*That ye also may have fellowship with us.*" John desires to share all his good things with us.

We may consider fellowship in two ways :

1st. *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ.*" (1 Cor. i. 9.) The fellowship here spoken of is partnership. When we were converted, God put us into partnership with the Lord Jesus—an eternal partnership, in which He made us sharers of all His treasures ; to share and share alike with Him in everything He has.

He has made us very rich, and wants us to try and live up to our spiritual income. The only limit is, How much can we use? We may draw, and draw, and draw ; we cannot exhaust His resources. If we want anything, we need only ask, "Has Jesus got it?" and go and draw it from Him. "My God shall supply all your need." (Phil. iv. 19.) "The Lord will give grace and glory." (Ps. lxxxiv. 11.) The measure of the supply is not according to our faith or obedience, but "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

We should think a person very foolish who was partner in a large firm, and entitled to £2000 a year, if he only drew 10s. a week, and lived in

comparative poverty. And, oh, how foolish are we, who are in partnership with the Son of God, if we do not draw out of His fulness according to our need. His treasures of wisdom, knowledge, strength, grace and love, are *all* for us. We have only to go and draw.

We *need* not lack anything. We may dwell in the secret place of the Most High. (Ps. xci. 1.) We may be beautifully clothed with the fruits of the Spirit. (Col. iii. 12-14.) We may be richly fed with the goodness of His house. (Ps. lxxv. 4.) We may be strengthened with all might according to His glorious power. (Col. i. 11.) We may ride upon the high places (Deut. xxxii. 13), and enter into His presence triumphantly, rejoicing and glorying in Him. (Isa. xxv. 10.)

Oh for the living, fervent faith, which will rest with nothing short of full and present possession and enjoyment of these our treasures!

2nd. "*Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son.*" (v. 3.) The fellowship here spoken of implies companionship. It is possible to enjoy partnership without companionship; to use some of the riches of Christ without having much of His company.

But the Lord desires our company. He wants to see our face, to hear our voice, to have us with Him, near Him. He not only welcomes us into His presence, and delights to see us feasting there, but is also ready to come forth with us wherever we go, and help us in everything we do. (Cant. vii. 11, 12.)

But Christ can only have fellowship with us in proportion as our thoughts and feelings are brought into unison with His. The natural thoughts of our hearts are only evil continually (Gen. vi. 5), and they all need correcting. We must go into His presence and sit down quietly there, and get our thoughts righted, before we can enjoy this constant companionship with Christ. We must read His word at His feet, looking up in His face, and desiring to know what He says about our daily duties, cares, sorrows, pleasures, shopping, relations, friends; our work for Him; our expectations, hopes, longings. And, oh, when He speaks, let us take care that we answer not again!

He would have us at ease in His presence, and thus we shall prove the mighty transforming power of intercourse with Him. He will not deal roughly with us—ah! no—but with His own gentle, persuasive, soothing grace, will gradually teach us His mind and will, and enable us to think and feel about everything as He does.

We shall then be “agreed” with Him (Amos iii. 3), and wherever we go, we can take Him with us; whatever we do, we can have His help; we can lean upon Him (Cant. viii. 5) and draw from His fulness, and prove that His grace is sufficient for us.

Oh the joy of such fellowship with Christ! Truly all things are but dung compared to it. Well may we give up anything for a little more companionship with Christ. Only let us prove its sweetness, and we shall turn away from anything that mars or hinders it.

But better, better still, our Lord Himself desires it. He loved to go to Bethany; He enjoyed His welcome there; and now it is a real joy to Him when He can find a humble, loving heart that cleaves to Him. Oh, let us keep our hearts as a shelter meet for Him! (John xiv. 21-23; Isa. lvii. 15, lxvi. 2; Zeph. iii. 17.)

Eternal security and full forgiveness are the portion of every child of God, but companionship with Christ depends upon obedience; and if we seek this companionship, He will lead us on and on into fellowship with all His ways and purposes, and we shall become true fellow-labourers together with Him. (1 Cor. iii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 1.)

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." All is bright and sunlight with Him; there is no cloud, no darkness. The clouds are all earth-born, not heaven-born; they go up from the earth, and do not come down from heaven. So is it spiritually.

If a cloud comes over the soul upon any point, we may be sure that we have not *His* thoughts upon *that* point; and we should go into His presence, and quietly sit down before Him, and talk with Him about it, until we see it as He does. It is our privilege to have fellowship with Him about everything, and in His light to see light. (Ps. xxxvi. 9.)

Clouds are the fruit of unbelief, self-will, or unconfessed sin.

Unbelief makes us anxious.

Self-will blinds our eyes.

And *unconfessed sin* keeps us at a distance from Christ.

But *why* should we distrust Him? He *loves* us tenderly; so much so that He says, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." (Zech. ii. 8.) He has all *power*, and does whatsoever He pleases in the heavens, and in the earth, and in the sea. (Ps. cxxxv. 6.) He is perfect in wisdom (Job xxxvi. 4), and His grace is very abundant. (1 Tim. i. 14.) Surely our unbelief should melt away before these precious truths!

And see the folly of *self-will*. Our wise and loving, mighty, gracious God has undertaken to gratify all the desires of our hearts. He knows the best and most gentle way to do it; and when we are rebellious and self-willed we cause ourselves no end of needless pain, as well as give Him extra trouble.

Unconfessed sin is still more foolish; for "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Unconfessed sin lies like a heavy weight upon the heart; it saddens and weakens us; it holds back the Lord's hand from helping us, and hinders the fond expression of His love.

Thus we see we need not walk in darkness. The sunlight of His love and presence can disperse every cloud, and we may "walk in the light, as He is in the light." True, there will still be sin within us, and increased fellowship with Christ will make us very quick to detect it; but then the blood, the

precious blood, it cleanseth from all sin ; and walking with Him, we shall continually realize its cleansing power.

Oh, what a joyous, gladsome path!—walking on and on with Christ ; leaning upon Him ; enjoying Him ; learning of Him ; using His fulness ; and, little by little, growing more like Him.

*"WHAT IS MAN, THAT THOU SHOULDST
MAGNIFY HIM?"*

ALL the judgment we deserved has been poured upon Christ ; and now our blessed God examines our hearts, that He may meet our every need, gratify every wish, consider all our longings, and bring out all His treasures in heaven to delight and satisfy us. He uses everything He has for us. His power, His grace, His wisdom, His tenderness, all, all are *for* us. His question is, "How much of it can you take in and use?" "How can I make you capable of receiving a little more? How enlarge your heart so that you may be able to hold and enjoy more of it to all eternity?"

He has set His heart upon us to magnify us (Job vii. 17), to make us really grand and glorious. He desires not only to justify, but also to sanctify, purify, beautify, gratify, satisfy, and glorify us. In short, to load us with every possible blessing ; to endow us with every perfection and beauty ; and to crown us with every glory and honour.

“*EVERY WHIT OF IT UTTERETH HIS
GLORY.*”

PSALM xxxi. 9 (margin).

THIS will be preciouslly true of the Church, the temple of the living God. (2 Cor. vi. 16.) Some of God’s children walk so badly, that wollah all their works will be burned up, and they saved so as by fire. (1 Cor. iii. 12–15.) *They* will be eternal monuments of His faithful, forgiving love. They will be living epistles of the exceeding riches of His grace (Eph. ii. 7), and show how much He could forgive, and how no disobedience or rebellion on their part could make Him forego His promises. “He cannot deny Himself.” (2 Tim. ii. 13.)

Others will have used the provisions of His grace, and by abiding in Christ have been enabled to bring forth much fruit. *They* will be monuments of His power (Eph. i. 19); and angels and principalities will learn through them, the exceeding greatness of that power which could subdue the sin within, and transform such vile and wicked sinners into holy, humble, beautiful saints.

Again, His manifold wisdom (Eph. iii. 10) will be seen in the varied way in which He has dealt with different characters. We shall then see how good, how wise, how kind have been His dealings; how truly He has led us all by the right way, the best way, the most effectual way, the least painful way. Yes, we shall remember all the way by which He

led us. We shall know even as we are known. (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) We shall see how much we grieved Him, how many times we turned aside, and learn out to the full, the deep compassions, the tender yearnings, the rich unceasing grace which flowed from Him.

And, oh, what songs of grateful joy, what hallowed notes of *chastened* praise, what fond, adoring, clinging love will flow from us, as we look back and learn how much we owe!

“Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.”

Ruth i. 6-18.

Naomi represents a Christian whose soul is withered up through want of fellowship with Christ. Such an one is walking in darkness, and cannot read the mind of the Lord. He will make sad mistakes himself, and also hinder others from following Him fully. His counsel will be bad and his judgment warped. He may be able to talk about the truth, but his perverted thoughts as to what will please the Lord, will make him a ready tool in the devil's hand, to mislead and bewilder others.

Let us take warning from Naomi, and so seek to walk with the Lord, that we may get His estimate of things around us, and become capable of discerning between the holy and profane, and between the clean and unclean. (Lev. x. 10, 11; Deut. xvii. 8-13; Ezek. xlv. 23, 24.)

SORROW TURNED INTO JOY.

NEH. viii.

THESE Israelites had lately returned from captivity, and it is probable that most of them had never heard the law of God before. The first eight verses of this chapter prove how eagerly and reverently they listened ; and as commandment after commandment fell upon their ears, they increasingly felt how deeply they had sinned ; sorrow and sighing filled their hearts, and at last the whole congregation burst forth into bitter groans and tears.

What a solemn sight ! Would that our hearts were as tender, and as quickly moved to grief, when we find we have been sinning against the Lord.

Then came the wonderful, the gracious command :
“ Mourn not, nor weep. . . . Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet. . . . Neither be ye sorry : for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

The people listened and obeyed, *“ because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.”* Thus their sorrow was turned into joy, and they *“ went their way to eat and to drink . . . and to make great mirth.”*

It is right when any fresh view of God's holiness, or clearer knowledge of His will is revealed to us, to weep over past failure ; but the devil would seek to lead us to *settle* down in weeping and mourning, as the Israelites did in Judges ii. They spent all

their strength and time in weeping, and never went on to obey, and did not put away their false gods.

It is sometimes self-righteousness that makes us *keep on grieving*. We are vexed and disappointed with *ourselves*. We have not really learnt that in *us* (that is, in our flesh) dwelleth no good thing, and therefore are cast down and disappointed at each fresh discovery of evil.

Our blessed God knows us thoroughly. He has searched us through and through. He knows the deep fountain of iniquity that is within us, and also our utter inability to keep His commandments in our own strength; and therefore in His rich grace He has given us Jesus, not only as our Saviour, but as—

“Our never-failing treasury filled
With boundless stores of grace.”

The Lord Jesus gives us the “*light*” which shows us how wrongly we have acted—“*forgiveness*” through His precious blood—and His own right hand to uphold and help us for the future. Have we not often wished the *light* had not come, sulkily accepted the *pardon*, and fretfully turned away from the offered *help*.

The first weeping is all right, but fretting and mourning will never give power over sin. The devil persuades us that there is some power of good in us, and that if we keep on grieving over our failures we shall be able to conquer them; but he is a liar, and only seeks to deceive. Our Lord's command is,

"Mourn not, nor weep. . . . But go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet." He spreads the table for us, a "feast of fat things, and wines on the lees well refined" (Isa. xxv. 6), and bids us eat and drink abundantly.

It requires a much greater effort of soul to rise and eat, than to settle down and weep, and the more intensely we desire to please the Lord the more prone we shall be to refuse to be comforted. Satan comes as an angel of light, and feeds our self-righteousness under the name of humility; and covers a sulky, fretful, discontented spirit with the name of godly sorrow.

A feast was provided for Israel directly they humbled themselves: *one* day's fast, and *eight* days' feast. (v. 18.) And so it is now. Our blessed God bids us feast upon Christ Himself—His sufferings, His love, His grace, His fulness, His promises, His glory; all that He has and is. And as we thus feed on Him, we gather strength to pursue our journey, and fight the good fight of faith.

A wounded soldier would never regain his strength if he lay bleeding, cold, and hungry on the battlefield. No; he must have his wounds bound up, and be sheltered and fed, before he will again be able to fight.

So is it with us. We get wounded in the battle with sin, and the devil tries to keep us bleeding, cold, and hungry. He tells us we must fret and conquer our sins *before* we may sit down and feast. But our Father bids us draw near to Him, and there

in the warmth of His presence, to sit down and feast upon the goodness of His house.

We find *four* things forbidden : “ *Mourn not, weep not, be not sorry, neither be ye grieved.*” We are prone to indulge in the *two* latter after the two former have passed away ; but the Lord forbids *all four*. He would not have us *keep* a grieved feeling, but commands us to forget our misery (Prov. xxxi. 6, 7), and leaning upon Christ for strength, to go forth full of hope and expectation of victory.

He wants us to be enriched even through our past failures ; so to learn our weakness, that we may be constrained to cleave to Christ, and fear to take a step alone ; and so to learn our folly, that we may distrust our own judgment, and be subject to His written word in everything. Thus out of our very failures we should get richer blessings to ourselves, closer fellowship with Christ, and become more capable of helping others. Ah, how matchless His grace ! How wonderful His ways !

Now for the crowning truth : “ *The joy of the Lord is your strength.*” Not *our* joy in *Him*, but *His* joy in *us*. The truth, the blessed stimulating truth, that we can give *Him* joy. The consciousness that we can be a real pleasure, a delight to *Him* ; and mark, this is said to those who had just been weeping bitterly, because they had discovered so many things in which they had been disobeying *Him*.

Now turn to Jer. xxxi. 18-21. Ephraim is there bemoaning himself because of past failure, and

crying to the Lord for help and strength. And as soon as the Lord hears his true confession, and his earnest cry for help, He exclaims—"Ephraim, my dear son! a pleasant child!" Now is not this wonderful? Should it not lift up and gladden our hearts? We thus see that as soon as there is real repentance, we again become pleasant children to Him, and can gladden His heart. We need not wait until we have conquered our sins, but after true self-judgment, may rise at once, with the consciousness of a full, free pardon, sit down and feast with our blessed God, and then go forth leaning upon Christ for strength, and *know* that as we thus walk, cleaving to Him, that He is rejoicing over us, and whispering again and again, "My dear child, my pleasant child."

Then comes the tender, loving caution, "Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps." Remember the past mistakes and failures; be on your guard against them. Let them be beacons of danger—finger-posts to warn you, lest you be again ensnared.

"*This day is holy unto the Lord.*" In deep, deep thankfulness and joy, He would have us dedicate ourselves afresh to Him. "Holy unto the Lord—" holy, separated unto Him in all our thoughts, and ways, and words. Not occupied with ourselves and our own gain, but occupied with Him, satisfied with Him, grateful to Him, delighting in Him, and longing to give Him joy.

One word more. He does not despise the day of small things. He has long patience for the precious

fruits of the Spirit. He takes pleasure in the buddings of fruit. He watches it while it is growing, delights in its progress, and looks onward to the time when it will be fully ripe. So now, even now, each one of us may be a joy and a praise to Him, and know *for ourselves* the sweetness of that precious truth, "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

REWARDS.

OUR Lord promises three kinds of rewards in heaven, which meet three different cravings of our nature; viz., affection, benevolence, and ambition.

1st. *Ambition.* Special positions of glory, honour, praise and power. See Luke xix. 12-19; Matt. xvi. 27, xix. 27-29, xxv. 14-23; 1 Cor. ix. 24-27; 2 Cor. v. 10; James i. 12; 1 Peter iv. 12, 13; 2 Peter i. 5-11; Rev. ii. iii., &c. &c.

These places will be given to those who set their affections on things above, who give up the trumpery glory of this world to obey and follow Christ, and do not suffer any earthly gain to turn them aside from Him.

2nd. *Benevolence.* Positions of usefulness and responsibility. These will be given to those who use what the Lord has given to them for Him, and not for themselves; to those who are good stewards, and send up their time, money, strength, &c. &c., to

heaven. See Luke xii. 41-44, xvi. 9-12; Matt. vi. 19, 20; x. 40-42; 1 Cor. iii. 8-15, xv. 58; 2 Cor. ix. 6; Gal. vi. 7-9; Eph. vi. 8.; Col. iii. 24; Heb. xi. 35; Rev. iii. 12. We shall then see how *He* has appreciated true, self-sacrificing service for Christ.

3rd. *Affection.* Places of special nearness to Jesus, and power of ministering to Him and yielding Him special joy. These will be the natural rewards of devoted love to Christ; of that love which delights in His company *now*; a love that makes us cling to Him, work for Him, suffer for Him, talk to Him, sing to Him; in short, a love that will sacrifice everything and everyone, rather than grieve or dishonour Him. He desires *such* love, He craves it, He values it, and will reward it with eternal, special fellowship with Himself. See John xiv. 21-23; Luke xii. 35-37; Rev. i. 7, 17, ii. 4.

He has called us to *run a race*, and bids us so run that we may obtain the prize. (1 Cor. ix. 24-27.) The goal is likeness to Christ, and the more we grow like Him *here*, the brighter will be our crown.

He also calls us *soldiers*, and exhorts us to fight the good fight of faith. (See 1 Tim. vi. 12; i. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 3-5; Eph. vi. 10-18; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; Rom. xiii. 11-14; 1 Thess. v. 8.) If we want honours in the day of Christ we must fight now, and the more victories we gain, the greater will be our glory then.

We are also *servants*, workers together with Christ (1 Cor. iii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 1); and the rewards will depend upon three things.

1st. The *quantity*: how much work we do.

2nd. The *quality*: whether we do it in the Lord's way.

3rd. The *motive*: whether we do it from love to Christ, or from some lower motive.

All service for Christ will be rewarded; but that which flows from a loving, grateful heart will receive far more reward than that which is done from a servile spirit. (Matt. vi. 1-18; Mal. iii. 16, 17.)

Again, we are the Lord's *garden*, where He comes to regale and delight Himself with pleasant fruits. (Cant. iv. 11 to v. 1; Isa. v. 7; John xv. 4-8.) These fruits must be produced here; and if we wish to yield the Lord special and royal dainties to all eternity, we must cultivate them here.

These truths make life very important, and should give us great courage. May we learn to look at everything in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ, and seek to turn to account all the details of daily life, that everything we do may be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Using Christ. We can only use the fulness of Christ in proportion as we know Him.

As we learn His majesty and power, we look to Him for *strength*.

As we learn His grace and fulness, we look to Him for continual *fresh supplies*.

And as we learn His tenderness and love, He becomes our *satisfying portion*.

SELF.

SELF-WILL, self-seeking, self-glorying, and self-exalting are all destructive, wicked, and foolish; but self-judgment, self-cleansing, and self-purifying are acceptable and well-pleasing to the Lord.

Self-will is foolish, because our gracious God has set His heart upon blessing us, and self-will hinders and delays the blessing.

Self-seeking is also foolish, because we can never obtain for ourselves, what the Lord has promised to give to those who live for Him instead of for themselves.

Self-glorying is the extreme of folly, because we have nothing of our own to glory in, and in the end we shall be utterly ashamed of our own sham.

Self-exalting is also foolish, for we shall only have to come down again.

Thus self-will, self-seeking, self-glorying, and self-exalting, are not only wicked in themselves, but can only lead to the most intense disappointment.

On the contrary, self-judgment, self-cleansing, and self-purifying, bring blessing, because the Lord undertakes to help us against any sin we judge. He *commands* us to cleanse our ways, and the pure in heart shall see God. The Lord also finds pleasure in the humble, obedient child. Such a one may enjoy and revel in His smile, and also lift up the head with confidence, and fear no evil. (Ps. lxxxiv. 11.)

*SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT.*

THE New Testament is full of doctrines and precepts, and unfolds the mind and will of God concerning us. The Old Testament reveals the ways of God with man under different circumstances, and is also full of earthly representations of heavenly truth. Thus, as one has said, the New Testament unfolds the Old, and the Old enfolds the New.

True, we need the power of the Holy Ghost to teach us the truth ; but He delights to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us. Therefore let us search the Scriptures ; yes, search them diligently. (See Prov. ii. 1-9 ; xxii. 17-21.) Let us compare spiritual things with spiritual, and enrich the plain, unvarnished statements of the New Testament, with the outbursts of varied and startling feeling, which so abound in the Old.

One great secret of interpretation is to remember, that in this dispensation believers' blessings are *heavenly* (Eph. i. 3), and *not earthly*, as they were to the Jews. Every earthly blessing which was promised to Israel is a shadow of a heavenly blessing laid up for us in Christ ; and if we carefully examine the earthly blessing, it becomes easy to perceive its spiritual counterpart.

Thus all the promises which were literally ful-

filled to Israel in their earthly portion, if *they* were obedient, will also be *literally* fulfilled to us in our heavenly portion if *we* are obedient. We get the earnest *now*, and the fulness when we reach our home. The same principle applies to the rich and glorious millennial promises. Every one of them will be literally fulfilled to Israel upon this earth, when Christ takes to Himself His great power and reigns; but we may even now enjoy their spiritual counterpart in proportion as Christ reigns in our hearts.

Gal. iii. 7, 16, 29, and many other passages, prove that we may take all the Old Testament promises to ourselves, provided we do not confuse the earthly and the heavenly together.

Again, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Therefore when we learn what He says to anyone under certain circumstances, we may be sure that He will always speak the same words to anyone thus circumstanced. Thus the Bible becomes a living voice to us, and through it we may hear the very words of Christ, and know that they are His message to us.

Still we must be careful, and not trust implicitly to impulse or feeling; for the devil can wrest and pervert Scripture, and use it to mislead us. The context must in some measure correspond to our circumstances, or state of soul, before we can be sure that that special passage is the Lord's guidance or message for us. But when the context seems to fit, we may use it as a light to our path, and as

strength to our hearts. See Heb. xiii. 5, where a promise to Joshua is applied to us.

So also with the types. They are shadows of heavenly realities, and the more carefully we examine the types the more distinctly will the spiritual truth shine out.

We should beware of mingling shadow and substance together. Most of the errors of the Church of Rome, and of other spurious Churches spring from this. The old covenant, with its types and shadows, has waxed old and vanished away, and our Lord Jesus has become the "Mediator of a better covenant," even a heavenly. (Heb. viii. 6.)

In the types, our blessed God seems to take the finished work of Christ to pieces, and show it us bit by bit, so that our hearts and mind may be able to grasp and enjoy it. He also takes us up into the heavenly places, and in symbol shows us the present work of Christ *for us* in heaven, *our* present portion in Him, and how He would have us occupied even *now* in His presence.

Thus the Old Testament with its *histories* is a beautiful *mirror*, where we may acquaint ourselves with our God Himself, and learn how He acts and speaks. Its earthly *promises* are a *shadow* of the heavenly blessings laid up for us in Christ; and its *types* and ceremonies are a *representation* of the work of Christ for us as Saviour, Sacrifice, and Priest, and also of *our* present priestly office in the holy presence of our God.

*THE STONES AND VESSELS OF THE
TEMPLE.*

“Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.”—PROV. xxiv. 27.

THIS was just what Solomon did when he was building the temple of the Lord. “The house was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building.” (1 Kings vi. 7.) This is a beautiful type of the Lord’s preparation for the living temple which He is building for Himself.

First, the stones must be got out of Nature’s quarry. This may be done quickly by blasting, or slowly by hewing. The blasted stones must be squared afterwards. So those who do not learn to loathe sin before conversion, must be taught to do so afterwards.

All the stones of the temple were *hewn* stones. So every child of God must have sin judged and put away. We must be cut square. This may be done in two ways, either by the sharp sword of the word of God (Heb. iv. 12), or little by little through the circumstances around us.

If we are wise, we use the sword of the Spirit against ourselves, and judge and put away our sins in the presence of the Lord. If we will not do this, the Lord makes the circumstances around us like pumicestone, which gradually rub us down,

and this is a much more painful way. You would far rather have an excrescence cut off quickly, although the pain would be sharper, than have it rubbed down every day, and kept sore for months.

But perhaps you say, "We shall have the trials any way." Just so; but if we cut off our sins with the sharp sword of God's word, the trials will be used as the chisel to carve and beautify, and make us like Christ, and thus we shall not only be *hewn* stones, but *carved* and *polished* stones, and able to show forth the praises of Christ to all eternity. How much better to be thus beautified! Oh that we were wise, and understood our latter end!

All the vessels of the temple were cast in the clay-ground between Succoth and Zarthan. (1 Kings vii. 40-51; 2 Chron. iv.) And thus all the vessels of glory and beauty, which Christ is preparing for Himself, are being cast in this world, and the circumstances around us are the clay-ground in which we are moulded.

1 CHRON. VI. 28.

THESE troubles literally came upon Israel as the fruit of their sins; and we have to watch against their spiritual counterparts.

Dearth.—Famine from want of water. If we neglect the fountain of living waters, the Lord often allows the outside help to be withdrawn, and we become dried up and withered.

Pestilence represents some flagrant and infectious

sin, like party spirit, or worldliness, which spreads from one to another, and quickly destroys the spiritual health and strength.

Blasting.—A storm from without, which cuts off the promising shoots and destroys the fruit. If we are hid in the secret of the Lord's presence, no storm can harm us.

Mildew.—Cold damp, which destroys the fruit. Trials will often cause mildew, unless we dwell in the sunshine of the Lord's smile.

Locusts.—Insects which settle on the ground, and eat up every green thing. When locusts are seen approaching, great efforts are made to drive them away before they settle; and we need to watch against wrong feelings, and get rid of them before they settle down upon our hearts.

Caterpillars.—Small insects, which grow and increase very rapidly. Small sins, if we think they do not matter, will quickly increase, and eat up our leaves, and destroy our spiritual beauty.



TRIAL.

THERE are five distinct objects in trial, but they often run into one another.

1st. The *rod*—for wilful sin.

2nd. For *training*—to exercise our souls and bring forth fruit in us.

3rd. *Preventive*—like Paul's thorn in the flesh, to check the growth of judged but innate sin.

4th. For *perfecting fruit*—like the hot sun, to make the fruit comely and excellent.

5th. For *glory and honour*—to manifest the beauty of some ripe fruit, that the Lord may be able to delight Himself in it and feast upon it, as well as give us a rich reward.

Abraham's obedience and faith were ripe when God commanded him to offer up Isaac. (Gen. xxii.) What a joy it must have been to God to feast upon it, and what exceeding and eternal great reward He gave him! Do you think Abraham ever regretted the trial? No, indeed. It was sharp, very sharp at the time; but, oh, what a gainer he was in every way!

Ripe fruit is also a great blessing to others. It sows itself in their hearts, and we thus become "a fountain of gardens." (Cant. iv. 15.) How often some lovely fruit in another Christian has led us to self-judgment, and produced in us an earnest longing after the same fruit. Thus, if we will walk with God, everything will turn to eternal gain both to ourselves and others, and also yield an abundant harvest of pleasant fruits to our precious Lord.

One word more. A trial which may have *begun*, as the *rod*, for wilful sin, may still continue after confession and restoration of soul; but it will then be used of the Lord for training, prevention, perfecting, and even for glory and honour.

He would have us humble ourselves beneath the rod, and confess and put away our sin; but He would have us take courage under all other trials, and seek to get the full blessing out of them.

TRAINING.

HEB. xii. 5-13.

THE word chastening in Hebrews xii. should be translated child-training. It does not necessarily mean the *rod*, but as the word implies, combines all that is needful for training—instruction, reproof, correction, restraint, and discipline.

Our Father is training us for special places in heaven. Our position *there*, will depend upon our progress *here*. Our fitness for places of responsibility and glory *there*, must be formed *here*. Our nearness to the Lord Jesus, and capability of ministering to Him, will be the result of close fellowship with Him *here*.

How important this makes our present life! And how earnest and watchful we should be to work together with Him, and help forward, and not hinder His training!

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child” (Prov. xxii. 15), and it scarcely does anything in the proper manner without being corrected. So it is with us spiritually. Many of God’s children are naturally proud, wilful, self-conceited, impatient, discontented, sulky, &c.; and these evils have grown with their growth, and this makes our Father’s training painful. It is contrary to our nature. It goes against the grain, and often we are so foolish, we resist or misunderstand His dealings, and thus, like naughty children, bring extra suffering upon ourselves.

He wants to make us like Jesus, to train us in humility, meekness, patience, self-denial, obedience, submission, faith, &c. None of these lessons are easy to learn ; they require a great deal of practice, even as a child can only learn to write by writing copy after copy, and making hundreds of *ill-shapen* letters. We therefore need to be put into circumstances where these varied fruits of the Spirit are called for, and these circumstances are often very trying. But our Father is very tender, and very patient and gentle, and He will never give us one needless pain. Still more, He is so gracious and so considerate, that whenever we try to do His will we may look up in His face and know that He *is* pleased. He accepts and appreciates the effort, and makes much of every little progress.

Our whole life is ordered for us by our Father, to help us to learn these lessons. All the troubles, frets, worries, trials, are part of His training. Every little thing that happens from morning to night is ordered for us by Him. Aches, pains, mistakes, unkind speeches, &c. — all, all are intended to exercise and help our souls.

None of the fruits of the Spirit can be perfected without trial, so let us thank the Lord for the trials, take courage, and seek to get all the good out of them.

For instance, how can He teach us *meekness* ? We can only learn it by being surrounded by people whose bad tempers try us. If we are seeking to please the Lord, this leads to exercise of heart and

conscience, and little by little we become meek and lowly. Oh, thank the Lord for the lesson, and seek to learn it well !

Patience again. We are naturally impatient, and cannot learn patience when everything is pleasant around us. A good deal of pain ; or a cross, crying baby ; may be the Lord's way to teach us patience.

Forgiveness. We are all more or less proud, haughty, and revengeful, and we cannot truly learn to forgive unless the Lord lets people treat us badly.

If He is teaching us *confidence in Himself*, He will let things look very dark, and thus our faith will be exercised. If He wants to *break our self-will*, He will allow someone to cross us continually in *little* things. If all be smooth around us, we may be very self-willed without knowing it.

Thus He leads us about to humble and to prove, to show us what is in our heart, that He may do us more real good in our latter end.

We can always find out the object of His dealings with us by noticing what evil is stirred in us. If our pride is stirred, He wants to make us humble ; if anger, He wants to make us gracious ; if self-will, He wants to make us yielding ; and so on.

Oh, what courage this ought to give us ! Our place in heaven will depend upon our progress here, and the more lessons we learn, the more capable we shall be of special companionship with Christ. You would give a very superior education to the boy you intended to be a physician, to that which you would give to one you intended to be a shoemaker. So if

our lessons are very difficult, we should be specially thankful, and take them as an earnest that the Lord is preparing us for special honour hereafter.

Again, as soon as one lesson is learnt, the Lord will, as it were, turn the page, and give us another. He will not keep us practising what we know, but will lead us on to higher lessons. We are like children at school, and every day we ought to look for our lessons to be a little more difficult. This is training-time ; and by-and-by, when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, our progress will shine out, and He will give us exceeding great and wonderful rewards. Then let us seek to work together *with* the Lord, and learn as fast as we can.

But you will say, "Does He not give the rod?" Yes, when we are wilful and rebellious ; but *never* besides. Do you flog your child when it tries to do what you tell it, but cannot do it well? "No," you say, "I would not be such a tyrant." And yet our wicked hearts have often thought that our Father would treat us thus. We have even thought Him more rough, and stern, and severe, than we are ourselves. Look at it, dear child of God ; look at it fairly, and never again malign your Father like that. No ; He only gives the rod for *wilful* sin, and even then He is very slow to use it. He speaks again and again first ; reproves, rebukes, entreats ; and when He sees nothing else will do, He gives the rod.

If you are under the rod, do not try to sing under it. You would not like to hear your child

singing while you kept him in disgrace ; and if the Lord is scourging you, He wants you to humble yourself, and confess your sin.

It is a terrible thing to go on in rebellion, to persist in doing a thing which you know is wrong. Turn to Lev. xxvi. 14-39. These threatenings may be fulfilled to you. You may pine away in your sins, and yet be saved. Now turn to Job xxxvi. 7-16, and mark the contrast. How much better to obey and serve Him, and spend your days in prosperity, and your years in pleasures.

If you have been indulging in any forbidden thing, do go down under the Lord's hand, and confess your sin, and He will lift you up and restore blessing to you. (Ps. cvii. 9-22.) The very moment you humble yourself, and say, "Lord, I have sinned, and I am sorry," He will give you a full, free pardon, cause His face to shine upon you, and be ready to help and strengthen you.

Again, much trouble comes upon us as the fruit of our own doings ; and this stirs the Lord's pity. Suppose a child was told not to touch a piece of machinery, and he would do so, and got his fingers smashed, and the doctor had to cut one of his fingers off. How sorry his friends would be. He would have brought it all upon himself ; but would they not try to comfort him ?

So the Lord is sorry for us when we get ourselves into trouble. (Judges ii. 18 ; x. 15, 16.) His compassions are stirred. He would have us come to Him for comfort. We may look up and read His

deep compassions, His yearning love. (Jer. ii. 17-19.) Yes, even while smarting under the painful results of our own sin, we may go and nestle in His bosom, and know that He has no reproaches for us—no complaints, or stinging words—but only the tenderest love and pity. We may even look to Him so to bring us through the trial that we may get richer blessing through it, than we could have had in any other way. Oh, how we ought to thank our Father for His patient, perfect training!

How good and gracious it is of Him to take such pains with us! True, it is not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards—that blessed afterwards—how rich and eternal the gain will be. Why did He not take us home as soon as we were saved? Because He wants to fit us for a higher place in heaven, to give us some prizes, special honour and glory for ever.

Now what will you do, dear child of God? Will you work *with* Him, or *against* Him? Will you set Christ before you as your example, grow like Him, learn your lessons, and gain His words of approval *now*, and rich rewards hereafter? or will you go your own way, do your own will, fret against His training, grumble at your lessons, and sow misery and sorrow for yourself here, and eternal loss hereafter?

Oh, may the Lord give you a wise and understanding heart, that will hearken to His counsel, and seek to grow up into Christ in all things!

AGONY.

A GONY of soul is either the fruit of *unbelief*, *self-will*, or *rebellion*. Our God is the happy God, and He desires to make us happy; and if we would truly yield ourselves to Him, we should go out with joy, and be led forth with peace. (Isa. lv. 12.)

Unbelief will produce great agony. We know something of the Lord's power, and if we distrust Him, and fear that He may use that power *against* us instead of *for* us, it must fill us with dread. But if we understand and believe His love and tender mercy, and know that all His power is *for* us, we shall be able to say at all times, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." (Ps. xxiii. 4.)

Agony of soul is also often caused by a conflict between *self-will* and *conscience*. Conscience says, "It is wrong; you must not do it." Self-will says, "I like it, and want to do it." But if we believed that all the Lord's precepts are for our present and eternal good (Deut. xii. 24, 25), and looked to the Lord to help us to resist our sins, the conflict would be rather pleasant than agonizing, because it would be so continually crowned with success.

Again, agony in prayer is often caused by *rebellion*. We are intent upon getting our own way, and make tremendous efforts to get the Lord to yield His will to ours, and fret and fume if He does not do so. But He knows far better than we do what is best for us, and He loves us so tenderly that He will

never withhold a real good from us, and therefore we ought to be able to tell out our desires to Him, and quietly leave them with Him to do what He thinks right.

Thus we may have continual joy and peace in believing (Rom. xv. 13), not only as regards our eternal salvation, but also about everything that concerns us.

THE PROMISES OF GOD.

VERY many of the promises of God are conditional. Many do not see this, and therefore get their faith terribly shaken. They read the Bible carelessly. They pick out the promises, and build their faith upon them, without considering the context. The result often is, the promise is *not* fulfilled, and Satan whispers that God does not keep His word, and distrust and fear are sown in the heart.

Take, for instance, "The Lord shall guide thee continually" (Isa. lviii. 11), and look at the conditions mentioned in verses 9, 10. We can only be sure of *continual* guidance, when we are *thus* walking before the Lord.

Again, 1 Thess. v. 23, 24 is dependent upon obedience to the preceding precepts. We need to incline our ear and hearken diligently to the *written* Word (Prov. ii. 1-9), and notice the conditions of the promises, and then we shall always prove that our God is true to His word, yea, better than His word, and Satan will not be able to shake our faith.

“*SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS
ABOVE.*”

THERE are many deep, intense cravings in all our hearts—cravings which have been formed by God Himself, and nothing short of the *fulness* of Christ can really satisfy them.

These cravings have been corrupted and defiled by sin ; but instead of crushing them, we should seek to transplant them from earth to heaven. If we *root* them in *earthly things*, they become a fruitful source of misery and discontent. If we seek to *crush* them, we become dried up and withered ; but if we *transplant* them, they become a mighty power of fruitfulness, and a constant source *of joy*.

We are already saved ; our sins are all forgiven ; we know that we can never perish ; but we are not content with this ; we want to *have*, to *be*, and to *do*.

These cravings are like the horse-leech, and continually cry, “Give, give.” They need a rich, exhaustless soil to feed upon. But oh, the fulness that flows from Christ, how rich it is ! *He* has made provision for them all. He does not wish us to be nonentities, but desires to make *something* of us ; to make us really rich, capable of doing great things, and intrinsically good and beautiful.

Let us look at a few of these cravings.

1st. *Desire to be loved.* Ponder the deep, fond, intense love of Christ. He loves you even as the

Father loves Him. (John xv. 9.) He has set His heart upon you, and chosen you for Himself; and He longs to see you root your affections in Him, and drink of the sweet, satisfying draughts of love, which are ever welling up from Him.

If you seek your portion in earthly love, you will be continually disappointed; but if you seek it in Christ, you will be satisfied indeed. We need to *root* our love in Christ; and then instead of starving or crushing it, we may revel in His fulness, and shoot out long, twining branches to embrace and comfort others. Ah! there is no earthly love compared to His. It is so gentle, so tender; so considerate, so fond; so personal, so faithful; so exactly suited to us in every way.

2nd. *Desire for companionship*—companionship with Christ! Ah! who can tell its sweetness, its rich, its full enjoyment. And we may have it *now*. Ah, yes; by faith we may walk with Him; but we can only have His company when we are truly subject to His will. We must choose. Will we part company with Christ to go after forbidden things, or to seek forbidden companionship? or will we count all things but dross compared to fellowship with Him?

3rd. *Desire to be great*. Will you seek to be great in this poor, unsatisfying world? to get a name for yourself *here*, and then be comparatively small for ever? It is foolish to waste your time, strength, talents, energy, for that which must pass away and come to naught; to labour in the fires for

very vanity. Oh, set your affection on things above, and seek for eternal greatness! How, Lord, how? By obeying and serving Him; for when He comes in His glory, He will reward everyone according to His works. (Matt. xvi. 27.)

4th. *Desire for praise or approbation.* It is a paltry and despicable thing, when the praise of man is the ruling motive of the life. But if we seek the honour that cometh from God only, it becomes a mighty lever, to raise us above the worthless praise of man.

Oh, *live* to please the Lord! Seek His approving smile! So act, and speak, and think, that *He* may say, "Well done;" not only crown you by-and-by, but even now "confess your name" with joy. (Matt. x. 32, 33.) And if the Lord praise you, it will never cease. No, it will go on and on, and increase and increase, until the whole universe will echo *His* "Well done." Then let the longing *grow*; but fix its roots in Christ Himself, and feed it with nothing short of *His* approving smile.

5th. *Desire to be admired.* We can utterly despise this world's admiration, and count it paltry indeed, if we realize that it costs us the loss of the admiration of Christ and of the angels, and may result in a loss of eternal beauty. "What!" you say. "Is it possible that Christ will admire us?" Yes; listen: "Behold, thou art fair, my love," &c. "Thou art beautiful, my love, as Tirzah," &c. "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes," &c. Do read Cant. iv. 1-7; vi. 4-9; vii. 1-9, and ponder

over those wonderful, precious words. They are the words of Christ Himself, and express His admiration of, and delight in our obedience and love; and to all eternity, the fruit which we bring forth here will be our beauteous crown above.

6th. *Desire to be appreciated.* Christ will make much of, and treasure up, every little thing you do for Him. Every thought of love, every desire after Him, every emotion of your heart towards Him, are all appreciated by Him—fed upon, remembered. A great deal of love and care for *others* falls to the ground. It is neither known nor valued; it is wasted. But everything we do for Christ, will endure for ever.

7th. *Desire to be rich.* Who would throw away the unsearchable riches of Christ, for the trumpery gold of this present evil world? Yes, we may be rich indeed; rich even now; handling, enjoying, and distributing the riches of Christ; rich in love, faith, joy, meekness, patience, every beauteous grace; rich in the knowledge of *His* love and grace and truth; and able to enrich, and meet the need of others. There is enough and to spare, an inexhaustible store, which we may use to our heart's content; but we have no power to use it, if we set our affection on things below.

8th. *Desire after pleasure.* "In His presence is fulness of joy." (Ps. xvi. 11.) "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God." (Ps. xlvi. 4.) "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house." "Thou

shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." (Ps. xxxvi. 8.)

Pleasures! Oh, there are no pleasures like those He gives! but we can only have them, by turning away from forbidden pleasures, and pressing up into His presence, and sitting down and feasting there with Him.

And thus we might go on from thing to thing, and prove that He is able and willing to gratify every longing of our hearts; not to crush, but to satisfy. Truly the Lord is our portion, our present portion, and a goodly portion He is; not only our future inheritance, but the portion of our cup, ready each day to fill it to the brim, and never weary of replenishing it again.

Desires for power, honour, glory, usefulness, ease, influence, knowledge, &c., may all be transplanted from earth to heaven. The varied promises of our God provide a rich and suited soil, where one and all of them may grow and flourish, and bring forth fruit to all eternity.

When you transplant anything you take it up very carefully, and try not to injure any of its roots. You also dig a hole sufficiently large to set it in without cramping its roots, and then carefully fix it in, and fill up the hole. This is just what you need to do with the cravings of your heart. Do not weaken your longings; do not crush or cut them back, but try and find out what Christ has provided to meet them. Search His word diligently, examine His promises, and when you find the suited

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soil for any special craving, transplant it carefully and thoroughly, and let it root itself and grow.

But, dear child of God, there is something higher, higher—a deeper longing of our hearts than any of these things, a stronger motive power, a richer source of joy. Let all these desires be gratified, and we should still cry, "More, more!" We need to *love* as well as to be loved. It is more "blessed to give than to receive." (Acts xx. 35.)

Who does not know the joy of loving another better than one's self, so that that person's comfort, gratification, and glory, are dearer to us than our own? And who has not proved that in such a case it is a *pleasure*, rather than a *struggle*, to give up our own will to please the loved one?

Oh, let us cultivate a deep true clinging love to Christ—a love which seeketh not its own, but gladly sacrifices itself for Him; a love that finds its joy in ministering to Him, and would rather glorify and gladden Him, than exalt or please itself! This, this will satisfy indeed.

He is so truly beautiful in all His ways, so altogether lovely, that we cannot keep company with Him without *growing in love*; and as we grow in love, *self* will be swallowed up in Christ; and then while joying in His fulness, we should not be occupied with what He gives, but intent upon ministering to Him. Thus our cup of joy would be full indeed. We shall prove that we have a goodly heritage, and declare with joy that the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places. (Ps. xvi. 6.)

“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS.”

THIS is true of Christians as well as of the unconverted. The poison is within us; it is natural to us; but let us be careful that it does not come out and poison others. Not only bitterness, evil speaking, and such like; but flattery, idle words—indeed, everything that springs out of our own hearts, and is not corrected by the word of God, is the poison of asps. It feeds the flesh in others, and tends to foster worldliness, unbelief, or sin of some kind, and thus strengthens the old man and weakens the new, and increases the difficulty of growing up into Christ in all things.

Elisha healed the barren waters by casting salt into them (2 Kings ii. 19–22); and the salt of God’s truth will correct the poison of our hearts. He also neutralized the poison in the pottage by casting meal into it (2 Kings iv. 38–41); and the pure bread of life received into our thoughts and feelings, will enable us to feed and strengthen others. If we get this truth engraven on our hearts, it will greatly help us in guarding our speech, and it will become very natural for us to pray—“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, that I offend not with my tongue.” (Ps. cxli. 3.)

If we will cleave to Jesus, and receive the words from His lips, our hearts will become so permeated with His bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering (Col. iii. 12),

that honey and milk will be under our tongue, and our lips will drop as the honeycomb (Cant. iv. 11), and He will delight and feed upon it (Cant. v. 1), instead of being grieved with our words.

PSALM XX. 3.

“The Lord accept” (“turn to ashes,” margin) “thy burnt sacrifice.”

THE man who offered a burnt-offering had nothing left him but ashes. If it were a bullock, it would cost him something. Before it was offered he could either sell it or eat it; but after it was burnt there was nothing to look at, and nothing to show. If he had faith, he believed the offering had gone up to heaven, and been accepted there; but there was nothing left but the ashes, and all *seemed* wasted. *He* could say, I gave it to the Lord, and have the consciousness of having given joy to the Lord—but what display could he make to his friends?

We are not always prepared to have our burnt-offerings accepted in this way. There may be real and lasting blessing, and yet apparent turning to ashes. It is very puzzling. Our sacrifice seems to have come to nothing, but the surrender was real, and the Lord has taken us at our word. The devil says, “The Lord has rejected it.” Unbelief says, “It is all a mistake.” But it is treasure laid up in heaven. We did it to the Lord, and He has accepted and valued it; and in the day of Christ the recompence will be full, eternal, and real.

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN.

PROV. xxxi. 10-31.

THESE verses describe a pattern Israelitish wife, and are an earthly picture of a devoted self-sacrificing child of God, who has a true heart for Christ, and seeks to walk worthy of Him. It is very precious to Him, when He can find such an one; therefore what a stimulus it should be to us.

It does not represent the Church collectively, but individuals in it. The Church collectively has failed, and is a shame and disgrace to the Lord; but *individually*, we may be a name and a praise to Him. (Jer. xiii. 11.) Thus it is a picture of a soul that follows hard after Christ; not satisfied with salvation, but longing to know the fulness of its portion, and seeking to respond to the love wherewith it is loved.

Verse 10: "*Who can find a virtuous woman?*" It is indeed rare to find one, but why should we not be amongst them? Thoroughly true to Christ; no neglecting Him for others; no pleasing others rather than Him.

"*Her price is far above rubies*"—of real value to Him.

Verse 11: "*The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.*" Think of the joy of hearing the Lord Jesus say of you, "I can trust her; I have won her heart, and she will not turn aside from me for earthly love, or gain, or pleasure. Whatever anyone else does, *she* will stand true to me, and be

always ready to be led by me. Whatever I give her to do, I can trust her to do. She will not give me trouble, nor sow discord or strife, nor break down the carved work in my church." He does rejoice when He can truthfully speak like this.

"*So that He shall have no need of spoil.*" He will get real riches from such an one—deep, adoring, grateful love, and a thorough surrender of heart and will, which will find its joy in sacrificing all for Him. This will indeed gladden His heart; He will need no other spoil. . He will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. (Isa. liii. 11.)

Verse 12: "*She will do him good, and not evil.*" Instead of being a burden, she will be a joy to Him. Instead of grieving Him, she will minister comfort to Him. She is able to enter into His thoughts, and be His companion; one from whom He receives *something*, in return for His great love.

"*All the days of her life.*" Not one day only, but every day. May we thus learn to regard His wishes, fall in with His plans, and seek His glory; and may we never be so base and ungrateful, as to think that half-hearted, fitful obedience or service, is good enough for Christ.

Verse 13: "*She seeketh wool and flax.*"—*seeks* it; it is not brought to her. Wool for comfort, to make warm garments; flax for beauty, "fine linen, which is the righteousnesses of saints." (Rev. xix. 8.)

Wool—the love and grace of Christ. We should go through the Bible, and search out all the precious promises, loving words, and encouragements, and

weave them into a garment to fit ourselves—a garment that will fit our temperaments, our circumstances and trials. Nothing short of such a garment can keep our souls warm in the cold biting atmosphere of this world.

Flax—the beautiful precepts of Christ—woven into our lives, covering us with a garment, seen in all we do or say; the fruits of righteousness so beautifying us, that others may see and admire them. Some Christians only seek the wool, and are satisfied with being warm and comfortable, and do not seek to be a glory to the Lord. Others only seek the flax, and keep shivering with cold, although outwardly consistent, for our own obedience cannot keep us warm. Let us be careful to seek both wool and flax.

“*And worketh willingly with her hands.*” There is no constraint, no saying, “I *must* do it, but it is very wearisome.” No; she responds to the love of Christ, and wants to be a praise and a glory to Him.

Verse 14: “*She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar.*” She is not satisfied with having food brought to her; receiving it, as it were, second hand; but presses up into the Lord’s presence, and sits down and feasts with Him there. There are many difficulties in the way; sins to be put down, weights to be laid aside, enemies to stay her progress. But she is in earnest; she does not say, “It is too much trouble; I must do without;” but presses up, and proves for herself the rich, the satisfying provision of her Father’s house.

Still more, like Ruth (Ruth iii. 15–17), she

comes away laden with good things; she has an abundant supply for others. Ah! this is the secret of being able to feed others. Let us habitually feed in the secret of God's presence ourselves, and He will send us away laden with blessings for others. (2 Sam. vi. 19.) He has spread a table for us, a feast of fat things indeed, and He loves to see us seated there, feasting to our heart's content. The Lord preserve us from remaining spiritual infants, dependent upon others for food, and needing continually to be fed with the spoon.

Verse 15 : "*She riseth also while it is yet night.*" She is intensely earnest about it. There is no self-indulgence, but thorough self-sacrifice. She earnestly longs to enrich the Lord, and to help Him in the tedious work which He is accomplishing.

Verse 15 : "*She giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.*" This is her first care, to minister spiritual food to those whom the Lord has committed to her. It need not necessarily be in your own household, but those in the family of God who have the *first* claim upon you; those for whom the Lord has made you responsible, or who look to you for guidance. It may be a class, or others ready to listen to you, and glad to receive what you have to give.

Verse 16 : "*She considereth a field, and buyeth it.*" She is not satisfied with the service close at hand, or with doing what others put into her hands; but she looks around, and says, "Cannot I do anything more for Him?" She *considers*; there

is careful thought; she asks, "Is there no vineyard I can plant for Him?" She perceives an unoccupied field; she *buys* it. It costs her something—the love or praise of friends perhaps, or something she enjoys or values; some earthly hopes, or ease, or comfort—but she gives it up for Christ, and thinks not of the cost.

Dear child of God, you will never do much for Christ, unless you are prepared to *buy*. The Lord constantly puts us to the test, "How much are you ready to give up to serve or please Me?"

"I gave my life for thee;
What hast thou given for Me?"

He emptied Himself of all for us; and now He has given you energy, power, talents, influence, time, &c. What will you do with it? Will you waste it, crush it, or *use* it? May He enable you to be a good and faithful steward.

Verse 17: "*She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.*" It requires much labour to turn a field into a vineyard; and the vineyard needs tending as well as planting. There is much to discourage; but on she goes, and she continually gets fresh strength. She is ever on the watch, to win more souls for Christ, or to help those already won. It is not all easy work. She is often worn and tired; but she will not give up. *He* sees and values it all. *He* delights in it, and will not save her the labour, because *He* longs to give her the crown.

Verse 18 : “ *She perceiveth that her merchandise is good.*” She proves that she has something worth having. The merchandise of wisdom is more precious than rubies. (Prov. iii. 14, 15.) The law of God’s mouth is better to her than thousands of gold and silver. (Ps. cxix. 72.) She proves the value of obedience ; its *present* and *eternal* gain, and constantly urges others to buy.

Salvation is the free gift of God, but we must *buy* the precepts. We cannot carry them out unless we *pay* for them ; but they are worth it all. “ In keeping them there is great reward ” (Ps. xix. 11)—the *present* reaping ; and who can measure the eternal recompence ? I believe that in the day of Christ we shall prove that each command of God, which we have received and carried out, will have enriched us to all eternity far more than thousands of pounds.

“ *Her candle goeth not out by night.*” She does not say, “ I am not going to work any more ; why should I bear all the burden ? ” but she keeps the light shining, and continually says to others, “ You had better obey the Lord.”

Verse 19 : “ *She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.*” She minds not high things, but puts her hands to anything that has to be done, each in its turn. She has a meek and lowly spirit. She does not sit as a queen to be ministered to, nor say—“ This is servants’ work ; it is not fit for me ; I have done such great things, I cannot be expected to do this ”—but is ready to help in any way that she can. Each fruit of the Spirit

is brought forth in its season ; humility in this verse, and mercy in the next.

Verse 20 : “*She stretcheth out her hand to the poor ; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.*” Poverty was the result of disobedience among the Israelites (Lev. xxvi. 1–20 ; Deut. xxviii. 1–19), and many now are spiritually poor because they do not walk with Christ—poor in love, joy, faith, &c., and needing well-nigh everything. This pattern woman does not lift herself up because of her own riches, but stretches out her hand to the poor, and both her hands to the needy. Her compassions flow out to them. There is no selfishness, no harshness ; she does not upbraid them, but is ready to help them in any way she can.

Do we deal thus with those who are spiritually poor ? Are we not sometimes tempted to despise and complain of them, instead of stretching out our hands to help ? Do our compassions flow out to proud, rebellious, wilful children of God ? Are we not inclined to be hard upon such ? And yet they are poor indeed ; the enemy has robbed them of all their pleasant things, and left them half dead. Oh for the bowels of mercies, which would make us use all we have for the blessing of others !

Verse 21 : “*She is not afraid of the snow for her household : for all her household are clothed with double garments.*” (*Margin.*) “Her household”—those she has been feeding and caring for. “Double garments”—garments of wool and flax. They can stand the cold. She is not afraid of difficulties and

dangers for them ; they are well prepared, and will come out of them with honour.

Verse 22 : “*She maketh herself coverings of tapestry ; her clothing is silk and purple.*” She seeks that her garments should show forth the riches and glory of her husband, and *we* should seek that all our ways should be a name and a praise to Christ. She makes these garments herself. They do not typify the robe of righteousness (Isa. lxi. 10), but the beautiful fruits of the Spirit.

“*Tapestry*”—worked in stitch by stitch, requiring much patient labour. Probably embroidered with gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet—colours which represent the perfections of Christ, because we are called to show forth His praises.

Gold—the divine glory wrought in stitch by stitch into our lives. We receive all the thread from Christ ; but much labour is required to work it into our habits, thoughts, and feelings.

Blue—the soft, heavenly, soothing colour ; the gentle graciousness of Christ pervading everything we do.

Scarlet—readiness to bear suffering and humiliation for Christ, counting it all joy, and refusing to turn aside from Him to escape it.

Purple—the deep consciousness of our heavenly and royal dignity, so filling our souls that we despise the glory of this world, and count its greatest honours as worthless indeed.

The gold, blue, purple, scarlet, are all the gift of Christ ; and the Holy Ghost delights to help us in

this embroidery work. These colours should be beautifully blended, and worked out into every good word and work ; and thus our Lord Jesus would be verily glorified in us. Sometimes one colour so predominates, that it spoils our testimony ; but if we compare ourselves with Christ, we shall discover what colour or stitches are lacking. It may be a little more self-denial or self-sacrifice is needed, or steadfastness of purpose, courage, faithfulness, meekness, patience, faith, or gentleness, &c. One part of our garments may be well filled in, and another part perhaps scarcely begun ; but we should so seek to imitate our precious Lord, that every colour may be filled in in its proper place, and our whole lives become a mass of tapestry.

It will require much patient toil ; but these garments are for eternity, and are well worth the labour. “She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework” (Ps. xlv. 14) ; and to all eternity we shall stand arrayed, not only in the *given* robe, “the wrought gold” (Ps. xlv. 13), but also in the raiment of needlework, which has been wrought out in our lives upon earth. (Rev. xix. 8, *righteous acts*, R.V.)

No two Christians will have garments alike. Each one will wear his own workmanship. We cannot make them for one another ; but we can greatly help and encourage each other in the work. And, oh, what joy it is to know, that our Lord Jesus watches the process with intense delight, and is always ready to help in every way !

Verse 23: "*Her husband is known in the gates.*" There is no mistake as to whom she belongs. *He* is known as her husband. Dear child of God, is it thus with *you*? You belong to Christ; *He is your Husband.* Does everybody know it? Oh, seek so to work out the coverings of tapestry, that you may be unmistakably marked as belonging to Christ!

Verse 24: "*She maketh fine linen, and selleth it.*" She begs and entreats others to buy. She seeks to show them the beauty of holiness, and the joy of fellowship with Christ. She tells them what it will cost; that they cannot have it without parting with carelessness, or worldliness, or vanity, or pride, or any indulged sin. She, as it were, holds up the fine linen before them, and descants on its merits—its eternal value and beauty, its present comfort and strength, and its future glory and praise.

"*She delivereth girdles to the merchant*"—*girdles*; special truths with which she has girded her own loins, and proved their strength and comfort. (1 Peter i. 13.) She does not rest with enjoying them herself, but persuades others to buy them also. We all have our weak points, and we specially need to search out the truth of God upon those points, and weave it, as it were, into a girdle, and bind it firmly around our hearts; and then we shall be prepared to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph. vi. 13, 14.)

Verse 25: "*Strength and honour are her clothing.*" She is seen in it as a *present* clothing. The word of God should be so girt around us that we may have

the consciousness of strength ; leaning upon Christ, listening to His voice, obeying His word, and therefore strong in the Lord.

"Honour." "Them that honour me I will honour." Conscious of the Lord's smile, and therefore able to go on with a firm, steady step, through evil report or good report, knowing that He will uphold and bless.

"She shall rejoice in time to come." Yes, the reward is eternal. If we are doing what is right in the Lord's eyes, we need not defend ourselves. We can afford to go on quietly and immovably, knowing that in the day of Christ, He will own and praise it, and every one will have to echo His verdict. Thus even should it cause suffering or sorrow here, we shall rejoice in time to come.

Verse 26 : *"She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness."* What a lovely picture! She bows down her ear, and receives wisdom from the Lord (Prov. xxii. 17-21); she drinks in His deep compassions (Col. iii. 12), and therefore sweet and pleasant words flow from her lips. (Prov. xii. 18 ; xvi. 21-24.) There is no anger, no roughness, no crushing or putting others to shame, no harsh complaining. If she finds fault it is done gently, and with the desire to help. She looks upon this world as a spiritual hospital, filled with the sick and needy, and her one thought is, "How can I help or cure them?" Thus honey and milk (Cant. iv. 11) flow naturally from her lips.

Verse 27 : *"She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."*

She does not settle down and take it easily, but does all she can, to help those whom the Lord has committed to her care. Her heart is true to Christ, and *that* makes her quick to perceive and encourage what is right, and also careful to reprove and check what is wrong.

Verse 28 : “ *Her children arise up and call her blessed.*” There may be delay in this, but it will surely come. It takes time for children to reach maturity, and God’s children are often very slow of growth ; but however much trouble they may cause us, if we are only true to the Lord, and do all we can to help their souls, in the end they will call us blessed.

“ *Her husband also, and He praiseth her.*” Oh, what a satisfying portion to a loving heart ! What could you ask for more, either here or in eternity ? Listen—

Verse 29 : “ *Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all*”—to hear His loving words of approval ; to know that you have made Him glad, that He has appreciated your obedience, that your self-sacrifice and service have been accepted and delighted in by Him. What ! what can you ask for more ? Oh, may these wonderful words of praise stimulate our hearts, and make us very earnest in seeking to be thoroughly devoted to Him ! It does not require brilliant talents or special gifts, but only a grateful loving heart, which will constrain us to seek to please Him perfectly, in everything we do.

Verse 30 : “ *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is*

vain ; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Present success, honour and glory, are deceitful ; for the fashion of this world passeth away ; and "beauty is vain," for it cannot last ; but "she that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Yes, praised eternally.

Verse 31 : " *Give her of the fruit of her hands ; and let her own works praise her in the gates.*" Her works will stand the fire which will "try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. iii. 12-15), and she will receive a reward. Still more, she will joy with the Lord in the result of her labours, and feast *with Him* to all eternity, on the sweet and pleasant fruits of the vineyard she tended.

Dear child of God, is not this enough? Will you not look round, and see if *you* can *buy* a field for Christ? Will you not seek to make your garments worthy of your heavenly Bridegroom? and do all you can to persuade others to gird up their loins, and live for *Him* alone?

Love to Christ is a *responsive* fruit. *He is love*, the embodiment of love ; and rich, abundant streams of love are always flowing forth from Him. If you feel your lack of love, drink in *His* love. There is no other way to get it. Take your Bible, and read about *His* love. Believe that He says it to *you* personally. Drink in His very words, and your heart will burn within you, and flow back in love to Him. "While the King sitteth at His table, my spikonaard sendeth forth the smell thereof." (Cant. i. 12.)

THE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST.

“In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

SIN may be classified under three heads—self-exaltation, self-indulgence, and self-will.

The Lord Jesus was God, and therefore had a *right* to exalt Himself, indulge Himself, and do His own will; and, as God, self-exaltation, self-indulgence, and self-will would have been *no sin in Him*. But when He took upon Himself the form of a servant, He so humbled Himself that He neither sought His own glory nor ease, nor did His own will, but was in all things entirely subject to His Father.

His whole life upon earth was one of continual self-restraint. He was full of wisdom, yet never spoke His own words. (John viii. 26, 28.) He was full of power, yet never used His own strength. (John xiv. 10.) In every way He was indeed the dependent One. Thus He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; and can therefore truly sympathize with us in our struggles against sin. *We* have to restrain the natural risings of sin; *He* had to restrain His holy, perfect, Godhead power.

Oh, what a life of self-restraint it must have been! what incessant watchfulness it must have entailed! and what intense love must have fired His heart, to have kept Him braced up, to such tremendous self-denial!

Oh for hearts to follow in His steps, and deny ourselves for Him, even as He denied Himself for us!

ENTRANCE INTO THE HOLIEST.

Read John x. 9; Eph. ii. 18, 19; Heb. iv. 14-16; x. 10-22; 1 Peter ii. 6, 9; iii. 18; 1 John ii. 1, 2.

WE are already seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus; no longer strangers and pilgrims, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. We have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ; we are accepted in the Beloved; and in that sense are always

“So near, so very near to God;
We could not nearer be.”

But in our daily experience we often lose this blessed fellowship, and get far away from the enjoyed presence and smile of our God. Unbelief or sin comes in, and we slip away; and therefore we need the Lord Jesus as our Priest, that the way into the holiest may always be kept open for us.

By His own blood He has entered into heaven, “having obtained eternal redemption.” (Heb. ix. 12.) He has also become our Surety before God, and made Himself responsible for all our guilt, past, present, and to come. Every fresh sin is put away with the precious blood once shed. He does not even wait for confession, but as our merciful and faithful High Priest, makes reconciliation for each sin as soon as it is committed. (Heb. ii. 17.)

Now is not this wonderful? Is it not amazing, matchless grace? Does it not surpass everything that we could have asked or thought? And should

it not bow our hearts in adoring gratitude and praise?

Nor is this all. The blood upon the altar makes atonement for our guilt, and the same precious blood makes us whiter than snow. (1 John i. 7.) One word of confession, one look to the precious blood, and instantly all defilement is gone. Thus we have boldness to draw near "through the blood of Christ." (Heb. x. 19.)

Our Lord Jesus is also Himself the door (John x. 9), the *living* door; our living, loving Lord, always waiting, ready to bring us unto the Father. (Eph. ii. 19.)

Only two things are needed on our part—"a true heart, and full assurance of faith." (Heb. x. 22.) The Lord Jesus does all the rest.

"A true heart" is a sincere heart, an honest heart—that looks upon past failure, and can say with truth, "I am sorry; I do want to leave it off; I do wish to please the Lord."

"Full assurance of faith" is taking the Lord at His word, and believing the truths we have been pondering over.

If our hearts are not true, we are *not willing* to go in; and if our faith fails, we are *afraid* to go in. But is not such rich grace, such tender love, such wondrous promises, sufficient to melt down our self-will, and bring us to His feet with humbled, subject hearts? The provision is complete indeed; and at all times we may draw near with boldness, and have access with confidence, through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. iii. 12.)

POSTURES OF THE SOUL IN THE HOLY PLACE.

WE have already considered the way of access into the holy place, and also our right of entrance through the precious blood of Christ. We have also seen that our living, loving Priest is always waiting to welcome and help us in ; and our Father's heart is flowing out to us, delighting to receive us and minister to our need.

The holy place is our proper and appointed place of rest, of fellowship, of worship, of feasting, of enjoyment, and of learning. We go *in* as children, *real* children, beloved children, accepted in Christ, and loved even as He is ; chosen by God to be the bride of Christ, and chosen by Christ to be His own bride ; and if we understand our calling, we cannot fail to be at ease, and at home in His presence.

Let us now ponder over the proper postures of our souls when there.

There are at least eight postures which are natural and simple, and which spring out of the glorious relationship which our God has formed.

- 1st. Prostrate in confession.
- 2nd. Kneeling in petition.
- 3rd. Standing in praise.
- 4th. Prostrate in worship.
- 5th. Sitting at His feet as learners.
- 6th. Sitting at His table, feasting with Him.
- 7th. Standing with girded loins ready for service.
- 8th. Leaning on His bosom enjoying His love.

1st. Prostrate in Confession.

How natural! You have sinned—and with a sad and burdened heart, you fall down at your Father's feet and tell him how sorry you are. You draw near as a child, and not as a criminal. You know your guilt is met with the precious blood of Christ, and that there is no condemnation for you; but you have grieved your Father, you have lost His smile, and down you fall in confession at His feet.

He would not have us stay at a distance, and, as it were, send in our confession by our Great High Priest. No; we should draw near ourselves, and with humble, contrite hearts confess our sins to Him.

What then? Need we stay prostrate at His feet bemoaning and bewailing our sin? Ah! no. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John i. 7); and He would have us rise *quickly*, with the full assurance that He has indeed forgiven us. We ought to believe the *written* Word, and not wait for feelings. If we wait for feeling, the devil may cheat us; but if we believe the sure written Word, feeling is the result.

What a joy that it is *written*, and that we have not to wait for a *spoken* word! And what joy that after confession, we need not stay prostrate at His feet, but may rise at once and look up in His face, and know that He is smiling upon us! (Job xi. 14–16; xxii. 26.) He has no thought of upbraiding us. He forgives from His heart (Hosea xiv.); and He wants us to believe His word, trust His love, and understand His grace.

2nd. Kneeling in Petition.

We should just tell out our petitions into our Father's ear as a loving child; quietly, trustingly speaking to Him, as to One who has all power, and who loves us intensely.

The unjust judge, in Luke xviii., only avenged the widow because of her importunity; but our God hears our cry because He loves us, and has pledged Himself to meet our every need.

We may cry to Him from the ends of the earth, and He will still hear and answer. But what right have we to be *there*—far off from Him? It is unbelief that keeps us there. Our proper place is to draw near with boldness, and in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to make known our requests to Him. (Phil. iv. 6.)

Supplicate means, Ask earnestly; and we may tell Him our requests over and over again. We should just pour out our hearts to Him; and whenever the trouble rises tell it out again, and thus disburden our hearts, and rest in His love.

“With thanksgiving”—*not agony*, but thanksgiving; a happy, thankful, restful spirit, which can trust Him, and knows that whatever He does, it will be loving, kind, and wise.

We cannot be sure that He will grant our petitions, but we ought to have confidence in Him, that He will indulge us to the very utmost that He can, without spoiling us. We are at school, and He is training us for Himself; and many of our lessons can only be learnt in trial of some kind or other.

For instance, we must learn submission ; and how could we learn it, if the Lord never said *no* to us ?

Thus we should pray in subjection to His will, feeling we are very foolish, and do not know what is good for us, and glad for Him to order all things for us. There should be no *agony* ; for agony is either unbelief or self-will. Self-will says—" I want my own will ;" and unbelief says—" He does not care about my troubles ;" and both breed distrust and agony of soul. Still He is very pitiful and tender with us ; and instead of being angry with our agony, He bears with our foolishness and seeks to increase our faith.

Faith is a very tender plant, and needs a heavenly clime. It cannot flourish in the cold, bleak atmosphere of this world, and soon withers if we neglect the Lord's presence ; but in His presence faith will grow and flourish. We shall there learn His love, His tenderness ; and prove how ready He is to hear, how quick to answer ; and how He delights to load us with loving-kindness and tender mercies.

3rd. Standing in Praise.

Again, how natural ! If burdened with sin, we have told it out, and received a fresh sense of forgiveness. We have also poured out our *desires* to our Father and our God, and then with glad and happy hearts we rise and sing His praise. There should be nothing forced or formal, but the simple outflow of a melodious, thankful heart.

4th. Prostrate in Worship.

Worship is delighting in what the Lord is in Himself. Words may fail, but the heart flows out to Him in adoring gratitude, praise, and love.

Worship, as presented to us in the word of God, is always a short, spontaneous burst of praise. The worshippers do not remain prostrate upon their faces in lengthened adoration; but fall down before the Lord, with some fervent short ejaculation, and rise again. See Rev. iv. 9-11; v. 14. See also Gen. xvii. 3, 17. Abraham fell down twice before the Lord in that interview, so he could not have remained on his face all the time.

This should be the character of our worship at the Lord's table; not one long continued strain, but bursts of praise and adoration, intermingled with prayer, confession, and listening to the Lord. All should be spontaneous, nothing forced, but flow forth naturally, each in their order, as His truth is brought before our souls.

If we are at ease, and happy with the Lord, we shall be sure to take these first four postures, when pouring out our hearts to Him. The other four rather befit us, when He is telling out His heart to us.

We need to be very spiritually natural before the Lord. He desires truth in the inward parts. Those who worship the Father must worship in spirit and in truth, and we shall find ourselves *incapable* of taking the four latter postures, whenever our hearts

are burdened. We must first disburden ourselves of whatever may be pressing us, and then with free and happy spirits we may take the fifth posture ; viz. :

(5th) Sitting at His feet as Learners.

“At His feet” (Deut. xxxiii. 3)—that is the place to receive His words, and learn His mind and will. We should sit down and talk with the Lord. We should talk with Him about our sins, looking up in His face with the full confidence that we are forgiven (Job xxii. 26), and telling Him all our wrong thoughts and feelings, that we may get them righted. Every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil, and that continually. (Gen. vi. 5.) We are not sufficient to think a right thought of ourselves (2 Cor. iii. 5); but our precious Lord is always ready to teach us, and He loves to have us sitting at ease in His presence, learning of Him as Mary did. (Luke x. 39.) We need to talk with Him, and ask what are His thoughts about everything we do, or say, or think ; and to get His judgment about everything around us. (Job xxii. 22.)

We should always read our Bible at His feet. It is not enough to read it as a letter which He has sent us. We should sit down at His feet, and talk with Him face to face about what He has written. The Bible would thus become a living, mighty, quickening, gladdening word ; and day by day we should increase in the knowledge of His will (Col. i. 9), and become quick of scent in the fear of the Lord. (Isa. xi. 2, 3.)

6th. Sitting at His table feasting with Him.

Sitting at His feet we get our thoughts and feelings righted ; feasting at His table we get health and strength. And, oh, how wonderful ! we feast with God our Father, and with our Lord Jesus Christ ! “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John i. 3.)

Day by day we may sit down in the holy place, and eat the very bread of God, and drink the new wine of the kingdom. (Cant. ii. 3, 4.) We feed upon the produce of the heart of Christ (John vi. 57); His love, His grace, His gentleness, His holiness, His thoughts, His desires, His purposes ; yes, all that He has or is. He treats us as His friends, His loved ones ; and delights to lead us into full fellowship with all His thoughts and purposes ; and *there* we may sit and feast with Him, and delight ourselves in the varied provision of His house. (Jer. xxxi. 12-14.)

Oh, what a feast of fat things ! How it destroys any relish for the world or its attractions ! How paltry all earthly things appear by the side of such grand realities !

7th. Standing with Girded Loins ready for Service.

All our need has been met, and with glad and grateful hearts we ask, “Lord, what may I do for Thee ?” We are ready for work, and wait for His orders. The work may be varied, but our one question should be, “Lord, what would'st thou have

me to do?" It may be to work in His vineyard, or go forth in the gospel field, or the common everyday duties of life; but whatever it be, He would have us do it, as our appointed service *for Him*.

Our precious Lord has left us an example that we should follow His steps. (1 Peter ii. 21.) Think of the first thirty years of His life upon earth; first as the holy boy at Nazareth, and then as the carpenter. (Mark vi. 3.) Truly "He pleased not Himself." (Rom. xv. 3.) And if we tread the path He has marked out for us, the life of Jesus may be as truly manifested in us in ordinary duties, as in outer and more public service. He may sometimes say, "My child, I want you to learn patience to-day, and show forth My power to sustain and gladden you." The great secret is, to receive our appointed service from Him, and then with girded loins to seek to please Him.

8th. Leaning on His bosom, enjoying His love.

This is our place, our proper place, and the Lord delights to see us take it. He gave Himself for us for this very purpose. He wants us to know and enjoy His love. He labours, He toils for this object. He not only tells us of it, but seeks in every possible way to reveal it to us. He wants to give us such confidence in His love, that like John, we may take our place in His bosom. (John xiii. 23-25.) And, oh, how welcome He made him!

Cant. ii. 7 * is just an expression of the ecstasy of

* The pronoun I—in Cant. ii. 7 is in the masculine gender in the Hebrew, which proves that Christ is the speaker, and thus the verse expresses *His* delight in His *bride*.

His soul, when any of His loved ones can say with truth, "His left hand is under my head, His right hand doth embrace me." (Cant. ii. 6.) It is as if He said, "O daughters of Jerusalem, I have waited and toiled for this, and at last I have got it; now stir her not up, but let me enjoy her."

But we must take the place ourselves. It is of no use to lie at His feet and say, "Lord, lift me up." No; we must get up. We must take Him at His word, and believe that His desire is toward us, and rise and take our place in His bosom, as His loved and cherished ones.

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. x. 17.) The Holy Spirit shows us the things of Christ through the written word, and if we listen to His wondrous words of love, and drink them in, our faith will grow. We need to grasp them for ourselves, to bind them round our hearts, and respond to them. Thus we get increased confidence in His love, and believe that He delights to clasp us to His heart; and resting there, we learn out His secret thoughts and feelings, and prove indeed that He is enough for us.

CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

IF Christian parents are true to the Lord, He promises to convert their children; but the promise is conditional. See Psalm ciii. 17, 18, where the Lord promises to give "His righteousness unto children's children; to *such as* keep His

covenant, and remember His commandments to do them." Again, in Psalm cii. 28, God promises Christ—"The children of *thy servants* shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." *Servants* are those who obey and serve Him, and not those who live to themselves. Also, in Psalm cxxxii. 11-13, God again says to Christ, the true David—"If thy children keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore."

Our God is true; He never breaks His word. Indeed, He is oftentimes better than His word, and His grace goes beyond His promises; but we may be very sure that He will never fall short of them. Therefore, if Christians' children grow up unconverted, and go out into worldliness, the parents should look back, and reverently, humbly ask, "Why, Lord, why?" He will not fail to show them wherein they have sinned; and He is so gracious, so full of compassion, that, if they really judge themselves, and confess their sin, they may expect Him to remove the rod and convert their children. (See 1 John i. 9; 1 Cor. xi. 31; Prov. xxviii. 13.)

Proverbs xxii. 6 does *not* mean that when a child becomes old he will *return* to the way in which he was trained, but that when he is old (or grown) he will *not depart from it*. And Ephesians vi. 4 may be taken as a pledge, that if children are brought up in the *nurture* and admonition of the Lord, He will be sure to save them.

THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

Ps. ~~cxviii~~ 1-12.

WE may regard the presence of the Lord in three aspects :

1st. *His actual presence.* We are always in the actual presence of the Lord ; we cannot get away from it. He is God, and therefore omnipresent. His eyes and His ears are here perpetually. He knows our downsitting and uprising, and understands our thoughts afar off. This in no way depends upon our faith or conduct. It *is* true, always true, whether we believe it or not.

2nd. *His secret presence.* We go up unto the Lord our God. (Jer. xxxi. 6.) We go *into* the secret of His presence, and there get refreshment, strength, and blessing. This is only true of us when we draw near to Him (James iv. 6), and if we neglect His secret presence, our souls will be weak and sickly.

3rd. *His realized and enjoyed presence in daily life.* This depends upon our faith. He *is* with us whether we believe it or not ; but we only realize it when we believe it. We should not wait to feel it, but settle it in our minds as a *certain* fact, that He is always gazing upon us in fond and tender love, always listening to us, and always waiting to bless, uphold, and strengthen.

The presence of the Lord *is* real, whether we believe it or not ; but if we believe it, *we* shall seek

to walk in His fear, and strive to please Him. What then? Thus walking in His fear we may be *certain* of His smile. He "taketh pleasure in them that fear Him" (Ps. cxlvii. 11), and whenever we try to do His will He is smiling upon us, delighting in us, and whispering some fond and loving word to make us glad. *This also is true*, whether we believe it or not. But if we do not believe it, we lose the joy of it, and walk on with sad and weary hearts.

But perhaps you say, "How can I have the Lord for my friend, companion, helper down here, when He is seated in heaven? How can He be up there and yet walk with me? How does He give me His hand and uphold me? *By the power of the Holy Ghost.* The Lord Jesus does not leave His throne in heaven, and come down here to walk with us. He is *there*, seated in glory at God's right hand; but His eyes and His ears are here; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, He stretches out His hand to uphold and minister to our need. The Holy Ghost is the channel of communication between our souls and Him; and when we are looking to Him for help, He will most surely supply all our need.

"But," you say, "I cannot keep on asking Him; I must be occupied about other things." Truly so; but suppose you are very busy, and a friend is in the room with you. You do not keep on talking to her, but if you want her help you turn to her in a moment. So with our precious Lord. If we realize that He is close by, how easy it is to turn to Him for anything we want.

Again:—suppose you are writing a letter. You ask His help, and begin to write. Thoughts flow on so rapidly, that you need not ask His help again until the letter is finished; He has been helping you all the while. But something comes in, and your thoughts are turned aside, and again you need to cry for help.

“But,” perhaps you say, “if we are always in the Lord’s presence, how can I be away from Him?” You may be in the same room with a person, and yet have nothing in common, and no intercourse with him. You *are* in his presence, and yet virtually away from him. Or you may have no confidence in him that he can or will help you, or no desire for his help, and so you do not ask for it.

How often have we treated our Lord like that! And, worse still, how often have we turned away our face from Him, and pulled away our shoulder, because we wanted some forbidden thing! and, oh, how soon the iron hand of Satan has grasped and held us fast, and robbed and spoiled us! Our faith grew weak, our joy all fled, our strength was gone, until at last, with weary, aching hearts, we turned again, and sought our Saviour’s face.

Let us beware of trifling with sin. We cannot have the Lord’s upholding and helping hand in daily life, unless we try to do His will. For instance, you want to buy your children some hats. Well, you must first go into the Lord’s presence, and see what His word says about dress. Get hold of His thoughts about the hats, and then you can

ask Him to go with you into the shop and help you to buy them. So with everything from morning to night. He can neither help us nor smile upon us, when we are doing what is wrong.

May we truly learn to walk under His eye, enjoying His smile, and leaning upon His arm, for continual strength and guidance!

WHY? AND WHAT FOR?

WHY? throws us back upon our past conduct, and enquires, "Wherein have I so displeased the Lord as to cause Him to send me such bitter sorrow?" *What for?* looks onward, and asks, "What does He mean to teach me through this trouble?"

If we have been indulging in sin, we can easily answer, *Why?* and should speedily heed the rod, and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. But if not conscious of indulged or wilful sin, we may rest assured it is *not* the rod; and then we should ask, *What for?* We can easily tell. The special trial will make us feel our lack of certain special fruits, and these fruits He would have us cultivate; or it may be a special exercise of faith, or love, or patience, because He wants to perfect these fruits in us. Either way we should seek to work together with the Lord, and cheerfully accept the trial as part of our needed training. The result will be exceeding and eternal gain.

ISAIAH XXXV.

WE must connect the first verse of this chapter with Isaiah xxxiii. 20-24, because the wilderness and the solitary place will be made glad with the broad rivers and streams mentioned in these verses. (Isaiah xxxiv. is evidently a parenthesis, and speaks of God's judgment upon Idumea.)

These rivers will issue from the temple which will be built in the holy land when the Lord Jesus takes to Himself His great power and reigns. (Read Ezek. xlvi. 1-12; Joel iii. 18; Zech. xiv. 8; Isa. xli. 18, 19; and xliii. 19, 20.) And who can tell the joy and gladness of that blessed day, when all these promises will be fulfilled? Well may the earth be glad, and the floods clap their hands, and the hills be joyful before the Lord; for He cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and His people with truth. (Ps. xcvi., xcvi., xcvi., &c. &c.)

The rivers mentioned in Ezekiel xlvi. which will issue from the earthly temple will produce exceeding fruitfulness; but they are but a feeble shadow of the rich and varied streams which flow from the very heart of Christ. Through death He has become the *mercy-throne*, and pours unceasing blessings down. The supply can never fail. It is exhaustless, full, and free; and we only need to take it in.

Let us gaze on the spiritual substance of some of these earthly shadows.

The *wilderness* is a place of rank luxuriance, full of noxious weeds, where everything grows in wild confusion. The *solitary place* is a bare, desolate, and lonely spot, which has been stripped of all it had. The *desert* is a barren, sandy place, where nothing will grow.

What a true description of our *natural* hearts! They are overgrown with the rank weeds of sin; they have desolate wastes, where cherished hopes or idols, have been blasted or crushed; and barren places, where nothing will grow.

But if we will only allow the broad rivers and streams of God's love, and grace, and power, to flow in, the wilderness and solitary place will be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. The steps are very wonderful, very perfect.

First we must drink in the living water, *then* be glad and rejoice, *then* blossom beautifully as the rose, *then* blossom abundantly, *then* rejoice even with joy and singing, and *then* show forth the praises of the Lord. We are prone to reverse the order, and the result is little or no fruit.

We must *begin* by drinking in His loving, tender words. Take a verse like this: "As the Father hath loved me so have I loved you." Drink it in; believe that the Lord says it to you yourself; and will it not make you glad? Then rejoice; which is an outcome of the gladness and a manifestation of it; and the blossoming will be sure to follow. Ah! yes, your very joy in the Lord, will produce longings to please Him. Then blossom abundantly; increase

your longings after fruitfulness, and also your joy in the Lord.

What then? The glory of Lebanon will follow. You will get firmly and deeply rooted in His grace, and stand forth like the stately *cedar* as a witness for God; and glory in Christ your Saviour. Then follows the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; the pleasant, fragrant graces which are often so slow to grow, the beautiful attractiveness with which we should be clothed. And then the glory of the Lord is seen upon us, and the excellency of our God reflected by us.

A lovely picture indeed! Who would not long to prove the blessedness of it? And if we will only allow the river of God to flow into our souls these blessed results will surely follow.

In Ezekiel we read, that everything will live where the rivers come, but the miry places and the marishes will not be healed. No fresh-flowing stream will pass over those stagnant places; *they* will be given to salt.

Thus indulged sin or wrong feelings dam up our hearts, and hinder the inflow of the grace of our God, and fill us with marishes and stagnant places. No fruit will grow in such places. They need the healing streams, the river of God's love, to overflow them; and then where wickedness has abounded *special* fruits may grow. Still the growth will be *gradual*; for "as the earth bringeth forth her bud . . . so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth." (Isa. lxi. 11.)

Dear child of God, do you cry out, "It is high; I cannot attain to it?" &c. &c. Listen: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. . . . Be strong, fear not." Drink in the streams. Behold He comes! He comes with vengeance—vengeance against your enemies, against your sins. He comes to remove what hinders your progress. He comes to save; and brings with Him a recompense for all you suffer for His sake. (Ps. lxxv. 4, 5, 9–11; lxxvi. 10–15.)

Oh, let us take courage, and go forth and do what He tells us fearless of consequences! He will come and recompense; He will sustain and bless.

Mark the result. Your *eyes are opened* (v. 5); you drink in the streams, you believe the promises, and you *see* the land that is very far off. Your *ears are unstopped*, so that you hear plainly; your ears become more and more accustomed to the Lord's voice, so that you do not mistake His meaning. Your *lameness is healed*, and you leap as an hart; and your *dumb tongue sings for joy*. The Lord is your Helper, your Deliverer, and you are afraid of nothing. The wilderness may be around you, but it matters not; for waters break out, and streams in the desert.

The very *nests of dragons* are turned into fruitful courts. Our circumstances can always become nests for dragons. For instance, if you are made a great deal of, it may foster your pride; or if you are ill-treated, it may breed discontent or malice, and so on; and all such evil things are of the devil, and may be

compared to dragons, which soon increase and overrun our hearts, and torment other people as well as ourselves.

We often say, "Oh, if I were only in different circumstances!" But no, no. Our circumstances only bring out the evil which is in us, and reveal the dragons which are secretly increasing. We should search out the dragons and crush their eggs. Every wrong feeling is an egg; and if we do not crush it, it breaks out into a dragon.

"*A court for reeds and rushes*" — reeds and rushes will only grow in low, damp places. Thus disagreeable and trying circumstances, which would naturally foster dragons, may be turned into opportunities for cultivating special fruit for the Lord, and making us a peculiar praise and joy to Him.

In verse 8 we read of a *highway*, and a *way* called the way of holiness; and Proverbs xv. 19 tells us that "the way of the righteous is raised up as a causey" (margin). If we connect these verses together they present a *highway*, the ordinary path in which most Christians walk; and also a special path, a raised up way, or causey—*the way of holiness*.

This way of holiness is a path of separation unto the Lord, and abiding fellowship with Him; "for He shall be with them" (margin). A path in which we must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; for "the unclean shall not pass over it." But a path in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, will not err; for the Lord will uphold and guide.

A blessed, glorious path indeed, but one that requires great truthfulness of heart to Christ; and we can only walk there as long as we are intent upon pleasing Him, and lean upon Him for strength and wisdom.

This is the *true* higher Christian pathway—not *life*, but *pathway*—and the Lord desires intensely to see us walk in it. The devil is always seeking to draw us down from it. He will not come to us *there* as the roaring lion; for “no lion shall be there, nor ravenous beast.” He knows how strong we are when cleaving to Christ. We are out of his reach, and he cannot prevail by force; but he will come as an angel of light, and seek to beguile, or else to attract us with some forbidden thing.

His one object is to get us to come off this higher pathway, and we specially need to guard against the first downward step. How often when we have stepped aside, as we thought, *but for a moment*, the devil has entangled our feet and led us on and on; and hours have passed away, before our souls regained their former joyous fellowship with Christ, and glad, elastic spring.

“*The redeemed shall walk there.*” It is our proper pathway, and the only one in which we can continually prove the upholding power of Christ.

If we turn into *bye-paths*, we shall find that they are a hedge of thorns (Prov. xv. 19), and we shall be sadly torn and wounded. If we walk in the *ordinary path* of half-hearted obedience, we shall drag along with weary steps and heavy hearts; but

if we will tread *the way of holiness*, we shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

The Lord make our feet like hinds' feet, so that we may be able to walk habitually upon this high and blessed pathway of abiding fellowship with Him. See Psalm xviii. 33, .36; 2 Sam. ii. 18; Hab. iii. 19; Deut. xxxii. 13, 14.

ARMOUR.

THERE are four different kinds of armour mentioned in the word of God, each suited to protect our souls from special dangers in varied circumstances.

- 1st. The armour of light, in Romans xiii. 11-14.
- 2nd. The armour of righteousness, in 2 Cor. vi. 4-10.
- 3rd. The armour mentioned in 1 Thess. v. 8.
- 4th. The armour mentioned in Eph. vi. 10-19.

1st. **THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.** This armour is to protect us from the power of the flesh within; from yielding to what is earthly, sensual, devilish; to worldly pleasures, indulgences of the flesh, or strife, or envying.

If we go into the sunlight, our bodies are surrounded with light, and we can see natural things as they really are.

So is it spiritually. By nature we are in the dark; every imagination of our hearts is only evil continually, and our judgments are wrong about

everything. But "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" and so when we really go into His presence, we are surrounded with light, and clothed with it; and seated there, we can see things as they really are, judge of sin in the light of His holiness, get His thoughts about the works of the flesh, and see and feel about them as we shall do, when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Thus the "true light" of His presence, is a *real* power against the workings of the flesh. It shows us that they are hateful and abominable, ugly and useless. Thus they lose their deceptive and attractive power, our judgment cries out against them, and we are able firmly to refuse to indulge them.

The devil knows the strength of this armour, and therefore strives to keep us in the dark, by encouraging us to trust our own judgment, and persuading us that we know better than God. "He that trusts his own heart is a fool," but "the wise man will hear, and increase learning;" and the armour of light will protect from the deceitfulness of sin.

2nd. THE ARMOUR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. (2 Cor. vi. 7.) The armour of light is to protect us from the power of our own flesh. The armour of righteousness is to protect us from being charged with inconsistency or hypocrisy. We *are* the servants of God, and every one of us ought to be doing something for Him. The work may vary; but we are slothful and wicked servants, unless we are doing some work in His vineyard.

2 Cor. vi. 1-11, tells us the manner of this service, and among other things mentions "the armour of righteousness." We should so truly wear this armour, that, Daniel-like, no fault could be found with us "on the right hand or on the left;" or, in other words, in anything we do. We should walk through this world with such steady, even consistency, that all may see that we are indeed the servants of Christ. If we wear the armour of light, it will be easy to put on the armour of righteousness.

3rd. "THE BREASTPLATE OF FAITH AND LOVE; AND FOR A HELMET THE HOPE OF SALVATION." (1 Thess. v. 8.) This armour is to protect us from discouragement and weariness in the Lord's service; while the armour of righteousness is to protect us from bringing dishonour upon the Lord's name.

"*The breastplate of faith and love*"—the heart filled with confidence in the Lord's power and willingness to bless, and so fired with love, that we are ready to suffer anything, if we can only bring blessing to others.

"*For an helmet the hope of salvation*"—when the devil attacks us we need the "helmet of salvation," so that we can lift up our heads and tell him "we are saved;" but in service for the Lord, we also need the *hope* of salvation. We should go forth expecting blessing; and if it tarry we should still be full of hope, assured that it *will* come; and that our labour will not be in vain. Again, when conscious of mistakes or failure, we should roll the burden

upon the Lord, and look to Him to overrule and put it right, and bring blessing out of it. And surely when thus equipped, we can go forth in His service with a light and eager step, and lift up our heads, and fear no evil.

4th. THE ARMOUR MENTIONED IN EPH. VI. 10-18. This armour is to enable us to withstand all the efforts of the devil, to hinder our fellowship with Christ.

Our chief difficulty in connection with this armour is to *put it on*. The Lord *gives* it to us, but He commands *us* to put it on; and we are quite unable to put it on, unless we are really in His presence and enjoying His love. We must just draw near to Him, and lay all our wilfulness, worldliness, and pride down at His feet; and then, with obedient, humble hearts, we can clothe ourselves with this perfect panoply of God.

The Israelites had to wrestle with flesh and blood. Their enemies were men; but our foes are spiritual—our own evil hearts, the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, and wicked spirits in heavenly places. A terrible conflict indeed! How all-important that we should be well prepared! No wonder that God's children are overcome, when they venture upon such a conflict alone and unarmed.

The first point mentioned is "*loins girt about with truth*." This is extremely important. We need to gather up all our thoughts and feelings, and fasten them firmly *inside* the girdle of truth, to bring them all into captivity to Christ; never to think

our own thoughts, or trust our own judgment, but to bring every detail of life, every purpose and thought, to the light of God's truth, and thus learn His mind about everything.

Satan is always tempting us to give liberty to our own thoughts and feelings, because he knows that when we do so, he can easily lay hold of our wrong thoughts, and lead us into something which will grieve the Lord. We cannot have steadfastness of purpose, or evenness of walk, unless our loins are continually, and well girt about with truth.

“*And having on the breastplate of righteousness.*” We must protect *our hearts* with the divine righteousness which Christ has provided for us. Our own uprightness of walk may make *men* feel that they can bring no just charge against us, but it will not stand the test of God's holiness; and the devil can soon find flaws in it. But, oh, that perfect, spotless righteousness which we possess in Christ!

“No spot, no stain, no flaw!
Matchless it is!”

Arrayed in that we need not fear, but may boldly lift up our heads and shout aloud, “It is God that justifieth. Who . . . who, is he that condemneth?”

“*Feet shod,*” &c. Always ready to speak of Jesus; watching and eager to proclaim the good news of “peace” *both* to saint and sinner—peace to him that is afar off, and peace to him that is nigh. (Eph. ii. 17.) Our pathway *is* rough, and if we neglect our shoes, our feet must be wounded; and then we go limping along with weary, painful steps,

instead of running in the way of His commandments. The Lord make us very fearful of being unshod !

“*The shield of faith.*” The deep, settled persuasion that every word of God is true ; a steady habit of asking about everything, “What does God say about it ?” Thus every fiery dart of the devil would be met with, “God says so-and-so, and I believe Him.” This would effectually quench the dart, and quiet the soul, and also take off the edge of the sword of the tongue.

Oh that we were wise, and continually used this shield ! The darts of the devil would then be powerless indeed, and our strength would not be wasted by festering wounds, nor our time be spent in seeking healing ointments to soothe our pain.

“*The helmet of salvation*” — the *certainty* that we *are* saved and can never perish ; so that we can lift up our heads and fear no evil.

“*And the sword of the Spirit*” — the sharp, two-edged sword of the word of God, the only weapon with which we can resist the devil or detect the deceitfulness of sin. Let us seek that it may dwell in us richly.

“*Praying always,*” &c. Always dependent, and looking up to our precious Lord for continual supplies of grace and strength.

We have no strength in ourselves, and as long as we live in this world we shall have to watch and strive against the old man within us. This is God’s arrangement for us. He could have completely de-

livered us from its power, and made us perfectly holy the very hour we were born again, but He has ordered otherwise. He desires to give us the opportunity of proving our love to Him, by resisting the sin within; and also to show how truly He can make us more than conquerors, if we will but use the weapons He has given us. He also desires to give us the opportunity of obtaining special rewards hereafter, and He will find great joy in owning our efforts and rewarding us for them.

Could we slay the old man by one tremendous struggle we should be *conquerors*; but if we get continual victory over a *living* foe, we are *more* than conquerors. He has made every provision for us. The armour is all-sufficient, but the power of our enemies will be too great for us, unless we continually wear it; and we shall need it to the very end.

“*Having done all to stand.*” However many victories we may have gained, the flesh will still rise within us, and the devil will still continuously seek to cast us down from our high places (marg. Ps. lxii. 4) of fellowship with Christ. He is too strong for us, and we can only stand, when we are truly clothed with this impervious armour, and leaning upon Christ, praying always for continual help.

But, oh, the recompence, the joy, the daily joy, of constant victory! And then at last, the glad, triumphant welcome home, and all the loving words of praise our Lord will give!

FRAGMENTS.

Deut. xiv. 21 : "*Ye shall not eat any thing that dieth of itself*"—things which we once greatly enjoyed, but which have passed away. If we brood over lost health, pleasures, comforts, friendships, it produces a sad and murmuring spirit. It is unwholesome food, and does us no good. It cannot bring back the lost blessing, and it takes away our enjoyment of any present sweetness in our cup ; and destroys the joyous, grateful spirit which is so pleasant to the Lord.

You do not like to see your child pining for some past treat, and refusing to enjoy your present kindness. Let us then seek to forget the things which are behind, enjoy our present blessings, and look onwards to our glorious, eternal portion, above with Christ.

Heb. xii. 1 : "*Let us lay aside every weight.*" Anything that hinders the soul from rising upward, or pressing onward, is a weight. We shall never lay down the weights, as long as we consider them either ornamental, useful, or valuable. But if we take them into the light of God's presence, and get His thoughts about them, we shall get power over them ; because we shall see that they are disgraceful, ugly, useless, and injurious ; and we do not care to be *burdened* with valueless things.

Shields.—"His truth shall be thy shield and buckler." (Ps. xci. 4.) We must be in circumstances to require and use any special truth before we prove it as a shield.

Any promise proved is a shield against fear.

Any precept proved is a shield against temptation.

Any warning proved is a shield against being beguiled.

If we neglect to use the shields, we continually get terrified without cause, or overcome by temptation, or entangled with some snare of the devil.

The shield of faith is, "I believe God," and we must meet each several dart of the devil with the truth about that special point; so unless the word of Christ dwells in us richly, the needed shield is not at hand, and we get wounded. How important then to lay up His words within us.

Our blessed God has also provided balm for our wounds. If we use the shield we escape the wounds; but should we be so foolish as to get wounded, let us not neglect the balm.

We read of one upon whose neck there hung a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. (Cant. iv. 4.) Happy indeed the soul that is thus protected. (Prov. iii. 3, 4; vi. 20-24.)

Idols.—An idol is any thing, or person, which we love, fear, or serve, more than God Himself. There is really but *one* God; but we often set up many little gods, and sacrifice to them what belongs to God alone.

Besetting Sins.—Our besetting sins vary according to our individual character ; but if we trace the matter to the root, we shall mostly find that the same sin is continually tripping us up in different ways.

Christians often find that a sin seems to grow stronger after they have prayed against it. One reason is, because they become more alive to its working, and detect it more speedily. But a more frequent reason is, because they have not gone to the root of the evil, and only wish to have some troublesome offshoot cut away.

Take pride, for instance. They do not want to give it up entirely, but only to be kept from certain inconvenient or offensive manifestations of it. If the Lord gave them the help they desire, the hidden evil would go on spreading and growing, in the same way as a thistle would become more deeply rooted if you merely cut off its head, and left it growing in the ground. The Lord wants us to lay the axe at the root of our sins, so that their growth may be completely checked.

Checks.—The Lord always checks us first by *little things*. He never gives a sharp rebuke without having first spoken once, twice, thrice ; and we would not hear. He does not like to put us to shame, and would never do so, if we would only heed His little warnings. Let us learn to pull ourselves up at the *first* word, and we shall never need the rod.

The Lord's Jealousy.—The Lord is not jealous *of* us, but jealous *for* us. “I am jealous *for* Jerusalem.” (Zech. i. 14, viii. 2.) Jealous lest anything came near to harm it. “Then will the Lord be jealous *for* His land” (Joel ii. 18), and arise to deliver it from His enemies.

It would be a terrible thing if the Lord were jealous *of* us; for jealousy demands compensation before it is satisfied; and we always come so sadly short of what we should *be*, or *give* to the Lord, that it would be impossible to make amends for the past, and therefore rest and confidence in His love could never be restored.

But oh what cause for joy that He is jealous *for* us! His compassions are stirred when He sees us oppressed with sin and coldness; His affections are moved, and He comes forth for our help. “Now will I arise, saith the Lord.” (Ps. xii. 5.) He may have to send trouble, but His object is blessing, blessing. He is grieved *for* us, and not angry *with* us; and He uses His wisdom, love, and power, to free us from the evil which is weakening our souls, and destroying our joy.

Isaiah lxiii. 13, 14.—If we will cleave to Christ, He will lead us in difficult paths as carefully as a man leads his horse down a steep mountain pathway. He will hold us up that we may not slip; then let us rest awhile; then calm and soothe us; and then lead us on again. Surely, surely we may trust Him, and need fear no evil.

Isaiah lv. 1.—The water of life is given freely, freely; we only have to ask and receive; but we must *buy* the wine and milk. True, we buy it without money and without price; still, the word *buy*, implies that we part with something for it; and so we do. We cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. (1 Cor. x. 21.) We must give up the devil's mixed wine—his deceitful and unsatisfying pleasures; if we would have the new wine of the kingdom—the joy of the Lord. So with the milk. If we would know the comforts of His loving sympathy, we must turn from our own self-sympathizing thoughts, and drink in His soothing and yet sanctifying words.

Isaiah lxi. 2, 3 teaches us the same truth. We buy beauty for ashes (things we once delighted in, but they have turned to ashes); the oil of joy for mourning; and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Shortcomings.—No child ever learnt to write without making many ill-shapen letters; and we cannot bring forth the fruits of the Spirit without repeated efforts and many failures. It *is* painful to prove our weakness and folly; but the Lord does not expect perfection, and He is always pleased whenever we *try* to do His will. Indeed, He often says, "Well done," when we are greatly discouraged and disappointed with ourselves. He knows how difficult the path is, and, far from being a hard Master, is always ready to help us.

The Holy Ghost may be compared to the *telescope*—through which we see the unseen things; the *telephone*—through which we hear the distant heavenly sounds; the *phonograph*—which makes the written word of God a present living voice; the *pen*—by which the word of God is written upon our hearts; the *camera*—by which the likeness of Christ is stamped upon us; and the *golden pipe*—through which the Lord Jesus pours down the treasures of His love, and grace, and power, into our hearts. Let us take heed lest we grieve the Holy Spirit, and thus lose these inestimable blessings.

The Holy Ghost is also given to us as our Teacher and Remembrancer. (John xiv. 26.) He always speaks through the *written* Word; but He cannot bring to our remembrance, what we have never heard or read; so if we desire much of His teaching and leading, we must give ourselves time to read, and ponder over our Bibles.

The Devil's Sieve.—When we get into the devil's sieve, we see so much evil in ourselves, that we are ready to sweep away all our obedience and service for Christ as worthless. But *His* eye sees every precious thing (Job xxviii. 10); and He treasures up every loving thought and every effort to please Him (Mal. iii. 16); nor will He suffer one grain of anything good to fall to the ground. The Lord always encourages, as well as humbles; and strengthens, even when He reproveth; but the devil either pulls up, or depresses, or weakens.

Psalm ciii. 3: "*Who healeth all thy diseases.*" The punishment of our sin has been borne by Christ, and now our God looks upon the sin of His children as *disease*, and deals with it accordingly. His object is to *cure*, and not to *punish*. He may have to use the rod, even as a surgeon is sometimes obliged to use the lancet; but He never does it in anger. His pity and compassions are stirred for us, and however painful the stroke, it is the fruit of a deep, intense, and fervent love. He seeks to correct, to enrich, and bless; to heal all our diseases; and He is so wise, so gracious, and so kind, that He will never give one needless pain. If we did but believe and understand this blessed truth, how much anxiety and sorrow we should save ourselves; and how easy we should find it to yield to the Lord, instead of fretting against Him.

Isaiah lii. 5: "*They that rule over them make them to howl.*" An indulged and cherished sin will make us howl. This is one of the Lord's ways of making us hate it. When we find pleasure in a sin, the Lord does not always insist upon our leaving it off, but often allows it to increase and grow, until we get so thoroughly under its power, that we actually howl under it. The sin itself becomes the rod, and so flogs us that we long to be delivered from it. A murmuring spirit, for instance, may be indulged to such an extent, that all our comforts and blessings are embittered by it, and our whole life becomes one continual misery.

Why does the Lord sometimes withhold His help from us in His service, when we have most earnestly sought it?

Sometimes because self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction is secretly springing up; and the Lord comes to our help, and lets us prove our own nothingness. Sometimes others may be thinking too much of the instrument, and it is good for them to see the power is in Christ, and not in us. And sometimes the hearers are so hard and careless that the Lord is silent to them, and therefore we feel shorn of all our power, and can only mourn with Him over their cold indifference. Still we need not be discouraged. The work is His, and if we are true to Him, He will supply all needed grace and wisdom.

An Act of Faith.—Justification, cleansing, and the new birth are the results of an *act* of faith; but growing up into Christ is the gradual development of the life which He has imparted. That life can only be developed as it is nourished by continual abiding in Christ. The vigour of the new man depends upon this continual abiding.

Colossians i 11: “*Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.*” What for? For some mighty service? No; but “*unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.*” Joyful, longsuffering patience is the richest fruit of the greatness of His power.

A Broken Heart and a Broken Spirit.—"The sacrifices of God are a broken *spirit*" (Ps. li. 17), and *not* a broken *heart*. A broken heart is the fruit of our own self-will, or pride, or sin of some kind. We will go our own way, and reap a harvest of desperate grief and sorrow, which breaks our hearts. He will *not* despise a broken heart. He pities it, and loves to heal it (Ps. cxlvii. 3); but He *dwells* with the humble, contrite spirit. (Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 1, 2.) A broken spirit is a healed broken heart; whose self-will, self-dependence, and self-sufficiency are broken down; and who, in felt helplessness, leans upon the Lord, and desires to do His will. He will lift up, revive, and strengthen such, and put new songs of joy into their mouths.

Isaiah xlviii. 19.—"*Peace as a river,*" widening and deepening as it flows on. "*Righteousness as the waves of the sea;*" the fruits of righteousness following each other in an unceasing flow. The greater the storm, the larger the waves; therefore, the greater the trial, the more abundant fruit. This promise is conditional, and will only be fulfilled to us when we hearken to His commandments.



